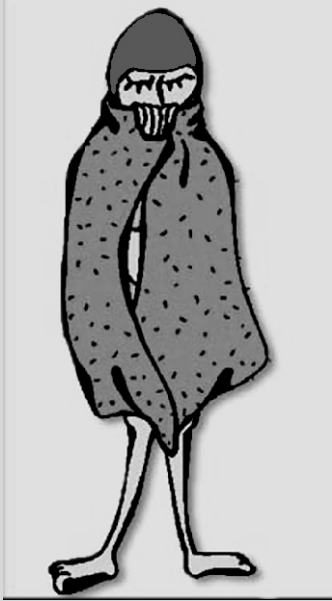


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Towel tradition

Yes, Dr. Rashid Hyder (November 22) I can, perhaps, throw some light from my own observation on towel and executives. There are both pan and reality on this issue. But before that you should read a si-fi book, titled, 'Hitch-hiker's Guide to Galaxy' (also drama serialised by the BBC radio few years back) which graphically illustrates the usefulness of towel over several pages!



Towel for taking bribe?

However, in Bangladesh the executives above the rank of Section Officer have towels on their seats. The SOs normally have the privilege of home-made towels, the above echelon's towel are made of finer materials from Indian origin, reaching up to Chinese or Japanese ones, say, for the Secretaries and Ministers. The uses are varied. The executives work too hard, often their chair-cushions are bruised or damaged, towels tend to cover the scar of the fateful chairs. In humid summer they are in use to wipe off your sweat, particularly when there is power-cut or load shedding. During rainy season, their uses need not be narrated. This is the time, the towels get replaced (mind that it is June ending!). In leisurely district-level offices, towels may be used as replacement of pillow - you cannot have a nap sitting upright. People say that in some offices where movement of files run along side clandestine transaction of money, towels are most useful - one can put the flow of money under the towel covering the seat since pockets and table drawers are not only too exposed but embarrassing to both the givers and takers!

With the development of Bangladesh, towel culture is flourishing fast. Now I have seen it has invaded the educational institutions. The vice-chancellors are getting the like of it. They need them all the year round, since there are agitation, slogan and movement around the corner, and mind that, most of them are occupying the position by virtue of nocturnal expedition. And the practice is spreading gradually to the lower levels as per order of precedence.

Dr. Hyder, it is not status symbol. It is a downright stupid symbol!

Dr. K. Maudood Elahi
Jahangirnagar University

Hasina for her promulgation of branding Bangladesh "a cocoon of terrorists" in Brussels, and in many other European communities. Bangladesh is a paradigm of juxtaposition of different religions, and as late as last month, the US Ambassador in Bangladesh, current US administration, and European countries also viewed Bangladesh as a moderate Islamic country.

In such a scenario, why India is trying to brand Bangladesh, one of its few friendly neighbours as an extremist? Is India being trapped by its own repeated proclamation of a common phrase, which originated after September 11, that it is a victim of terrorism?

A broad perspective or a bird's view will be beneficial to better analyse this kind of behaviour all around the world. It is now a cliché to say that the world changed with the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre. But, the world also did change with the election of George Bush to the presidency of the United States. A new agenda emerged, the old rules of the game were abandoned, and internationally agreed laws and protocols were disregarded. "With us or against us," emerged as the dominant political theocracy. "Regime change," and "pre-emptive strike" became non-contested, forceful, power policies. What is different now is the open discussion and the overt plans to change another government, and the silence of the other states. None has seriously questioned the emerging world order and challenged the empire.

The Israelis invade Palestinian cities and murder innocent civilians. They too are engaged in the act of "pre-emptive strike." And the world watches it with minimal reaction. The Russians see their natural right to enter Georgia to haunt "Chechen terrorists." Setting up "buffer zones" in other sovereign lands is becoming an accepted norm. Welcome to the world of pre-emptive strike! A maddening new game has begun. The result is, undoubtedly, increased worldwide violence. We have entered a new era of violence, one that is fuelled by a quest for world domination and profiteering.

