

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.

## "Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow"

I can't help responding to your front paged 7 column photo and news coverage of a ceremony entitled 'Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow' organised by *The Daily Star* as in the past to honour 319 students of English medium schools for their outstanding achievements in the O' level and A' Level examinations last session ending June 2002.

While any effort to appreciate performance of students for their academic distinction must be lauded, like everybody, *The Daily Star* and its Editor with multi dimensional interests must know for sure more than any body else that these students, if anything cannot be the nation builders of tomorrow as the only ambition of these students, also passionately wished and nurtured by their parents, is to go to America for higher studies, build up a bright academic career to get in to a lucrative job in America with an attractive salary, settle down permanently with American citizenship and contribute to building America as a prosperous nation.

Far from serving in Bangladesh these expatriate Bangladeshis, totally alienated from the mainstream Bangladesh society, more often than not sneer at Bangladesh and loathe to visit home infested with mosquitoes and mastans, dreaded diseases and environmental pollution, and trapped by disabling poverty, traffic gridlock and squabbling politics.

If *The Daily Star* initiative is not a gimmick, it should better organise similar ceremonies in future to honour meritorious students of SSC and HSC examinations who are the real and potential nation builders of tomorrow as most of them will stay home to serve as teachers, journalists, doctors, engineers, businessmen and government servants.

**Abdul Hannan**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## George Harrison Day

This is in reference to the letter by Saeed Khan (November 8) on George Harrison.

When I read this letter, I became really emotional. For the first time, some one has finally said what was

very reasons for the information of the younger generation.

Let us start with naming something nationally important after George Harrison and then follow with Ravi Shankar and the rest. We need this more now than ever before as the memories of the Liberation War are being distorted beyond confusion.

**Raqta**  
Pennsylvania, USA

## Bank robbery and some thoughts

If masked men have the temerity to rob a bank in broad daylight ("Masked men rob bank in daylight", November 12) while the army is conducting an anti-terror drive one is compelled to say that perhaps the tip of the iceberg is still to come into sight.

The government and the army seem to be up against something more ominous than an ordinary imagination can perceive. This does not seem to be a mere drive against "mastans". The situation points towards a thick plot against the journey of democracy in the country. A couple of more challenges of daring of this nature in the face of the army-drive can send shivers across the whole infrastructure of governance paving the way for Allah knows what kind of catastrophe. This surely is a delicate moment for politicians' rule on the country. There is need for complete unity amongst the people's civilian representatives irrespective of their political affiliation. Also in the same breath one needs to say that the ruling coalition also needs to widen its consultative organ with a large heart to take into confidence the otherwise opposing political fora. The opposition should also demonstrate maturity and support the civilian rule. If at this moment in history the opposition decides to cash in on these ugly events for a demand of fresh election history may not judge them as friends of Bangladesh. There will be ample time and opportunity to disagree if democracy survives.

No doubt that the short sighted motives of the politicians over a period of time have nurtured and institutionalised the culture of crime and to a great extent provided the criminals immunity to pursue their

being whipped across the globe each day, so are simultaneously conspiracies hatched to easily malign the next target. And one big hurdle in the way is the government of the people. Beware Bangladesh.

**Mohammad Anis**  
Karachi, Pakistan

## Army deployment

The Government has deployed army to curb crimes and terrorism in our country. But, I do not think it is a sound approach in a country like ours, which has achieved democracy through much bloodshed. And we are not sure what will happen when the army returns to their barrack. What hurts me most is that we still find at the front page the death news of a person or two. The difference is that previously people used to die at the hands of some terrorists and now people die in army custody.

Is there really any value of our lives in this country?

**Rifat Mahbub**  
Department of English, DU

I agree with some of the writers here in their characterisation of the use of army forces to deal with domestic crimes as a diversion from the ideals of pure democracy. Nonetheless, it is apparent that our government and many of our citizens have the strong feeling that some of those democratic ideals are worth sacrificing if in so doing, we bring some control to the country's worsening crime situation.

We cannot blame the army for their involvement. Nor can we blame the government that felt deploying the army to deal with the criminals was the only option in hand, other than leaving things as they have been for so many years. As a society, for decades, we have been accepting towards all the corruption and immorality around us.

In time our own social ignorance and apathy reveals itself in the governments we elect, the police we have and the communities we create. In the end, it is the fault of an uncaring society if military force is needed to bring structural stability within the country. Perhaps this is a time for us to realise the importance of being politically and socially conscious; a time for us to remind

are all unanswered questions and nobody knows if these will be answered.

