

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.

"AL and terrorism in Bangladesh"

It seems that the campaign by Sheikh Hasina and AL to portray Bangladesh as a hotbed of terrorism and fundamentalism is succeeding to some extent as evidenced by the occasional reports published in the international media and the PhD researches reportedly initiated in some foreign universities on this issue.

However the same people who would like to take these foreign reports at their face value would not accept the views of the international observers that the last general election that brought the BNP-led alliance to power was a fair one nor would they accept the views of the diplomatic community in Dhaka about Bangladesh being a moderate Muslim country. How absurd it is that the reports by foreign journalists based on their flying week-long visits are more acceptable to these people than that of the diplomatic community living close to ground zero and assessing the local situation day in and day out. It is sad to note how biased we become as a result of our polarising partisan politics!

I find it sad also that a member of the faculty of a US university (Dr. Zaman, November 4) would mix up the issue of violation of human rights during the current army campaign (which you had forcefully and rightly condemned) with your criticism (again rightly done) of Sheikh Hasina for her recent speech before a foreign audience denigrating the last general election and for depicting Bangladesh as possible host of terrorist network. It is true that even if Sheikh Hasina had made the same speech in Bangladesh, it would have reached the global audience given the state

columnists and editorial-writers (of whom we have plenty at home and abroad) who cannot find anything wrong with the AL and nothing good with the BNP. I would like to commend you for your missionary zeal to speak for truth and justice without worrying whether it pleases or displeases the recipient. Please keep up the good work.

A.B.M. Nurul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Most of the points I wanted to make after reading Dr. Zaman's letter have been made by other readers. I don't understand why Dr. Zaman and his friends were embarrassed when "learned" scholars in his faculty were critical because the army was called in to assist civil administration in Bangladesh that unfortunately resulted in some deaths. In USA where Dr. Zaman now lives comfortably, the paramilitary like the National Guards is often called to assist local police in law and order cases. He and his friends may also feel less embarrassed to face his learned friends who criticise Bangladesh for reasons of human rights violations if they ask them to focus instead on the measures being taken in the USA by the Government to discriminate against its own citizens of Arab origin following the 9/11 incidents.

The criticisms of the army drive in Bangladesh are nevertheless well taken and every one in Bangladesh, where we have a healthy democracy functioning with the press freedom the best as compared to any other country, are talking and discussing freely about the pros and cons of the army action. Dr. Zaman may not know, the papers in Bangladesh are reporting on the negative side of the army drive the Prime Minister and the Government in Bangladesh also share those

cyclones, etc. Yet after all these, we have shown the world that we are capable of changing governments freely and fairly; guaranteed press freedom; and giving the people a genuine hope of a better future as indicated by the positive indicators of social and economic growth in our country. With this army drive, we will, I hope, set another example of using the armed forces for a civil cause and then send the armed forces back to where they belong.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

I could not believe my eyes after reading the letter by Mr. Sultan Mahmud Sharif (November 6).

Why do we have to always side with a political party's view? Isn't it pretty obvious that internal matters of a country need to be dealt within the borders of the country, instead of marketing it as a political tool to gain others sympathy? What has our respected Leader of the Opposition gained by further distorting our country's image to the Western world? Is being in the 'Hot Seat', so important, that one is willing to sell his/her ethics and morals, something we all stood up for at our time of independence?

Does the Leader of the Opposition realise how her irresponsible comments affect all Bangladeshi students as well as other Bangladeshis living abroad?

As far as the comment made by Mr. Sharif regarding exposing the sufferings of the innocent people, have you once seen our neighbouring country India's, leaders of the opposition running to the foreign press and the foreign community for solutions?

The main reason for such a slow development in Bangladesh is its narrow minded power hungry politicians. I do not mean any disre-

students of Bangladesh. I can hardly remember any leader of a foreign country speaking about internal ills in a foreign land. Though it is late but the leader of the opposition should change herself and spoke cautiously both inland and abroad. We the Bangladeshi students really fall in an embarrassing situation when we find our politicians talking like that.

It is very surprising that being an ex-Prime Minister she could talk like that in Brussels. Anyway, it would be better for both our country and Awami League as well if she talked with more responsibility.

Akter Mahmud
Stockholm, Sweden

Louis I. Kahn's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

I appreciate the letters written by architects Mr. Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury and Mr. Jalal Ahmed (November 04) expressing their concern over the Government's plan to build Speaker's and Deputy Speaker's house within the precincts of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. I must also congratulate *The Daily Star*, *Paribesh Andolon*, and *Pratham Alo* for bringing the matter into public attention.

The present set of bureaucrats, engineers and architects of government works department are perhaps not aware of the significance and the international acclaim Sher-e-Bangla Nagar received as an architectural masterpiece of late Louis I. Kahn.

