Bali attack

And the paradise burns....

our wonderful religion.

Akku Chowdhury

Banani, Dhaka

My eyes couldn't believe when I was watching the news about

the heinous attack made in Bali. What was floating in front of

me was my visit to this beautiful island about a year ago. Not

only scenic beauty but almighty Allah has also populated this

place with beautiful and kind people. I have no words to con-

demn this heinous crime and whoever has committed it in this

abode of peace and beauty. I can't accept that any one claiming

to be a Muslim would be involved in such an unspeakable

crime against humanity. Islam is a religion of peace and toler-

ance. Anyone practising and accepting the words of all gra-

cious Allah can't be a party to such acts. They are disgrace to

many innocent people were brutally murdered? Let us hope

and pray that Bangladeshis who have always, as part of our

heritage, shown 'tolerance and cohabitation' of different reli-

gion would never disrupt this harmony. Terrorism no matter

who commits it will always be condemned by the people of this

How can anyone conceive such atrocious crime where so

TO THE CONTROL EDITOR DHAKA WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16, 2002

Police in Puja Mandaps

The government decided to deploy BDR troops in the Puja Mandaps as a part of security measures. Besides, police force was guarding most of the Puja Mandaps throughout the country.

In essence, the Hindus in our country had to celebrate their Puja under heavy security. I wonder what made the government take such a decision ahead of the Durga Puja

Bangladesh is often termed as a land of 'communal harmony". Then why do we have to observe our biggest religious festival surrounded by police and BDR? What are we to answer our younger generation when they see all the heavily armed security people around our Puja Mandaps and ask us the reason behind it? T Sengupta New York, USA

Education Watch 2001 Report

We greatly appreciate your coverage on 9 October of the launch of the Education Watch 2001 report titled "Renewed Hope Daunting Challenges" and its follow-up with a lead editorial on 10 October. We note that both in your report and the editorial, you have referred to the report as a CAMPE study and have made no mention of Education

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the study based on a nation-wide sample survey was carried out by Education Watch, a body of education researchers formed in 1998 for the purpose of providing periodically an independent, research-based assessment of selected aspects of the educational situation in the country. The Campaign for Mass Education (CAMPE) serves as the secretariat of Education Watch and has been extremely helpful in providing logistic and administrative support, but is not responsible for the content or the conclusion of the annual Education Watch reports. We believe it is important to underscore the independence of Education Watch and its reports, although it has to rely on the cooperation of many organisations and individuals to carry out its mission.

Manzoor Ahmed Convener, Education Watch Gulshan, Dhaka

Yes, I do miss home

This is in reply to Somaiya Shameem's letter "Do I Really Miss Home?" (October 14) and how she got thinking cynically towards the

Rapes, murders, corruption they are all there. The bad statistics can shamefully travel the whole world and back. "Home" will always be at one with that savagely ignominious burden. Sometimes I feel like I miss the pollution and long for the ungodly traffic jams Ms. Shameem mentions, but that's not why I miss

I log on to The Daily Star page everyday, but despite any amount of bad news, I do long to go back. Recause I have my famil "home", my mother and my father are in Bangladesh, and that's why I miss home. No amount of bad statistics in the world can change

A. Hussain Lawrence University, Wisconsin

This letter is in response to Ms Shomiya Shameem's letter "Do I really miss home". In her letter she. like many other expatriates, tried to defend her position by blaming ever-growing rates of crimes and insecurity in our country. Being adrift in the brain drain, she even asked for incentives to come back home.

I agree with her on her concerns on the law and order situation of the country however cannot except her iustification for brain drain based on that. It is also true that most of the people of our country won't miss a single chance to leave their country for better opportunity; however that also doesn't justify the brain drain. I guess, Ms Shameem like me and many other expatriates received her higher education form a national university with a very nominal cost. In other words, people of our country had to bear majority of our educational expenses not to let us escape but to help them with our intellect and skill. Therefore, people like Ms. Shameem and me have no way to justify our stance whether our country has to offer us anything or not. We are already indebted to our

country. Rather than showing the audacity of justifying our stances, we should keep our eyes down and confess that we are the opportunists who don't have the courage to get down in the quagmire of reality and fight back. I know there are few people who have this courage and they are to be exalted

