

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.

"Miss World pageant and Nigeria riot"

This is in response to Mr. Mahmud's letter ("Miss World pageant and Nigeria riot", November 26)

The comments by the offending newspaper was of no doubt of poor taste, and they even profusely apologised for it, still it is no excuse for going on a rampage and killing innocent people, mostly Christians. There are remedies other than resorting to violence: legal action, economic boycott of the newspaper, protests, etc.

If one criticises one's religion, is this an excuse to start a riot?

Karim Abdullah
New York, USA

This letter is in reference to the letter published on the topic "Miss World Pageant and Nigeria Riot". I am surprised to see that Mr. Mahmud is trying to put the blame on the newspaper authority instead of condemning the angry youths who were responsible for instigating the riot which killed more than 200 people.

As far as I know the Editor of the Newspaper publicly apologized for the comments and formally suspended the journalist for his derogatory comments about the Prophet. If we stop short of condemning this sort of violence, we would send a wrong message to the Muslim youths. We Muslims need to be tolerant about others' views and opinions about Islam. How the faith of Islam would be damaged if someone writes a negative thing about our religion or Prophet? We had to call a strike in Bombay because of Jerry Falwell's remarks against Islam which was made in USA and that strike ended up turning into a riot between Hindus and Muslims!

We must not encourage our younger generation to indulge in

"Army excess at Rayerbazar"

This is in regards to the letter by M Hasan (November 26) on the army's rampage in Rayerbazar. I completely agree with him. Bangladesh is not a country for Muslims alone. Bangladesh is a country for Bengalis, be they Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or Christians.

Only the other day, the ISPR was quick to respond to press reports on the death of a young man in custody. That's interesting because as far as I can recall it's the only denial published by the army so far. And since the Rayerbazar rampage reports have not elicited a denial either, we can safely assume it to be true as well.

Let this be a warning, in addition to going on a wild goose chase for the most wanted criminals, army jawans will enforce the sanctity of Ramadan in the same fashion as the religious police in Saudi Arabia.

Gora
Dhaka

Bill to drop name of Bangabandhu?
This was one of the most shocking and disturbing news I read in the whole year. People of Bangladesh have elected this government to bring prosperity, peace and ensure a better life for them. Nothing will be accomplished by dropping the name of Bangabandhu from the nomenclature of that agriculture award. The main objective of that award is to recognise talent and to applaud the great contributions to the country in that field. To achieve this objective the government does not need to change the award name.

We all should remember that our main goal in this century is to

aged to squander what little reputation it had by the Joyal Hazari attacks on Tipu Sultan, the minority attack after the October election, death in army custody and so on. Now we go ahead and arrest two Channel 4 journalists!

Our government really never bothered to take those classes on diplomacy did it? Regardless of what anti-government material these Channel 4 reporters were going to broadcast, you can be rest assured that it will be negative now.

I am also amazed to see that *The Daily Star* has given so little coverage to this attack on press freedom. Rather than a large headline on another AL walkout, this report should have been given prominence.

Azad
Dhaka

"Community service"

This is apropos to Mr. Mahub's letter (November 22). Indeed there are almost no community service programmes in the schools of Dhaka in general. School administrations, due to various reasons fail to run such programmes. But we students must act. The students themselves must take initiative to run such programmes. They must be go-getters if they are to benefit the community, and thus, in the process, themselves. However, it is absolutely imperative that the school administrations allow and encourage the students to set up such community service clubs.

There should also be a counsellor from the administration to help the students whenever needed, and to officially approve the various activities of the club.

This is precisely what we are doing at Mastermind School. Our community service club is for the A-

and the school authorities definitely have a significant role to play in this regard. It may sound impossible (because of the recent debate going on regarding Bangla and English medium students' roles in the society) but students of both the mediums can work together to break down the stereotypical barriers "that supposedly exists" by working together in community services.

