

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.

Rapid Action Team

It is heartening to see the news of the formation of the Rapid Action Team's aptly named RATs. The US has SWAT teams, London has the Tactical Fire Arms Squad, and so on. Almost every country has highly trained commando style police with advanced weapons and tactics to nab the most dangerous of criminals.

But what benefit will this formation have if the policemen recruited are as poorly paid as the rest of their brethren? Maybe we should reconsider having a highly trained well-armed police squad made up of the same police who are also protecting criminals like Kala Faruq.

Kireti Dhaka

Like most people I would also probably have been muted in my criticism if all the dead were of the Kala Faruq variety. But the problem seems to be that most of the dead were mere suspects and not known terrorists. Secondly far fewer members of Jamaat have been picked up, so few indeed that it suggests a degree of bias among the armed forces. That is a very scary prospect.

I just hope for our country's sake, that Khaleda Zia knows what she has done by deploying army. I cannot deny the short-term benefits of such an arrangement. But it would simply roll back a decade of democracy for some short-term security.

Masood Rana Dhaka

Well done, Tipu Sultan

The predicament of Tipu Sultan is a predicament of the country as a whole. Steadfastness of Tipu Sultan eventually triumphed. A triumphant nation, we hope, likewise will emerge stronger and better from the morass of lawlessness.

In the context of Mr. Chowdhury's letter (November 09) I would like to add that "Dristipath" (an organisation (www.dristipath.org) dedicated primarily to uphold human rights) was very active raising resources for proper care of Tipu Sultan.

Mohammad Zaman, M.D. USA

About the army

I would be the first to thank God for Operation Clean Heart. In the last few years starting with the AL regime and culminating with BNP's government life had become unbearable. I used to write letters to the editor everyday almost complaining about the extortion we are suffering. In regards to the absolute amounts of money, the extortion we suffer is far less than what customs, the EPB or any other government body extorts from us. The only difference is that government bribe takers are at least providing some service while the extortionists are threatening our lives.

Since the army's operations life has been blissful. This is as good as we had been under the caretaker government. But a few issues are beginning to bother me very much.

First are the 22 deaths in custody,

Newspaper fiasco!

I do not know what happened in Dhaka, but in Chittagong the daily newspapers were not distributed on November 08 by the hawkers- not even the ones published in Chittagong! I also failed to get them from the street-vendors. Some of us were given the impression that there was a newspaper holiday on the November 07, while in reality it was not so. I rang one of the local newspaper offices and got the reconfirmation that the newspapers, indeed, came out on November 08 as usual. While the newspaper owners have been doing a commendable job by trying to bring the "newspaperless" days to minimal levels it seems that there's always someone to spoil it in the end.

Now, can we have an explanation as to why all the newspapers were "held back" on November 08. What happened to the rights of the readers? Finally I had to log on to the Internet and read *The Daily Star* of November 08 while sitting in Chittagong.

A Distressed Observer Chittagong

Some of the readers who are studying abroad were very much embarrassed at the comments of Sheikh Hasina. I want to ask them where do your embarrassment goes when we have to watch these alleged fundamentalist elements acting as policy makers? Yes, you can say they are elected by the people... but is it that much easily conclusive? Don't we bear any responsibility? Don't you feel any urge to be ashamed watching these very ironic acts?

Ashamed Dhaka

Drive against corruption

We must congratulate our valiant armed forces for their recent drive against crimes and criminals throughout the country. But the hard fact is the anti-terrorism drive would never become a success unless the Godfathers are uprooted for once and for all.

Our country has once again topped the list of the most corrupt

national and it is of course not the so-called miscreants and criminals who to be blamed for this. There is always some high-ups involved in every criminal activities. From ministers, secretaries to gatekeepers, meter-readers almost every one is corrupt.

So in order to check terrorism and eradicate crimes from the society, first the Godfathers must be nabbed. It is not very hard to check corruption from our society if it is sincerely wished by the authority. It is the best time to detect and check corruption by the Bangladesh Army during their present drive.

Peerzaa Syed Rofiqul Hussain Gulshan, Dhaka

"AL and terrorism in Bangladesh"

I agree that Sheikh Hasina shouldn't be making any comments abroad that would degrade our nation's image. In addition, I think Sheikh Hasina has no moral right to criticise the rise of fundamentalist element in Bangladesh.

