Obviously some factions who wants to see this Government

become unpopular at home and branded as extremist abroad

of Al-Qaeda terrorists in Bangladesh sound very objectionable

and suspicious as well. People of Bangladesh respect India as a

great neighbour, but India should know that the Bangladeshis

Thank you for inviting the readers' opinion on the recent spate of

bomb blasts in Bangladesh. In the last two weeks the police

investigation on this premeditated and carefully planned grue-

some killing has failed to find even one culprit. The actual investi-

and detaining some prominent newspaper columnists, histori-

ans and political leaders. An investigation committee has been

formed headed by a Supreme Court judge. He even went to

Mymensingh, met people from all walks of life and made exten-

sive enquiries. The Prime Minister in a speech in Mymensingh

accused the main opposition Awami League of involvement in

the killings. In her turn, the Leader of the Opposition accused the

Government of putting the blame on them to save their skin and

that of their coalition partners who have actually committed the

crime. The recommendations of two previous investigations

carried out by two different Supreme Court judges, one concern-

ing a police raid late at night in Shamsunnahar hall and the other

about the Shatkira bombing were never acted upon. The first one

blamed the BNP students wing and the police for the shameful

acts, the second one was so much out of track and lunatic that it

disgraced the BNP government and there was nothing to act

However the Government has made 'progress' in arresting

The recent statements by the Indian Govt. about the sheltering

has clear hand behind this despicable crime.

would defend their sovereignty at all costs.

A Ullah, USA

gation came to a blank end.

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.

Iraq crisis: Seek peaceful solution



The readers of *The Daily Star* had the opportunity to read two Iraq related letters on December 14. The first one by Mr. Mahmood Elahi mentions Saddam Hussein as the only tyrant in the world and that Saddam's compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 will ensure his survival. Mr. Elahi sees none but Bush to save the Iraqi people. The other letter by Mr. O.H. Kabir appreciates the statesmanship of Saddam Hussein as he accepted the UNSC resolution in the interest of world peace.

We have observed in the past week that complying with the UN Security Council Resolution 1441, Iraq handed over its arms documents to the UN on 7 December. The very tough UNSC Resolution requiring the declaration be filed by 8 December also called on Iraq to declare any stocks or programmes in chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. Baghdad said the arms declaration reflects what it has been saying all along-- it no longer has weapons of mass destruction.

But US President Bush always rejects such Iragi denials. On 10 December, his Defence Secretary Rumsfeld said the US knows Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

The world welcomed Irag's release of its arms declaration in time. Iraq accepted the UN weapons inspectors and has been fully cooperating with them since three weeks after they started swooping on Iraqi sites from 27 November under UNSC Resolution 1441. The inspection teams have not reported anything untoward from their site checks. Russia expressed satisfaction at the successful inspection and hailed the "mood of constructive cooperation" between Iraq and the UN experts. Let us hope that Russia and other countries including the UNSC members will vigorously work for peaceful solution of the issue.

Saidur Rahman, Dhanmandi, Dhaka

This is in reference to the letter "Who will save the Iraqi people?" Having read the letters by Mr. Elahi and the subsequent replies from the readers regarding the Iraqi crisis, it seems that Mr. Elahi is so typical of brainwashed Americans who only believes their values/views/actions are correct. When others behave the way they do they classify them as wrong without justification. I have read many of the replies to Mr. Elahi, it seems most other normal human beings would try to rebuke the answers others given to his letters or admit that they were wrong. Mr. Elahi does neither he keeps on regurgitating the same old invalid points like an ignorant extremist.

If we look at the reasons why the US along with other nations are giving for attacking Iraq, I could use the very same reasons to justify an attack on US by Bangladesh: The actions of Iraq is threatening the future security of US and its interests. The very future existence of Bangladesh is threatened by the actions of US namely the global warming/rising sea level due to US economic activity. Some might argue that the rising sea level link is disagreed upon by experts, the same way some experts argue that the US security is not threatened by Iraq.

