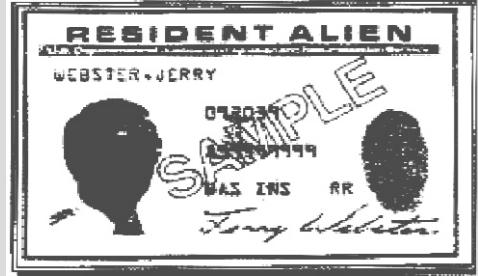


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

INS registration may help Bangladeshis in USA in the long run



corrupt practice by a few embassy officials). Some data show that few hundred Pakistanis have obtained US Diversity Visa as Bangladesh-born using fake paper and illicitly obtained Bangladesh passports.

Controlling such fake-Bangladeshis will be possible at the ports of entries before they cause any misdeed or harm to our country.

Thanks to Attorney General Ashcroft for making such a prudent decision. We need to save our homeland from all kinds of evil forces. In this context I invite all ethnic Bangladeshis in USA who are in the process of Americanisation to submit their primary allegiance to their adopted homeland USA and USA only.

We all have to admit that we are here in USA by our own choice. We want to live better. America is a secular country and does not promote any religion, ethnic background or national origin.

In God we trust.
James P. Sheff, Immigration Attorney
Pennsylvania, USA

There is an important point that is being missed by the uproar created in the Bangladeshi community in USA and by politicians inside Bangladesh itself. I believe that the INS registration in USA will be good for the "image of Bangladesh" in the long run.

In recent times, the availability of Bangladeshi Passports to the foreign nationals in USA has been very wide spread.

Indians, Pakistanis, Afghans and South Americans obtain Bangladeshi passports through the back door from the Bangladesh Embassy and consulates in USA. (Due to a



For the better or worse?

"Religious group halts women's foot-ball"

I read with concern that a religious group called Towni Janta forced the cancellation of a women's exhibition football match in Netrokona between a visiting West Bengal team and the Netrokona XI. They said that, "Women playing football is degrading and obscene." (Your reporter says the girls were really scared, which indicates that more than a peaceful demonstration was planned which gives rise to further concern.)

May I plead that the Government, in its advantageous position as an alliance between secular and religious parties, sets up a committee to discuss what form of exercise for women and girls would be acceptable to the religious gentlemen? Those of us with responsibility for the health and welfare of girls as well as boys are extremely concerned at the health problems that are arising because girls, especially those who live in built-up areas, lack exercise. Problems are arising in women of middle and old age that are related to the lack of exercise. So what can we do that will not give offence to someone?

Poor women, of course, get exercise but often too much and of the sort that strains their muscles, such as carrying water. The number of women of my age and under, whose backs are doubled over, is truly sad. Domestic work, with its bending and stretching, can be excellent physical exercise, but the ladies of the rising middle and upper classes of the towns, of course, usually have servants that do this for them.

I am circulating all sorts of books about 'games' of all kinds for school use among my lively staff and have demanded feedback which I look forward to. I have every intention of appointing a lady teacher for PE in the next round of appointments in June/July and should be interested to receive ideas from any of your readers.

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)

The British School, Dhaka

In response to Mr. Sakhat Hossain (January 26) I must say that I have been duly chastised. Just think, the mere presumption of me to put individual freedom over social norms! What is the world coming to these days?

All these "anti-social" elements who harbour dangerous and seditious foreign ideas of Women's Lib are definitely not welcome in our society. How dare they not conform to social norms and practices? It is unfortunate to see how these so-called individualists would take our

Westin Hotel

There is a large colour advertise-

ment in *The Daily Star* (January 26) for the new Westin hotel's signing ceremony with Siemens. I personally think Dhaka needs more five star hotels and it is even better when it's a private sector project.

I am concerned however with the parking space. Thanks to reckless development, Gulshan is fast becoming a high rise slum. Gulshan 2, especially is becoming almost a near permanent traffic jam thanks to all those buildings with no parking space.

So does the new Westin hotel have sufficient space for cars? Or will it be more like the La Vinci which has almost none or closer the Landmark Tower which has about three?

