Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of all the writers' will be protected. All letters will be subject to editing.

Letter to the Chief of Army Staff

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, would you kindly reply to the nation as to why a number of people have died in army custody and as a consequence we have now 10 deaths in 11 days? Who knows how many people have been admitted in the hospital? Who has given your troop such an authority?

Those who are responsible for applying alleged excessive force, would they be brought to justice? We want a proper investigation of each death and wrong doers punished according to the laws of land.

Army's joining the civil administration to root-out evils from the society has been appreciated by many but; that does not give your troop a blank cheque to abuse power. The latest report reveals that our army members are alleged to have kicked and punched Shahatunnesa, an 85-year-oldlady! What a strength they have demonstrated!

It would, however, be unfair not to recognise and appreciate those good efforts and achievements that your troop has made as of date to curbing crimes and criminals. but we are troubled when we see that the army continues crossing its iurisdiction Md. Sahed Ali

Murder of Swapon

Just when "Operation Clean Heart" was literally cleaning the

city of marked criminals, our faith has been shaken by the hei-

nous murder of a teacher of Government Lab School. Murder,

abduction, etc are not decreasing nowadays, but for the past

few days some sort of relief came down upon us as the army

arrested and carried out raids suspecting people irrespective of

In our society, teachers are placed after parents and God and

they give us lessons from beyond the boundaries of books.

Where parents fail, teachers often succeed in showing us the

right path. And if we lose such people in the times of crises, I see

nothing but scary days ahead. Already due to commerciali-

sation, the definition of teachers has changed and we seldom

find the image of a person we could look up to. At this untimely

hour, if we keep losing the 'idols' the future becomes darker and

I AXOPLASMIC FLOW NEURONS

ACTIVITIES

IANTATING CELL

Kumar Goswami

we have nothing left to do.

Arani Siddiqi, İBA, Dhaka University

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

I am also concerned why most of the BNP leaders caught by the army was later released. Is this an army drive evewash? The country is also under tremendous economical pressure, the government should also take into consideration that whether this army drive is doing good to the business community. Army should not be used by the government as a means to harass or wipe out its political opponents.

I strongly support the government's bold move to eradicate crimes from the society, but unless corruption is removed crime will always be there.

Qazi Rubayet Ahmed Dhaka, Bangladesh

Is army the solution?

Like many other millions of Bangladeshis I am also closely observing what's going on in the country in the name of "Operation Clean Heart". Till today they have failed to arrest none of the listed terrorists. Surprisingly, the army have also not arrested any one of Jamaat-Shibir group though there are plenty of allegations against many of their activists and leaders. Why this one-sided approach?

However, they have arrested a most sober person and newgeneration politician like Saber Chowdhury but has not even searched the house of Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury!

On the other hand, more and more people are dying (because of

have been assigned to remains above any controversy. We want to live in a society like others countries-- free from violence, terrorism and corruption.

But the question remains-- what will happen once the army is back to their barracks? Will the Government make necessary reforms in the police force and take action against the incompetent and corrupt ones? Shahriar Shams

Better than nothing

Your report " Army 'beats up' 85-yrold lady, SI's wife in city" (29 Oct.) contradicts with the report on the same incident published in the Bengali daily. Which report should we believe to be true?

Political parties, including BNP, AL, Jamaat, JP and even the tiny leftist parties are liable for the miserable law and order situation in this country. Long ago Bangladesh has turned into a 'Moger Mulluk' in its true term. We are all looking for a way out from this unbearable situation. And asking the administration to take tough measures to rescue us from the hands of the criminals. When the administration has taken a rather tough measure, some of us started asking question about it and raising hue and cry regarding its toughness

We want democracy and law and order at the same time. But as a nation if we are not destined to have both at a time then we will prefer law and order to democracy, because without law and order democracy is anarchism. This anarchism we have been experiencing in Bangladesh since long. The human rights of millions of citizens of this country are being downtrodden by a handful of criminal.

We are sure that the godfathers and 'godgrandfathers/mothers' will remain untouched during the present drive against the criminals. But if the present drive can curb the middle order and petty criminals we will think ourselves lucky enough Farugue Hasan

"Operation Clean Heart "

I see now that the army has stopped blaming heart attacks and are now citing brain haemorrhage as a cause of deaths in custody.