What is the esoteric adumbration and logical conclusion we can deduce from the strident, but meaningful statements from BJP leader Mr. Advani to Kolkata police detective Mr. Mitra? Is India also in a mission to fulfil its obligation as a junior partner of lone super power?

Nasim Islam
USA

Bangabandhu and the cantonment mural

The other day while going to one of my friends' house in Dhaka cantonment I stopped by the Muktiyuddha Jadugar on the Staff Road. I've never been to this place before and I was impressed by the architectural design of the museum. I remembered with deep respect how Bangabandhu was tortured here during the Agartala Conspiracy Case. I felt encouraged when I found some teenage boys inside the museum. Probably because of restriction of movement in the Cantonment people hardly visit this historical place. There is also not any widespread publicity that there is such a place in Dhaka.

"AL and terrorism in Bangladesh"

This is in reference to your editorial "AL and terrorism in Bangladesh" (November 2). The remarks you have made in the editorial are right, objective and dispassionate.

What is galling and appalling however is that your foreboding had been proved correct soon enough. As published in your daily, the European Parliament had passed a resolution condemning the so-called human rights violation "now underway" in Bangladesh.

You are well justified in pointing out that the Indian politicians do criticise their government in no uncertain terms but never while travelling or staying abroad. I distinctly remember when Mr. Jyoti Basu, while Chief Minister of West Bengal, visited Dhaka for the first time our reporters asked him volleys of question regarding Indian affairs and policy. But Mr. Basu responded to the barrage of questions just in one sentence, "since I am in a foreign country, I shall not utter so much as a word ever about my country".

"Colonialism and War on Terror"

I would like to thank Mr. John Finch for his letter "Colonialism and War on Terror" (November 14). Due to globalisation, the present day political leaders of many nations are shifting their stance very different from the colonial era. In those days the political leaders and their parties could reach the pinnacle by waging war against their colonial rulers on issues like disparity on participation in policy planning and decision-making process of the government and deprivation of allocations of resources of the colonies. But now it is quite different. Because the political leaders in many nations are competing in drumming up support from the nation's civil and military bureaucracy and embarking on waging war on terror against a particular religion, both at home and abroad almost forgetting that they were once their partners in alliance in spreading socialism, communism and atheism and sided with a particular religion order which were often dissimilar in two different bordering arch-rival nations.

I believe Mr. Finch your beloved country Australia would not be facing the same eventualities like the several nations that you have mentioned in your letter, because so long the constitutional rights of the aboriginal and Asian immigrants are not violated, there is no imminent reason for social unrest or security threat from outside to your peace loving continent-nation.

Indian views of Bangladeshi criminals

I am very thankful to *The Daily Star* for staying on top of Indian lies and deceits, which is being propagated by, from the top level Indian leader to various Indian media, regarding the issue of those criminals, who were held in Indian state of West Bengal.

What is the psychological and philosophical motive that India is trying to play by branding those seven criminals as ISI and Al-Qaida operatives? Thanks to Sheikh

the policy of imposing higher import duties involving itself in the trade dispute or belligerency.

But there is a fruitful way out of this problem. The looser country may impose non-tariff barrier restricting the quality of import. Only the shortfall of the product should be allowed for import. With the narrowing of shortfall, as the new move; more industries will be emerging under government protection to meet the demand gap, the volume of import should be gradually reduced and in one stage when the industrial sector will be able to meet the national demand the item should be banned for import totally.

Investment in Korean EPZ

Since the project was launched about five years ago, I have been following the news items on the development of the Korean EPZ, the first private sector EPZ of the country. It took the government more than five years even to consider issuing the operating license to the Korean Company, whereas the government committee is setting a time frame of five

years for the project to be completed. In the context of Bangladesh's least developed economy this policy may give in a rich dividend.

Shawkat-ur-Rashid Khan
BK Gangully Lane,
Dhaka

private sector.

Jalal Ahmad
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The education controversy

I have read the arguments concerning the English Vs Bengali medium controversy and feel it necessary to add some comments. We have the same problem in England where English graduates cross the Atlantic to the US in search of better emoluments. This sorry fact has just recently been highlighted in an article in the current issue of the Economist.