**NL**  
Toronto, Canada

## Education in shambles

Nearly 70% per cent of the government and non-government educational institutions in the country are either below or sub-standard. It has been revealed by the recent survey of the Education Ministry. About 87% of the educational institutes were under the purview of the survey. The result of the survey is very frustrating and worrisome no doubt.

The government pay about Tk. 1850 crore every year as teachers' salary and benefits. Each educational institutional receives Tk. 14.66 lakh on an average per year. The Education Minister has aptly said, "There should be logic behind the huge government expenditure in teachers' salary and other benefits".

Such futile expenditure from the government exchequer is highly questionable for this poor country. So, necessary steps should be taken for improving the present deplorable condition of education without further delay. The below standard and sub-standard institutions either be upgraded or shut down.

The government has taken initiative for introducing semester system in the educational institutions from the year 2004 and changing syllabus. Changing of education system and syllabus are important but if the standard of teachers are not improved all attempts will go in vain. Most of the teachers are found very much interested in teaching at tutorial centres rather than in their respective institutions. Students are found copying in public examinations for passing rather than acquiring knowledge in the classroom.

We sincerely hope that the government would come forward and do whatever is necessary to improve the sorry state of our education system.

**M.H. Bari**  
Khulna

## Parking space and RAJUK

If I am not mistaken, there is a law that you must have 23 square feet of space earmarked for parking for every 197 sq. feet of building space in Dhaka city. Whenever someone submits a building plan for approval of RAJUK, it must abide by the law and RAJUK is supposed to look after it.

But what we see in Dhaka today, a very few abide by the building code and RAJUK seems to be constantly turning its eyes away from the grave consequences it has already posed to city environment and traffic. Just go through Mirpur Road from Nilkhet towards Gabtoli, you would find all those plazas and malls constructed violating the building code of parking space. As a result, cars are parked on the roadsides narrowing the road space. The building owners have even turned the footpaths into parking lot.

Many shopping centres have also transformed the underground parking lots into shops. There is a pathology centre which has turned their underground parking space into x-ray rooms and another one do not allow visitors' cars into its already below-the-code parking space. It is reserved for its MD and professors. Dhaka City Corporation constructed a number of shopping centres in Gulistan and near New Market (Chandrima Super Market) without having parking space even for a single car.

If things go like these what is the point of having RAJUK? The government should better lease out the task of approving building plans to private architectural firms in exchange of a fixed rate and get rid of this ever-corrupt and inefficient RAJUK that did never care for a healthy Dhaka City in its history.

**Nihan Amin**  
Lalbag Road, Dhaka

## Police and teachers

I wish the army were there forever tuning up the messy, corrupt section of people among us (attitudinally, at least, the proportion of corrupt minded people seems quite high).

After army returns to their barrack, I propose that the police be empowered and their salaries and benefits be made substantially high to match good corporate employment salaries. This, I believe, is a basic step towards changing the corrupt attitude of our police force.

Only then will our poorly paid police would not need to depend on 'side' money to live their life.

The education system, very fertile for generating frustrated adolescents and youths by very poorly paid teachers at school and college levels, is another area to concentrate for reduction of crimes and corruption.

Let us push towards improving these two sectors first. I believe, then we would surely be able to improve our socio-economic condition to a respectable level.

**Aref**  
Dhaka

## Development sans basic utilities?

## Republican victory belongs to Bush



American democracy has spoken. Before the midterm elections, pundits were predicting that nothing would change after the elections. Republicans would continue their thin lead in the House and Democrats would retain their one-member lead in the Senate and the divided government would continue.

But of course everything has changed. Republicans increased their majorities in the House and regained the control of the Senate and instead of a divided government, we have a highly united government under President George W. Bush. This is in stark contrast with the divided government during the Clinton era when mid-term elections in 1994 produced a highly divided government and the subsequent deadlock leading to the shutdown of the government. Today, the American people are solidly united behind President George W. Bush.

As such, Republican victory belongs to Bush. It is as much about public endorsement of Mr.

Bush as president as approval for Republican Party. If there were any doubt about Bush's leadership, it is now over. The American people have recognised his leadership. He has stood up to the crisis of September 11, rallied the American people, liberated Afghanistan and now on the threshold of liberating Iraq from the brutal yoke of Saddam Hussein.