"Well done Sheikh Hasina!"

I have lived in the UK for 35 years, studying working and paying taxes. I have made a large contribution to the development of society here as well as sending zakaat to Bangladesh. I have taught my children to be honest, hard working and studious.

All this good work, over four decades, have now been undone by an irresponsible, untrue and self-serving statement by the Awami League leader. I, together with all my countrymen, am regarded as a potential terrorist, from an extremist country. Ignorance and malice has triumphed over diligent and honest toil. As the Leader of the Opposition one must ask whom she opposes - the government or all the Bangladeshi people!

We must unite against extremism and terrorism. We must unite against those - nourished on Bangladesh's soil, nurtured in Bangladesh's air and benefiting from the sacrifice of the nation - who now turn against our country for their own selfish ends.

Raqib Shamsad
UK

This is a response to Saidullah Jaffrey (January 25). He stated that Sheikh Hasina and her party was presenting propaganda against Bangladesh. If that is so I believe whatever she and her party members have stated in abroad and in the country is not totally wrong. If Sheikh Hasina was the person to be blamed what was our present government doing? It is their responsibility to preserve the reputation of our country.

During the war against Afghanistan the rally against the US decision was in all international news broadcasting channels. Even a part

of our government is Islamic and that is not hidden from the US authorities. I am not blaming Islam but the people who are putting a black spot over our holy and peaceful religion. Now it will be wise for us to let democracy breath in our country.

Khalid Rahman
Dhaka

I thank Mr Khalid Rahman for his reply (January 23) to my letter. I agree, Sir, when you say the US "does not pay heed to what one says". In fact, they definitely did not take this decision with only Sheikh Hasina's recommendation! But I sincerely believe that being a patriotic citizen of one's beloved motherland, it is extremely wrong of ANY individual to bring the focus of the world on to such a sensitive (not to mention foolish) issue, at such a crucial moment. Sheikh Hasina did not, of course, invite the WHOLE focus that is absurd. But then again, *bindu bindu jol, gore tole shagor oport*. Moreover, as the Leader of Opposition, she can be metaphorically described as being quite a lot of *'bindus'* her views carry much weight.

I have called the situation a conspiracy because, Bangladesh is not a "haven for the bigots and fundamentalists". You call it an "open secret". I view it as a 'publicised false belief'. We do have our fair share of fundamentalists, but not what is worth calling a 'haven'.

You said "Many weekly magazines of different countries also published controversial statements..." True. I feel sorry about the world press' stand. I am frustrated when that stand is supported by a part of the Bangladeshi media. Nevertheless it has to be swallowed it's Press Freedom. Since you raise the issue of India there's hardly any love lost between us. But Sheikh Hasina is a Bangladeshi. She has a certain duty and responsibility towards her own country.

Nabila Idris
Class IX, Sunnydale School

Abu Dhabi

Price should dictate gas export option: BIDS researcher

This is in reference to the news item "Price should dictate gas export option: BIDS researcher" (January 23). Sajjad Zohir, the BIDS researcher quoted in the news, has introduced a new, and in my opinion very important, dimension to the debate on natural gas in Bangladesh. It is high time that some one introduced the price variable in the debate on gas export.

Gas is a scarce resource and, like all scarce resources, decisions about its use, such as how much should be extracted each year and what uses it should be put to, (including the choice between exports and domestic use) should be driven to a significant extent by its price.

This does not mean that price will be the only factor in decision-making. Economics is not the only thing that will inform decisions and even within economics there are a few other variables, besides price, that will be important.

However, the price of gas is clearly an important variable and it is unfortunate that this dimension, and indeed the economic dimension as a whole, has been rather neglected in the debate so far. Even many economists in the country have confused the debate by straying away from economics in their comments on the subject. I commend Sajjad Zohir, for finally introducing some sound economics into the debate on gas. I hope this is picked up by others.

