

## Home Minister's comment

The comment of our Home Minister was indeed an eye opener for me to finally realise where we are actually living. He philosophically told the press that no death could take place without the will of the Almighty. So what can we derive from this preaching?

The killing of Naushin-- a two-year-old baby was destined by the God. The killers committed this crime because they were sent by God to do that. The case ends here.

If it is that simple then why do we need a government and particularly a Home Minister? We need no judicial system, no law enforcement agency because to the Home Minister's interpretation no single soul can commit a crime on his own whims.

**Kabir Hossain Taposh**  
Elephant Road, Dhaka

I am appalled and enraged by the Home Minister's frivolous comments on television regarding the spate of tragic murders that Dhaka alone has witnessed in the last week! The Home Minister has the gall to tell TV reporters that "Birth and death are ordained by the creator and no man can change the course of those events". That too, said while standing outside the house of the murdered infant Naushin, killed two days ago by a stray bullet from a mugging incident. "We must find solace" he said, "in the idea that god has taken away his own."

Thank you Mr Minister that's very comforting especially for Naushin's parents. Especially since there's no solace to be had in the possibility that you would do something to prevent similar incidents in the future.

But that wasn't all. To put the icing on the cake, he responded to an ETV journalist's questions regarding the deteriorating law and order situation, by questioning what the journalist, as a conscious

citizen of the country, had done to fight terrorism! Why do we need a Home Minister then? If the law is to be enforced by civil society and ETV journalists, lets get rid of Altaf Chowdhury and his cronies in the Home Ministry.

Is Khaleda Zia too obtuse to realise that Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, his incompetency and his frivolous remarks are a major factor behind the loss of people's faith in this government?

**Enraged**  
On e-mail

The Home Minister's visit to the parents of Naushin at a time of their greatest grief was encouraging. His clergy style submissive comment on the death of twenty-month old baby has astonished and saddened us greatly. Some of the concerns that appeared in his deliberation of console are not only alarming, but frustrating too!

Is his comment in line with what he claimed a couple of months ago about the deteriorated law and order situation in Bangladesh? Is his statement - "crimes have decreased though murders have increased in the country" still valid? Has he given up any hope of improving the law and order situation in Bangladesh? Does he mean also that we forget and forgive, as it was the child Naushin's destiny and fate to die like this?

By concluding that the baby was not a target of the killer, he demonstrated his extraordinary talent in analysing and judging such a delicate and heart breaking incident so quickly; after all he is our Home Minister!

His conclusion has generated problems elsewhere too. In the event that the killer is presented before the court-- we urge it happens quite soon, the defendant lawyer now has an additional point to argue in favour of his/her client that the baby Naushin was not the target your honour, rather it was a mere accident. In this scenario, how can our Home Minister ensure justice?



An exchange of so much of so-called philosophical ideas and thoughts like a clergy in one hand, and his assurance to arresting the culprit (s) on the other hand seems funny if not contradictory.

Like any other baby, Naushin had the right to be taken care of by the parents, adults, society and the state and to prepare her to be a responsible adult; ensuring security, safety, shelter, food, education and the rights of participation in all aspects of life and liberty.

Sadly, we failed to ensure the very rights to survival and development of not only Naushin, but also many others within less than a year; since the BNP led coalition took its office.

Once, not so long ago; the Home Minister's comments denying

the media report to be exaggeration on the violence and repression on the Hindu community in Bangladesh got a massive media coverage. Not only the local media, but the regional and international media also brought interviews and reports highlighting various facts.

I wish our Home Minister would think about the seriousness of an issue before making a final conclusion.

**Sahed Ali**  
British Columbia, Canada

## The Home Minister and Fetma Nasreen

I am shocked at the words of Fatema Nasreen (May 13) who said that the Home Minister is right about the comment he made ("Life or death are in the hands of Allah").