I don't think we would be amiss in asking the army to clarify exactly what orders have been given to the soldiers on patrol. The military is a bureaucratic organisation, nothing happens without a written order. Well what guidelines have been set for interrogation of suspects? I mean by now we know that suspected criminals and policemen can be murdered and 85-year-old women can be beaten, is there

Joyonto

Gas export

I read with considerable annovance the Asian Development Bank's insistence that Bangladesh export gas. Don't they realise that this is a democratic country? A big decision like gas export should not be taken unless public debate has both ascertained its benefits and convinced the person on the street that this is the right course of action for the country The ADB has no right to dictate

Zeeshan Hasan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Thoughts on army deployment

letters and, finally, a to-the-point commentary from the Editor himself, I felt like expressing my thoughts through some pertinent points/questions:

the legal basis of deployment, then they should make out a list for the common citizenry about what to expect from the army and what not to expect from them and also what we, as citizens, should or should not do when faced with such an army

2) The BNP had to search for examples (elections, etc.) to justify deployment and the next government can do it with the twinkling of eye just by saying that the BNP had

ment/administration of four-party alliance who are mainly using the army in the name of "joint forces"? 4) There must be some sort of reason or cause for suspicion (e.g. an intelligence tip-off) for checking by the army. They simply should not go about checking all and sundry for

5) Can the army really do whatever they like, as some are people are saying so?

the difference between a crimina and an innocent man?

8) The army has complaint-boxes

ance-letters against army excesses?

9) And finally a line from the leadnews of The Daily Star of 29 October reads "Masum succumbed to his injuries at the DMCH on Sunday after he fell sick following army interrogation"- since injuries are not caused by "sickness", shouldn't we rather read it as "torture" in place of "interrogation"?

A Distressed Observer Chittagong

DCC tenders

This is so rich. While the army drive goes on BNP backed musclemen grab papers for 91 crores of DCC work. I'd have thought that staking out the various ward commission ers' offices and homes and Naga Bhaban would be more than sufficient to nab most of the criminals in the country. Rather than going after the small fry, the army should concentrate on the whales

Personally I have no problem if a couple of AL MPs are hauled off to prison, although these two in question are the better of the lot. But it amazes me that the army has not seen fit to arrest a single BNP MP for aiding and abetting terrorists. Leaving aside the cabinet ministers, are we really to believe that none of the State Ministers have criminal links?

I would really like to know if any of those involved in the various misdeeds in the last year have been caught. What of the JCD cadres who attacked the women's hall in DU? Any of those caught in Operation Clean Heart? What of the gangsters in the employ of Jamuna Group who were trying to fill up the wet lands in Ashulia? Or the gang leaders mentioned in the Daily Star report on extortion in Shewrapara?

The army would be much more appreciated if they actually did something concrete rather than beating up old women and prison-

"Miss Photogenic"

I refer to the letter by Ms. Nazia Nayla (October 29). What we choose to watch or not watch is a matter of personal preference and if I have insinuated otherwise, it was misconstrued.

I have no problems if one wishes to flaunt good looks or any other "talents" one may possess. I do, however, have problems when the media- from Cartoon Network to BTV- incessantly bombards you with images where anything less than a 36-24-36 body and fair skin is considered a lesser form of beauty Naming products like "fair and lovely" do not help the situation very much either! You and I may be conscious enough not to be influenced by these images, but what about the young and impressionable minds of children and teenagers? Every time Hot Wheels comes up with a new tov on Cartoon Net work, my 6-year-old son wants it. Whether I give it to him or not is another issue, but that illustrates how powerful the mass media is. Now of course I can take away the TV, stop subscribing to newspapers/magazines, and retire as a hermit. But unfortunately I do not have enough resource at my disposal to take such a bold step.

I ask you, Ms. Nayla, when was the last time you saw a dark-skinned model in a Bangladeshi advertisement? You can again argue, "No one is compelling you (or your sixyear-old) to watch these images? to which my response is "How can I (or my six-year-old) escape them?" Please advise.

A. Farjad Ahmed Rajshahi House. Dhaka

Triggering a new cycle of violent ter-

ror? The hostage drama in Moscow has

ended. Yet has it? Russian troops stormed the Moscow theatre to relieve and rescue the hostages-- men, women and children. Regrettably, the troops managed to kill over 100 innocent hostages, hundreds more are precariously ill of which many might eventually die. The troops used a poisonous gas that killed all these people including about 50 of those who took the hostages. This is an indiscriminate act with consequences that no State can be proud of. The Russians put a cloak of secrecy on the episode; persistently refused to say what kind of gas they used. The doctors treating the sick would not know what is it they were up against. It is now being reported that it was a nerve gas that surely must belong to the prohibited list of weapons even in war. Though much less publicised,

