



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.



## Militants are militants...

My attention has been drawn to a news item under the heading "Islamic Militants no threat" says, our Home Minister Altaf Hossain published in your esteemed daily on 24th August. To me the statement made is rather insensitive and naive giving out wrong signals to the otherwise free and democratic Bangladeshi society. Although our readers would recall that making wrong kind of statements is not new with our venerable Home Minister. Most of our law makers have been making remarks which are arrogant, naive and often depressing. Remember our Shipping Minister proudly announcing that he and he alone was capable of delivering the goods when dead bodies were floating on the rivers.

And now this. My first reaction to his remark was "Why should there be any Militant whether it is Islamic, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist. Militants are militants and should be dealt with severely" I have often wondered why it is that all over the world including the Muslim majority countries talk of Islamic or Muslim militants only and not the Hindu or Christian militants. The reason is simple. Militants also exist elsewhere in the world but then they have not been allowed to cast a negative influence on the socio-economic order of the countries. It is now a tested fact globally that politics and religion or politics of religion do not go hand in hand. No one knows it better than Bangladesh. Where else has Islam been so much used and abused like that in Bangladesh. I for one certainly do not wish to see a repetition of a similar experience.

On the other hand these are difficult times. We do not wish to nurture or encourage any individual or organisation which may have the slightest possibility of giving rise to situations like the Bali carnage or the recent bombing of the UN Offices in Baghdad. We must realize that no nation today can survive in isolation. The world has become a global village and we do have other matters to deal with than being

complacent and or encourage religious fundamentalists.  
**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

## Safe driving

I feeling very sad after visiting a friend, a doctor from London, lying in a hospital in Dhaka with a broken jaw and a cracked skull. His microbus was hit head on by a truck from the opposite direction between Bogra and Sherpur. Two occupants, including the driver died on the spot but Allah spared him, maybe for the help he rendered to so many people or for the work he undertook in his native village, to be completed. He waited all these years before he retired as GP in UK only to come home and start rebuilding his area.

I know the gradual bend on the northern highway where the accident took place. I too had been driving through this bend and about ten such bends, on similar missions. The authority who maintains these world class roads of the north are acting rather insensitively. These horrifying accidents can easily be averted if they just pay a little attention to its safety and maintain it. It does not cost much to apply common sense and some sincerity. Neither the ministry nor the policy makers do have any time for this.

And no attempts have been made so far to train the drivers properly. They are driving on the high ways without proper training and no instruction or information on the aspects of driving heavy vehicles are available. And there is another point that is very disturbing - the fundamentals of safe driving are rarely appreciated, even by some of the literate car owners.  
**Rezaur Rahman**  
Dhaka

## RAJUK should return people's 16 crore taka

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipokhko (RAJUK) made a plan for Dhaka city at a cost of 16 crore taka. Unfortunately most of the buildings of Dhaka city were not and, still, are not being built according to codes. It

is hard to find any building which kept four feet distance from its neighbours (the houses around).

Moreover, many buildings are made where it should not be. Roads in front of most of the markets have turned into a parking place. Water bodies, playgrounds and parks have been occupied by some vested quarters.

I think this practice should be stopped.

**Dr. Mahboob Hossain**  
Department of Pharmacy, The University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka

## 15 August again

Everybody respects Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. But during the Awami League regime some of their party men exploited his name and for that reason, his name does not evoke universal adoration. Therefore, to preserve her national interest, as a sovereign nation, to deter Indian decision, in whatever means necessary, Bangladesh preserves her right to intervene internationally, and it must be made clear through Bangladeshi

It was him who stirred our countrymen in freeing our motherland from the Pakistani exploitation and inhuman oppression. He shook up the whole nation and went to the prison many times for our country. However, opinions and ideals vary with different people and parties but his contribution is undeniable. So, his death anniversary on August 15 should be observed with due respect and announced as a national mourning day.  
**Rubab Abdullah**  
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

## Water crisis

I thank you profusely for offering us such a timely editorial (August 22) that on the one hand, not only expresses Bangladeshi concern, but also exposes to what extent, on water issue, New Delhi can become insensitive towards the legitimate rights of her neighbor.

Indeed, in my opinion, should India go ahead with her plan, it would be tantamount to declaring an informal war against the 140 million people of Bangladesh.

To be precise, this Indian decision not only violates the prevalent

Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of water sharing, but also all the existing norms and principles of international and human rights law, as embodied in the charters of the United Nations.