Zafar Hadi California, USA

"Fuel-less electricity

generator" I have been following with interest letters on "Fuel-less electricity generator". I agree with the letters both of K. Rahman, a former professor chemical engineering, BUET, and of M. M. Rahman, professor of chemistry, DU, that a fuel-less electricity generator is an impossi-

In his letter (October 12), Prof. K. Rahman dismissed the concept as it violates the first and second laws of thermodynamics. I agree with Prof. M. M. Rahman (October 14) that the concept is a violation of the first law, which says that energy cannot be

created or destroyed Lthink Prof. K. Rahman meant heat engines in his letter as he talked entirely of thermodynamics, which deals with the study of heat. The second law, in fact, states that (i) heat cannot flow from a body at a lower temperature to body at a higher temperature, and (ii) no machine can work with cent per cent efficiency. Obviously, the machine referred to is a heat engine. "Output is less than input" follows from the second part of the

Prof. M. M. Rahman has alluded to the random motion of particles of matter. Random motion is responsible for the low efficiency of heat engines. Take, for instance, a piston-- cylinder arrangement, which is compressing and expanding gas. According to the kinetic theory of gases, the gas molecules are moving at random in all directions. The piston, on the other hand, has just one direction, and therefore, it is getting the energy of those gas

The opposite direction

If the Finance Minister is seri-

ous about economic reforms,

transparency, and investment,

he should simply get rid of the

Customs Department. The

economic necessity of Ayub

Khan's Customs Act of 1969,

which is what our Customs

Department supposedly

enforces is questionable any-

way. If any of your readers

want to know how bizarre and

arcane the law is, he/she can

access it on the National

Further, the gentlemen in

Customs serve no purpose

than to simply extort money

out of hapless individuals and

businesses at airports, sea-

ports, landports, and ware-

houses. Even people returning

from abroad or family mem-

bers receiving gifts from loved

ones overseas are not exempt

from this organised racket of

men in white uniforms. Little of

the money realised goes to the

national exchequer, innocent

individuals are needlessly

harassed, and bribery fuels

multi-storey residences for the

molecules, which are moving in that

direction. This accounts for the low

input to have an output. To me fuel-

less electric generator is a misno-

This is in response to Mr.

Mushtaque's letter. And to his query

I'd like to say that Mr. Huda is trying

wants an investment in his project. If

the project fails, he then has nothing

to lose. Besides he may find a way

technical jargon, as though he is

completely at ease in the world of

advanced technology. Movies have

made it easier to trust characters

like Doc Brown from "Back to the

Had I been the Prime Minister, I

would have become the Home

Minister too. Had my son been the

Joint Secretary of the political party I

head. I would have appointed him

the State Minister for the Home

Ministry. Had I been granted the

mandate by Allah to lead and serve

Bangladesh, I would have stopped

at nothing to restore internal secu-

rity i.e. law and order, establish

accountability, and create employ-

Though I am neither a "Sheikh".

nor a "Zia", had I been given the

opportunity to carry the mantle, I

would have risen above politics of

corruption and influence peddling to

illuminate the legacies of

Bangabandhu and Shaheed Zia

In answer to Seema Chaudhury's

opinion "Some disturbing thoughts"

(October 13", I would like to say,

This is evident in our beautiful

country, its toiling and yet happy

rural masses, whose needs are very

meagre. They know how to smile

with so little, compared to the aver-

age person in the developed world.

We have a rich abundant soil, the

mildest of temperatures and plenti-

Ms Seema cannot be an ordinary

individual. When she can feel so

strongly and has demonstrated the

power of the pen, I am sure she is

capable of bringing about a change.

It is time that we all started doing so,

the lucky ones, who have had a

chance to get a decent education

and can reach out to people around

us. Each of us should start making a

difference in our own spheres of

influence and try and reach out to

the disadvantaged persons of our

society. Even I do not know how to

do this. But society as a collective

force have to start thinking on ways

to change our lives as so aptly

of fellow humans, of our women, of

Start at the roots-- teach respect

described by Ms Seema.

(may Allah bless their souls).

"Some disturbing

Sved Nazmul Ahsan

God has blessed us".

thoughts"

ful rains.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ment and prosperity.