Recently *The Star Weekend Magazine* featured such an event which took place at the Dhanmondi Lake Amphitheater on October 31. Students from both Bangla and English medium very enthusiastically took part in cleaning up the garbage littered around the Lake area. This was a good example that with the right kind of motivation and positive approach it is possible to get the students involved in community service at an early age which in turn will definitely create a sense of responsibility in them towards their community and the country.

My advise to all the letter writers on the debate "Saluting the nation builders of tomorrow" to end this debate before it turns ugly and rather concentrate on ways and ideas on how to help the next generation of Bangladeshis to serve their nation.

Joseph Amond
Gulshan, Dhaka

ADB economic update

I had the opportunity to go through the most recent quarterly economic update on Bangladesh prepared by the ADB. It is available on their website at http://www.adb.org/Documents/Economic_Updates/BAN/default.asp. The ADB report is encouraging, but there is still a lot to be done. Bangla-

While appreciating the Finance Minister for addressing the issue of counterfeit notes with the Central Bank, I fail to understand why the Scheduled/Commercial Banks can't take the full responsibility- all authorised Banking Institutions should employ necessary personnel and equipment (scanners, etc.) to put a check on this.

Thus, when an account-holder withdraws cash from a bank-counter or ATM, he/she is "automatically" ensured that only genuine currency notes come out of a bank. If the banks are making so much of profits, shouldn't this be the minimum expectation from them? After all, it is the bank who is supposed to be the "expert" on legal tender-not the common people. Otherwise, how to differentiate between such institutions and the kerb markets?

A Distressed Observer
Chittagong

To the mobile phone users

Mobile phones have become not only fashionable but also useful to the point of almost being indispensable. However as with any technological advance there should be rules and/or etiquette for proper and safe usage. It is amazing that many mobile phone users do not realise that it is very rude not to switch off mobiles during meetings and seminars. A most embarrassing incident comes to mind when a company organised a special lecture from a renowned person from the UK but instead of being able to concentrate on the seminar we had to hear different musical notes of the mobile phones owned by the innumerable professionals present.

A serious safety issue regarding mobile phone use is talking on the phone while driving. Dhaka city traffic is crazy and dangerous at best but this can become fatal if the attention of the driver is distracted while talking on the phone. In many countries usage of mobile phones is banned while driving. This should be applied to Dhaka city and other major cities of Bangladesh as well.

Zeba I. Seraj
Dhaka University

Royalty fees?

Would the Grameen Phone authority shed some light on the legality of collecting tk.1100 royalty fees from each subscriber every year?

On 23rd November, I received a text message on my cellular from Grameen Phone (GP) that I am required to pay taka 1100 by November 28 otherwise my line would be snapped. With such a short notice (5 days) plus the unique format of the circular (text message) used, one wonders whether the message is authentic or not. Would it have been too much trouble for GP to send a formal letter to each subscriber, or give a newspaper circular in order to inform the subscribers about the new decision?

Mohammad Mehroz Jalli
Dhaka Cantonment

Thoughts on gas export

The issue of pipeline export of gas has become a highly emotive subject. It should be considered from purely national and commercial interest instead of slogan mongering and paranoia aimed at misleading people with exaggerated risk based on obsolete figures of gas reserve.

Limited export of gas not exceeding 500 MCF/day will consume 3.65 TFC in 20 years which the country can allow the IOC to export from their shares. This quantity of gas can be extracted from the 'field growth' of the existing gas fields without reducing our intake from the proven reserves. We have not yet taken into consideration the massive reserve of 6 TFC in the newly discovered Bibiana.

We should take a look into the stagnant situation that we are in. The gas pipe of India has been taken across Jamuna Bridge but there is no finance for the planned

Yes, it is all about oil



The United States today has an overwhelming preponderance of military, economic and political power over the rest of the world. But such an imbalance situation cannot last forever and over the next 10 or 20 years new power blocs will emerge in Europe, Russia, China (and perhaps other areas too) as potential rivals to the superpower. The main strategic aim of the US therefore is to utilise this period of temporary dominance for maximum effect. In this long-term geopolitical context the seizure of the Iraqi oil resources represents a tempting option, because at a relatively low cost it will give the United States a means of achieving permanent advantage against any future challengers.

