

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.

Donation from Bill Gates and some thoughts

It is in the news that Bill Gates, founder of software giant Microsoft, is donating \$100M to India to fight AIDS. This is nothing significant for Bill Gates, since he has been donating a lot of his wealth in various humanitarian projects. What bothers me is that in his ranks, there are few billionaires who are from Saudi Arabia or Brunei. And they may not be as rich as Bill Gates but they are somewhat close. In my lifetime, I have never heard of such donations from those rich Muslim individuals, for their fellow Muslim countries. Bangladesh, Pakistan and some North African countries are among the poorest Islamic nations and I am sure one tenth of above mentioned donation can build a very modern hospital or an educational institution in those countries.

I have seen Saudi Prince, buying millions of shares of Citibank, Apple computer or buying hotels in Hollywood. Which is fine, from financial point of view but it is worth investing in the improvement of poor Muslim lives. Thus, they can make them better educated instead of becoming narrow-minded fundamentalists. They can have better access to health care which they badly need. I am saddened to see that we willfully ignore the moral decadence of rich Islamic countries, ignore their horrible human rights record. I have hardly seen any letter showing the displeasure in treating young boys from our country in UAE as camel jockeys.

We rejoice when a Muslim win in any type of discrimination lawsuit in the West but constantly ignore the poor human rights record of Islamic countries. We can be sympathetic to our fellow Muslim brothers but except for Palestine, rest of the miseries are brought by their own deeds.

We should first become righteous collectively before we show solidarity with our so-called Muslim brothers. Because individually Muslims can be as righteous as any other people in the world but collectively or as a nation we are worst in the civilised world.

Finally, I remember a quote from Ben Franklin, which may sound controversial-"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters."

M. Hassan, USA



Where are our brothers?

Jail killing

This refers to your editorial "Jail Killing Trial" (November 4).

I wonder what justifies your 'feeling' that the BNP-led coalition has put the trials of the '75 killings 'on the back burner'. On the contrary, doesn't the dilly-dallying with the trials argue that the BNP is interested in dumping them into the deep freezer forever? Can you think of any instance when the BNP tried to bring the trials to the boil?

Isn't it also naive to think that the BNP-led alliance will take appropriate steps to hold the trials? Moreover, wouldn't their support for the trial look like an act of self-condemnation as it will mean standing up for figures who had antithetical position? As the BNP is proceeding steadily with its project of political rehabilitation of Jamaat, why should it devote its time and energy in honouring leaders who led the War of Liberation?

When I think of the way our national leaders have been treated, I feel like crying in shame. No doubt, Bangladesh is a strange country. **Quazi M Billah** Chittagong

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

I expected a more hard-hitting commentary from Editor Mahfuz Anam criticising the negative sides of the army drive. But, Mr. Mahfuz Anam has implored 'Will our elected government tell us what is happening?'

It is another form of terrorism what the "army" is doing to eradicate the terrorism. They are just doing whatever they like. There are allegations against them of beating, arresting, killing, and insulting anybody they suspect. But do they have the right to act like this? Are they above the law of the country? I really wonder where are our human right activists and lawyers are. Why

are they silent when people need them?

The Daily Star is said to be committed to the people's right to know. But what about our right to express the truth, right to live with dignity and right to enjoy the protection of law? **Nazmur Rahman** Dhaka

Gun control infringes our right to self-defence

Asking law-abiding citizens to surrender their licensed arms can be considered as an attack on individual liberty. The right of self-defence is the first law of nature. Whenever the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any colour or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction. A well-regulated police and military being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms should not be infringed.

If guns are taken away from the law-abiding citizens the only owner of arms in the country will be the state and the criminals. 29 days have passed since the start of "Operation Clean Heart" and this operation has yet to recover less than 5% of the arms hidden by the miscreants and *santrashes*. If the authoritarian takes over of people's licensed guns continues (without any probable cause in the individual situations) we will have to live in a police state where only government and the miscreants possess arms. **Ahmed K. Rashid** Dhaka

Army drive in Mirpur

It's a great opportunity for people like me who live abroad, to know about the current affairs in my country through the Internet edition of your unique daily.