Future" than to trust real scientists.

Nurul Islam Talukder

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Had I been the

Prime Minister

Mr. Huda makes casual use of

to attract our attention because he

An electric generator will need an

salaried civil servants.

efficiency of heat engines.

Mahfuzur Rahman

out to earn a lot.

Board of Revenue's website.

our farmers and even our leaders. Teach our young minds to have the confidence to lead our nation to prosperity, to teach that corruption is wrong, that the truth is important. Some NGOs are making a major difference in the lives of our rural people. Sometimes the input can be as little as teaching a new technique of seed germination, or correct food storage and other small incentives that can make all the difference. We have a rich cultural heritage, but science also needs to be popularised. Maybe The Daily Star can itself play the leading role and start a series of roundtables on how to bring about change in our destinies. Zeba I. Seraj, Dhaka

Assessing the alli-

If we are to talk about achievement. the coalition government's reluctant manner in running the country probably is the most noticeable among all. The nation's attention is

In the police force, much

maligned as it is, I have known

or seen the odd honest officer

who discharges his duty cog-

nisant of being the people's

We are to serve the people!

servant. Never in my life, and I

have regularly travelled

through Bangladeshi airports

since I was an infant, have I

seen or heard of a single Cus-

toms Officer who acts as a

public servant. At every trip to

Dhaka I have seen how the

entirely captured by the strong

indication of law and order deterio-

ration. Murder, kidnapping, extor-

tion, bribery and embezzlement are

dominating the socio-political

scene. But the exact statistical

record of the criminal activities are

not available. Whatever is available

A symbiotic relationship between

the government and the lord of the

criminals has been formed. But the

Majority of the population voted for

BNP, which led to the victory of the

coalition government. The previous

Awami government failed to curb

terrorism. Their supportive role to

some notorious lawmakers and

party leaders ensured BNP's land-

Since then one year has passed

The government has indeed

taken some laudable decisions like

that of banning polythene, 2-stroke

auto-rickshaws, shutting down of

But all these successes went in

vain as they failed to improve law

and order situation, which was one

of their major election pledges.

People want to live in peace and

want assurance of a natural death.

But criminals are given political

shelter ignoring their crime. The

government's voice, though always

sounds quite tough against corrup-

tion, became rather silent when their

own MPs and party men were found

involved in the wheat scam. In every

sector there are evidences of politi-

cal appointments. And even a

slide victory over Awami League.

and it is now review time.

Adamjee Jute Mill etc.

government's election manifesto

is just like the tip of an iceberg.

was quite the opposite.

president was forced to guit the office in charge of impartiality! So, can anyone tell me what is

going on? **Noushad Shahrior** Dhaka

Being frightened and fed up with the previous AL govt. I voted for BNP with high hope. But today I feel deeply repentant of my decision. I even dare to think that the previous government was better. At least the common people were not overburdened with new taxes and VAT Inflation was under control and the commodity prices were within my

The Finance Minister through his budget has only added salt to my injuries. He compared our taxation with that of India. Probably he does not even know that in India TV has no license fee, let alone VCR. In India one can buy a daily standard newspaper for Rupee 1.50. Their

public's servants treat those

who have toiled blood and

sweat away in sweltering heat

abroad. Instead of humbly

thanking those whose hard-

earned dollars have kept

Bangladesh going, the Cus-

toms Officers have behaved

little better than the extortion

In today's free market econ-

omy, the idea of a regular

Customs department is non-

sensical anyway. The only

things that need to be checked

are hazardous materials,

arms, and protected wildlife.

The regular police, which

staffs the immigration coun-

By abolishing the Customs

cadre, the Finance Minister

can do three good things at

once: jump up significantly

from the 'most corrupt country'

label, receive the heartfelt

blessings of travellers, and

reduce expenditure on sala-

budget is prepared for the mass not

for the selected few. But our FM

does not talk of economising the

cost and discarding avoidable

expenses by the various Govt.

bodies. He does not talk about

rooting out corruption nor mentions

about cutting down the jumbo size

cabinet. Bangladesh even is smaller

than some states of India but look at

the size of the cabinet. The ineffi-

cient and much talked about Home

Minister as well as the Shipping

Minister are still holding their portfo-

lios. Law and order is at its worst.