It is very just to criticise Sheikh Hasina for her recent irresponsible comments considering the time and venue of her speech, but don't you think fundamentalist elements really exist in our current government?

These days, it is very rare to find any sign of anxiety, any sense of obligation from the so-called concerned citizens of our country. Rather it seems like we are trying to pretend that no such elements exists in our country and even in the government.

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Save National Assembly Complex

The architecture and planning of the National Assembly Building Complex (Sher-e-Banglanagar), Dhaka is world famous. It is one of the most acclaimed works of modern architecture in the world as well as in the subcontinent. It is, as the architect Louis I. Kahn said, 'one of his best works'.

Many books have been written, and a number of Masters and PhD theses have been done on this Complex in various universities of the world. Each year many visitors come to Bangladesh only to visit this Complex. Aside from being a masterpiece in terms of artwork, the Parliament Building (Shangshad Bhaban) is also a good response to the climate of Bangladesh. Kahn was well aware of the climate, geography and the culture of Bangladesh, and had visited many places here. He was a member of the 'Tagore Society' in Philadelphia, USA and wrote that he came to know about the nature and seasons of Bengal through Tagore's works. The National Assembly Building Complex has well worked out zones with buildings and open spaces of greenery and water.

Much can be said about the sculptural aspect and the special quality of the interior spaces of the Assembly Building. The building is an architecture of light. If one walks along the corridor on an autumn morning ('Sharater Shokale'), one can see the rhythms of light on the floor filtering through the roof skylights created by the moving clouds in the sky. The daylight in the offices is befitting to the function. In the prayer hall the environment created generates a feeling of devotion. And the subdued soft day lighting of the top-lit Assembly Hall has a magnificent yet solemn atmosphere.

There are plans by the government to add new buildings to the Complex and make alterations inside the Assembly Building. Please save the Complex from such alterations and additions.

Shama Ali Dhaka

Repair and maintenance work

It is the month of November and the Mayor of Dhaka should recall his pledge made before the election that various civic works would be undertaken by him as soon the monsoon season is over!

He should start with cleaning and washing of every garbage area and sprinkle them with bleaching powder, next clear the stagnant roadside drains and spray them with effective insecticide followed by cutting the extended tree branches overlapping the live electric wires. He should quickly and correctly award the street, road and pavement repair works to qualified contractors and utilise properly thousands of sweepers employed by the Corporation to sweep, wash and clean the city streets, roads, pavements and public toilets and every quarterly apply liquid limestone in all the ponds and lakes within the city limit including the famous Crescent Lake of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar which is in front of the mausoleum of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

Golam Ashraf Gulshan, Dhaka

Our film industry

The importance of film in our national life cannot be exaggerated. Firstly it has to serve us as a source of entertainment. Amusement and recreation are simply essential to the preservation of man's zest for life. But anything and everything that is displayed on the screen in the name of amusement and recreation cannot be allowed to continue unchecked. Things that do not conform to the norms of decency, to the feelings of good taste and to the sentiments of good order of life tell very adversely upon the society in the name of entertainment.

Secondly, the films have to inculcate a sense of purpose and direction towards solving social and moral problems. These are certainly very lofty ends and it is the extent of fulfillment of these ends that determine the degree of worth or worthlessness of films.

But when our films are judged by

these standards they fill us with frustration and dismay. Most of our recent films are poor remake of Bollywood movies as a result of which the plots fail to reflect our daily life, the characters stand out unconvincing and their deeds, words and costumes simply shock our senses of good taste and propriety. In a nutshell, the modern films play a dominant role to corrode our sense of values and corrupt the coming generation. This state of affairs does not bid well for the future of the nation.

We are the developing nation and have yet to reach our destiny. So, we need great ideas to guide us along the right way, and our film industry has to harness itself to play a dominant role in our national progress by holding up our vices and dropping suggestions to solve our problems.

Abdul Fatha Asif Bonogram Road, Dhaka

Continue the army drive



Army for us

We know that public lynching usually happens when the law enforcing authority fails in managing the law and order situation. In such situation the public take up the law in their own hand and deliver verdict on criminals by beating them up and in many cases causing death to them. And that is a criminal act.

The law enforcing agency's job is to apprehend the criminals and put them up for legal trial and judgement by the civilian court. Torturing the criminals to disability or death in the custody can itself be a criminal act too. Otherwise, why do we need the police or in that case the army in a civilised country to maintain law and order?