As a Muslim I am not permitted to use ration to justify my actions. I have to use Sharia. But the likes of Mr. Elahi will not defend himself using Sharia because he will say he has a different system of rules. I am still allowing Mr. Elahi to defend himself on his own terms - ration.

I await a rational reply from Mr. Elahi, not just his usual regurgitation.

only gone beyond the six-storey

limit; it has virtually turned the lives

of people living there like me into

hell. In addition, the Medical Col-

lege, in total disregard to the health

of the people living on Road No 14

"A", has been disposing hospital

wastes in the open garbage on the

road with total impunity. Your

esteemed paper carried a story on

this aspect sometime ago but Rajuk

has done nothing so far either to

make this institution abide by the

rules or about the disposal of the

I am writing this letter with the

hope that the Chairman of Raiuk

who said that the alleged violation

of building rules by the Adel Family

will be looked into and if there has

been such a violation, it would be

corrected, would also look into the

antecedents of the Bangladesh

Medical College that stands 8 storey

In Bangladesh, we blame the

poor people for not being law abid-

ing. Unfortunately, when massive

violations are done by those who

are supposed to implement the laws

and the rules, nothing is ever done.

Let Rajuk do something to save

India is contemplating to link the

rivers of the north with those of

south at a cost of Rs. 5,60,000

crore. The report appeared in the

Times of India of Sunday, 22nd

To say the least it is ominous for

Bangladesh. Both Jamuna/Ganges

and the Brahmanputra will have to

contribute huge amount of water to

keep the rivers of southern India

wet. In the process Bangladesh will

hospital wastes.

high already.

Dhanmandi

Shahjahan Ahmed

Dhanmandi, Dhaka

River linking!

Abu Nasher, UK

Database of Liberation War martyrs

It is very unfortunate that we have passed more than thirty years in independent Bangladesh, but have taken no initiative to collect the names and details of our great martyrs of the Liberation War. Most of us do not know the names of martyrs of even our own village. They will soon be forgotten

I request the Minister of Liberation War Affairs to start a project to collect the detail of our Lliberation War martyrs and publish it in media including the Internet.

Dalia Satter Dhanmondi. Dhaka

Censored

The other day my hawker delivered my weekly 'The Economist' for the week November 30th - December 6th 2002. On opening I found one page (pages 42/43) cleanly torn off. I immediately rang my newsagent and told him to replace the copy. He informed me that all the copies he received for distribution had the same page torn off. He further informed that this has been done by the government agency during clearance.

I was surprised. I know that the Saudi Govt. does this type impromptu censorship at airports and other ports of entry. Have we started to follow the Saudi model? Or did my newsagent give me wrong information? Would someone of your readers, buying this week's 'The Economist, confirm this or give me the correct information?

AZM Abdul Ali Uttara, Dhaka

Save Dhanmondi

I have read with interest the news that appeared in your daily on December 20, about violation of Rajuk rules in Dhanmandi Residential Area regarding height limit in construction of building there. The "influential" Adel Family is not the only violator of Rajuk rule restricting buildings to six stories in Dhanmandi R/A. The Bangladesh Medical College on Road No 14 "A" has done this long ago and has not

this letter

On 2nd December, 2002, I along with the members of my family were going to Bangkok by Biman flight No.BG-084. The flight was scheduled to leave Dhaka at 12:45 p.m. We reported at the Airport at due time for check-in and soon afterwards were asked to complete immigration formalities and to wait at the departure lounge. I was happy hoping that the flight will leave in time. But to my utter surprise, we were kept waiting for hours together and there was neither any information regarding the departure of the flight nor the reasons for the delay were explained to the waiting passengers. At about 3:00 p.m., some of the passengers became furious and asked the Biman Officials on duty to explain the reasons for the delay, but they could not give any satisfactory reply. When some of the passengers asked for food, they were told that snacks may be served, but lunch will be served on board. This made the passengers more furious and they said that they were already late for lunch and how could they expect that lunch will be served on board when the departure time was not certain.