America's war on Afghanistan was tarnished with serious violation of

When Sates unleash terrible retribution with or without legal cover and boast their determination not to seek any alternative means to fight terrorist groups, the States are entrapped in a situation fraught with cyclical violence of unimaginable kind- the very process they profess to prevent or minimise. If there is any need to repeat, the "war on terror" will not be won by counter terrorist acts that are even more atrocious and vicious than those chosen by terrorists. Hussain

Mushrooming mar-

evening of last Friday the 25th October). While I was about to park my car in the basement. I found a number of people there in the basement including the market staff and security guards. When I asked the reason, I was told that the door-mirrors of the car of one customer parked there have been stolen. The moment I heard it, I turned my car back and went to another market for shopping

May I draw the attention of the appropriate authorities including RAJUK to please visit these markets and enforce the owners to have (1) generators, (2) fire fighting equipment and (3) toilet facilities before the markets are formally

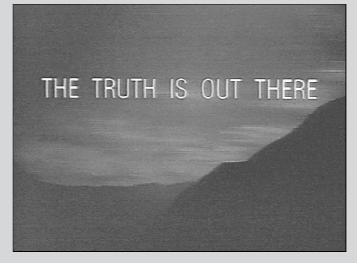
because as soon as they define terrorism, their own definition appears to prove themselves as

terrorists! d) Iraq is an independent country and both US and UK have been bombing Irag for the last ten years. According to Mr Bush, attacking an independent country is an act of war. And according to Mr Bush again, it seems that attacking an independent country is OK. Confused? Well, you are not alone.

e) Anyone flouting UN resolution is to be bombed. And anyone flouting UN resolution is to be rewarded with F16, Missiles and Apache Helicopters! Confused again?

f) From this war, we have learnt that

"Will our elected government tell us what is happening?"



This is in reference to Mr. Akku Chowdhury's response to Mr. Mahfuz Anam's timely commentary (October 31).

It comes to me as a sad and ironic revelation that the keeper of the Muktijuddho Jadughar would declare that without a "surgery" by the army, "we shall never be able to overcome the socialmorale degradation that seems to have taken control over all of

According to him, "Our army boys are taking great risk to rid of the cancerous growth that has inflicted our nation." I wonder how Mr. Chowdhury feels so certain that intervention by these "army boys"-- will uplift our social-morale situation.

Mr. Chowdhury, the cancer that you have diagnosed is manifest most as an appendage to our head rather than to our posterior. If you really want the army to strike a dent to the cancerous lesions, you should press the government to first apprehend and blindfold those top-level godfathers who form part of that very government (how many, if any, so far have been?), before the risk-taking army boys carry on with their drive.

Unleashing the army boys to haul and maul some low level criminals and ruling party "activists" for some time to create a smoke screen for the persecution of political opponents will not do much to cure the disease, for such "activists" can be bought and sold anytime at very cheap price. To the contrary, it has the very serious potential of causing another much more painful, chronic and extremely-difficult-to-cure ailment.

The reasoning that you offer in favor of the army call-up is a hackneyed but very dangerous one: "We had reached a point of no return and to bring back the 'rule of law' I believe there could be no alternative but ask the army to come in aid of the civil Shafiq Ahmad

Canada

kets I am a resident of Dhanmondi Area.

Recently I along with the members of my family went to visit A.R.A. Center, a newly constructed shopping mall at Dhanmondi Road No.7. which has just been inaugurated. It was at about 7:00 p.m. when suddenly the power supply failed and the whole market plunged into total darkness. My wife and children got panicked. I thought that the PDB line might have failed, but soon I came to know that there was a fault in the internal wiring of the building, which has caused the power failure. I gathered that this fault was extremely fatal and exposed the market to catching fire. The shopkeepers started lighting candles and we were asked to leave the market since the power will not be restored before next day. I was surprised and utterly disappointed to see that such a modern market has no stand-by generator. I also found that the market lacks any fire-fighting facility. There was not even a single fire extinguisher -- not to speak of any modern fire fighting equipment.

A few days later I once again went to the same market (it was in the as it wishes. Using his own analogy, since crime is a cancer on society, better we kill ourselves rather than live with it. He has monumentally failed to see the point of Mahfuz Anam's much belated commentary. As I see it, no one including the editor, is asking for the army to be sent back to the barracks. No one

Akku Chowdhury is basically saying that since things have got-

ten so bad, we can throw away our civil rights and let the army do

is claiming that we didn't need this operation. All we are asking is that the government clarifies the rules of engagement. In any military operation the rules of engagement are set out to guide the officers in carrying out their duties. At first sight it would seem that the soldiers have been given a free reign to grab anyone they please and beat them as they wish, be it extortionists, sex worker clients or whoever displeases them. As

The army is the servant of our nation and more specifically of us. Their job, in return for their privileges, is to lay down their lives to protect us and the nation.