Around 1974-75 Louis Kahn had visited few times to oversee the work going on for completion of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, once known as the Second Capital.

Louis Kahn's architectural work of the Parliament building complex with lakes and red brick houses of unique design is considered as an architectural masterpiece. In 1980 at the British Council I was amazed and proud to see the coverage of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar complex in an international architectural directory as one of the architectural feat of 20th century. TIME magazine also gave coverage of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar complex in their art section with coloured photographs while appreciating the work of Louis Kahn.

It is a pity that we as a nation fail to appreciate great people and their contribution to Bangladesh. Any sensible government would have placed a plaque at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar honouring the great work of late Louis I. Kahn. On the contrary the influential law makers and their sycophants in public works department are out to destroy Sher-e-Bangla Nagar after finishing off Dhanmandi, Gulshan, Banani, etc. Talking about saving landmarks as national heritage, do our leaders know what is heritage or do they have any?

Ziauddin Ahmed
Dhaka

Gulf War II!

The Gulf War changed many things and opened a new vista to look at the western world, as well as a means to scrutinise our own activities.

Many Muslims woke up from their slumber of servility and complacency from the ashes of the Gulf War, Bosnian War, Chechen War, AfghanWar... a resounding question baffled everyone "what are we doing wrong?"

During the 80's I never saw anyone in Canada, the United States, or Australia praying their Salah (namaz) in any Bengali party, at home, or elsewhere; we just used to dress-up beautifully, converse with the guests and eat to our fill. But things have changed for many of us since the Gulf War. Now men pray in congregation every time we have a party; women also pray. We now study to understand our religion and parents try to send their children to weekend Islamic classes. Moreover, now many young women do not hesitate to wear hijab to portray themselves as proud Muslims. It is certainly a paradox that through these wars, the West has managed to raise the awareness of Muslims as opposed to subjugating them.

Shukla Mirza
Qatar

What about Islami Chatra Shibir?

We welcome the move by the army to nab criminals but we don't welcome the extra-judicial heart attacks. People in Latin America also cheered the initial arrival of the military in the civilian scene in the '60s and '70s but later deeply regretted it as many disappeared. The social wounds never healed. Lowering human rights standard may ultimately affect the very people who are now happy at the sight of armed law keepers.

Suppose the crime rate does not fall? How long will the army be in? And why should we pay taxes to maintain the police who according to all views is only useful for collecting bribes?

But there is already a puzzling aspect of the matter. How come Jamaat and Shibir cadres are left virtually alone when BNP and AL are being taken in?

Munna Murshed
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

George Harrison

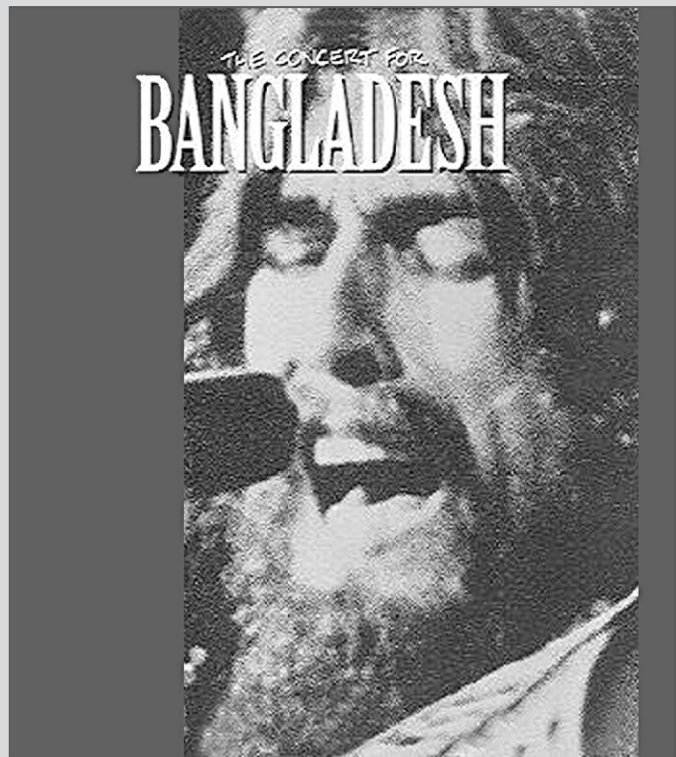
In 1971 Bangladesh had a very few friends in the West who were concerned enough or knew enough to do something to support the cause of Bangladesh. Among these few were George Harrison, an ex-Beatle who learned about the struggle from his friend and teacher Pundit Ravi Shankar. Harrison was a humanitarian and that is why eastern philosophy appealed to him. There were a lot of people who just joined the movements in the '60s and '70s to be fashionable while people like George Harrison actually were serious about their humanitarian commitments.