The crisis of September 11, has brought out real Bush - a resolute man who has rallied America to the new threat of terrorism. George W. Bush now faces three challenges: restore confidence in the American economy, liberate Iraq from a brutal yoke and defeat global terrorism. With America united behind him, Mr. Bush is well poised to achieve all three.

**Mahmood Elahi, Canada**

It's a mind-boggling affair-- I quote from *The Daily Star* of 09 November, "the demand for fixed telephones ... demand note charge ... highest in the world. The exorbitant charge was fixed to discourage prospective subscribers, they said". What do they mean by "discourage"? Is it harmful for the economy or for the public if the demand for fixed phone is fulfilled? Does the government want to cry hoarse about "development" and do almost nothing regarding the basic utilities? Actually, I am afraid, like all other sectors of this country this is just a glaring example of creating an artificial crisis in order to make money by illegal means.

Where else in the world has anyone heard about a situation where people are ready to pay a certain price to the government for a product/service, which is highly profitable for the country as a whole, but still the authorities are unwilling to supply the same in a smooth and timely manner? An expatriate has rightly said, "The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Office administer the telephone system. Applying for a new connection takes a long time and cell phone companies are booming as a result".

**ADistressed Observer**  
Chittagong

## The curse of BTTB

If there is one government outfit that is stalling growth in the field of communications in Bangladesh, it is the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB). The recent government decision to allow BTTB in to the cellular and ISP business is a big mistake. With a company like Grameen Phone demonstrating the potential of the private sector in this field, BTTB's entrance will surely be a damper to all private initiative.

BTTB is a business organisation and possession of the national telecom infrastructure gives it an obvious edge over all private telecom businesses. Under such circumstances, there will never be healthy competition between the BTTB and the private telecom companies in Bangladesh.

To create a level playing field for all businesses, the government should split the BTTB in to two separate entities - one, a service provider public limited company and two, a national telecom infrastructure company possibly under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The prime mandate of this proposed company will be to further and maintain the primary telecommunications backbone and infrastructure in the country. It will not be a service provider, but sell wholesale bandwidth to other business concerns.

Consecutive governments keep stalling growth in this promising sector only because BTTB today contributes highly to the public exchequer. This is highly unacceptable. Bangladesh government can earn a lot more by selling only bandwidth and leave the service provider business mostly to the private companies.

**AA**  
California, USA

## Save Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

We, through ignorance of what is ours to take pride in, have scarred, dismembered and destroyed many of our proud heritages. And we are still at it.

Dhaka, once a city of tree lined avenues, clean air and wide open spaces now chokes in its own congestion. The visual cacophony of unplanned growth is a unfortunate legacy we are leaving behind for our future generations. There seems to be no worthwhile attempt to rectify the mistakes of the past that have resulted in the mess we call Dhaka. An oasis of sanity remains in the form of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Created by one of the greatest architects of modern times, Louis I Kahn, this piece of imaginative planning has put Dhaka on the world architectural map.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar is recognised as one of the most notable works of architecture of this century. The buildings have been widely published and a lot of visitors come here just to see this magnificent work. This complex belongs to the dwindling list of things we can be proud of. But plans are afoot to scar this too.

We have read about and heard of plans to build some new structures along the Western part of this complex. Thanks to the timely intervention of some contentious citizen groups that this plan by the government has been postponed. But postponed is not enough. Such a landmark and object of pride for the nation should not be touched. Rather than building new structures the attitude should be to prevent any new addition to this site. Sher-e-Bangla Nagar should be earmarked

as a heritage site so that we leave something for our future generations to be proud of.

**Fuad Mallick**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Employment opportunities and retired officials

Employment market is becoming limited everyday in Bangladesh with the growth of educated young generation. And to worsen the situation a lot of retired officials are occupying good position in different NGOs, working as consultants and holding senior most positions in different companies. This preference confines the opportunity of other potential officers with good calibre to climb the succession ladder.

In the government services and other national institutions the retirement age is clearly spelled out. The officials are given substantial retirement and pension benefits for a life of rest and leisure. The retirement plan is well chalked out because after a certain age the ability of a person gradually tends to decline. The senility takes over limiting his analytic abilities, efficiency and dynamism and working diversity. The only good use of retired officials as I see is they are used as trademark to get entry and access into various government offices. In some companies or NGOs these

officials are used as ornamentation, they have little or no work at all but to lobby for all personal works.

These officials are all well established in their life, why re-employ them? These retired government officials had already taken the best advantage that this country can offer, are they still going to be provided the same till their last breath on earth? I find this preference a sheer injustice, which directly affects the younger generation like us.