Wahid Shafi, Dhaka

A failure of the system

Our country is in dire need of a revolution, in some form or the other. The political parties and the people in the country can blame each other all they want, but the plain fact of the matter is that the whole system in Bangladesh has shown itself to be a failure.

The army is not out in the streets because of BNP's failure to curb crime, or AL's failure during its tenure, but because of the failure of the whole system in Bangladesh, ranging from the security forces to the judiciary to the government. The politicians are not the only ones at fault, because the people of the country have a very archaic view of politics. When was the last time you voted in an election taking the various policies put forward by the candidates into consideration, and not just on sentiment, voting for a party just because your father supported it, or some other form of attachment that you might share with it?

How can we blame the political parties for being more interested in whose portrait should be hung in offices than feeding or educating people, when that really IS such a great factor in the minds of the electorate? Hopefully, future genera-

tionals patronise politicians. This is why the anti-crime drive will ultimately fail.

The army can arrest as many street criminals as it wants because this whole anti-crime drive is nothing more than facade; giving the hapless citizens of Bangladesh nothing more than a respite. Because the people behind the anti-crime drive are the real criminals-- the loan defaulters, tax cheats, corrupt government officials and police, etc. Thieves who have enriched themselves by looting the national treasury.

Unless you go after these base criminals, Bangladesh's law and order situation will never improve. We will get more Kala Faruqs, not less.

Niraj Agarwalla, USA

Anti-crime drive

It's my opinion that the anti-crime drive currently being undertaken by the army is short-sighted because it is only treating the symptoms of the problem, and not the problem itself-- the endemic corruption that permeates all strata of Bangladeshi society. It is this society that produced the likes of Kala Faruq, who probably at a very young age realised that the only way to be successful is either to be a criminal or a politician. To his detriment, he chose the life of crime.

According to the news item in *The Daily Star*, Kala Faruq was a member of former President Ershad's Jatiya Party, and even stood for elections! How can a notorious criminal-- a virtual don of Dhaka's underworld-- do this without the connivance of political higher-ups? Because it is a known fact that politicians patronise criminals and crimi-

I encourage the government of Bangladesh to continue the army drive. Bangladesh army is doing a good job and few deaths under custody cannot be helped. The trade off is clear: few deaths is better than several thousand deaths every month at the hands of these crime mongering parasites.

Nowadays, the ordinary citizens feel safe, there has been a huge dip in crime and it's evident even in the coverage of your paper. Toll collectors and extortionists have disappeared, smuggling is down and according to a recent *Daily Star* report, Patenga boozers have also fled. All this is very good news and Bangladesh army

deserves commendation.

The current army crackdown, however, has become a thorn for some people to tread. While criminals, smugglers and *maastans* have a reason to fear the army drive, I fail to understand why is the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiyo Sangsad so reluctant to give it her one hundred per cent endorsement. Sheikh Hasina's accusation on prejudice against her party people is not true. Many BNP men have also been arrested. In fact, more BNP workers have been arrested than Awami League.

One must not also forget about those Awami League

Amnesty's report!

On 5th November Amnesty International issued a report fully confirming that Israel had committed war crimes during its attack in Jenin earlier this year. As this was the first time that such charges, commonly made by the Palestinians in the past, had been found to be true by an independent organisation it became a huge news item all over the world and CNN in particular had extensive coverage. I was keenly interested to read the newspaper coverage the next day because there were said to be very explicit and shocking findings in the Amnesty Report and I wanted to read some extracts from the actual text. To my surprise however, far from providing additional analysis and interpretation of such an important news story, *The Daily Star* of 6th November did not even mention the Amnesty Report anywhere in the whole paper.

May we as faithful readers of *The Daily Star* enquire why this omission occurred? This is particularly disturbing because a respected newspaper functions not only to provide the news but also serves as a record of the events of the day. By not covering this Report you also helped to make it vanish from the record, an outcome which only unscrupulous supporters of Israel would want.

I wonder if this omission, and others I have noticed in the past, took place because *The Daily Star* relies too much on the bigger news services (such as AP, AFP etc.) for its international news? As it is well known these news services often skew their coverage to suit the interests of the Western countries or, as in this case, the Israeli lobby. To avoid having its agenda set by the news services, *The Daily Star* should perhaps appoint someone as a News Editor, whose function it would be to supplement the input provided by the news services with other sources of international news, primarily from the Internet but also

from smaller independent and focussed news services. This would provide a more balanced view of the world and free us from total dependence on motivated news coverage.