Saudi Arabia, with the largest oil reserves in the world, is already under the sway of America. If Iraq, with the second largest oil reserves by far, also comes under US tutelage, after a carefully arranged "regime-change" of course, all the advanced industrial nations of the world for decades to come will find themselves at the mercy of the one nation in control of the lifeblood of economic activity, namely oil. China, Japan and Europe with no or little oil of their own will be most vulnerable. But even countries which have some oil reserves will also be subject to the American whip

because with the Iraqi oil in hand OPEC can be destroyed and oil prices driven down, which will seriously damage economies like Russia which depend badly on high oil prices.

It is in recognition of this dire prospect that Russia, France/Germany (representing Europe) and China (from behind the scenes) have felt compelled to work together to thwart the US plan to invade Iraq and take over the oil resources of the country. Russia, in particular, must have understood that in the game of global chess the loss of the Iraqi piece would represent such a decisive setback as to be equivalent to checkmate. The Russian leadership must have made it clear that there were red lines around Iraq, which they were prepared to defend at all costs, even by nuclear means if necessary. Only a threat of such proportions would have been sufficient to dissuade the Americans from following through on their intention to steal the Iraqi prize from under the noses of the world.

If Mr. Mahmood Elahi is himself too naive to understand the deep geopolitical implications of the US's proposed grab of Iraq perhaps he will be a bit more charitable towards the rest of us who are under no such illusions.

Rafiqullah Bhuyian
Magbazar, Dhaka

An appeal to the business community

It is apparent from various reports that some solace and tranquility have dawned on people after launching the 'Operation Clean Heart'. The biggest beneficiary appears to be the business com-



Commodity price and consumers' plight

acts that promote violence and disrespect others.

Noori Mostofa
Ono's Mostofa

"Army vs. civilians' right"

This is in regards to the letter by MMJ (November 26) about the privileges enjoyed by the army. I certainly admire his courage to come out and write on this issue, especially now when the army drive is going on.

Although I am no fan of AL and Bangabandhu's later policies, at least he kept the army subservient to the civil administration. It was his death that opened up the floodgates to army privileges which culminated in the regimes of President Zia and Ershad.

I suppose in a way the last decade has seen some sort of compact between AL/BNP and the army. Thanks to this unholy compact, AL/BNP have merrily raped our country for the last decade while the army has busied itself with UN missions, rounds of golf and buying planes and ships.

Kim, Dhaka

develop the nation which is one of the world's poorest, give people better and comfortable life. And also a sideline reminder to whom it may concern, none can remove Bangabandhu from the Bangladeshis' heart no matter how hard they try.

Singhal Hasan
Singapore

I see that the AL staged a walkout over the removal of Bangabandhu's name from the agricultural award. I am well aware by now that the AL has no conception or understanding of opinion polls. If they had, by now they would have changed their tune.

Rather than wasting time over issues dear only to Sheikh Hasina, AL should start concentrating on what we care about.

Shonku
Dhaka

"Two foreign journalists arrested at Benapole"

We have arrested two foreign journalists on treason charges? Do we really know what we are doing? Bangladesh has already man-

level students, run solely by the A-level students. Our counsellor is the vice-principal of the school.

The members of this club have participated in the anti-dengue drive. Currently we are working for a local madrasah. We have organised a donation programme whereby we are delivering old books, toys, clothes etc to the madrasah from the school students. A few of us are also seriously planning to coach the madrasah students on a regular basis on Math and English. We are also trying to bring Marie Stopes Clinics Society to deliver health care service to the madrasah students and other employees.

Another important suggestion in the ADB report is on investment in enhancing the quality of human capital through education. An increase in literacy rate side by side upgrade in the physical infrastructure will create an enabling environment for healthy private sector development. Stress should be on technical education and Bangladesh government needs to be more encouraging in this sector.