If they can do so, I don't see why Bangladeshi students can't. I hope they try and good luck to those who

higher studies in the distant shores of the US, UK, or any foreign country. The reason why more English medium students make it to schools abroad is because, unfortunately though it may sound, they generally have a better overall academic background. This is borne out by the fact that in most entry-level examinations, like the Scholastic Aptitude Tests or the TOEFLs they invariably do better.

I would also ask the concerned citizens to take a look at the curriculum of the O and A levels. I am sure they would themselves be convinced of why the English medium students get easy entries in the educational institutions abroad.

And why do they stay back? It's not the English medium students alone who stay behind. Take a walk on the streets of the Queens in New York, and I can assure you that nine out of ten Bangladeshis you come across belonged to Bangla medium school in Bangladesh.

Ahmed Aurungzeb
On e-mail

It's all about oil

No doubt, the Bush administration thinks the people of the whole world to be stupid. So they came up with different stories about Iraq having connection with Al-Qaida. When that did not get enough support, they came up with the great idea of Saddam having weapons of mass destruction. While Saddam and Iraq are denying all these allegations, North Korea admits of having nuclear weapons. But the Bush administration has all its attention focused on Iraq and not on North Korea. A recent poll in the UK showed that one third of the people believed in Saddam over Bush. Indeed a result of these kind of double standard activities.

As for the example of Japan, the US has a huge base of armed forces situated there. They probably want Japan to build its army to share the cost of the war. Isn't it nice! You share the bill, but I eat all the fruits! The US wants to make another base in Iraq like that in Japan, which will provide them the controlling power over Iraq.

Don't worry! The people may be stupid, but they still understand why the attention is concentrated on Iraq. It's all about oil, smart guy!

M. Mashui Huq
Qatar

Two-stroke autorickshaws

One of the significant achievements of the first year of BNP rule has been the improvement in the quality of air we breathe in Dhaka, as a result of the withdrawal to a large extent of the black smoke emitting two-stroke autorickshaws.

My observation on the quality of air was confirmed the other day when a member of the BUET faculty, told me that from the rooftop of his residence on BUET campus, previously he could hardly see the buildings up to Panthapath, but now he could clearly view up to the IDB Bhavan in Argargaon.

While congratulating the Communication Minister for his noble efforts to improve the environment of the capital, I would urge him not to budge an inch from his determination to totally ban these environmental *Frankensteins* by the year-end from Dhaka (ensuring at the same time provision of alternative transport). Ultimately these should be phased out from the entire country as well.

A. B. M. Nurul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

complete, but unfortunately they are not taking any initiative to reconstruct the wall. And this is allowing people to enter the Cemetery at their free will and also to use the Cemetery as a thoroughfare. Some people are even dumping garbage inside the Cemetery, as there is no boundary wall. Also all the fruits from the numerous trees are being stolen. Please note that by selling these fruits, we generate revenue for the maintenance of the Cemetery. The WASA contractors have poured huge amount of mud into the Cemetery, covering many graves, and now we have to remove this excess mud at our own cost, as the contractor is nowhere to be found. We have written to WASA many times but so far no action has been taken.

Now it has become almost impossible to maintain the sanctity of the Cemetery.

So, we are requesting you to kindly look into the situation and hopefully do a photo feature to expose the gravity of the situation.

Joseph Amond
Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka

Save the cemetery

I would like to request you to do a photo feature on the Christian Cemetery in Narinda, Wari, Dhaka.

The Cemetery was established in the 16th Century by the then British Govt. for the British soldiers, Indigo planters and their family members. Many of their graves can still be found in the Cemetery dating back to 16th Century.

Currently the Cemetery is being used by the different denominations of the Christian Faith, under the Jurisdiction of the St. Mary's Cathedral, Ramna, Dhaka.

At the beginning of this year, Dhaka WASA requested the Cemetery Board, of which I am the Voluntary Cemetery Supervisor, for permission to demolish about 150 RFT of the boundary wall, as they were constructing a box culvert for the sewerage expansion and rehabilitation Project (SERP) at a depth of 23 ft. as the wall was a threat to the work being done there. And WASA confirmed in writing that they would reconstruct the wall at their own cost after completion of the box culvert.

