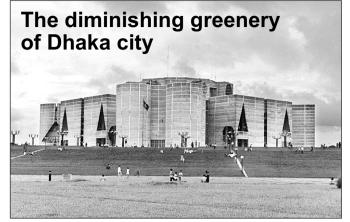
Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

TO THE EDITOR.



No breathing space?

The Paribesh Andalon, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star must be congratulated for their recent efforts to save the parliament complex from ruin. Although the work on Speaker's and Deputy Speaker's house has been postponed (and not abandoned?), this is hardly an occasion to celebrate. Work on a pump house is still in progress just opposite the site in question. Alarming still is the fact that many structures within the complex, not excluding the parliament building itself, has been undergoing changes and alteration in the name of "maintenance" and "beautification". Vague as these terms may be, the reality is much clear. At this slow but steady pace of additional alteration works, it may not be long before the complex is no longer in its original state either within or without.

An appropriate measure and a means of protection would be to declare the entire complex - covering the area between Manik Mia Avenue and Crescent Lake - as a National Heritage Site. Given the importance of this complex internationally, the undersigned was among those who recently met the UNESCO representative in Dhaka and having informed him of the recent developments, also discussed the possibility of declaring this as a World Heritage Site. The Director was quick to point out that such a proposition is entirely possible Brasilia is an example but the proposal must first come from the Government, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to be exact.

Therefore through this daily, which have always supported such causes, a demand is made that the complex be declared first a National Heritage Site and then a World Heritage Site. Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury, Architect, Dhaka

After the gradual encroachment and destruction of the open spaces of Ramna Park and the Osmani Uddayan, now we observe the beginning of encroachment into the open spaces of the architectural master piece of Parliament Building Complex in the name of constructing the buildings of NAM residential apartments on the south side of Manik Mia Avenue and the proposed construction of the Honourable Speaker's and Deputy Speaker' residence on the north west side of parliament building. But we are relieved to know that the government has postponed the construction of the official these residences.

The Parliament Building Complex, designed by the world famous architect Louis I. Khan, is listed and considered as one of the 100 architectural masterpieces of 20th century. In fact, probably this is the only building through which, Bangladesh is being recognised in the architectural map of the world.

Recently, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon and other professional groups have rightly expressed their concerns about the negative impact on the environment of the area, if new and unplanned buildings are constructed within the master plan area of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. When the government is taking stern measures like banning the use and production of the polythene, banning twostoke engines to improve the environmental condition of the city, it should also preserve the open spaces of the city for the enjoyment and benefit of the citizens. If someone takes an evening stroll though the beautiful landscaped greenery of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, he is bound to feel the difference between the environment of the unplanned areas of Dhaka city and the planned open spaces of the Capital Complex. If the residences of the Honourable Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament are allowed to be constructed, this would encourage more such

"Deaths with many questions"

The report in The Daily Star today reads like a charge sheet of the Khmer Rouge or the secret police of Apartheid South Africa. It does not read like the actions of a so-called professional army that has excelled in UN peace-keeping duties and regularly sends its officers to the US for advanced training.

Some of the dead are certainly criminals and probably deserved to die as well. But army officers do not have the right to make that decision. The deaths due to torture reveal a disturbing lack of regard for the laws of our country or for that matter of any civilised society. How can we trust an institution that has no regard for the norms that it is supposed to defend? Emile, Dhaka

Bring back caretaker government

Recently after the spate of 'deaths' in army custody, The Daily Star seems to have been denuded with letters on the issue. Broadly they appear from two camps, on one extreme is the Akku Chowdhury 'ends justify the means' sort and on the other, the Khushi Kabir human and civil rights angle.

While we are all bemoaning the lack of political leadership and the ineptness of the police that has made it necessary to call out the army, we shouldn't forget one significant fact. During the 90 days of the caretaker government, this same corrupt and demoralised civilian administration managed to maintain the law and order of the country, beyond all expectations and not at the cost of civil rights.

That is an important lesson for us to remember. Our choice is not only between the alleged "brutality" of the soldiers and the criminal incompetence of AL/BNP. We have seen through the caretaker government that our poor, ill equipped police and underpaid civil servants can do a better job that either these two extreme choices and not at the cost of sacrificing democracy.

