

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.

Our friends of the East

I welcome the BNP Government to seek friendship from our Eastern neighbours. Finally our Government is taking small steps towards the right direction. For too long we have tried to have a normal relation with India. But it didn't work out.

India earn more than three billion dollar from Bangladesh, and that is without counting the smuggled goods. Our people travel to India for vacation, medical treatments, for business and spend millions of dollars worth foreign currency.

What we usually get in return is 2nd class service from their medical institutions, poor quality products from their factories and 3rd class treatment from their government officials and immigration.

Overall India, in general, takes a very unprofessional approach towards its business from Bangladesh. Thai people are known for their professionalism and friendly spirit.

So why pay for second class service from an unwilling and hostile nation when we can get first class treatment from a friendly nation? More interactions with Thai business will also have a positive impact on our business people and business environment.

Improved relationship with our other neighbour Myanmar is also very encouraging. Myanmar is a country with huge natural resources and it also could be our access to our other Eastern neighbour.

Sherif Saeed Trenton, New Jersey, USA

AL's arrogant attitude

I am really shocked and saddened about the language AL has used in their Invitation Letter to the top party leaders of BNP (December 25).

It seems AL wanted to insult BNP leaders before they could think over whether to attend the council or not. We cannot understand how AL leadership can send the same card meant for their workers to leadership of a party in power using abusive language.

Again a leader like Mr. M. A. Samad requested Mr. M. A. Mannan to receive these cards from persons who were CL leaders only yesterday. Before AL can win the heart of opposing millions of Bangladeshis they must refine their uncontrolled tongues first and try to use civilised languages in their public and party meetings.

G. Ahmed Shamoly, Dhaka

Journalists serving vested interest groups!

I wonder whether the Bangladeshi journalists will ever learn to be objective in their news coverage. Many a times I have observed that news are published in a politically motivated manner.

Md Sirajul Islam NY, USA

The drive to curb crimes

When a villager bathes in a hyacinth filled pond, the hyacinths are removed with hands for getting access into water, after the water is used the pond is again filled back with hyacinths.

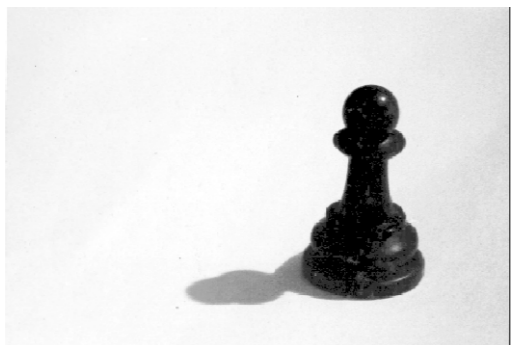
Thanks to Mr Mahfuz Anam's commentaries "Denial that brings discredit to the government". The mysterious deaths under army custody, the interrogating procedures and right for self-defence of the suspects needs to be probed into.

It is a blatant fact that the deaths of the suspects appear unfounded, the lawbreaker, murderers or whatever we may call them are cold-blooded mastermind criminals by nature who do not

Tanbir ul Islam Siddiqui Shantinagar, Dhaka

"When one hundred"

Playing with the pawns



Pawns of politics

Ideally all political parties have one objective in common -- welfare of the people. Since Independence we have voted each time, for one or the other party, hoping to see better days for ourselves.

Between 1996 and 2002, there were half a dozen of bomb blasts in the country, each time claiming a huge toll of innocent lives, as in Udichi function; Ramna Batamul, church premises at Gopalgonj; Paltan Maidan meeting of the Left front in Dhaka; Shamim Osman's office at Narayanganj; finally, and very recently, four bomb blasts in the cinema halls in Mymensingh.

Leaders of the two major parties accused each other for such heinous occurrences. Both the parties demonstrated their unflinching determination to bring to book the culprits. But what has been the result till date? None of the culprits have been arrested.