Syed Akhtar Mahmood
Maryland, USA

Terror list and Iraq

According to the BBC website, American Secretary of State, Colin Powell, speaking just prior to his departure for Davos, said the US can "count on support from 'at least a dozen' governments if it decides to attack Iraq without a fresh UN resolution".

Secretary of State Colin Powell departed for the Davos summit Friday evening. His second to last appointment for the day was at 3 pm with our Foreign Minister.

I would really like to know what Mr. Moreshed Khan had to say on this issue. After all, he had gone to Washington to plead Bangladesh's case as a tolerant, moderate and democratic 'Muslim' country and a friend of the US.

None of the State Department press briefings given on the 23rd mention anything about Bangladesh. From that silence I would take it that our FM held the line on demanding a new UN resolution before taking military action against Iraq. Given our government's intractable stance on an issue central to the Bush administration, I rather doubt if Bangladesh will get much of a hearing especially in the near future when the Americans will be even more concentrated on building a coalition against Iraq.

We would do well to choose our friends now and standby them.
Sabyasachi
Dhaka

Bangladesh cricket

I was hitherto thinking who is this idiot who thinks Bangladesh cricket can get any practice for World Cup preparation by going to Namibia and playing against them.

It was proved the (cricket) powers that be are very right by honourably losing to an unheeded team called Namibia.

Don't all Bangladeshis now think, "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"? I strongly urge the ICC to rescind immediately this ignominious TEST STATUS which has only brought shame to the nation. I don't think we can endure this any longer. Doesn't the team have any shame or self respect that they continue to play?

I am a great cricket fan and of course also of my team. But what has it given us? I now strongly urge the govt to stop this farcical spectacles of our great cricket team and save some valuable foreign currency (very hard earned- let me tell you).

Mahboub ul Malik
Abu Dhabi

US Ambassador's opinion on terror list

I think the US Ambassador has made her country's position quite clear on the issue of Bangladesh on the terror list. The onus is upon Bangladesh to prove that it is indeed a tolerant and open society. I am certain that our case for not being included on the terror list would be far stronger if our great army and detectives had been able to conclusively solve even one bomb blast incident.

I also don't see why the US should do any favours for a country that doesn't stand by its side in world affairs. We have also been hostile towards US investments in Bangladesh. There can be many arguments made either in favour of or against gas export. But the private container terminal is not a subject of debate. It is a question of survival.

MA, Dhaka

Friends from West

I write this letter, partly as a response to Mr. James Rosario's letter (January 25). Mr. Rosario advises not to look to the East for friends. I would like to ask him why not?

I am guessing here that he wants the people and the Government to look more towards the West vis-a-vis for friends. This despite the fact that the US seems to mostly leave its friends to fend for themselves once they are done with them. Look to South America for examples.

On the other hand they seem to be extremely successful in putting tyrants in power and then taking steps to remove them, at extreme cost to innocent people. Cases in point, Manuel Noriega and of course more recently the world's favourite dictator Saddam Hussein.

But let's forget what they are successful at doing and consider what they actually fail to do.

Among nations which are considered major donors, the US is at the bottom. More importantly most of their international aid and donations go to one country, and that is of course Israel. And if you shift your gaze to the East, you will find Japan one of the biggest contributors to

phone bills) finally in December, 2002, the bills for November and December, 2002 are yet to reach us till date. Gulshan Telegraph office is dishing out different versions each time they are contacted for the last two months! In the middle of December they said that they did not receive any bills for November. Later they informed that they received only a few important bills. Little later they said, "they are busy delivering what they received earlier and are expecting another analogue to digital turned 7500 bills" and so forth. This morning while contacted over telephone number 9880240, Gulshan Telegraph office informed that 'not a single such bill for November has been issued by T&T except a few belonging to VIPs and that one will need to visit the Revenue Office to have his bill for November prepared. As regarding December bill, they have just received few, which are in the process of delivery! The same old story.

May I request your esteemed daily to investigate and publish the mystery behind this matter before the T&T find an excuse to resort to their 'usual activities' - inflated bills, disconnection for 'non-payment' of bills and as such?

AC, Banani, Dhaka

A service with a smile indeed!