For the next anti-crime drive I'd recommend not that we call on the army but rather bring back the caretaker team for another stint. Gora, Dhaka

Khushi Kabir on army

This is a rebuttal of Khushi Kabir's letter dated October 30. She has raised some real concerns. But I disagree with some of her comments:

1. She said she is uneasy that a large majority of people accepted the role of the army and that she is concerned that this acceptance indicates our acknowledgement that all other institutions and machinery have failed to control the law and order deterioration. I hate to tell her, but what she fears is true. The majority of people have indeed lost their faith in police and the corrupt politicians. Go and ask people in the street level whether they believe that police has any knowledge of the whereabouts of top criminals and you will get an answer in the affirmative With regards to the role of the army and its previous history, we should learn from it, not shy away. Army is not for merely remaining in barracks and going to peace keeping missions. We need to use the army for the good of the country in a positive manner. 2. She said that some major crimi-

nals have somehow got wind of "Operation Clean Heart" and are nowhere to be found and that this does not speak very highly of the army's intelligence unit. If she would look closely and have talked with street level people, she would find that almost everybody believes that the police knows about the whereabouts of these absconding criminals. If the criminals are tipped off right before the raids, who do we blame - the army's intelligence or the reluctant and often corrupt section of the police?

3. She said that working in remote areas, she found some better known terrorists continuing to work unhindered. Like I said earlier, corruption has entered the very core of our psyche. What won't we do for the sake of money? We cannot expect the country to be rid of criminals almost overnight. We ought to let the army do the job that they have been assigned.

4.She said that while arrests are being made and activists of both BNP and AL are not being spared, terrorists belonging to Jamaat, Chatra Shibir or the Islami Oikyo have been spared. I don't think that BNP and AL would stand by and allow their armed cadres to be arrested while the armed members of these parties roam about freely in the society. They will have their turn.

Having said all these, I am very much concerned the manner in which the army has conducted interrogations and about the deaths caused in the army custody. Here, I strongly agree with Khushi Kabir. Terming these deaths as deaths caused by "heart attacks" is a feeble attempt to hide gross violation of human rights. I would request the PM and the other concerned officials to form a speedy judicial inquiry committee, headed by the President, to look into these deaths. We need the government and the army to work together in this matter. We need this to prove to the sceptics, the people of Bangladesh and to the international community that no one not even the army is beyond the grasps of the judiciary system. M Rubaiyat Kibria, Sydney, Austra-

Democracy: **Bangladesh style**

Like many of The Daily Star readers, I am extremely proud of our functioning democracy and our status as a moderate nation, founded upon very strong democratic principles. We have developed our own distinctive style with the caretaker government system to ensure free and fair elections.

We still have a long way to go though, as our major political parties do not always abide by democratic principles while in power and also in the opposition. Every party promises autonomy of the judiciary, staterun media and Anti-Corruption Bureau (which are required fundamentals to root out crime, corruption, and the inequalities of the

remember the army itself is not above law and ultimately it is the PM who has to take the responsibility of these mysterious deaths in army custody. Shafqat, USA

Why always blame the army?

I am not supporting any unlawful actions of the army but I must say as a reader of The Daily Star I've found that some people are always accusing the army on every issue. Mr. Joyonto you accused the

army when they were in the cantonments. Now you are accusing them when they are on the streets trying Malick M Reza

custody and demand appropriate investigation to be conducted, I failed to justify Mr. Chowdhury's branding the whole nation (except him, of course) "SPINELESS" just because people feel positive about the army.

Crime and criminals in our country have reached such a state that we no more afford to sit idle to watch things deteriorate further.

Rather we should welcome such actions and try to remain vigilant of the abuses that are inherent in these kinds of operations. Also I didn't see any point for Mr. Chowdhury to feel empathy to drug addicts and parasites living on prostitutes.

Israel.

It has been revealed that Tony Blair tried to sell British warplanes to India, during a meeting with Indian PM. Here we have Pakistan and India almost starting a nuclear war, and in the middle we have some leaders from certain civilised countries attending a meeting in the name of peace and what do they come up with? It seems that their professional opinion suggest, in order for India and Pakistan to have peace, they need more weapons

ctors were used to spy for US and crackdown in the name of "Operation Clean Heart", many people may notice some improvement in law and order situation. But is this real improvement? I don't think so. It's just going to be a short lived one.

DHAKA MONDAY NOVEMBER 4, 2002

In my view army can't clean up our hearts. Unless and until people in power don't stop harbouring criminal elements, sheltering terrorists, become respectful to others' opinion we can't expect a terrorism and corruption free society. Unfortunately, all the govern-

ments of Bangladesh since liberafrom the West! tion miserably failed to serve the It is shocking to see how sick and people. The present government is greedy some people can be, espeno exception to that.