A long time have elapsed since the gruesome bomb-blasts in Jessore and recently in Mymensingh, but our intelligence services could not make any head and tail of these incidents. Moreover, Governmental efforts to clear off the smoke screen surrounding the bomb blasts appear to be quite inadequate and ineffective.

Moni Khan, Dhania, Dhaka

readily succumb to "heart attacks" in course of interrogation. I confidently believe that we have a proper judiciary system and significant number of human rights organisations that will open up a dialogue with government to safeguard the human rights of the citizens.

The deployment of Army to curb up crime is the last resort and final trump card for the government. There is absolute vagueness as to when the army will be withdrawn, no clear cut perception have been so far given to the citizens.

Kishwar Sayeed Dhaka

Legal issues about Saleem Samad and Pricilla

Thanks to the Honorable High Court Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court for granting 'bail' in favour of Saleem Samad and Pricilla Raj. The day, the two main 'accused' Ms. Zaiba Naz Malik and Mr. Leopoldo Druno Sorrentino were released from the charge of 'Foreigners Act' and not from 'Sedition' charge, it became a moral obligation for the whole nation as well as the concerned court too to release the 'accomplices' to ensure and establish rule of law in the country.

In fact, after granting bail and subsequent release of Ms. Pricilla Raj, it was a matter of time for Mr. Saleem Samad to get justice and that happened on 23rd December 2002. But Saleem Samad has not been released yet.

Getting bail is a fundamental right for any accused unless there are extraordinary causes not to grant

I ask every sensible American what will they gain from war against Iraq. Nothing but Israel's interest will be served.

A number of analysts have predicted that around 50 thousand innocent people will lose their life in this war against Iraq. And I think this 50,000 will have another few hundred thousand close relatives who will become the enemy of the US.

Shahriyar Zaman Sydney, Australia

The stalemate at ADAB

I have been closely following the growing stalemate at ADAB. I have served in one of the largest and oldest International NGOs for over four years as one of its Senior Management Executives during the mid-90s.

In retrospect, I have no hesitation to say that the contributions made by the NGOs in rural development interventions have been significant. Yet it must be said that it has never been too transparent and accountable in its management operations.

The Government therefore is well within its rights to investigate, review the working of ADAB with a view to make it more democratic and transparent in its management operations. I would like to put forward the following suggestions for consideration of the authorities concerned:

1. The review or investigations should be undertaken by a most neutral and representative committee consisting of a cross section of knowledgeable individuals from the Government, civil society, NGOs, recognised individuals from Chartered Accountant Firms, so on and so forth including a member from the donor community as an observer if found feasible.

percent support is not enough"

Thank you Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed for your analysed article (December 20) on America's one-way support to Israel.

Like you said, I think White House is fully controlled by Jews who has the vision to look after Israel and are masterminding to destroy the Muslim world. These are the people taking decision for the American people. They have captured the American ideology and brain washed the entire nation.

2. The formation of the Committee should be recommended and confirmed by a retired Senior Judge of the High court in order to ensure transparency and neutrality.

3. The Committee should operate under a clearly defined mandate and terms of reference under a given time-frame.

4. Among others the terms of reference should primarily focus on its alleged involvement in the partisan politics of the country, the transparency of its financial operations, review of the ADAB Constitution including confirming a well-defined Code of Ethics for the entire NGO

With due respect to the editor of The Daily Star, I disagree with the fact that there has to be a law to ban on use of children at the polls. Here is why I believe such law will stand illegitimate and destructive to the morale of our democracy.

Firstly, all citizens of our country equally shares fundamental rights provided in our constitution. These rights do not differentiate in application on the ground of age identifying as major or minor. Therefore, isolating minors from exercising their fundamental rights to participate in any political associations violates constitutional provisions providing equal rights for all citizens.

Secondly, politics is significantly an educating process for the people of an emerging democracy like ours. It enables people of all ages to know the best of their rights and responsibility in a civil society.