Corruption is rampant with no sign

of any check. Due to unabated and

open corruption only a few handful

the improvement in the communica-

tion sector not to forget the banning

of polythene. The government has

already forgotten their election

pledges and is busy harassing the

ng after themselves and party

Today, I am frustrated and

unhappy. I see no hope for the

future. A new third party must come

up with a competent leader. The

leader has to be educated, sincere,

and have the capacity to run the

Many thanks to Mr. Craig A Meisner

for his noteworthy letter "Encourage

Exporting gas to the neighbour-

ing India have become an alarming

issue because we do not have much

substitute as fuel for over 130 million

state in a true democratic manner.

opposition leaders. They are look-

The only plus point that I notice is

is getting richer.

interests only.

A.B.M.Zakaria

East Shewrapara, Dhaka

investment" (October 14).

Encourage invest-

ES, Missouri, USA

ters, can do so fairly well.

gangs in the streets.

area instead of the required 22% Till today wood remains to be the main supply of fuel in most of the kitchen. Moreover, there is a long queue for would-be domestic and commercial subscribers. Already, the large fertiliser and electricity generation plants are causing pressure on domestic gas supply. Therefore instead of exporting gas; traditional and non-traditional products can be exported to India under tariff-free system, which can fetch reasonable profit on our exportable products if not wholly in foreign exchange. As for investment in private port

people in Bangladesh. In our coun-

try there is only 8% approx. forest

sector, I believe the people at large first want to see further development and local use of Mongla Port. And then it may be used by the neighbouring countries like Nepal

Bhutan and India. Therefore at this take-off stage investment by local and foreign investors in vegetables, fruits and fish processing, salt, textile, cement, battery, garments and under-garments, ceramic, telecommunication, transport, pharmaceutical, agricultural tools and machinery, printing and packaging materials, housing, hospital, informationtechnology and tourism sector have better prospect. Golam Ashraf

Gulshan, Dhaka

Shaheed Minar restricted

I wholeheartedly support the government's decision of prohibiting meetings and assemblies at the central Shaheed Minar without prior permission. Shaheed Minar is a sacred monument of the nation and for every little dispute it must not be allowed to be used as a meeting place for the disgruntled.

I am amazed at the moral degradation of the so-called intellectuals and the politico cultural activists.

I congratulate the government on this decision to prohibit all such meetings and gatherings at the Shaheed Minar M Mahmood

Bangladesh

I'm scared

I am an eleven-year-old girl Recently I have been reading about children of my age getting kid-napped, being held for ransom and even being murdered. How can people be so cruel? Don't these criminals realise how anxious they have made our parents or how scared they have made us?

Greed and temptation are taking over this world like a spreading disease. The children are spending their days in insecurity and all these criminals crave about is money! If they want to earn money why not earn it by hard work?

The earth is like a large house, and us, the people living in it, are like are a big family. Then why are we turning against each other? Bushra Anwar

Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka

Where there is a will there is a way

stroke auto rickshaws, Minister Shahjahan Siraj and Minister Nazmul Huda have done something positive and noteworthy. Who says that no good work can be done in our country? We would like to see some more similar changes in

recent future. 1. All the new 4-stroke autorickshaws must install meters. 2. Build as many parking space as possible. Private investment may also be encouraged for construction of parking space instead of shop-

ping centres. 3. Clear and repair the footpaths

to encourage walking. 4. Proper guide map for Dhaka City bus should be made available and systematic route plan and fare chart for buses introduced. Journey by buses should be made easier and comfortable for the city dwell-

Ensure bus stoppages at proper points, in a systematic manner to prevent the present system of taking and dropping passengers

anywhere and on the middle of the

6. Provide facilities and ensure boarding of the passengers in an orderly manner.

7. Ban other polluting vehicles. Otherwise there is no point in banning the 2-stroke auto-rickshaws

8. Keep the number of vehicles restricted up to the available road

9. Deal sternly with the violators of traffic rule. If necessary enact a special law to improve the situation.

Last but not the least, unless rickshaw is withdrawn, at least from the main thoroughfares, traffic jam will never ease rather will increase. Mohammad Ataul Hoque Gulshan, Dhaka

Investigative journalism

We need more investigative journalism--the kind of done by Tehelka.com of India. It's shook the Indian government and its administrative pillars. This type of journalism is the need of the hour for Bangladesh because this will expose the faces behind the mask involved in corruption and criminal activities.