However, after much exchange of heated words, passengers were asked to go to Balaka Restaurant at the Airport and were served lunch over there. Finally at about 4:00 p.m., we were informed that the pilots are on a wildcat strike - they have placed a charter of demands and were negotiating with the Biman authorities at the Airport. Until and unless their demands are resolved. the flight will not take-off. Some of the passengers were sick and were going to Bangkok for treatment. The undue delay deteriorated their condition. A foreign national who was in transit from Belgium to Bangkok via Dhaka complained that he has been at the Transit Lounge for last 13 hours and that actually the flight was to depart at 10;30 in the morning. The ordeal was, however, over at about 5:00 p.m. when we were asked to board the Aircraft. We thanked our stars thinking that at least we will now be reaching our destination. Finally the flight took off from ZIA at 5:15 p.m. A friend of mine who stavs in Bangkok was supposed to pick us up from the Airport, but when I reached Bangkok. I did not find him there. When I called him later, he told me that he was at the Airport for long 3 hours and since there was no information about the flight schedule, he thought we are not going to come and had

left the Airport. My question to the Biman authorities is: can't the passengers expect the minimum courtesy of being explained the reasons for the delay and the minimum apology for this? What did the members of the crew achieve by keeping the innocent

passengers hostage so long? No wonder people prefer to travel by Thai or Singapore Airlines.

Dangerous trends

A news item published in your esteemed Daily of 22 December has attracted my attention regarding the release of Priscilla Raj.

According to the news item, Priscilla Raj was granted bail by the High Court three days ago. She is however yet to be released. I am no legal expert. But it is my belief that once a court order is issued, more so of the nature, it is the duty of the administration to see that the order reaches the appropriate authorities expeditiously. And now Muntasir Mamun and Shahriar Kabir have been sent to separate District Jails. To me this is yet another ploy to cause mental pressures and harass the families of these people in custody. I have this uncomfortable feeling that the Administration is directly or indirectly engaged in interfering with the Judiciary leading to obstruction of the smooth passage of justice. These are danger-

Over the years I have found that actions of the nature by any government have not only tarnished the image of a nation but also brought about disastrous consequences for the ruling party. The day Awami League led a lathi (stick) procession

on the High Court premises in against the officials responsible for the delay. It prompted me to write connection with expediting the judgement (demanding execution of the accused) on the Bangabandhu murder trial I had this premonition that we have indeed set a dangerous precedence, one that no government, democratic or dictatorial can afford. The same could be said about the Muslim League's storming of the Supreme Court premises

during Nawaz Sharif's rule in Paki-

Shamsher Chowdhury Dhaka

Good work

Our politicians need to understand that they can get a lot more respect and praise if only they bothered to do what they were voted for. They can benefit a lot by keeping people happy rather than lying, harassing and taking people's rights. Public are not afraid to praise leaders if and when they deserve it. After a very long time, we had some good news about Bangladesh in the last few days. The visits by Thailand's PM and then by Myanmar's PM are results of Khadela Zia's good foreign policies. This would create better trade relations and Bangladesh would get duty-free access for certain products. Although, how much this would benefit the poor public remains to be proven by our government.

We would eagerly await to see similar progress with India. India is big and powerful country and the recent accusation of Advani linking Al-Qaeda presence in Bangladesh has surely strained the relationship between the two country. That is why our PM needs to play her cards with India very carefully. **Azad Miah**

Oldham, UK

Civil rights

Mr Shaad M. Ahmad and Mr A.K.M. Fakhrul Alam (December 13) have accused me of being a busybody, butting my nose into what is none of my business, being as I am "comfortably ensconced" far away. I also hear a lot of people decrying the Gujarat riots. Israel is a perpetual scapegoat for all the ills of the Muslim world. Our compatriots shed crocodile tears for Palestinians every day.