Rafiqullah Bhuyian Moghbazar, Dhaka

BCS result and The Daily Star

The result of the much-talked about 21st BCS was indeed a big event for thousands of candidates who had been waiting for it for around two years. On November 4 while all the prominent dailies published the result in details, *The Daily Star* only wrote a few lines and did not bother to circulate the detailed result. This was a big surprise for us.

Would it matter much for *The Daily Star*, one of the most popular

intervention.

At the same time, I earnestly hope that the opposing people including the journalists, reporters and the media will express similar kinds of interpretation of the situation. We have lost so many innocent lives at the hands of these criminals, many women were being raped and killed by them, many children have been vanished by them, many people were robbed, mugged and assaulted by this cruel and notorious criminals. Also we urge the government to arrest and try the so-called political leaders including top leaders who patronised and are patronising them even today.

Make no mistake and let one thing be very clear to everybody that law is equal for everybody and it will take its own course regardless of their social, political or economic status. Thank you Prime Minister for taking such a

Reason for regime change

In the current debate over UN weapons inspectors to monitor Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the most important argument for "regime change" isn't getting a fraction of attention it deserves. This is, of course, the argument based on Saddam Hussein's three and half-decade-long assault on the Iraqi people. In fact, many Iraqis in exile are raising this issue, but very few are paying attention to their concerns.

As Hithem Al-Hassani, a spokesman for the Iraqi-Canadian Co-ordinating Committee, a Toronto-based alliance of various Iraqi groups in exile, told Canadian daily *National Post* recently: "We have an outlaw regime such as in Iraq that is not a legitimate regime... This needs to be stood up to."

Mr. Al-Hassani said those who oppose war with Iraq on the ground that civilians would be killed fail to understand that people are already dying due to Saddam's misrule. "In any war situation there must be some innocents that will die but the thing is in Iraq, as we speak, innocents are dying. I'm talking in thousands," he said.

Ridha Saleh, another Iraqi-Canadian, wrote in *The Toronto Star*: "Indeed, as I am aware from my communications with friends and relatives in Iraq, most citizens of that country are waiting with bated breath for a strike that will free them from their current state of oppression."

Dr. Kenneth M. Pollack, a research analyst at the Brookings Institution, provided the most graphic account of Saddam's brutality to his own people in his recent authoritative study *The Threatening Storm: A Case for Invading Iraq*. "This is a regime that will gouge out the eyes of children to force confession from their parents and grandparents. This is a regime that will crush all of the bones in the feet of a two-year-old-girl to force her mother to divulge her father's whereabouts. This is a regime that will hold a nursing baby at arm's length from its mother and allow the child to starve to force the mother to confess."

Most critics' usual observation is: "But what about other brutal regimes?" The answer is: "No other such monstrous regime exists today?" The only parallel might be the long ousted regime of Pol Pot in Cambodia. Return of the weapons inspector will not resolve the crisis as Saddam will continue to brutalise his helpless people and if his past dealings with the inspectors are any

deserves commendation.

The current army crackdown, however, has become a thorn for some people to tread. While criminals, smugglers and *maastans* have a reason to fear the army drive, I fail to understand why is the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiyo Sangsad so reluctant to give it her one hundred per cent endorsement. Sheikh Hasina's accusation on prejudice against her party people is not true. Many BNP men have also been arrested. In fact, more BNP workers have been arrested than Awami League.

One must not also forget about those Awami League

dailies, to spend only a little space for the result which could serve its hundreds of readers?

Md. Ashequl Islam IBA, University of Dhaka

Stop squeezing the roads

On November 10, I was looking at a photograph published in your newspaper. The photograph is about streamlining of Dhaka traffic, and the experiments being carried out at Kakrail. Thank God, this time the authorities have opted for a test. I think they have also learned from their mistake of the much publicised program of creating separate lane for rickshaws through putting up concrete dividers on narrow roads.

One of the major works done by the Dhaka Urban Transport Project was to create gardens on the road turnings (example: Manik Mia Avenue, Panthopath-Mirpur road crossing, Panthopath-Green Road crossing). The authorities have created these concrete gardens particularly on the left turns. So rather than making the left lane clear they have put up special obstacles, to ease traffic!