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

I can not believe that you could have written such a commentary! I do not know whom you are trying to protect but if you are trying to raise the concern of general people, take it for your information, they have breathed a sigh of relief though short lived till the army goes back to their barracks. You as well as all the concerned citizens are very well aware of the nature of democracy in countries like ours where votes can be traded and choices are limited. Don't Rumi, USA always blame the politicians but we also need to have a hard look

at ourselves. There is no country, which is immune from social vices but the difference between others and us is here criminals go scot-free while there they get prosecuted. One also needs to appreciate the fact that whether it is a blue collar crime or white collar, a crime is a crime but in our country people who commit white collar crimes remain beyond the reach of the law and it is the petty crimes which often get trivialised by the media and stir up the living condition of

average people. We know hundreds of people go to jail everyday but tell us how many have gone to jail for white-collar crimes - NONE. I was absolutely amused by Khushi Kabir's long letter trying to lecture the readers on democracy and social values.

The army should not be expected to rid a society of all evils where almost everyone is corrupt either in conduct or in attitude. A few people mostly having involvement in crimes might have died, so what? What happens when innocent people and children die in the hands of criminals? The police in this country will never do its job whether for their inherent association with crimes or for influence. So, what is the answer? What the army has done is it has given a temporary relief to us and perhaps they should continue until you have an answer. Khandaker R Zaman, Dhaka

This is in reference to Mr Akku Chowdhury's letter on Mr Mahfuz Anam's commentary.

The issue of lesser of the two evils comes up again. People who live in Bangladesh, who invest with all of their life for a concern called Bangladesh, who send their daughters to school every morning, every evening who has to wait for their son/ husband to return home -- has only two evils to choose between.

They are hostages anyway, either to the politically empowered thugs gone berserk, or to a military operation aimed at uprooting these widespread rogue elements of the society.

Akku Chowdhury, like any other Bangladeshi, living in Bangladesh, has the right to choose the lesser of the two evils. It is the basic human instinct.

At times "survival" becomes an uphill challenge. The middleclass Bengalis in Bangladesh, like Akku Chowdhurys are in the uphill struggle of survival against the social terror.

to improve the law and order situa- Dhaka Then there o

For many, it may be more tolerable to see a terrorist suspect dying in the army camp, than watching a high school teacher being killed by two of his 8th grader students with the help of a hired assassin.

I also feel like Akku Chowdhiry. Let this army destroy my captors, destroy them ruthlessly, destroy them cruelly. I am locked in lifedeath struggle of survival. I don't have the option of judging a politically correct counter attack now.

* * *

Unlike Ms Anjali Akbar and Mr Islam, I was shocked by the commentary of Mahfuz Anam. I could not recapitulate any other reason to accept this from a journalist like him than his past linkage with the Awami League.

He seemed more in search for the authority and documents that allowed the army to participate in the ongoing crackdown on criminals rather than evaluating its success. Interestingly he never

searched for such documents while army was called in on eight other occasions since liberation apart from elections and traffic duties

'Fundamental Rights' is a term now best suits in the speeches of our so-called intellectuals. Where was our fundamental right when an infant got killed in the lap of her parent by a stray bullet? Didn't Sony paid too high a price enjoying her rights to attend classes at BUET?

Deaths in custody are not something new in Bangladesh. I still remember the terrifying story of a prisoner at Ramna Thana some 2/3 years back, who hanged himself with the fan by his own 'shoe-lace'!

Can we expect the list to be impartial in a country where elections are required to be conducted by a neutral caretaker government? The current drive so far seemed to be better than the usual partisan ones and for this reason we do notice arrest of many

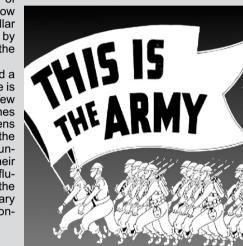
terrorists backed by the ruling party as well.

Talking about image of Bangladesh, "Do we still have one?" A country so far known for flood and corruption is now facing another challenge from within itself pointing unfounded links to "Al-Qaida". Naturally images of a country are tarnished when people dies in custody but does killing people in a shooting spree endorse anything different?

By far and in general, the current drive has brought in 'some relief to breathe and is not like the usual eyewash. Even the monthly death figures reduced considerably in October. So please let us not talk about legitimacy, fundamental rights or point fingers only at the dark sides of "Operation Clean Heart". **Asif Akram**

Canada

cially those people who come in If PM Khaleda Zia is really serious to go after rea dia with stickers on criminals she MUST clean up her their foreheads, self-certifying own house first. There are many themselves as "civilised" and such people in her jumbo cabinet. "peace-loving"! After cleaning her own house the Now for those people who still like PM can take action on the criminals to convince themselves that, Bush of other parties (and she should). and Blair want to waste billions of But the sad part is every governtheir taxpayer's money to bring ment in this country only point their peace for some "Iraqi" people, all I fingers at their political opponents can say is; go and see your doctor whenever they fail to serve the immediatelv people properly. Azad Miah Kamal Hassan Oldham, UK Kulshi, Chittagong Can army root



unplanned construction in the area, like the gradual destruction of the Ramna Park