I am not a slave I have some issues with that.

Unlike Akku I personally don't believe that the end justifies the means. That simply denigrates us to savagery. But even if I were to accept that flawed premise, we would still have a right to know at least what the means deployed are?

This is in regards to the letter by Khushi Kabir in regards to Mahfuz Anam's commentary. I find myself in the strange position of agreeing with her.

She is entirely correct in saying that by imagining the army to be the answer to all our prayers we are ignoring the lessons of most of our history as an independent country. The army has never been and never will be a solution. It is a part of the problem.

She also makes an excellent point that I had completely overlooked. The fact that none of the party criminals arrested have been from the Islamic groups. Why is that?

Almost none of the major criminals have been caught. Here in Shewrapara, all of the main terrorists have simply gone on vaca-

This army drive will only bring a temporary lull in crime; it is not a permanent solution. What it has shown us is that not only is the army no better versed in civil rights than the police, but that to them civilian institutions hold no worth. If junior army officers find no qualms about beating policemen to death and rampaging through MP's houses, what do you think these officers will do if ordered to do something against their wishes by the same MPs? The army has driven home the point that they are a para-state. They will not work under the orders or norms of civilians. Thanks for that lesson.

Satyajit

to take voluntary initiative in this regard considering the safety of the customers as well as the shop owners. The security of the markets also needs to be tightened. A citizen

opened. It is also the primary

responsibility of the market owners

Terrorismly speaking!

The great War on Terrorism has been fought world-over by some very noble people. It was even supported by the humble government of Bangladesh! Although some readers may suggest that, in the case of Bangladesh, it would be more appropriate to call it "War on Opposition"! After fighting this great war for more than a year, we have learnt a lot of things, such as: a) We now know, that we don't know where Bin Laden or Mullah Omar is.

b) We know that throwing a stone is terrorism, but firing a missile on civilians is NOT. c) We know that a lot of clever politi-

cians talk about fighting terrorism. But, not a single one would come in front of the camera and clearly "define" what terrorism is. That's

chill Nelson Mandela Yassar Arafat, Martin Luther King are some of the biggest names in terrorism. because these people fought for freedom, independence and justice! The poor Mr Mandela even went to prison for his people. g) Bush and Blair keep whining that:

Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Chur-

we "think" Saddam has weapons of mass destruction and he would "probably" give them to terrorists and those terrorists "might" use them against us. And so we "have to" bomb Iraq! How can anybody come up with this crap? h) According to those in Washing-

ton, bombing will not start during December because it will be the time for Ramadan. How very touchi) What started as a great war on

terrorism, has now been cleverly muddled up with 'war on Irag'. Which will eventually turn out to be the great war on Islam. Some might argue, it has already began! Fortunately for the Zionists, the Muslims are still sleeping in their big Royal

Unfortunately for the Muslims, by the time they wake up, it may well be Azad Miah

"Unilateral US strike will be disastrous'

This is in response to Mashiul Haq's letter (October 28, 2002).

In actuality, George Bush Sr. did not have the popular support-- he had UN support, which is different-for attacking Iraq that George Bush Jr does. George Bush Sr's argument for war was dubious at best: it was about oil, not liberating an autocratic state like Kuwait. George Bush Jr is using 9/11 to justify attacking a rogue state known for not only pursuing weapons of mass destruction, but harbouring terror-

On the point of the UN, though George Bush Sr. had UN support he was willing to go alone if necessary, as is George Bush Jr going through the UN is a courtesy, nothing more. A. S. Byatt, New York, USA

Worst commentary?

Staying in the States what do you, Mr. Jasim know about the current army drive? So far more than ten people had died during army interrogation maybe they were criminals or innocents but they were human beings. The victims could had been anyone, maybe one of your relatives. What would had been your emotions then? Anyway, the game is not yet over.

Mr. Anam had done the right thing by asking questions to the PM. We need to know the answers, if not Mr. Jasim because he is staying abroad. People staying abroad can say many things. It matters to people of my age who are afraid of going out to different places with friends despite being innocent.

Fuad Dhanmondi, Dhaka

This is in response to Mr Jasim's letter (October 30) about the Editor's commentary. Mr Jasim thinks that the October 29 commentary is one of the worst commentaries written by the Editor. He is entitled to his opinion although I think it is one of the best commentaries and reflects the opinion of the ordinary citizens. What bothers me is that Mr Jasim thinks the government should not answer any such questions as the ones raised in the commentary. The government is supposed to represent the people and so the people have a right to know what the government is doing and why. Everyone has a right to ask questions and the government must have accountability.