These are issues far removed from our society. If what is happening in my country is none of my business then obviously ethnic cleansing in India should not concern anyone in Dhaka. Or is it?

Wherever civil society faces the danger of being imperilled, it is everybody's concern whether it is Dhaka, Ahmedabad or Jerusalem. It is our duty as human beings to protest injustice in every society, regardless of who and where we

I had merely pointed out that detaining the alleged "criminals" by Operation Clean Heart and the resultant 'death in custody' will not solve the problem. You can detain a shoes if you do not resolve the socio-economic problems that gave rise to the gangster.

In the meantime, innocent people might die in custody. My question to you gentlemen: my geographical remoteness not withstanding, do the words "rule of law" and "presumption of innocence till proven quilty in a court of law" mean nothing to you? Have you forgotten Rubel?

Why is it politically incorrect to talk about human rights and civil rights? Can we not envision our society where everyone would be free? Yes I mentioned the US Constitution but that was to point out the shortcomings of ours. We can adopt the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. Will it be wrong to expect fair treatment and accountability for all?

"We should face the reality"

This letter is in response to Angela MV Robinson's "We should face the reality" (December 20).

Your exhortation to admit that there is a presence of international terrorists in Bangladesh by our Government to its powerful friends is truly an insult to the intellects of Bangladeshi people. Obviously, "There is a sickness in the heart

Blasts in Bangladesh

I am certainly confused with the current situation created with the recent bomb blast in Mymensingh. The way the Government has been harassing a number of prominent citizens of Bangladesh with charges such as "anti-state" makes me really frustrated. I should be careful not to raise my voice against the Government. Who knows I might also be charged with getting involved in anti-

There is a big difference between anti-state and antigovernment. Being anti-government is not illegal, everybody has the right to raise their voice against oppression. The way the bomb blast situation is being handled by the Government, the only anti-state element I can find is the BNP-Jaamat coalition. Our much-laughed about Home Minister is certainly confused about Al-Qaeda networks. The economy of the country is going down the drains. I would urge the government to work more for the economic betterment of the country rather harassing opposition party or NGO workers. These NGOs have done a lot for the country than any of the governments in Bangladesh combined.

BNP-Jaamat is trying to find out the root of all evil. Well, they don't need to look further. All they need to do is take a deep look within the coalition Government!

HM, Dhaka

Both the BJP controlled govt. in India and the so-called secularist elements in Bangladesh are claiming that the Muslim fundamentalists backed by Al-Qaeda was responsible for the recent bomb blast in Mymensingh.

Interestingly both the secularists and their Indian backer are claiming that the present Govt. of Bangladesh has the influence of the so-called fundamentalist Islamists within the Govt. If it is so then why would they jeopardise the position of the Govt. at home and abroad by destabilising the very Government they represent? An individual of simple intelligence would agree that it would be equal to suicide if the fundamentalists would plot such a heinous act to destabilise their own coalition government.



An age of anxiety

here..." who always tend to run with the Bare and hunt with the Hounds Nasim Islam We, like the other developing

nations have a reality problem with the fact that, we, Bengalis did not colonize Indian sub-continent for two hundred years, it was not Chechens who invaded and conquered Russia, nor did the Afghans, the Egyptians or the Pakistanis ever invade Britain, no Palestinians ever took over any Jewish villages in Germany, the Iranian secret police backed no military coups against Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the Egyptians did not conspire with the Colombians to reconquer the Panama Canal, no Arab corporations covet oil in Texas or Alaska: Arab forces do not maintain bases in Europe or North America: Philippines don't have a base in California; Arab aid has never supported military dictators in Chile, Peru, Zimbabwe, or Cuba. Indian Prime minister did not go to Ireland and sold high-end sophisticated weapons in the midst of fighting between Irish and Britts. Indeed, we do have a reality problem.