Dr. AM Choudhury
Professor, University of Dhaka

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AA
California, USA

desh economy needs to grow annually by 7-8 per cent to see any significant employment and poverty reduction. I feel this goal is achievable, if corruption can be stemmed. The recent anti-crime drive by the Bangladesh army is a necessary move and augments the notion of stemming corruption, but there is much to be apprehensive as no fail safe mechanism exists to stop reversal of the law and order situation when the army return to their barracks. A national consensus by all political parties in this regard is thus paramount in achieving a more sustained improvement on the law and order.

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AA
California, USA

Currency notes

European Parliament and Bangladesh

I am disturbed, dismayed and dissatisfied by the way *The Daily Star*, especially its much respected editor has been canvassing against the army drive against the criminals who virtually held a nation of 130 million people hostage to their ruthless campaign of terror and horror.

I feel abashed that a daily like *The Daily Star* triumphantly publishes the headline that the European Parliament has heavily reprimanded an independent nation in its stride against the inhumane human beings who have lost the sense of humanity; not to talk of mercy, conscience and respect to others.

I believe if *The Daily Star* could analyse the weight that the European Parliament bears. It's not the Parliament of the European Union. It is merely a convention of some Members of Parliament of almost all of the European countries including those who have a horrendous record of human rights. The Editor has mentioned the name of such a country along with Rwanda and Bosnia (I believe the editor meant the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia while it was under iron fists of Yugoslav) in his much heralded commentary on November 22.

European Parliament has little link to the EU and unlike the EU headquarter in Brussels, they confer in the northern French city of Strasbourg.

In today's world, it is not realistic to become very astonished by a Consortium like the European Parliament who can take on a country like ours at its will but at the same time can keep its eyes blindfolded while heinous acts are being committed in Bosnia, Chechnya or Palestine which are not so far away from them as we are. But I urge *The Daily Star*, please do not malignantly try to foil a much-awaited effort by, probably the only respected institution we

possess in the country--the army.

Ahmed Mohiuddin
Banani, Dhaka

The European Parliament is really not a very important institution. However, it can influence government opinions in European countries.

We have been condemned for the extra judicial killings, growing radicalism and the fact that Jamaat men have gotten off scot-free in this army drive.

Before BNP came to power, I foolishly imagined that nothing could be worse than AL. I've changed my mind.

Kireti
Dhaka

In response to Mr. Fakhru Alam ("AL and terrorism in Bangladesh", November 25), I will have to disagree.

If the government of our country is promoting state sponsored terrorism then we have to speak out against it. I am no fan of AL and Sheikh Hasina, they were no better while in power, e.g. PSA 2000. However, conscientious people must agree that outside pressure can bring change in government policy. In our country we do not have freedom of speech, freedom from arrest and right to life.

The military and the police make random arrests which results in death in custody. Let me ask you, if a failed state (regardless of whoever in power) seeks to perpetuate itself by using predatory tactics on its own populace (like Saddam's Iraq) then is it not right to speak out against it?



You can call me unpatriotic and I will accept the charge. If speaking out against any wrongdoing is unpatriotic then I do not need this type of patriotism. Justice does not exist in our country and a society that fails to provide justice deserves all the condem-

nation it receives.

Yahya
USA

I have learnt with dismay that the EU Parliament has adopted a resolution regarding the on going joint action of the Government of Bangladesh.

They have questioned the human rights situation in Bangladesh. My point is why Bangladesh? Have they adopted similar resolution regarding Israel? There the Palestinians are fighting for protection of their rights on their land, being violated by the Israelis most nakedly every day under the protection of USA and UK. The European Parliament remains silent.

In Bangladesh on the other hand though there may have been some excesses here and there while the joint raid are trying their best to protect the human rights of the general citizens. That the citizens in general are heaving a sigh of relief from insecurity and fear is a fact. This year the people are doing their Eid shopping in a relaxed manner and the traders are also trading freely. In such an operation a few casualties are unavoidable. See the record of other Western countries including the EU countries and the USA.

After years of living under the threat of musclemen and other anti-social elements an effort has been made by the Government to put things right. Please extend a helping hand to them instead of playing in to the hands of enemies of civil liberty and rule of law.

PGM
Dhaka