I just want to thank the government, especially Prime Minister

Khaleda Zia for her fantastic decision to deploy army to crack down on criminals. I don't trust our police and therefore don't expect them to be honest. According to all the newspapers Bangladesh crime situation has improved a lot and I hope it's going to improve further. I also wonder whether army has cracked down on Mirpur area. When I used to live there, the man who ruled the area was Kala Jahangir. He was almost like the emperor of that area. I would like to urge the authorities concerned and the media to save the people of Mirpur from the clutches of criminals and terrorists like Kala Jahangir. **Ahsan** One e-mail

AL leadership

I was disappointed, as I am sure many others were, while reading the news about the AL convention/conference in December, although it did mention, and in vaunted terms too, that this was an exercise in democracy that the party was undertaking--for the first time in many years.

Reading between the lines, it will be quite clear that this is mere hogwash. The fact that evades immediate recognition is that it is the old and existing Thana and District level organisations which will be electing the big shots in the party. The union and up level elections will happen later, after the top leadership has re-cemented their old building blocks firmly in place. Old wine is being served in a new bottle and the old power structure will continue to perpetuate their hold in the party.

New generation leadership, who would have wanted to join the party despite the current lack of the means to make a quick buck or grow a quick muscle, --who would want to serve the party from an ideological and philosophical urge, will not be attracted. This is going to intensify the already crippling crisis of capable second, third and fourth tiers of

leadership in the party. The party leaders think that they have hoodwinked the people they consider stupid, once again! Do they realise how they are snuffing-out the party to death?

This simply is organisational hypocrisy and will do anything but save the party from the disaster that has been impending. And yet, this was the time when an honest effort should have been made to cleanse the party of the benefit-mongers who have controlled and pillaged it all this time. Thus, the infusion of new blood and new ideas which has been so talked about lately, is being skilfully skirted, under a smokescreen of democratic-processes. This will certainly keep the power structure intact but is going to throttle life out of the grass-roots-level work force of the party. On the other hand, this would have been an excellent opportunity to revamp the party, set the organisation right and get ready for the next elections.

How long can the Awami League keep deceiving itself and its supporters? Who will give the ultimatum to the party chief that this kind of hogwash and ill-brewed political considerations may serve some leaders but will not in the future, serve the party, nor will contribute to the long term goals for the Bengali society that was behind the Liberation War in 1971 and that this is not the time for self-aggrandisement **Acitizen** Dhaka

Reasons for regime change

By citing the 'Reasons for regime change' as a go ahead to the US to proceed on their plans to invade Iraq, we are effectively handing them the right to be the world's police force. If they can have the right to bring about regime change in Iraq for the benefit of the Iraqi people, why can't they do it everywhere else where people are not happy with their government?

Whether the government was democratically elected or not should not matter, since of paramount importance is whether the government is effective in providing good governance. As many friends as the certain Ridha Saleh in Mr. Mahmood Elahi's letter could find in Iraq who welcome the US attacks, a person opposed to these attacks can find two, or even three Iraqis opposed to the attacks, because more than a few innocent Iraqi lives will be lost, I assure you. Saddam is a bad guy, we all agree, but saying a US attack would solve all Iraqis' problems is like saying two wrongs make a right.

How can more deaths be the solution? Don't give me any high-handed statements about the greater good of the future, because not me, not you, nobody, has the right to determine which lives should be sacrificed for the greater good. **Shayan Khan** Gulshan, Dhaka

"The standard of English in Bangladesh"

I am writing this letter in response to the letter "The standard of English in Bangladesh" by Mr. F Hussain from U.K. I do agree with him that the standard of English in Bangladesh is much poorer in comparison to that of some neighbouring countries of ours. But I am not that much regretful for it nor am I going to lament about it. I confess that English is an international language and we have to learn it for different purposes. But if any one does not know English his life is not that much futile. There are many countries where English is not used widely but they are rich with their own culture, heritage and language. The important and burning need of our contemporary time is to nurture our own language and culture with full concentration. If we can discover the values of our own language only then we can enjoy and utilise the essence of a foreign language.