Would it not be a wise decision for the government to restrict employment of such officials for more than six months thereby creating opportunities for the juniors to move upward? In a country where the employment market is limited, it is illogical and unethical to give the equal or more privilege after the retired age.

**Z Firdaus**  
Dhaka

## About PRB

While I chat with the inhabitants of Bangladesh via Internet, I used to say that I am from PRB. They became astonished to know that. They ask me, "what is PRB?"

Now, how many people can say what PRB stands for? I think the ratio would be very little. PRB's full form is People's Republic of Bangladesh. It is really a matter to regret as well as a matter to shame on ourselves that most of us don't know what PRB stands for.

**Abdul Fatha Asif**  
On e-mail

## "The standard of English in Bangladesh"

This is in response to F Hussain's letter 'The standards of English in Bangladesh' (November 12) where he has regretted that the articles appearing in *The Daily Star* are in 'very poor English'. He also observes that 'half the time the writers literally translate Bengli phrases into English'. If he is true, then *The Daily Star* must be extra cautious. The concerned team must be very serious in editing the articles or any kind of writing before they reach its thousands of readers.

People at home and abroad do love *The Daily Star* and they rely on this most attractive daily not only for satisfying their thirst for knowledge but also to develop their English knowledge. Their expectations from this daily have always been high. *The Daily Star* with its learned and committed editor Mahfuz Anam has an important role to play when it comes to practising this international language by its common readers. In the seminars held at British Council auditorium by the YEP Forum, as I clearly remember, Mr. Anam emphasised the need for extensive practice of this much needed language in order that we can survive and compete with the rest of the world.

May I make a request especially to our well-educated Bangladeshis living home and abroad to contribute more in the newspapers like *The Daily Star* with their valuable writings in rich English.

Thanks a lot to F Hussain. He has obviously attracted our attention to a special issue.

**MD. Ashequi Islam**  
IBA, University of Dhaka

## New ordinance for speedy trial of major offence

The President has just promulgated a new ordinance for speedy trial by special tribunals of six major criminal offences. The six counts of crime are murder, rape, possession of illegal arms, narcotics and explosives and hoarding. One of the gravest offences which has been holding the entire business community from petty shopkeepers to large establishments and even many development projects of the government itself and committed almost exclusively by the so-called cadres of the political parties in power is toll collection. The overall adverse impact of this crime in the economic field as well as in the law and order situation of the entire country is far more far-reaching than that of all the other crimes combined. May I, therefore, suggest that toll collection be also brought within the purview of the new ordinance?

There is a basic flaw in the ordinance as it has made the Government both the prosecutor and the judge. The Government alone has reserved the absolute right to decide on which cases are to be referred to the tribunals. This is a serious flaw which leads itself to gross misuse of power by the Government. This flaw can be easily overcome by a provision whereby the law enforcing authorities alone should be empowered to take all decisions in this regard without their having to refer any case to the Home Ministry or any other civil administration.

Also, in order to ensure against any political influence or favoritism in the appointment of tribunal judges, a provision should be made for the adoption of a foolproof procedure for such appointments. For instance, the tribunal judges could be appointed strictly on, say, last retired first come basis.

**A. Qayyum**  
Dhaka

## Advani's remark

Mr. Advani has recently made some ill remarks about Bangladesh which is highly objectionable.

Remarkably, India could not maintain a good tie with any of its neighbouring countries. And it is the Indian leaders who are responsible for this. People of the neighbouring countries do not like undue interference in internal matters and their big brother attitude.

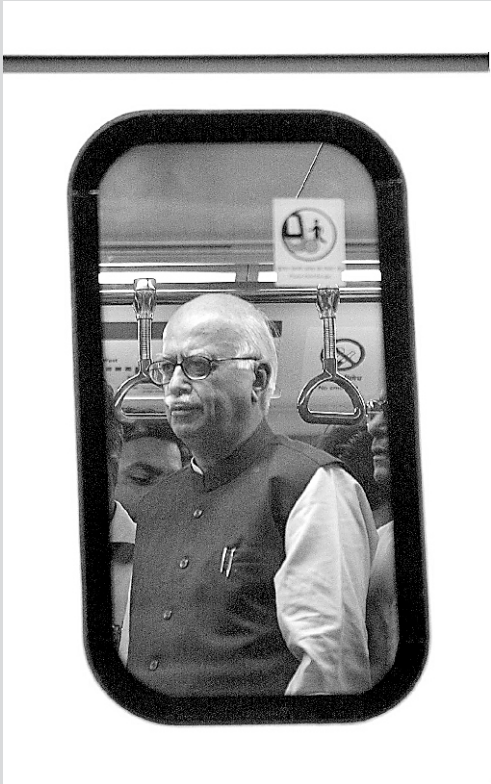
The Indian Government should realise that though we are a small country, we are very conscious about our sovereignty.