But who will be the Tehelka of Bangladesh? These are not the tasks of ordinary journalists but of a dedicated group who are ready to face dire consequences and would not yield to any pressure.

We, the number one corrupt nation need such journalists very badly to expose the corrupt lot and the negative elements. Engr. Mohammed Alauddin

Lawmakers turned lawbreakers!

The Home Ministry is trying to hang onto the threads of existence! The answer to curbing crime is not in an incompetent Police Force, it is the ministers, politicians, ruling party members who have given the criminals the immunity to be above the law.

If the lawmakers become the lawbreakers no crack squad will be able to fight crime. It's all very good to go ahead and form a special squad but the first thing the Home Minister has to do is bravely face the PM and her close ring of Political Advisors and tell them that he intends to use his dragnet and that they have to support him unconditionally, without any interference.

Then and then only will we see some positive results. If the police can't do it, then the Minister can resort to other means of support from para and the regular military forces. What is the use of nabbing a noted criminal who knows that his release is just a phone call away? Farhan Quddus

OLD DOHS

USA vs the rest of the world

The US policy is creating enemies throughout the world. Polls of different countries are subsequently proving the fact that peace-loving masses do not approve American policy. Even. America's prime allies Western European countries also seem to be frustrated with the US

Recently, Suader won the election in Germany and he was a major critic of US-Iraq policy. One of the members of his previous cabinet even compared Bush with Hitler. Then there is the Pakistan elec-

tion. Musharraf, the military ruler of Pakistan supported America unconditionally but the people had a different opinion in mind. The recent uprising of religious parties speaks for itself. To sum it up, the US is loosing its

credibility from Arab to Europe. Though Blair supports America, large demonstrations were seen in the street of England against America's Iraq policy. We also firmly believe that the general people of US are in favour of peace. But, the US government is obstinate in its

Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury Khasdobir, Sylhet

Khaleda's accusa-

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is

accusing that the opposition is responsible for the violence in Puja

mandop and mondirs. My trust in her credibility has been severely ruined when she said to the BBC that her party MPs were not involved in the wheat scam and the commission reports also did not find the MPs being involved. If she can tell one lie flat face how can we believe her other statements? Ahsan Habib

Michigan, USA

Your headline quoting Khaleda Zia "BNP MPs not involved in heat scam" (October 12, 2002) instantaneously reminds us of the past PM Hasina's "He (Hazari, the notorious Awami Leaguer of Feni) is phuler moto nirmol". We have had enough of "phuler motos. . . " in our nefarious world of public representatives. We do not need any more nor do we want any of them.

If Khaleda Zia honestly believes that her men were not quilty of wheat scamming, which is a denial of the two independent committee reports, her government should make public the two reports. If she does not want to do so we urge her government to set up a judicial committee to hear the case in public, and present its report to the

Recommendations given by the and acted upon enabling themselves to regain the confidence of its supporters and non-party voters Whenever, we look at and or think of our successive governments, since the first one, we feel unsafe and jittery, in spite of their many positive performances. Syed Waliullah

Knowledge is power This is in reference to the BTV

programme "Progress made by BNP Govt during one year rule" (October 12).

We enjoyed Minister Saifur Rahman's frank talk but we expected from a man of his stature little humbleness, and, respect for others. He is no doubt an able Finance Minister and an experienced chartered accountant but his continuos charging of the Awami League on any pretext wasn't in good taste. In the entire programme only Mr. Saifur Rahman and Mr. Debapriyo Bhattacharya talked with

authenticity, and, with knowledge on the subject, which amply proved they did their homework quite well before presenting their views in the national media

We, the countrymen want to know the truth, no matter how embarrassing it may be either for the government or for the opposition. If both the parties continue to blame each other in an impolite manner the "heat" will never cease. So it is the government who should be more tolerant and prove their

worth through their "deeds". Already people have become fed-up with the misrule of both BNP and the Awami League and are desperately looking for a Third Force, which unfortunately and frustratingly is not in the offing. We are yet to find a charismatic leader, who could be a Mahathir, or Lee Kuyan Yew to rightly steer the country to a respectable place among the committee of the

nations I am horrified to think what will happen to us in year 2005 and thereafter when there will be no trade barrier. We all have to be united and face the challenge of

But unless we take notice and act now, God save Bangladesh and its

people . Tayab-ul-Huq

Use of Digital **Rights Management**

considered fatal...