Community. 5. Once the Committee report is finalised it should be placed before the highest law making body namely the Jatiyo Sangsad for extensive debate and ratification before the recommendations are made into Law binding on all parties concerned.

Shamsheer Chowdhury Dhaka

Who will save the world?

As far as I know, it's the US who first used WMD to kill more than 200,000 Japanese civilians in the last phase of WW II. It's the US who tried to invade Cuba. It's the US who invaded Vietnam, also killing a large number of civilians there.

Now, in this new century we see USA as the self proclaimed saviour of Iraqi people from their (according to US) oppressive ruler named Saddam. But where was this country when more than two decades ago Saddam killed more than 5000 of his own Kurd people by dropping biological and chemical weapons (mainly Hydrogen Cyanide, Mustard and nerve gas)?

After engaging itself in such heinous activities, America is now saying that Saddam is a threat to world peace and stability! Why? Because according to US Saddam used WMD against his own people in the past and still has a hidden stock of WMD (which is yet to be proved by UN inspectors).

Operation Clean Heart Recently, I have read a number of letters saying that the only job of the army is to protect the nation from outside aggression. I agree that was the purpose of creating an armed force but we have to be honest; who is going to invade Bangladesh and take the burden of 140 million people of which a massive percentage is unskilled, can barely make their ends meet!

Imran Karim

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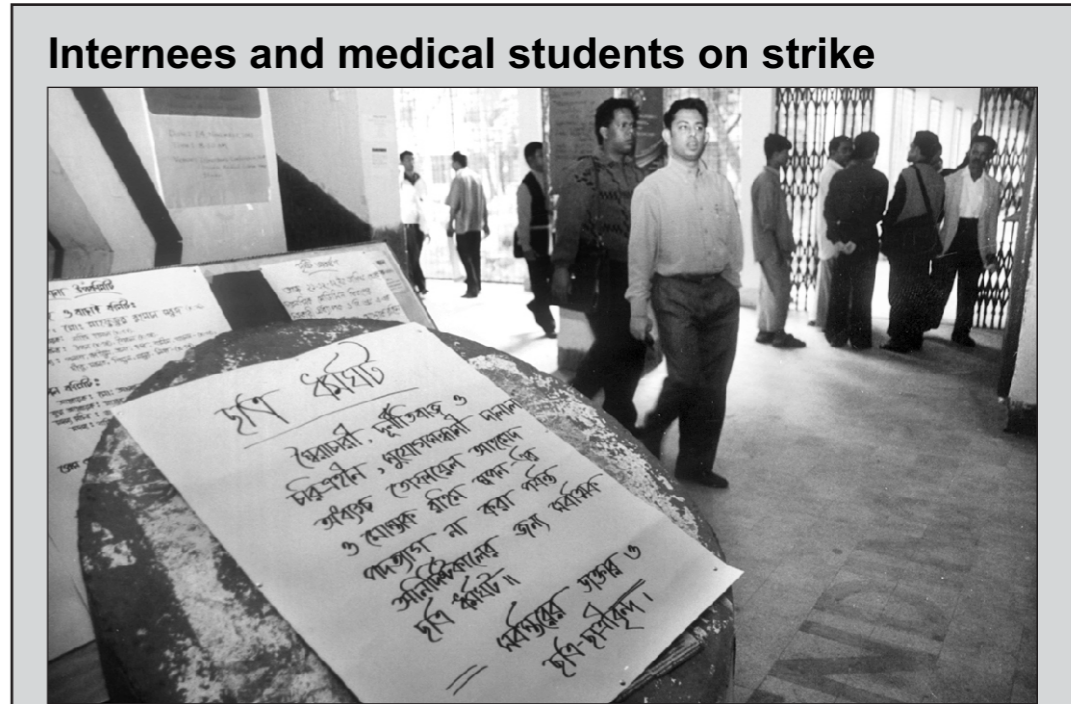
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So much for hippocratic oath

The internees and medical students of Dhaka Medical College/Hospital (DMC/H) went on an indefinite strike (though withdrawn post haste). It was withdrawn because we realised that we had gone on a strike for a very wrong cause. By our strike we were supporting extortion of money by a group of students headed by an internee doctor who did not relinquish his student union post.