As for the neighbouring countries, it seems a little weird when I find them communicating among themselves in English as though it is their respective mother tongues. Lastly, I want to urge all the people like Mr Hussain and to those seniors who have great authority over English to come forward and help us improve 'the standard of English knowledge in Bangladesh'. Please don't waste your time only in lamentation, in reminiscence of past golden days or in criticism. **Rifat Mahbub** Dhaka University

This is in response to F Hussain, UK. The standard of spoken English (of course those who speak) among Bangladeshis is much better comparing to the people of our neighbouring countries. Say for India; each state has its own language and their accent is greatly dominated by their mother tongue. If you are not used to work with them, then it's really hard to explain you. Then Nepal. Their English accent is a combination of Nepali and Hindi. I don't know about the Burmese accent, as I am not used to work with them. Most of us know about the standard of Pakistanis' spoken English, and I don't find any reason to see theirs to be superior either. No question about Thai, Chinese and couple of other East Asian nations around us. You would need a bi-lingual interpreter to understand their English.

English is not our mother tongue - thus, it would be really hard to have

similar skills that of the people whose mother tongue is English. But the fact remains that most of them are really bad when it comes to written form of English. Whereas, we try to follow the English grammar in the construction of a sentence, they hardly do so! Of course, if you are educated in UK, USA, Canada and so forth; then it is different.

Letters from different senders addressed to the Editor, *The Daily Star* are subject to editing, deleting and/or change that are needed for brevity, accuracy and integrity with other texts. In my case, it happened and would happen in future too. I think *The Daily Star* has been doing enough quality control. I don't understand what kind of additional quality control on the individual's letters F Hussain means!

I also disagree that half the time the writers literally translate Bengali phrases into English. The writers' thought originates in Bangla in their mind before writing anything since it is their mother tongue. After they write their thoughts in English, it is no more a literal translation from Bengali to English. I read carefully most of the write-ups published in *The Daily Star*. They are quite good, and we should be proud of that.

Grateful to the management of *The Daily Star* that it continues publishing views of different writers/commentators from renowned to novice, professional, students and other citizenry. Our standard in written and oral English might improve further if we keep this trend going. **Ms. Sahed Ali** Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Honesty is the best policy

Everyday while returning from Dhaka Shishu Hospital I have a tough time bargaining the fare with the rickshawpullers. The other day as I was preparing myself for such bargaining I was asked by a very tired, weary, weak rickshawpuller where my destination was. His approach was so different that anyone will instantly grow a soft corner for him. I was determined mentally to take him for the ride whatever the fare might be. I also asked him whether he was sick. And I was shocked to learn that he was suffering from a tumour in his throat which the doctors have treated by medicine, as the operation wasn't possible.

As I reached home, I was prepared to pay this sick yet laborious man any amount he asked for. But to my dismay he charged 12 taka only! Any other rickshawpuller would have charged minimum 15 taka. When I handed out 20 taka the man said to me that I should keep the 10 taka as he didn't have any change. I told him that there's no need for that but the honest rickshawpuller did not agree with me. So I had to take back the 10 taka.

I just wondered if all of us were as honest as this man was then we wouldn't be termed as the most corrupt nation. However, I'm happy to learn that honesty still exists in our people. **Dr. Basmah M. Jafir** Dhaka

Our police

Recently the Inspector General of Police told in a TV interview that a rapid action force will be formed with those police personnel who are honest, efficient and diligent. Will he kindly tell us what will be done with the rest? **A concerned citizen** Dhaka

"Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow"

I was one of the awardees at *The Daily Star* award giving ceremony which took place on the 2nd of this month and I cannot help but respond to Mr. Hannan's letter (November 13). It seems like this man holds a deep rooted disliking for English medium school students and it is pretty obvious that he does not consider someone like myself who has completed his/her O' Level or A' Level Examinations as a 'nation builder'.

First of all let me point out that America is not the only country in the world where we young Bangladeshis go to study, work and live, countries like the UK, Canada, Australia and even East Asian countries are also an option for us. Also, not all of us plan to study abroad, there are a lot of meritorious students who join national and private universities and excel in their studies and work hard to build the nation. And by saying that English medium schools students are the ones who go abroad to study, Mr Hannan has also insulted the students of the Bangla medium schools. It seems he has no knowledge of students achieving meritorious results in HSC and SSC and then studying in prestigious universities abroad.