That is why when Bangladesh was just an obscure name in the West and a dream to the freedom loving people of Bangladesh George Harrison came through for us. He arranged for a benefit concert for Bangladesh. He gathered all his friends and colleagues to perform for this event. This was an unprecedented event. This gave Bangladesh and the cause of Bangladesh wide exposure in addition to the financial help from the concert profits. The concert raised more than 2 million dollars for UNICEF aid of Bangladesh. Stars like Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan and Ringo Star, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Ustad Alla Rakha and Pundit Ravi Shankar performed at the concert.

We want to see something like naming of a city street or some form of memorial to remind us about the contributions of this singer songwriter who wrote the song 'Bangladesh' to help and inspire a nation.

This November is the first anniversary of the Humanitarian's untimely demise. We, Bangladeshis owe it to the world to recognise the contribution of a friend in need.

Saeed Khan
St. SE, Glenwood, MN



Remembering a friend

Snap polls?

Sheikh Hasina in a recent public meeting declared, "Public opinion is now against the government," and "I want immediate elections. It's now a public demand and the people would press it home in due time".

Will the Leader of the Opposition please tell us a credible source of her findings? If she is using some form of statistical analysis, then please elaborate on the basis and theory behind inferring such statements.

Osman Siddiq
New York, USA

"Operation Clean Heart"

The government has launched army to deal and improve the law and order situation in Bangladesh, but is the army doing the job in an appropriate manner? Why people are dying while in custody? No matter what measure the government adopts the thorough cleansing of the whole system is needed instead of "Operation Clean Heart".

Waheeda Alam
Toronto, Canada

Corruption and harassment at the ZIA

This is very unfortunate that a few (or could be many) of airport staff make life horrible at the airport sometimes due to their naked approach for money.

I travel a lot for my official work and consultancy across the world. I do not know about other passengers but I was harassed many times at the ZIA unnecessarily at the check in, immigration and customs and really felt guilty myself for being a Bangladeshi national.

If my luggage is over weighted, staff at check-in offers to make it okay by paying him half (negotiable) of the airlines charge. If I bring any taxable item from anywhere, people in custom are unhappy and do late service since I do not pay them instead of the government. Sometimes, immigration people ask something, which is really insulting, and they are not supposed to ask those kinds of questions.

I am a frequent traveller of

Lufthansa German Airlines; I have travelled many countries in the five continents but have never found these kind of behaviour in any airport in the world except Kolkata.

I urge to international airlines operating in Bangladesh-- please allocate your airline staff instead of airport staff at check-in.

May Allah bless the people of our country.
Shaheen
Bangkok

Death in army custody

I would like to write few things about the death in army custody during ongoing "Operation Clean Heart". Firstly I would like to thank the Prime Minister to give the army (the most patriotic organisation in the country) the opportunity to free the ordinary people from the hands of criminals.

Mr. Badrul Ahsan rightly wrote in the column of 25th October "It (Operation Clean Heart) has also brought us a sense of relief that is comparable to that of the people when liberating forces enter occupied territories." Unfortunately there are cases when some criminals (as per media report most of these people had severe crime records) died in the army custody during the interrogation. Interrogation is not an easy process. These criminals are not ready to divulge the information when interrogated in a soft voice. To crack these hardened criminals, rough and tough interrogation process is inevitable. That is why an accused is placed under remand; it is open secret that he will be tortured if required. We are a poor nation. We don't have sophisticated instrument like lie detectors etc. While no one dies in custody in

developed countries during interrogation, such deaths in developing countries are not unusual.

Our officers and soldiers are truly patriot. Any task assigned to them they perform to the best of their abilities. Arayan project (Building houses for poor people in remote places), flood duties, traffic control to name a few. Now they are determined to crack down on criminals who created reigns of terror in our beloved motherland.

For the sake of greater interest, we must be ready to sacrifice. We must be ready to sacrifice few criminals' life for the safety of the millions of ordinary people. If my brother had been a criminal I would be the first person to accept this sacrifice. Nowadays many parents are proud of their criminal sons. We must get rid of these new trends.

So please don't shed any more crocodile tears for these criminals. These criminals disgraced the concept of human rights. Thousands innocents died at the hands of these criminals, hundreds of young girls were raped, business communities were forced to pay illegal toll. Won't we be happy if hundred criminals die at the expense of peace in the country? I request all the media to go for opinion poll about these deaths.

Major Khalid Moinuddin (retired)
Australia

Where is war on terror heading?

The US declared its "War on terror" with much fanfare. After one year, that war is characterised by two significant trends.