We are also hearing that the interior spaces of the Parliament Buildings is being proposed to be renovated and escalators are to be installed like the commercial shopping malls. I don't know when there are dozens of elevators inside the Parliament building and when it is not as busy as the shopping malls then why escalators are needed. As a conscious member of the architectural profession of the country, I would, therefore, urge the honourable Speaker and the Parliamentarians of the country to reconsider the proposed constructions within the master plan of the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and to uphold the dignity of the Parliament Building and its surrounding landscaped spaces for the sake of our future generation to enjoy the last few remaining open spaces of our city. Architect Jalal Ahmad, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

society) ... but nothing happens. However, our strong election system has ensured peoples' choice and I'm sure that a free and fair democratic system will ultimately prevail in our impoverished country. So let's not let it all go in vain. I congratulate the PM for taking a strong stand and trying to improve the country's most ailing sector - law and order! At the same time, we are setting a dangerous precedent by allowing the gross human rights violations by the army go unpunished. However happy the people are about the anti-crime drive, please

demanding the Chief of Staff to answer their query! But did you people ever write a single line against Bangladesh Police Department for their incompetence and questionable role? Don't the police ever beat up innocent people? Why no hue and cry on human rights violation then? SSSumit, England

Welcome army

This is in reference to Mr. Ornob Chowdhury's letter (October 30). While as a concerned citizen I condemn these "deaths" in army

Laser-guided, turbo-jet peace On 29th Oct, The Guardian (UK)

reported that Bush and his warmonger teams are spending a lot of money in developing even more devastating biological and chemical weapons (with the help of British scientists). At the same time we have Bush -and of course- Blair dying to bomb Iraq for allegedly having weapons of massdestruction -despite warnings from former inspector S. Ritter that all of Iraq's weapons were destroyed and instead, the weapons inspe-

out terrorism? After almost two weeks of army

"AL and terrorism in Bangladesh"

In your editorial (November 2) you tried to blast Sk. Hasina for her speeches abroad. You are an eminent editor of our country and if you analyse situations little more deeply, your views and vision might be questioned. In this era of communication technology, global politics, policies and strategies, people do not depend on any Sheikh Hasina to be aware of the facts and situations in any part of the world.

Let me give you an example. The 'International politics and policies' department of our university arranges monthly seminars on issues of nations around the globe. Yesterday the topic was 'Politics and governments among South Asian nations'. While discussing on Bangladesh, one of the nationally reputed scholarly professors was discussing about the recent army operations, deaths in custody and human rights violations. We (the few Bangladesh faculties) were feeling embarrassed among a multi-national audience. One of us questioned the authenticity of the speaker's presentation and said the speaker was disgracing our nation.

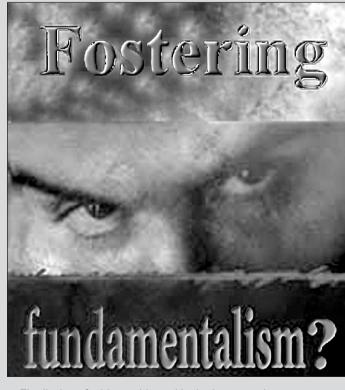
Immediately, the research scholar on foreign politics opened up his file and referred to a printout which was your recent commentary on Bangladesh politics where you questioned the legality of army operations and the deaths in custody. Now, do you think, we should blast you for writing that in your newspaper that is available in the Internet? In fact, the same thing you did to Hasina in your editorial!

Do you think the donors, foreign media, and international intelligence authorities all depend on what Sheikh Hasina says abroad? Quoting from your referred commentary, can I ask that "are you insulting' the intelligence of foreign media and other intelligent agencies?"

Mr. editor, you are a privileged citizen of our nation. How do you feel when MPs and citizens are taken away blindfolded tied with ropes? We face questions from foreigners on `blind folding and ropes' before even there is any charge sheet!

What BNP is doing now is beyond any tolerance. Not only repression, but they have also politicised the bureaucracy and lower level judiciary. Where will the people go? I think, not only Sk. Hasina, all opposition parties, even journalists should send representatives abroad to tell what is going on in our country. Only that would make the ruling party feel embarrassed and stop this mockery under the signboard of democracy.

Do you think a non renowned journalist like Tipu would have received an award if things were left confined within our nation for the sake of the so-called "prestige of the nation"? We need our govt. to feel embarrassed of what they are doing.