Also, I don't understand what Mr. Jasim means when he says the editor is "jealous at the improvement of law and order situa-

tion". How can anyone be 'jealous' of something like that? He says it is a simple question but I think it is a very strange question. Since he is in USA, he doesn't know exactly what is going on here. But he has assumed that there has already been some improvement in the law and order situation, which is very far from

In fact, the law and order situation has deteriorated. The muggers and murderers are still very active and in addition, people are living in constant fear of being harassed by the army. People are dying in army custody of "heart attack" and this is a serious abuse of power on the part of the army as well as the government. Violating human rights and oppressing opposition leaders is not the way to improve law and order situation. Sonya Hossain

Respect thy teacher Amnesty's concern This is in reference to Amnesty

International's concern about "Operation Clean Heart". I don't understand why such a named organisation takes so much interest in a country like Bangladesh where a very small quarter of the world's entire population resides. I doubt their knowledge about the law and order situation of Bangladesh and thereby believe that they do not receive ample right to comment anything about it be it good or bad.

I understand and honour that human rights should be respected. but the question of human rights only comes when HUMANs are in reference... do we consider these criminals (the ones recently arrested by the army) human? I do

Hundreds of people all around the world are being arrested in the name of Al Qaida and the so-called war against terrorism. I did not see Amnesty International react so sharply to any of those arrests. Mashukur Rahman

"Worried about armv!"

I have been extremely cautious in judging the army activities in the country. It is true that a lot of criminals are being captured easing the law and order situation of the country. But 12 people have so far died and a lot of innocent people have been harassed. In the past other nations have deployed army to bring back law and order and have always failed since the root of the trouble was not dealt with

Army drive may bring only temporary relief to law and order, but unless the root of the problem is not solved criminals will spring out when the "Operation Clean Heart" ends.

heart attack!) everyday under army custody. Outrageous and scary, must sav.

There is a democratically elected government in the country and it is their responsibility to maintain law and order. If those in power stop harbouring terrorists, promoting and encouraging corruption, the situation would improve overnight.

It is indeed time for us to do a soul searching. We must not allow anybody to violate human rights. Army must not be used to persecute the opposition and harass the innocent

Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani,

Welcome army

The majority of the people except those who has political affiliations have welcomed the deployment of army under the present situation. The army has been cracking down on criminals without any influence and the drive has come as a great relief for the common people.

However, voice has been raised regarding mistreatment and death in army custody. How can any one raise his/her voice against the army crackdown, where was the press and human rights organisation when those criminals brutally killed so many innocents and peace loving people spreading terror in the society? We hope the army will continue its drive until the root of terrorism is uprooted. They should move ahead with the drive, as general people do not have even little bit of sympathy for those who

are criminals and terrorists. However, we hope that army will treat a person based on evidence not by allegations. We would also appreciate if proper inquiry is made regarding those deaths in custody. It is also the responsibility of the army to make sure that the tasks they

policy on this matter.

Now that I have seen a barrage of

1) If the government won't explain

team. 3) So, what do we call the govern-

the sake of checking only!

6) Absolutely whatsoever the case may be (even for a "listed" criminal). can the army beat up anybody? The deaths being caused as such- is the army trying to act as judges also? 7) The army chief is quoted as saying "everyone has to see to it that innocent people are not harassed"is the army really capable of telling

against "criminals"- and where do we get the box to drop our griev-

human rights and scores of deaths of prisoners in custody. The Russian score card after the hostage drama looks equally if not even more grim indeed. Question is could there have been another way to end the

hostage crisis, a way that was more

humane, discreet, and peacefully

patient negotiation? That question

is now academic but it remains moot

to all future deliberations on world-

wide outbreaks of violent means of

seeking redress to real or perceived

grievance. The thought is disturb-

that the use of nerve gas of high and

lethal toxicity opens a new chapter

in the fight against terrorist outfits: at

the same time it gives the terrorists

an excuse and a licence so to say to

use similar lethal substances to kill

or maim their victims when pro-

voked in future times. If States with

democratic pretensions use prohib-

ited agents that kill terrorists and

victims without discrimination, claim

legitimacy, and take extreme

actions, it provides extreme provo-

cation and a cover (if one is needed)

to the those who resort to terror to

draw attention to their cause or seek

redress of extreme grievances.

Even more disturbing is the fact