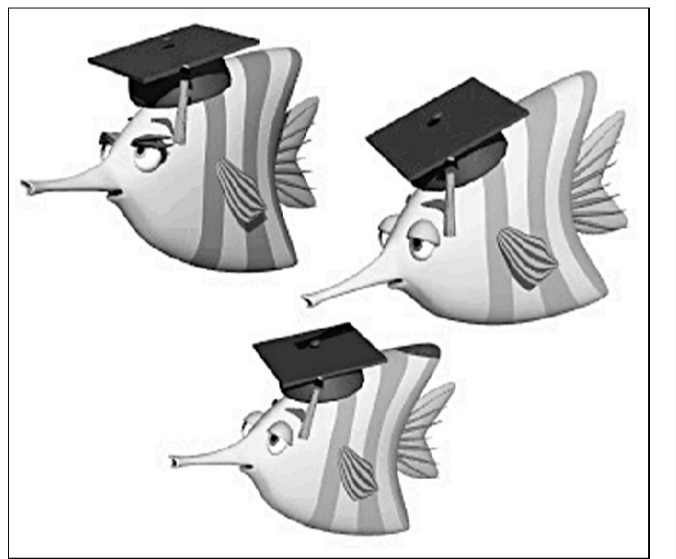
Every year while the HSC and SSC examinations are going on, we see numerous pictures in the newspapers of students getting caught while cheating and of course the percentage of passing has been going down each year. And Mr Hannan expects such people to be the nation builders of tomorrow! But I will of course not take away the credit of the students who do brilliantly in the HSC and SSC examinations, they are real assets of our country.

Mr Hannan also points out that *The Daily Star* hosts no such award ceremony for HSC and SSC results. Well, then maybe we English medium students should be given the national coverage that the Bangla medium school students receive each year after their results are out, with pictures of students and families on newspapers and names announced on national television. Neither the government itself nor any form of national media makes any effort to publish O' Level and A' Level results, whereas these results are acknowledged worldwide. *The Daily Star* has made a commendable move by introducing these annual awards and we English medium school students are grateful to *The Daily Star* for this. Mr Hannan should learn to appreciate the hard work of the English Medium students, because we are also the citizens of the country which he says in his letter, is filled with dirt, disease corruption and dirty politics. **Afreen Khan, Dhaka**

I am writing this letter in response to Abdul Hannan's comments on "Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow".

I must commend Mr. Hannan for identifying the most devastating societal ill of our 'ruling' nobility. Throughout history, our part of the world has been ruled by people who were detached with the mass vis-à-vis language, religion, culture, etc. Why should things be any different now? Did we ever have a revolution? Then why must we expect things to be any different? I am afraid that our esteemed newspaper is no different. Its niche market is the so-called English speaking crème de la crème of Bangladesh who for the most part aid in the development of the West rather than their own backyard. I find it extremely ironic to note here that most of these people actually reside in Bangladesh for a better part of the year.

Nonetheless, I congratulate *The Daily Star* in recognising our "Nation Builders of Tomorrow," because nobody ever bothered to recognise me (publicly) when I got 6 As and 4 Bs in my O' Levels some 10 years ago. **Zareh Khan, New York, USA**



Opportunity over there?

"Operation Clean Heart"

They call it 'Operation Clean Heart' but to me it sounds Like US's Operation Desert Storm carried out by the Senior Bush against Saddam Hussein in 1991. Although Operation Clean Heart is not a war operation yet people are dying in army custody. Why?

They asked people to deposit their licensed guns with the Police Stations. Why?

These deaths in custody are a serious matter. The deaths in the custody have now risen to 23. If the government had to respond to killings under police custody why the army be spared? In the meantime the ruling party should immediately come up with clear statements regarding the following:

1. Publish a full list of the criminals against whom the operation is directed. It should no longer be a secret list.
2. Publish the names of the individuals arrested out of the list so far.
3. Provide a clear statement as to who is responsible for the interrogation following the arrests.
4. Provide an approximate date of the army's return to their barracks.
5. Provide names of the various police and civil authorities and the army officials responsible for the Combined Operations area-wise or zone-wise This is necessary since it is often seen that whenever and wherever a mishap takes place the game of shifting the blame begins. The people have a right to know as to who is responsible covering which area.
6. Provide a statement indicating the length and breadth of the operation's mandate. Clearly state whether arresting of relations or family members of a criminal is also covered by that mandate.
7. Last but not the least, provide a clear statement as to the circumstances which led to the engaging of the army in the operations covering such aspects as to the failure of the police and other related civil authorities.