The box culvert adjoined to our wall is now

ut to the extent of shortage to enable the actual users to buy it from the market without trouble in one hand and on the other hand with the increasing of production of the said product, as new industries would be coming up to meet the demand gap, the import will be cut proportionately and finally banned with obtaining self-sufficiency.

But in the long run when the sector would be stronger and also since this is the age of free economy we have to open our market to participate in the world competition which will fix up the price of the product reasonably and also ensure its quality in the greater interest of the consumer class.

years for investment of 500 million US dollars in the EPZ. I would like to know, why don't the government impose such conditions on BOI for investment in the government EPZ. When the government itself is failing to attract such huge investments, it is creating unnecessary hindrances for the private sector to flourish.

Therefore, at this time of very little international investment in the country, the government should understand that whatever are the investments made in the private EPZ, it will benefit the country. Therefore, the government should not impose such unnecessary conditions on the

complete, but unfortunately they are not taking any initiative to reconstruct the wall. And this is allowing people to enter the Cemetery at their free will and also to use the Cemetery as a thoroughfare. Some people are even dumping garbage inside the Cemetery, as there is no boundary wall. Also all the fruits from the numerous trees are being stolen. Please note that by selling these fruits, we generate revenue for the maintenance of the Cemetery. The WASA contractors have poured huge amount of mud into the Cemetery, covering many graves, and now we have to remove this excess mud at our own cost, as the contractor is nowhere to be found. We have written to WASA many times but so far no action has been taken.

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Joseph Amond
Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka

"Nation builders of tomorrow"

A lot has been written on the subject in these columns. I would request those concerned about the exodus of the English medium students and their intentions of staying back abroad to kindly carry out a sample survey in the educational institutions of both Bangla and English medium. I am certain, they will discover that all students, be it English or Bengali medium, long for

succeed. The brain drain, as it were, works between First World countries too.

Andrew Flintock
London, UK

"Anatomy is destiny"

anyway they are doomed to slay the way they are, so why not? Why not set up a few gas chambers while we are at it, in order to hasten the disposal of people who are destined to be perpetually useless elements in society? Forgiveness is pointless because those whose genes have fixed the way they are living cannot improve in any way, can they?

Having dealt with the problem of law and order, what shall we do about education? Well, we might as well invent some way of testing the genes of small children and dispose off those whom we decide (somehow or other) will never be able to make much of their lives, however hard they and their teachers try. Maybe we should make arrangements for parents to be forced to surrender such children for disposal. They can always be told to go away and have more children whose genes are more satisfactory.

I hope your readers, sir, are now spluttering in horror at these suggestions! But are these not the logical outcome of such beliefs? No wonder those of us who rejoice in even a small measure of true humanity refuse to believe such dangerous rubbish and those of us who are truly religious go into orbit!

I admit that there is an ele-

ment in many cultures, often felt acutely by poets, that ponders on the existence of 'fate' but turning it into an 'ism' - a religion called 'fatalism' - leads to a society which would be a living hell.

There will always be a tension between pre-destination and free will but it should be a healthy tension between two poles like a washing-line on which we can hang our lives. To surrender entirely to fatalism takes us in the opposite direction to true religion in fact it is one of its major opponents, as it challenges the assumption that human beings can be expected to take responsibility for their lives and so can be held accountable for their choices.

Our genes are indeed the raw material with which we each have to make our lives. But the difference between them and the finished article is the difference between what is in the bazaar bag and what is on the dining room table! Life is a kitchen, cooking provides the chemistry, the cooks provide the skills and the passion to cook motivates the whole process. Transformation is possible!

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Dhaka



Anatomy of life from another angle

The column by Md. Badrul Ausan "Anatomy is destiny" (November 22) did indeed make gloomy reading, with its apparent agreement with the atheist scientist Richard Dawkin's thesis that, because human beings are the creation of their genes, they are programmed, from their conception, to be whatever they become.