It was very interesting to follow through the recent 'Letters to the Editor' especially on 'My Visit to Bangladesh An American View.' I

I agree with Mr. Titu from New York

that 'greeting somebody with a smile does not cost money'.

However, we often encounter contrary situations over the service counters in our country. Let alone the local companies, the multinationals operating in this country do not pay much heed in educating their people how to behave politely to customers!

I remember sometimes ago, I borrowed some books from a well-known library that offers service to many countries around the globe.

They had a system failure and thus unjustly fined me for a book I had returned long ago. I tried to explain the situation but the lady at the counter would not listen.

I requested them to check again in their shelves and she would not pay attention. She behaved very rudely

custodial deaths and human rights violation during Operation Clean Heart without opposing by a single person from the government. Does it tarnish the image of Bangladesh and the government to the world when the government is in biggest image-crisis?

Purnima, Mohima, Indrani, Rojifa, Bappi, Nowshin, Shihab, Galib and many more died during the rule of BNP-Jaamiat government. Most of these killings happened in the name of politics. Rokhsana's killing is another heartfelt incident for our entire nation that need exemplary punishment soon.

Mohammad A. Siddique
New York, USA

Save Dhanmondi

The futile and fruitless debate on saving Dhanmondi R.A. is going on for a long time. Let us accept the fact in the context of current position and past condition.

Dhanmondi was declared residential area in 1958 (44 years ago) suiting the purpose for the then period of time. It was then a solitary location and the character of the area was suitable for pure residential purpose.

After the passage of long 45 years, Dhanmondi has become the nerve centre of Dhaka because of its convenient location. In fact, it has turned into an important semi-commercial area slowly, steadily and gradually. Dhanmondi presently is housing nationally reputed schools, colleges, varsities, banks, hospitals, commercial enterprises and N.G.O offices etc. The age-old lease clause of Ministry of Works has lost its realistic sense, approach, effect and efficacy in the context of time and changed circumstances. It is a utopian thought to convert it again into a pure residential area according to PWD definition.

If Dhanmondi R/A is made free from non-residential activities, it will make thousands of people jobless, students without schools, countless people out of earnings.

Pure residential areas are generally located at least 100 km away from city centre unlike the location of Dhanmondi.

Mustafizur Rahman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Pilots, beware of next US move

A news from CNN say that the US government has authorised its Aviation Agency to revoke or review licences of pilots flying in or into USA. This decision may be directed towards pilots of airlines of Muslim countries that fly into USA.

Airline pilots who fly their aircraft into USA usually have their licences approved by Federal Aviation Agency of US. Bangladesh government should take cognisance of this news from CNN and take appropriate diplomatic steps before it's too late. Don't say later on that it's all due to Sheikh Hasina!

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

40th Anniversary of French-German Treaty to EU

The special supplement of your esteemed daily on "40th Anniversary of the French-German Friendship Treaty" and its positive effect to gradually transform the war torn countries of Europe to present EU was most interesting reading. Apart from the stupendous efforts and resources behind the rehab/reconstruction of the then West Europe and UK/West Germany in particular the mental attitude of the people with century old conflicts and hatred towards each other was perhaps the most difficult hurdle to overcome.

The vision that convinced General de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to sign that historic treaty at the Elysee Palace on January 22, 1963 could be an example for the leaderships of our sub-continent to follow. Instead of what the two signatories did during past 40 years; the relentless work of reconciliation between their people to get rid of the hatred of the leaders of our countries, the two big brothers in particular are always adding fuel to the fire. The development of nuclear arsenals by India/Pakistan with billion still not having access to safe drinking water/basic hygiene goes to prove what they are worth!

However there is no alternative for salvation of the people of this vast region without realisation of SAARC spirits no matter howsoever we may try to remove all the differences or to resolve the problems without a complete change of heart amongst the people as well as the leaders of the entire region. Sometime back (1/2 months ago), I happened to watch a BBC TV programme on South Asia with well-known Mark Talley as the anchorperson. During the discussion he made a very passionate call to the leaders of the area to