I also would like to question the utility of putting up dividers in roads. A divider of two feet takes away a road space of at least four feet as cars driving on both side of the dividers have to leave some safety space along the dividers. Do the planners realise this?

So what the planners are in fact doing is taking away scarce road space in order to streamline traffic. We might soon see another project to remove these obstacles in near future!

Fahad Saleh Baramoghbazar, Dhaka

Deaths in army custody

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to Major (Rtd.) Khalid Mainuddin (Australia) for his insights to this situation and timely

courageous and bold step.

Nasir, On e-mail

Kala Faruq's death

I have been closely following the recent Army "operation" in Bangladesh. Having lived there for some time, I can very well comprehend the relief expressed by many at the decline in "maastani" in nearly all aspect of daily life, which had become routine in recent times. Sympathising with them, I was going to keep silent on this issue, although I am not fully convinced about the legal and ethical aspects of such interventions-- whether invited by the civilian administration or not. However, with the activity well into the third week, together with some intriguing (and not so subtle) "happenings", I am unable to resist making a couple of observations.

No life lost in an extra-judicial situation can be condoned. Moreover, the death of Kala Faruq especially begs one to start asking questions regarding the motive(s) behind the "deaths in custody". The death of a 35-year old man less than 24 hours after being arrested is not only unusual and shocking, but one has to ask: Was all the information obtained from him, which would seem unlikely in the short time. Kala Faruq in his hey days could not have operated without the support of, and protection from, mentors in high places. Was he killed to stop him from spilling the beans on the bigger fish who patronised and sheltered him? The questions become even more pertinent if one considers that he died at the hands of the police force! It is time that other deaths in custody in recent days are considered in this light. Steps should be taken that vital information is not lost as minor criminals are got rid off by even bigger crooks (their previous protectors), to protect themselves!

Gringo Capet, Sydney, Australia

Root of all evil?

guide, he will try to hoodwink them again once the threat of military action has passed. The United States may decide to return to the old policy of containment and sanction. We will be back to the status quo ante. And the suffering of the Iraqi people will continue.

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Root of all evil?



Let's become disabled-friendly

THE SYMBOL OF ACCESS

Indicates ACCESS for the DISABLED

I celebrated my return to Bangladesh by falling and spraining my ankle so badly that it is in a plaster for three weeks. I have a trusty 'third leg' in the form of an elbow crutch. Thus I am having the unwelcome but interesting experience of being a handicapped person on the streets of Dhaka.

I am not surprised I do not meet many others! Most of the handicapped seem to have decided that the only place for them is home-- except for the handicapped beggars, of course, who are a lesson to us all in courage-- or is it foolhardiness? The surface of the roads and pavements of Dhaka make them an obstacle course indeed. Crossing the road means requesting help to wave the traffic down and hobbling across to the accompaniment of screeching brakes... In my life-time, I have seen a revolution happen in the UK-- the gradual appearance of more and more of the handicapped citizens of our country who emerge from their homes as the environment has become more and more friendly to them. Stores and supermarkets have helped a lot-- with car-parking, easy access and nearly all the desired shopping under one roof-- and wide aisles for wheel chairs, pushed or motorised.

The same revolution is underway here, but slowly, and please let me urge one particular improvement-- access to shops. As I am buying things for my new flat, yesterday I visited a well-known store, run by an NGO. The car I had borrowed parked in the nice car park at the back, but immediately I was faced with a flight of brick steps - with no handrail! Going up was bad enough but, without a handrail I could not come down again in the approved manner i.e. backwards. If I had been in a wheel chair, I could not have entered at all.

Please will those building stores and shopping bazaars remember what shrewd businessmen in the developed world have discovered-- that handicapped people, and the family and friends that accompany them, have money to spend and deserve the opportunity to be your customers! What is morally right is also commercially profitable. But good access for the disabled is expensive to create after the builders have left - it is cheaper if planned on the drawing-board - either with level access from the pavement or a choice of slope as well as steps - and hand-rails! Provide a disabled toilet as well and then you deserve the accolade of the international symbol on your advertising that says to the world "This is a disabled-friendly place!" As word gets round, you will become a place of pilgrimage! As for me, I tick off the dates until the 21st, when my plaster comes off! Lucky me! There are many whose handicap is much longer term. Please think about them and make our world an easier place for them to share.

Angela Robinson Dhaka