If DMC sells 6000 admission forms this year, then the students' union have been deprived of almost five lakh taka. It's a huge amount of money and definitely a good reason for a wrong cause to go on a strike. This is not the first time that the students of a medical college have done this offence. This is done in almost all the govt medical colleges and is being practised for years.

Coming back to the internees, we did not have any choice either. We had to show our sympathy to a leader (!) of ours. Although an intern, he was still clinging to a post of the students' union. What choice did the interns have? We know he is a mastan type but he tows the present party in power. We can look forward to him for future blessings, particularly in the next four years or so. When the term of

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The Union was over, the Principal did not dissolve it. The Union was declared defunct only when things went wrong and not when it was due. Both the Principal and the student leader are supporters of the same party and were in connivance with each other when the going was good.

But it's a surprise that the hospital came to a stand-still with the strike of the internees. The internees are supposed to be learners. We are here to learn. The hospital is supposed to be run by the non-internees, the so-called teachers. But where are they? Unfortunately, we learn whatever we can only through our perseverance and willingness to learn. Self-learning is now the essence in the government medical college hospitals. We try out all our innovative skills. Simultaneously, many of us do private practice and work at private clinics. (This is one thing we have learnt very well from our teachers). Because many of us held proper connections, we were guaranteed a pass in the examinations. At the end of our one year internship, many of us will not know how to set up a saline line, how to do a lumbar puncture, how to conduct a safe delivery, how to do and interpret an ECG, how to tackle an emergency or even to clinically examine a patient.

Still then, whatever amount we devote in the hospital is the only service that the hospital gets. Quite frankly, was it not quite evident from our strike? Evidently, something very wrong is going on in the name of providing health service to the general public.

Mamun Dhaka

University of Rochester, NY, USA

"Revisiting Indo-Bangla relations"

This is in reference to the article "Revisiting Indo-Bangla relations" (December 21).

A critical analysis of the Indian foreign policy from 1947 to 1966 does not show any evidence that India was really interested in the prospect of a sovereign Bangladesh. This became evident when Sk. Mujibur Rahman proposed the Six Point programme for greater autonomy for East Pakistan in 1966.

This gave India an opportunity to dismantle Pakistan which would weaken its arch rival. The brutal steps Pakistan took to retain East Pakistan in its fold brought in a revolution and India took appropriate steps to realise its most prized foreign policy goal. India's moral and material help was the deciding factor to bring this revolution to its victorious conclusion.

The right to live without fear from criminal elements is one of the most important human rights. The Bangladesh Government wants to guarantee that right to the people. When the European Parliament accuses the Government of human rights violations on account of its action against terrorists, it is missing the whole point.

There is clear double standard here. The Parliament is not criticising the USA for killing thousands of people in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine and its so many other activities that are clear violation of human rights. The only conclusion one can draw from this is that the European Parliament is harsh against the weaker and poorer countries, but is silent about the superpower.

Dr. Ahmed Habib Manzur Buraydah, Saudi Arabia

The Government is responsible!

As Sheikh Hasina now tries to propagate that "incidents of bomb blasts in Mymensingh is a govt. staged drama" then should we confirm that all such blasts or killing incidents during the AL regime were also enacted by Hasina and her Govt.? She said to the pressmen that such awe inspiring dreadful incidents could not take place without the patronage of the Govt.!

AF Rahman Dhaka

University of Rochester, NY, USA

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AF Rahman Dhaka



Exploited innocence?

makes it, it is just a matter of time to discard it again since democracy cannot live without freedom, and freedom as a form conscience is indifferent for both majors and minors.

Dhananjay Roy New York, USA