Well, I agree that God has given us life and he will take us back (which is written in Quran), but it is written anywhere that he will take his creations back through terrorism or murders? Ms. Fatema was right about the sentence 'Nothing will happen without the will of God'. But killing an innocent 20-month-old baby; kidnapping and tearing a schoolboy in pieces; murdering a wife and 2 sons-- are these wills of God? No, but these are all happening as law and order is deteriorating.

We expect the Home Minister to encourage the police force to do their work seriously, but instead he is encouraging the terrorists. And by the way, if everything is in the Will of God, then what do we need a Home Minister for?

**Zenith T. Ahmed**  
Dhaka

## Grameen organisation

I was just reading an article in the Economist about the Grameen Organisation. A Mr. M. M. Akash of Dhaka University is quoted as having said, "It is not clear whether the money to run the Grameen Bank's micro credit schemes is coming from depositors' savings, from loans from banks or from international donors. If as Mr Yunus claims the bank is owned and operated by poor people, then it should be subject to independent audits".

Excellent point I think. I just wish our local press would also publish critical reports of this organisation rather than the usual lionising articles.

Another thing I find very interesting is that all these articles, both domestic and international, are written either in favour or in some way critical of the micro credit schemes. I am yet to come across one that addresses the issue of the involvement of the Grameen organisation in T-Shirt export, ISPs and fisheries.

I would like to pay particular attention to Prof. Yunus' garments business based in the EPZ since there are several hundred large firms already in this sector. According to the Grameen website, "the company sourced the best branded machines which have the reputation for producing quality products in keeping with the expectations of different levels of customers". (<http://www.grameen-info.org/grameen/gkni/index.html>)

Forgive me, but I really don't see what this has to do with anything the Grameen organisation is supposed to stand for.

**Bastiat**  
Dhaka

## Letter to the Editor: The people's page

Thank you for providing us a space in your "Letter to the Editor" page where we can speak out and share our views. As our Parliament has ceased to represent its citizens, the "Letters to the Editor" column is becoming more and more essential, imperative and important for the greater national interest. Because as a citizen of a democracy we have the right to express our thoughts; and your letter page is a place where we can practice it.

The Information Ministry, Press Information Department in particular should always be update with the "Letters to the Editor" and forward those to different Ministries, Departments and Public Sector Corporations concerned for taking necessary action.

I would also request our ministers, leaders of the ruling and opposition to read the "Letters to the Editor" column regularly and carefully with a view to carry out their duties more efficiently, sincerely and effectively.

**OH Kabir**  
Dhaka

## Great tragedy in Dhaka

While our PM delivered a speech at the UN for global safety and security of children, an one-and-half year old child died in Dhaka by the bullet of hijackers who were shooting in all directions in their bid to escape. How tragic and ironic!

For how long will our leaders act blind and say that law and order situations are nothing but plots by the opposition to tarnish the image of the government. Please Madam PM, make your own country safe and secure first.

**ADistressed Observer**  
Chittagong

## An Indian view on Palestine

The letter of Meeta Sanyal (April 26) did not surprise me. What could one expect from an Indian who is egoistic and self-centred? Of course Israel is their perfect match.

We feel sorry for the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for asking for

help from India, a nation that will not even lift a finger without gaining something from others.

**Nur Jahan**  
Chittagong

I thank Amit Deshpande for his distinct approach in "Another Indian view on Palestine". He supported Meeta Sanyal and was frank enough to express that there are many Indians who think more like Meeta Sanyal-- no matter how much wronged a Muslim country is, it doesn't deserve support of the Indians. There is no room for moral or ethical questions.

He has mentioned India's sacrifice for Bangladesh in 1971. But the way our big neighbour treats the border issues now, we are forced to look back at their sacrifice under a different light.

**Tareq**  
Rajshahi

Mr. Deshpande, in your letter (May 8) you have stated that Bangladesh is creating an air force against India. May I know from where you've got this information for we Bangladeshis have not yet heard of any such creation.