**OLIMd. Abdullah Chowdhury**  
Sylnhet

\*\*\*  
L. K. Advani's allegations about the presence of AL-Qaida and Pakistani Intelligence Service's presence in Bangladesh must be taken seriously.

There are people in Bangladesh who tend to live in a utopian world and loves to minimise the importance of India as a big and powerful neighbour. In the new global atmosphere after the 11 Sept. 2001 tragedy in New York, Bangladesh must take a pragmatic view of the situation and steer very carefully. The most disturbing aspect of the national politics is that it is not guided by any real political brain in the country. The nasty trend of personal animosity has become a chronic feature disregarding the most pressing needs of the nation.

Bangladesh does not want to become a puppet state of India and it also does not want



Advani accusing us?

antagonisms with her either.  
**Akbar Hussain**  
Toronto, Canada

overdue since 1971. We must honour George Harrison, Ravi Shankar and all the others who extended their helping hands during our Liberation War. We must do it as a nation. Naming a street or centre or some other important place after their names is a very good idea.

We can also mark the day of the concert as a national day. That day we could organise free open air concerts with classical, traditional and pop musicians. This may be a way to remember and express our love for our freedom fighters and friends like George Harrison. These types of concerts can also act as a platform for creating awareness and fighting the erosion of the spirit of our Liberation War. We could also invite other living performers of "Concert for Bangladesh" to perform in these events.

We should also make the "Bangladesh" song available *en masse*. It should also be aired on TV, Radio etc. This concert was an unprecedented and historical event for not only Bangladesh but for the entire world.

We should also have the song translated and along with the original one have it published in high school textbooks.

The political parties of Bangladesh exploit the memory of the Liberation War twisting it as they choose or see fit. There are those who are even confused about the reasons behind the War. Why and how did it become an international affair? What motivated George Harrison and the others to come forward? We should highlight these

own ugly designs while sending collateral benefits as and when required to the politically motivated. But to say that the baby tiger nursed into maturity by the politicians is still a tame tiger in their hands will be a great misjudgement. The gene has outgrown its masters and seems to have found its own diversified ways and channels of acquiring wrongfully which it has become used to acquire. These kind of underworld organisations can serve anybody for money. Values no longer matter them. It is true in Bangladesh. It is true in every human society.

What is now required is first of all to let the proper alarm bells to ring fully so that no ambiguity remains that the current situation is not another drive against criminals. Once the alarm is recognised then only the rulers and patriotic elements of the society will realise that the situation is a national crisis. Bangladesh is at war. With whom? Invisible hands whose mere masks are these hoodlums who are being nabbed each day in the drive. If the government and the people of Bangladesh become complacent even momentarily the deception will be complete. In a densely populated country as Bangladesh, what a complete breakdown of law and order will portend is anybody's guess. It is time to focus on the nation's enemies and foil their designs. Going after the apparent will be naïve. In the aftermath of September 11 its fall out has brought all Muslim dominated countries under a spotlight and target. As the Muslim emotions are

ourselves that democracy requires responsibility on the part of the people who live under it. If we refuse to be responsible for the circumstances we create, by being oblivious to our surroundings, we create situations similar to those we witness today, where we are shown that we are incapable of making productive use of our democratic freedoms.

**Omar Siddiquee**  
New York, USA

\*\*\*  
It is alarming to see that instead of resuming press briefing government had closed the avenue. It must be considered as severe blow to democratic norms. In the meantime 23 people have died in army custody. In a civilised society this would have triggered more accountability and someone should assume the responsibility.

Regular press briefing allows the citizens to be apprised of what is going on with this crackdown. Of course people wants to know how the list has been prepared and how the operation is being conducted. People wants to know have all the killers those who unleashed the reign of terror are in the list, all the criminals perverts and rapist on the list, all the criminals were seen on media picture standing on the same platform with ministers and MPs are on the list.

There are thousands of those untold stories that has not been clarified or told after the 'Operation Clean Heart' started. What about those top twenty or so godfather of terrorists initially identified? These