We praise our friends who act like God, and praise God who acts like friends. As a nation, though, we are not realistic enough, choose the later, and if given chances without arm-twist, by our powerful friends. Cultural and political disorientation by our powerful friends in the name of friendship, and the natural consequence of violent and non-violent resistance to the Western intrusions and attempts to recapture what was lost in the once golden age are natural reactions.

"The truth is that, when relationships are good, forgiveness..." is it a threatening statement from our powerful friends that we are very much familiar with after Sept 11th? Undoubtedly, we have a deep, understanding everlasting friendship with our powerful friends who for the sake of friendship can

threaten also! Are we next in the line after Iraq and Venezuela? Salinas Ca, USA

Singapore's IT Masterplan and our opportunities

Today we all are aware of Singapore's success. If we look back in 1970s, Singapore was not as prosperous as they are today. The world has witnessed the rise of this small country in less than 20 years through the leadership of a v political party called PAP (People's Action Party), and its leader Mr. Lew Kuan Yew in particular. Singapore's success story is beyond the scope of my today's writing, rather I will try to write about our opportunities in Singapore.

With the growth of every other sector, Singapore govt. decided to improve its educational sector in early '90s and allocated a huge budget for this purpose under the project entitled 'IT in Education: Masterplan'. The first master plan which was spanned from 1997 to 2002 has successfully been completed and recently MOE (Ministry of Education, Singapore) has announced the second five-year IT Masterplan. One may learn more about this in the following website: http://www.moe.gov.sg/edumall/

mp2/mp2_overview.htm. One of the major goals of this IT Masterplan is to develop e-leaning environment and content for all the schools, colleges and universities in Singapore. Respective departments of every schools, colleges and universities are taking initiatives to accomplish the task by proving training to teachers and others to convert a huge volume of classroom materials to an e-learning form and publish it through the e-learning platform. Local and foreign (mostly Indian) IT firms are also participat-

The last time I visited Mymensingh, It was sometime of May 1990 to submit my resignation to the Vice Chancellor before I left the country for the USA. I had been in Mymensingh for eight years and I loved its natural beauty. I felt empty-hearted to leave Mymensingh. I went to have a gentle walk through the university botanical

upon. In both cases the actual criminals went scot-free.

Sultan Mahmud Shariff, London, UK

garden and the bank of Old Brommaputra, overhead; the stars were out in full, twinkling in the darkened sky. Distant clouds rode the horizon, reflecting the light of a crescent moon. I walked a little way down the beach, simply stood in the water and let it wash over my legs. I closed my eyes and tried to enjoy the beauty of the Mymensingh without having to watch it. The only sounds came from the sail of a boat as the wind rippled through it and the water as the boat cut its way through the waves. Voices sounded different almost free, as if the open air would carry them forever.

I bet, any one would love to go to a quite spot of the bank of the river away from the hustle and bustle of the City, just to appreciate what natural beauty of Mymensingh had to offer. I wonder, why terrorists chose Mymensingh as their target.

Mazibur R Khan, Tualatin, OR 97062, USA

of e-learning to grab a handsome share of this big cake. Most of our IT firms may not be aware of this opportunity. Our foreign mission in Singapore may play an important role by analysing the current events and providing necessary info to the

relevant parties in Bangladesh. Besides this IT Masterplan, I believe there are other good opportunities in other sectors, for example, education, shipyard, construction industry for our govt. to establish gainful relationship with Singapore with our skilled professionals. Kazi Sabbir Ahmed Singapore