However, I would surely be happy had the Bangladesh government taken such step. Because you may never know that India, influenced by its so-called "best friend" Israel wouldn't try to turn our beloved Bangladesh into another Palestine. We need to prepare ourselves to fight such a mighty neighbour.

**Zishan H. Choudhury**  
Rajshahi University

## English medium school

Most of the parents want to send their children to good English medium school if they can afford it. The child gets admission to a good school after a long waiting period and after paying a good sum of money as admission fee, term fee, tuition fee etc. The tuition fee itself is quite heavy on most of the parents. On the top of that each year the schools keep on increasing the tuition fee and introduce new fees like term fee etc.

Under this situation the parents do not know whom to approach to listen to their grievances. It will not be out of place to mention that the standard of education in these schools however does not improve with the increase in fees.

It is highly recommended that some authority in education department have control over these institutions with respect to curricula they are teaching and structure of fees they are realising from the poor parents.

**An aggrieved parent**  
Dhaka

**Why label everyone?**

I have been observing a flood of opinion after FEER published a report on Bangladesh.

Mr. Mustafa Faruque's opinion has made some of the readers angrier. It is really amusing that any body trying to bring our attention to the risk of Talibanism in this country is labelled as Awami Leaguer. If there is no Taliban or their supporter in this country then let us relax. There is no need to occupy so much space in

development. The fiscal path towards prosperity is by no means set and therefore it is important to have constructive intellectual debate to settle such issues. To that end, it is crucial that both sides listen to each other's arguments and engage in a symbiotic dialogue.

By calling Mr. Biggles a "pro-India intellectual" and suggesting that he be posted on the border to defend the nation all by himself, his detractors

## Beware, mobile phone users

If you get a phone call on your mobile from any person, indicating that he/she is a company engineer, telling you that they are doing a check on your phone and that you must press #90 or 09# or any other number, end the call immediately without pressing any number.

Once you have pressed #90 or 09#, they can access your SIM card and make calls from it at your expense.

**Md. Taufiqur Rahman**  
Dhaka

are engaging in the kind of intellectual fanaticism and jingoism that is inimical to constructive debate on the issue of defence spending. And without healthy dialogue between opponents it is impossible to adopt a democratic approach towards national empowerment.

The literary behaviour of Mr. Biggles' opponents is a microcosm of the intellectual intolerance that has plagued our incipient democracy. When the Awami League was in power it seemed that anyone who disagreed with the government was labelled as Razakar. Now it seems anyone who has the gall to question BNP's methods will automatically be charged with being unpatriotic and pro-India. Such intolerance and fanaticism poses the most palpable threat to our hopes of achieving a functional democracy and therefore has no place in our intellectual and political endeavour.

**Bangal Chele**  
Bang



China invaded Vietnam not for territorial gains but for punishing Vietnam for invading Cambodia and killing Vietnamese Chinese.

Since the seventeenth century Tsarist forces occupied Nerchinsk and Yakasa in the Amur region (north of Mongolia and west of northern Nei Mongol) which were Chinese territories. In eighteenth century Russia invaded the Lake Balkhash area, near Northwest Xinjiang. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russians had seized a total 1.4 million square kilometres and another 1.5 million

strengthened with better equipment (taken from the Army), an air wing (taken from the Air Force) and modern small arms, we can do without the army. Keep in mind I am arguing for a far stronger BDR than we have now. But even that would be cheaper than maintaining a regular Army and Air Force. As for the Navy, frigates are the building blocks of a blue water force. We need a brown water force, for coastal defence. A Coast Guard equipped with fast patrol boats, built in the Naval Shipyards, would suffice to curb smuggling, conduct rescue operations and arrest illegal foreign fishermen.

**Migs and helicopters**

This is in response to Bastiat's last letter where he poses some strategic questions to me.