Shamsher Chowdhury Dhaka

A section of people seems a bit unhappy about the army operation against the listed criminals and terrorist. Can they suggest an alternative measure that would be effective in curbing terrorism?

A society where the law makers are engaged in criminal activities, where the members of police are found aiding and sheltering

criminals, where murders are committed in broad day light, where the victims are afraid to seek justice, was there a better alternative?

But the question now arises whether the present operation will yield any permanent positive impact. Handing over of the listed terrorists to police will not really help improve the situation in the long run. However, we are yet to see the result of the speedy trial to be held under the special tribunal announced recently.

Madam Prime Minister, please be sure that except for a handful of people the entire nation will be behind you in such a noble endeavour. **M Ataul Hoque** Dhaka

Many people have written letters praising the deployment of army but I do not find any reason to praise them.

At best, army actions are slipshod and seem to be without any proper planning. I have a feeling that they have not been properly briefed as to their prime objectives, otherwise, why should there be allegation of torture in army custody leading to death of 23 people so far. Why should they arrest people with licensed arms or confiscate licensed arms? Why should prominent politicians be arrested by the army and subsequently shown arrested in old pending cases? I am referring to a case in which Sheikh Hasina's political secretary was accused allegedly for attacking the motorcade of Begum Zia while she was in the opposition. Now after a lapse of several months, both Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sheikh Selim are also accused in the same case! Doesn't it look like an afterthought?

Wither "Operation Clean Heart"? What will it achieve nobody can tell!

A Concerned Citizen Dhaka

The following questions are for to ponder and if possible to answer who support the ongoing "Operation Clean Heart."

1. If the Parliament is the "Operation Theatre" for all state activities then how and why the decision on this "Operation Clean Heart" had been taken outside it?
2. Is the "Operation" justified without exhausting all other alterna-

3. Is it not absurd that all those who died in custody died of "heart attack"?
4. What happens after the Operation is over? The wound does not seem well healed or the disease cured. Then should the Operation continue for the next four years?
5. Was it not better to hand over power to the "Caretaker Government" instead of stepping into this complex, controversial and costly operation aggravating the condition with incurable complications if the coalition Government felt incapable of running the show?
6. What "Operation" do you think Begum Khaleda Zia should undertake for eliminating the corrupt ministers, MPs, officials and staffs?

Molla A Latif Kapasia, Gazipur

BNP was supposed to restore law and order in the country as the 'law and order issue' was the major among their election pledges. Already the alliance government has completed their one-year in office but they failed to curb crimes and terrorism. And finally the government has deployed army across the country in the name of nabbing criminals. Deployment of army has been congratulated from different tyres of the society. But the arrest of Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim MP raised numerous questions about the ongoing army drive.

So far 23 people have died in army custody. And more licensed arms than illegal have been recovered from different parts of the country. Should we call it a success?

Nobody should think that the army would be able to curb crimes overnight. Even three or six months are not sufficient to improve the deteriorated situation. Would it be wise to keep the army out of the barrack for indefinite period?

Rafiq Bin Hai Mymensingh

This letter is a resistance to a recent letter by Kushi Kabir where she cited that the Operation Clean Heart had the drive with intentions and their action did not include the criminals who were under the umbrella of Jamaat-e-Islami.



Army drive: To be continued?

To my knowledge the drive was to eradicate crimes that intimidated the lives of common innocent people, therefore the branded criminals with a history of prolonged pathological illness fostered by Godfathers who are the top notch of the society are being arrested. I would not hesitate to mention that the actions taken by the army have always been credible, but we must not forget that incidence of crime have dropped drastically. What the army needed was a thorough briefing fully stating their limitations, which was not done appropriately.

What I do not agree and oppose is the workers of Jamaat are not involved in heinous crimes, where loot, paid killings are being committed. The workers of Jamaat have a moral cause for protest against anti-Islamic culture and those, which annihilate the image of Islam. **Z Firdaus** Dhaka