Let's act like responsible citizens

Building a better Bangladesh has been our wish and dream for a long time. To materialize this dream we have to find the correct answer to the following questions first: Whose responsibility is it to build

a better Bangladesh? 2. Who should be blamed for having

failed to achieve it? Many people say many things,

but it seems there is a sizable number who believe that it is the responsibility of the politicians alone and they are the one who should be blamed for our failure to achieve it. We face and live with numerous difficulties and pains both at home and abroad as a third world citizen. If we want a quick relief from all these problems the easiest way would be to continue blaming our politicians, western world and its media. But what can we achieve by blaming others other than creating bad blood both at national as well as at international level? Moreover, who are these politi-

cians? They are our people. Who elect them to power? The people elect them. Yes, I know some of us

will say no we do not elect them ing in this huge work-festival. There is a very good opportunity for our IT rather they manage to grab power firms who have technical know-how with the help of their illegally earned wealth. If this claim is true, why then we support them, defend them and that too very often and very vigor-

Not only that, we do not hesitate to make unfounded allegation about opponents. If we believe that the politicians are corrupt and they do not have morale, why on earth do we feel so boastfully talk about their election victory and popularity?

Double standard is the other pathetic part of our behavior. When the American Ambassador in Dhaka says that Bangladesh is a liberal Muslim country, we very happily quote it in all of our statements and discussions as if she is authorized to issue such certificate. But, when she says that the government is not allowing the parliament or the judiciary to perform independently. many of us say that we do not need foreign prescription to run our country. Isn't it double standard?

What have we seen during the last 12 years? Whoever is in opposition will run to the foreign missions in Dhaka to complain about the government. When it is done by party X it is bad, but if party Y does it is good. This is call double standard. We should stay away from such behaviour if we feel responsible for our beloved country.

Shafiqur Rahman Khan Vienna, Austria

Reuters reporting

We are stunned and confused by Reuters reporting on the recent bomb blast incident and subsequent findings. What on earth is going on? Where is the professionalism, ethic and binding rules which had taken Reuters News Agency to the highest level? Or, are they also serving someone else's interest? **Tanzia Choudhury**

Army drive and human rights violation

While we applaud our Govt's initiative to curb crime and domestic terrorism, we are seriously concerned about the increasing deaths in army custody. Almost everyday, there are news of more deaths in custody.

How is it possible that the army picks up a healthy person and



The fear factor

returns him dead? How can one believe the doctors' reports of "died of sickness," and similar hogwash, when the reports talk about "serious injuries on the ankles and joints"?

Yes, we like to thank our honest, dedicated men in uniforms, who mean well and do their job. Yet, we cannot but protest these deaths in custody.

Tirtho Mahmud Dhaka

Before Operation Clean Heart began, like everybody in the country, I used to open the newspaper with a fear of seeing more death news and other bad news. Opening the newspaper did make the whole day bitter for me. Still the situation is prevailing, but in another way. Now my whole day is spoiled when I see the news of deaths in army custody. Earlier it was said that they died due to heart failure. Recently the authorities concerned completely refused that anybody had died in custody. I can't understand how will they explain this fact to a person whose dear one was taken away by the joint force and was returned as dead!

Many people say that it is better to see one death news a day than seeing many. I completely disagree with them. Because these deaths are different. These people died while they were in custody! What is most dangerous is the near and dear ones of the

victims can't hope to have justice. Where to go now? It must be admitted that like everybody I also admire the tre-

mendous improvement in the law and order situation during army drive. But everybody should be aware of his responsibility and of his limits. If army persons do their duty being aware of this, I believe that the ongoing drive will be more successful and people can be freed from all kinds of terrorism and fear. Tariq

The other day, I took a long walk along the Satmasjid Road at midnight. It felt safe and secure which was not possible in those days when the Operation Clean Heart did not start. Once while taking a walk, I was attacked by muggers and narrowly escaped.

But what makes me depressed is that it claimed about 36 lives to ensure a safe walk for me! But are we ready to sacrifice our fellow countrymen's lives for little betterment of our law and order situation? The answer is 'no'.

I request the authorities concerned to find another alternative measure to ensure peace security in the society. Md. Zahirul Hoque Mozumder

Plight of Biman passengers

become totally dry.

A news item published in a local daily on 10.12.2002 came to my notice. It was reported that the Biman authorities took exception to a delayed flight and took action