The discussion regarding the way our army should be structured needs more than one letter. In a nutshell, our armed forces should be able to respond to:

a global power with sophisticated military capabilities

a regional hegemon with asymmetric capabilities, such as weapons of mass destruction and missiles, designed to suppress its

Thanas officers. After all, I thought, this is a law and order matter, isn't it? Doesn't one have to get permission to speak in public on behalf of one's religious community?

I would like to think that, when extremists talk nonsense, publicly, then those who are morally and religiously better qualified than they, would, at the very least, take them to one side and quietly try to dissuade them from their opinions. The ideal, of course, is surely to insist that the culprit is put in front of the microphone and made to issue a public apology.

Anyway, it was extremely unpleasant and my Garo cook was, understandably, very frightened. I made a point of visiting the bazaar a little more frequently than usual, on the perfectly good British principle of "Don't let them see the whites of your eyes!" Drinking tea in various shops with my many Muslim friends, I assured them that, if I thought for one moment that my murder would bring peace between Israeli and Palestinian, I would cheerfully volunteer, especially as many Palestinian Arab families have been Christian for centuries, which our friend at the microphone obviously did not realise.

**Angela MV Robinson (Rev Mrs)**  
Haluaaghat

neighbours transitional threats that include terrorist groups, international criminal and drug organisations, and illegal migrations (Rohingya)

problems of failed or incapable states that require peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, or national reconstruction domestic emergencies such as rebellion in Chittagong hill tracks that exceed the capacity of other government agencies such as BDR to handle

Regarding the writer's other questions; I firmly believe that our armed forces should not be involved in hotel management and banking. This is a problem to make our army a professional one. We have to correct the problem but total abolition of the armed forces in the excuse of correcting the problem is ridiculous.

Procurement of trucks and jeeps is aimed at augmenting the transportation capability of the army. There is nothing wrong with that. But the transparency in procurement can only be ensured if our politicians refrain themselves from taking kickbacks from every military deal.

Our air force needs modern infrastructure and fighter planes to make it a modern one. We cannot do that by buying low-tech Chinese fighter planes. Since, Bangladesh is a poor country it cannot buy modern planes like MIG-29 in bulk. So, we buy small number of modern fighter planes and build proper infrastructure.

It was not a kim-chi type frigate; it was a modified Ulsan class. The Taka was devalued not to buy the frigate but to expedite the export. Bangladesh navy has to decommission three old British frigates soon. So, they need replacements.

The writer has a tendency of portraying China as an evil state. His claim of China being involved in border disputes with its neighbours for territorial gains is mostly incorrect. Regarding the Korean War, PRC's intervention in Korea was primarily precipitated by its own security concerns. PRC intervened in Korea, so that US forces could not press on China along the Yalu river to pin down China's north-eastern defence force, and control Southern Manchuria's power supply (generated from hydroelectric plants in North Korea).

China invaded Vietnam not for territorial gains but for punishing Vietnam for invading Cambodia and killing Vietnamese Chinese.

Since the seventeenth century Tsarist forces occupied Nerchinsk and Yakasa in the Amur region (north of Mongolia and west of northern Nei Mongol) which were Chinese territories. In eighteenth century Russia invaded the Lake Balkhash area, near Northwest Xinjiang. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russians had seized a total 1.4 million square kilometres and another 1.5 million

strengthened with better equipment (taken from the Army), an air wing (taken from the Air Force) and modern small arms, we can do without the army. Keep in mind I am arguing for a far stronger BDR than we have now. But even that would be cheaper than maintaining a regular Army and Air Force. As for the Navy, frigates are the building blocks of a blue water force. We need a brown water force, for coastal defence. A Coast Guard equipped with fast patrol boats, built in the Naval Shipyards, would suffice to curb smuggling, conduct rescue operations and arrest illegal foreign fishermen.