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media that it is India, which ultimately bears the responsibility for the consequences. That is to say, for Bangladeshi, patience has run out, as time and again, while dealing with Dhaka, it appears that rationality and respect to international law, are what New Delhi government lack.  
**Shibly Azad**  
Columbia University, NYC, USA

## Cars, foreign tours, ACs

Rejaul Karim Byron reports in The Daily Star (DS August 23) that our General Economic Division of the Planning Commission has finalised the project for implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Cars, foreign tours and ACs (CFA) included in the budgeted amount of Tk 77.38 crore. Mr. Byron also reports that the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) is critical of the (luxurious) items and concluded that these are simply wastage of the loan received from the donors.

The PERC reportedly noted that "there are already four similar projects being implemented by the Planning Commission" and "undertaking several technical projects for the same purpose creates unwanted duplication and wastage of (loan) public fund". "While the Planning Commission has huge number of cars and ACs."

We fail to understand the contention and the logic of the PERC because we strongly believe that in order to do a job even for an hour we are to exert ourselves so much in the warm weather that we need AC rooms while in the office and an AC car when we travel to see the condition of the poor. Critics fail to understand that the work of the PRSP is not an ordinary job for it entails project preparation for about 50 per cent of the population in a cool atmosphere, cozy office and transport and necessary frequent international tours.

Otherwise no work of any worth will be achieved for sure. We the readers of the Daily Star appreciate the unquestionable need for brand new ACs, comfortable cars, and frequent tours to distant cities, in business class if not first class, for the success of this most needed project.

**Syed Waliullah**  
Dhaka



of pottery, oppression by neighbours as communal violence, political molestation & feeling of dire insecurity. He also informed that to bring money as a loan for capital from banks, they have to pay bribe to bank officials. NGOs often help them by providing loan with low interest. Potters are also concerned at the rising price of fuel wood and clay. Above all, their hard labour to pottery is not undeniably at all. Many of them grudgingly rush to adopt another occupations leaving pottery gradually.

Hence, government and connoisseur of pottery both should come forward to alleviate their poverty and evaluate their artistic work precisely. The commoner can also play a role merely considering the question of preservation of our Bangladeshi tradition.

**Palash Podder**  
Dept. of Sociology, DU

## Dr. Stiglitz, LDCs and Cancun

Dr. Joseph E Stiglitz currently paid a four-day visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of BISS (Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies). His statements about the LDCs (Least Developed Countries) portray the true picture of their present condition. His advice to the LDCs to create unity among themselves is very timely for facing the emerging challenge. LDCs should take a common position to demand in the fifth ministerial meeting the duty and quota free access to the market of the developed world. All the ministers of 14 member countries of WTO will meet in Cancun, Mexico from 10 to 14 September. Ministers of 49 LDCs are going to place their unanimous demand through "Dhaka Declaration". The 16-point Dhaka Declaration includes 13 demands. The significant demands are: quota and duty free access in the market of developed countries, assuring free mobility of the unskilled and semi skilled labourers of LDCs to the developed countries, increasing technical assistance, decreasing agricultural subsidy of the developed countries, changing anti-dumping policy

etc. Dr. Stiglitz said the success of the LDCs in WTO negotiation in Cancun would depend on their unity and negotiating capabilities.

Stiglitz, a former chief economist and Vice President of World Bank (WB) won Nobel Prize in 2001. Stiglitz suggested LDCs to follow the strategy "you give up some thing, I give up something, on the equal value, should be based on the issue of the tariff and non tariff negotiation."

Top five rich countries of the world are involved in 82 per cent of export. On the other, hand 49 LDCs contribute only 0.4 per cent of world export. The European Union gives subsidy of \$2 per day for each cow whereas a citizen of LDC hardly earns \$1 a day. When the LDCs cannot ensure food for all citizens, USA is giving subsidy of \$4 billion to 25 thousand farmers.

The Economist criticised the developed countries for maintaining double standard to have their interest served. The renowned journal said the LDCs should be aware of the common tactics of rich nations of creating division

among the LDCs. It supported the mobility of labour as the mobility of capital.

The second trade ministers meeting held in Dhaka from May 31 to June 2, 2003, concluded with Dhaka Declaration. The demand in the Dhaka Declaration has similarity with the suggestion made by Stiglitz. He criticized the US agri subsidy which would be doubled in the next 10 years. He suggested the LDCs to protest this policy together so that the developed countries change their subsidy policy.

He identified 'corruption' as a major enemy deterring development of LDCs. He also suggested Bangladesh not to sell the natural gas. If we export it now we have to import after 15 or 20 years. So to ensure the successful negotiation with developed countries LDCs should unite and elect efficient and experienced person to negotiate at WTO to maximise advantage for the LDCs.

**Ummee Saita**  
Dhaka

## School of Business (IUB)

### Runaway DCC roads and corruption

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