We better decide, pretty fast, sir, whether or not, we are going to believe this and if it is to be promulgated as truth - because it will have a profound effect not only on our personal behaviour but how we want the society to be managed and the governments to govern. What if, indeed, the murderer and the wife-beater, the generous philanthropist and the fine teacher, are nothing but the product of their genes and can accept neither praise nor be blamed for their actions? The

concepts of good and evil are explained away by the excuse, "It's nothing to do with me! It's my genes!"

If we believe that people's character is pre-ordained, the forces of law and order may, with impunity, not bother about the human rights of those whose behaviour is anti-social. Good gracious! Why make a fuss if the police or army polish off a few criminals? There is no hope for their re-habitation

"The denial that brings discredit to govt"

Thanks a lot to Mr Mahfuz Anam for his commentary on the government's denial of deaths in army custody.

Since the inception of "Operation Clean Heart", concerns were raised regarding the army's heavy-handed attitude, violation of human rights, politicisation of the drive, alleged torture and resultant death in custody. Some even questioned the legal footing behind calling the army.

The army was used in raid/occupation of Awami League's research centre CRI. Under which law the army took part in these actions?

The Principal Information Officer's briefing is also self-contradictory. On the one hand, he claimed that there was no death in army custody and on the other hand, he mentioned about the formation of several probe/inquiry committees regarding death army custody!

We don't disagree that the deployment of army has helped a lot in curbing criminal activities, at least for the time being. But one has to consider the other side of the Operation as well. The army is yet to show success in catching those big fish enjoying protection from different political parties including the coalition government. If these high-up criminals are overlooked, things would deteriorate soon after the army returns to their barrack.

In reference to Operation Clean Heart, the adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament on "serious human rights violation" in Bangladesh should be considered seriously and the government should take note accordingly. A couple of weeks ago, the Amnesty International also raised similar concern regarding "Operation Clean Heart".

Before things get worse, the government should question itself as to what is going wrong with the joint drive. If the elected government is determined in its commitment regarding improvement of law and order situation then keeping its eye closed, blaming the media and political rivals are not the best options.

Md. Sahed Ali
Vancouver, British Columbia,
Canada

"Deaths of children"

The Daily Star news "66 children die at RMCH in last 22 days" (November 23) and the subsequent editorial "Deaths of children" (November 24) has really made us worried about the situation prevailing in the government hospitals.

How come 66 children die in a single hospital in only 3 weeks time? What was the management of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital doing when on average 3 children were dying everyday? What were the doctors and professors doing? Why infants are neglected in this manner in our country? Has life become really cheap in this part of the globe? How long will the com-

mon taxpayers be deprived of their basic needs?

Md. Ashequul Islam
IBA, University of Dhaka

According to a report of *The Daily Star* (November 23) 66 children died at RMCH in last 22 days. It is a huge number and it shows a vivid picture of carelessness of the authority.

Moreover, RMCH does not have essential equipment to provide proper child health-care. Nor did the hospital authorities take any initiative to set up a separate neonatal ward even if the number of deaths of new-borns rose in winter. It is the lack of commitment towards children and it cannot go unpunished.

Even though we promise many things child care and children welfare, we do very little for them. The Government should immediately take steps and make the RMCH authority answer for the negligence of duty. For a better world, we must take care of our children.

OLI Md. Abdullah Chowdhury
Child Right Activist &
Field Co-ordinator, Community
Development Library (CDL)
Sylhet

"AL and terrorism in Bangladesh"

This is in reference to your editorial "AL and terrorism in Bangladesh" (November 2). The remarks you have made in the editorial are right, objective and dispassionate.

What is galling and appalling however is that your foreboding had been proved correct soon enough. As published in your daily, the European Parliament had passed a resolution condemning the so-called human rights violation "now underway" in Bangladesh.

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As a common citizen, of Bangladesh, I profoundly hope, our "exalted politicians" will take a clue from your editorial and the Indian politicians as well.

Fakhrul Alam
Siddheswari Lane, Dhaka

Indian views of Bangladeshi criminals

I am very thankful to *The Daily Star* for staying on top of Indian lies and deceits, which is being propagated by, from the top level Indian leader to various Indian media, regarding the issue of those criminals, who were held in Indian state of West Bengal.

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