The second facet of my argument was to try and provoke a discussion on our defence spending based on logic rather than emotional jingoism. Look at the front page of *The Daily Star* today. BNP is in trouble because they inadvertently gave the names of the five generals who took "development money" from AL. Even the PM has had to be conciliatory. Apparently "senior ministers told the PM that defence is always a sensitive area and that it was a major wrong decision by the government to make public the names of the five generals".

We live in a country where we silently accept all the wrongs of our leaders and the servants of our nation.

**Biggles**  
Dhaka

## Ex-secretaries' concern

This refers to the news "Ex-secretaries' concern" (April 30). Most of these former secretaries joined Awami League. Among them Abul Ma'al Abdul Muhit and Mohammad Ali contested the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2001 general election with



by 1900. The Beijing government began to challenge Soviet occupation of these disputed areas in 1963, and as a result border conflicts between China and erstwhile Soviet Union erupted.

I do not support Chinese invasion of Tibet. But do you support India's swallowing of Kashmir, Junagarh, Manvadar, Hyderabad, Goa, Daman, and Sikkim?

**Maruf**  
New Orleans, U.S.A

This is in reply to Ashfaque and Sohel's letters (May 9).

Actually wandering about in the tea garden was fun, I quite recommend it. But Mr Ashfaque is right, India has at times treated us without due respect.

Mr Sohel in his letter is actually corroborating a great many of the things I am arguing for as well. I entirely agree with his analysis of the duties of the BDR and Coast Guard. I would also add that the BDR has a role in maintaining domestic security and were it equipped well, in rescue and relief operations as well.

There are several facets of my argument and I may have been unclear on my reasoning. Partly due to the fact that that I am forming an opinion as we go along.

My first argument is that with a

## Communalism in perspective

The carnage in BJP ruled Gujarat has rightly provoked severe condemnation in Bangladesh (and elsewhere).

There are times, however, that such outrage has crossed the bounds of honesty. When we blanket all of India as a communal, anti-Muslim, Hindu fanatic society, we look like abject fools, if not worse.

India has a Muslim population of roughly the same proportion of Bangladesh's Hindu population. I am glad and proud that there have been no silly reprisals in Bangladesh as a result of Gujarat. What I cannot deny, nonetheless, is India's history vis-vis Bangla-

desh. India has no state religion. Twice it has elected Muslims as Presidents. To those who will say that the Indian president is but a figurehead,



there is more to India's record. Two Muslims have served as Chief Justices of India and a similar number as heads of the

powerful Indian Air Force. India's cabinets and state governorships, its science academies and film studios, its embassies and party leaderships have a noticeable number of Muslims in prominent roles. India's richest two men and its top nuclear scientist are all Muslims.

Please tell me how are Bangladesh's Hindus faring compared to Muslims in 'communal', 'anti-Muslim' India?

**ES**  
Missouri, USA

California, USA

## Withdraw income tax from sanchaypatra

I draw the kind attention of our Finance Minister to please consider in the next budget to extend indirect financial relief to retired and senior citizen of Bangladesh by way of removing income tax from the various *sanchoyapatra*.

Now-a-days government investment certificate holders are to pay income tax at 10 per cent on source (interest) on top of reduced interest, being levied since last couple of months. Previously one used to get interest over Tk 3300.00 per quarter on Tk1.00 lakh of SP and there was no tax on interest earned. Present interest rate and tax deduction both combined put senior citizens and retired personnel in hardship. It is quite difficult to maintain a decent but humble life.

I am sure this appeal will get a very special attention of Mr. Saifur Rahman, our Finance Minister.

**Q. Abdur Rouf**  
Dhaka

## Congratulation Mr. Mayor

I whole heartedly congratulate Mr. Sadek Hossain Khoka, the newly elected mayor of Dhaka, with a hope that he will eradicate the prevailing disorders from the city. I also hope that he will turn Dhaka into a cosmopolitan city -- free from traffic jams, garbage and mosquitoes; and also turn it into a suitable dwelling place for all classes of people.

**Fahim Hssan**  
Dhaka