One: mere suspicion is converted into conviction; arrests, interrogation, incarceration, are uncommonly frequent with no holds barred. If mere suspicion and speculative future intent were enough to arrest and prosecution, then we must be living in a very different world. Phrases like "Islamists", "Islamic terrorists", "Islamic Extremists" and more are now routine. What is not routine in the world media and summit communiqués is any reference to the dictum that even "terrorists" have some legal and human rights. Under the cloak of "War on terror", States are either pursuing extra legal methods to fight ethnic, linguistic, and rebel groups seeking separation, secession, or independence. All of this is a prescription for chaos and destabilisation or disequilibrium in the States that are delicately poised though chronically troubled.

Secondly, almost by design, the "War on terror" has transformed into war on Iraq, and by extension war on the Arab and Muslim bloc. Iraq never figured as having anything to do with September 11 attack; no link was established even after energetic efforts by the US intelligence establishment. Yet, after Afghanistan, Iraq has been a target. Iraq "may have" developed weapons, could give weapons to terrorists groups in future, may make a nuclear bomb if it gets the materials - all these speculations and insinuations do not sell and appears mere hogwash or utter crap, and that too coming from responsible world statesmen.

These are ominous signs. The Islamic world can ignore and remain complacent only at their peril. Muslim states must steadfastly and resolutely resist being put on the defensive; rather it is time for the Arab and Muslim world to close ranks to fight the menace posed by this twist on the "War on terror".

Those who spawn "terrorism" and much maligned "suicide bombing" and crimes must share responsibility as well as consequences. They must not be allowed to put the onus on others to fight their war while they escape scrutiny and cost.

Hussain
Dhaka

Death of Kala Faruq



I don't think there is anyone in this country who doesn't realise why Kala Faruq was killed 'while he tried to escape'.

This is going to have several ramifications. First, what little co-operation there was between the police and the army during this drive is now certain to be scrapped. No army officer will trust police intelligence or hand over another suspect to the police without first interrogating him themselves. Naturally they will act upon that information, so we'll soon see the army trying to arrest policemen. Second, this has further discredited our police again showing them as a corrupt, under-trained, demoralised bunch. Discrediting the police will only strengthen the army's hand in further operations and make them even more independent from any modicum of civil control or oversight. The police will now naturally try to discredit the army in turn to counter this imbalance, so we can look forward to more revelations of army abuses.

In sum, this murder has chipped away another block in the foundation of our democracy.

Joyanto, Dhaka

This is in continuation of my letter "Kala Faruq arrested" (November 6). Unfortunately, my fear has come true. Kala Faruq is dead. Why? Is it for fear of the truth? How many cats would have come out of the bag had he been in the custody?

Wahid Shafi, Dhaka

The Daily Star has published the news on the death of Kala Faruq in such a way that it seemed to me, the readers should feel pang in their hearts for his unnatural death.

To be honest, I have not felt sorrow, for the death of a notorious criminal like him. Have I lost human quality? What have made me lost human quality? Is not it the situation in the country created by the terrorists, which has

of current communication technology, but people do have the intelligence to understand what is meant for local public consumption as part of narrow party politics and what is meant for an international audience.

If the bomb blasts and supposed attempts of the life of Sheikh Hasina are evidences of rise of fundamentalism in Bangladesh, one might ask why not a single case was solved during the AL rule and the culprits brought to book? Don't blame our much-maligned police and detective branch for these lapses. They have shown in many a case that, if not interfered with, they can and do solve some crimes quickly as evidenced by the recent school teacher Swapan Goswami murder case.

Some of the writers have accused you trying to do a balancing act of pleasing AL and BNP alternately. Obviously, they would like you to behave like the Awami

criticisms and are taking due note of it.

The other points that Dr. Zaman and his embarrassed colleagues do not know are that the army drive was undertaken with considerable public support; that this drive is non-political as vindicated by the large number of BNP supporters who have been held in the drive; and that this drive was necessitated because of many years of a political culture of using "maastaans" for political ends that all political parties including the Awami League have patronised, a culture that the Prime Minister is now trying to end.

The following points I guess could help people like Dr. Zaman feel less embarrassed about their country. Bangladesh is the only country that had to come out of two-decolonisation process in 25 years and the second one in 1971 was utterly destructive and then there are our more than due shares of natural calamities such as floods,

spect but one wonders whether these individuals join politics for country's interest or personal gain? To make things worse, we find a certain quarter of the supporters blindly fall into the web of party policies without even analysing its affect in reality.

Shahzeb Shahnazaw
Univ of Michigan, USA

Stop embarrassing us

Being a responsible person we should utter words and behave likely. Sheikh Hasina should be more practical and responsible when delivering her speech. How could she ruin the image of Bangladesh saying that the present government is helping the growth of fundamentalism? "Fundamentalism" this word is a very sensitive and catchy these days. Nowadays, especially in the foreign countries, this sort of speech has a great impact on the immigrant and the