Finally, its a fashion to blame Hasina's tongue but no one says anything when Khaleda lies in open meeting contradicting apologies made by her own lawmakers. If you think the whole world only listens to Sheikh Hasina, the credit goes to her and you should stop behaving funny because you are insulting the intelligentsia of others. Please do not take anything personally, because the nation's future depends a lot on what 'star' journalists like you say or portrait about our politics.

Dr. Zaman, USA

I am surprised how you may take such a narrow vision in echoing with our ruling camp in defending that terrorism (religiously motivated) does not exist in Bangladesh! What Sk. Hasina has said in Brussels was very much within the realm of a conference she attended and the topic demanded that she raise the issue internationally.

If you read some international newspapers (aside from FEER or TIME), the name of Bangladesh as a country harbouring terrorism comes up regularly. Last week China Daily, the largest and perhaps the only English language newspaper (where Hasina will have least influence) covered carried story on Islamic terrorism in South Asia and Bangladesh was featured prominently. No one protested vet!

Let's not be complacent and take the path of hiding things. We do not need AL or Sk Hasina to complain; the international civil society is active and watchful enough. As I write, two PhD researches are being done on Bangladesh and Islamic Fundamentalism, both by foreigners in the USA.

Please help the country through an objective criticism and not play a balancing game, as one writer said. Asma Khurshid Haque, London

Sheikh Hasina's speech on 29 October before an international seminar in Brussels denigrating the outcome of the general election and calling it fraudulent amounts to a slap in the face for the Bangladesh electorate, and betrays what deep contempt she has for the opinions of the general public.

The right-thinking people from all sections of the political spectrum have condemned the biased attempt by a section of the international media to portray Bangladesh as a hotbed of fundamentalist terrorism. Far from joining in this consensus Hasina went out of her way in the same speech to associate herself with these dubious journalists. By doing so she has proved that she is hand-in-glove with the outsiders who are apparently co-ordinating this motivated campaign.

For these reasons Sheikh Hasina has forfeited all claims to be thought of as a nationalist leader who has the interests of the people of Bangladesh at heart. Concerned Citizen, Dhaka

I could not agree less with the views you expressed in your editorial (November 2) on Sheikh Hasina's latest speech in Brussels. She has been making speeches like this on every opportunity. Sour loser that she is, what she does not realise or may be she does not care about is, in the process of attacking her political rival, she is denigrating totally the image of Bangladesh abroad.

The pride that we can rightfully claim in the comity of nations for having established in the country a liberal democracy with a genuine hope for a better future is being sacrificed as she goes after the

BNP for settling scores that only she believes in. If there was unequivocal proof that the BNP won the last elections by means of fraud or fraudulent, even then as a political leader who the other day was the Prime Minister she should be wary of the repercussions of her statements can have when made abroad.

That almost everyone connected with the last elections, including international observers present in Bangladesh during the elections, spoke of the elections as being fair and free, make Sheikh Hasina's insistence to the contrary totally incomprehensible. By depicting the Bangladesh Government as one supporting religious fanatics, which by all accounts it is not and the statement of the US Ambassador in Bangladesh in this regard is proof enough, Sheikh Hasina seems to be acting as an external agent determined to see not only the end of the BNP but the end of Bangladesh itself. I have no doubt that Sheikh Hasina knows that in the current volatile internal environment where so-called Islamic fanaticism is what the West is after, identifying Bangladesh as a hotbed of such fanaticism would no doubt mean ultimately the end of external support for Bangladesh's development. It looks like this is the objective towards which she is moving. Shahjahan Ahmed, Dhaka

I congratulate you for such a timely editorial condemning Sheikh Hasina's remark on Bangladesh in which she virtually endorsed that Bangladesh has become a safe haven of terrorism.

Sheikh Hasina happens to have found a close allay to achieve her evil design to grab power at the cost of national interest. Therefore, it is no wonder that Hasina makes such a remark, for she is no a novice in politics to lack comprehension what consequences her remark might bring upon Bangladesh.

In fact, it is now a settled fact that Hasina and her party have extended the patronage to those so-called foreign journalists providing concocted information. Otherwise, all the articles identically would not have cited bomb explosion during the Awami rule, supposed attempts of assassination on her life as evidences of rising fundamentalism in Bangladesh.

However, as the adage goes, time takes its toll, and what Hasina seeks after now, like a boomerang, one day would hunt after her once she assumes power, for her politics resembles playing with a poisonous snake of which she would become an eventual hostage.

It is an irony that no one takes lessons from history that repeats itself. Shibly Azad, New York City