"Unlike some technical controversies, the facts of the DRMP [Digital Rights Management Passport] debate can be easily determined [by] non-experts. The trade press has seen through the "security" claims and a little reading will provide a great deal of information. But the definitive determination is to ask vendors to share the risks of DRMP. Will vendors of DRMP infected software and hardware warrant that DRM agents or their hardware assistants will not cause or contribute to any safety or security failures? Will they provide a warranty that DRM agents cannot interfere with your fair use rights or your rights to use your own data or rights

to use purchased digital data? Accepting liability is something else. Will your vendor indemnify you against any losses due to DRMP? If the answer to the question on indemnification is, "no", the risks to purchasers are obvious. The potential gains are not obvious."

http://www.linuxdevices.com/arti cles/AT7225637142.html

This article has excellent examples of the dangers of enforcing digital rights in hardware or software from a practitioner in the field. It seems polemic at the start, but the effect of computers and networks enforcing licenses on data and programs becomes more and more

scary. "Nothing can go wrong..." The digital rights people use the warm wooly words "trusted" and "security" when what they really mean is "We want to control what you can do. We don't trust you. Laws aren't enough. We must have our hands at your throats at all times." Their "trusted" "secure" systems become far less trustworthy, secure. efficient, or practical for the public than alternatives.

The costs of DRM are not just in making the chips or programs. The costs are not just in restricting the rights and freedoms of the public. The costs are also in making computers and devices even more unreliable, inefficient, awkward,

unusable, and dangerous. **Tom Trottier** Ottawa. Canada

Mobile phone and income tax net



The spreading wings of tax

I have read with interest the ers of mobile phones under the

news on Finance Minister's income tax net. Similar move intention to bring the subscrib- was made by the previous ask one crore of persons of well

withdraw the decision on proan average an owner of mobile phone pay Tk.1500 or more as

At least they are contributing some money to the exchequer. Mr. Rahman's move is nothing but to deter the spread of mobile phone to the grassroots level in villages. In the western world and the Far East even children own mobile phones but no question asked because more you use the phone more the government earns as VAT on calls.

I am no economist and my thinking are very simple and straight which others may not Dhaka agree. Bangladesh is a country blessed with 13 crore population or perhaps more. If on average Tk.100 is collected from each person of the population, government can get Tk.1300 crore per year. If we exempt 12 crore people from tax net because of poverty and

means of earnings and businessmen (which I think we have) to pay Tk.5000 each (with no question asked) the revenue earning can be Tk.5000 crore per year. I feel calculations on government revenue earnings should be based on our population and average contribution per person per head. I hope Mr. Saifur Rahman would carefully consider this point.

In Western world taxation is so high because of less population and high per capita earnings. We do not have to follow the dictates of the donor nations. If our government is sincere and honest and extends their hands to its nation, money will be there.

Ziauddin Ahmed

I have read with dismay the article appearing under the heading "Tax Tab on Cell Phone Users". Apparently the Finance Minister has unveiled a new plan to bring the mobile telephone users under the tax net.

I am looking at my mobile

telephone bill for August 2002, and note that an item for Value Added Tax (VAT) has been adduced in the amount of Taka 440.79. This suggests to me that I am very much in the tax In addition, I recall that when I

purchased the set, a tax was included. I believe also that those who have pre-paid connections, both at the time of purchasing their sets and also connections, and each time they buy the cards with which the connections are operated, there are taxes included.

Thus I am wondering what further taxes could be contemplated beyond those we are already paying? Such a plan will simply serve to stifle an enterprise that has grown fast to fulfil the needs of the people. Instead the government would do well to prioritise the setting up of its own network for cellular communications at more afford-

Syed Hamde Ali

government but they had to test from general public. Mobile phone users pay VAT for calls and subscription charges. On