



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.

Humayun Azad stabbed!



PHOTO: AFP

I am curious to hear the home minister's explanation for the brutal stabbing of eminent writer Humayun Azad. In line with his recent comments that senior AL leaders hurt themselves by falling in the road during hartal and that the attack on Dr. Kamal was the fault of his own anti-government activists, perhaps the home minister will now try to persuade us that Azad's actually cut himself shaving. I look forward to his statement on the matter with interest.

Murshed Zaman
Vive-e-mail

The attack by unknown assailants on prominent writer Humayun Azad with butcher's knives in front of

Bangla Academy has exposed our helplessness. "Fundamentalists have done this," said Azad's wife Latifa Kohinoor at the CMH. "Who else could do this? You know an MP even spat venom against him in parliament," she added. The allegation made by Prof Azad's wife should be taken into consideration.

If anything written by Prof. Azad does not comply with the norms of our society, we might seek the help of the judiciary. But in no way can we support any verdict delivered by a so-called religious leader. This section of people, religious leaders-turned-politicians, has been trying for a long time to turn our beloved country, which has an image as a peaceful

nation, into a country of chaos and confusion. They are using religion for political purpose.

There are many highly respected and educated people having a deep knowledge of Islam. They should come forward and unveil the ignorance of the so-called religious leaders who have a hidden political agenda.

I urge the authorities concerned to safeguard people threatened by the fanatic forces.

Mallik Akram Hossain
Hong Kong

I'm very much disappointed with the law and order situation in our country. The criminals are now targeting

our writers, after journalists. Renowned writer Dr Humayun Azad was attacked by some miscreants and he was seriously wounded. Now what will our honourable home minister say? Writers and a journalists are the voice of the nation. A writer and a journalist have the right to write which is a fundamental right in a democratic country. After that attack on Dr. Azad naturally the question arises: where are we living? Is it a democratic country?

I demand exemplary punishment to the criminals responsible for the attack.

Dr. Chowdhury Jalal Uddin
Murshed Rumi

Medical Officer,
Diabetic Hospital, Sylhet

The brutal and heinous attack on a literary personality like Humayun Azad is an example of the fanatics' evil design. It also shows that we have failed miserably to deal with the menace of fundamentalism. Humayun Azad is a man who has developed new modalities in literature, art and culture which are very original and distinct and have been appreciated by the intelligentsia. He is an asset of our country and as well as of the world at large. His research-based writings have opened up new horizons for others and should be considered a milestone in the literary arena. An attack on him is nothing but an attack on education itself. If education is an indicator of any social progress, the attack on him is an 'inhuman aberration' on the part of the fundamentalists and zealots. These elements must be brought to justice and all fundamentalist activities must be banned in order to avoid senseless

violence which causes so much harm to society.

Zahidul Karim
Dhaka, Lalmatia

It's not new...

Everyday I go to the Bangla Academy Book Fair and pass some time in front of the Agami bookstall to see Mr. Humayun Azad and hear him chatting with the readers. I like him

ist elements, including an MP of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Prasenjit Sarker
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Let us pray for both

Unknown assailants are not, in fact, unknown. They are not less known than the well-known professor. Trail of these assailants traverses a long sleeve of evil intrigue. Their trails are

the extent of 180 degree. Once again they are enthroned, while Prof. Azad and his ilk (I mean, the nation at large) are endangered.

They promised to get the killers of Pahela Baisakh

Did they?

They promised to get the temple-trampling thugs.

Did they?

The honourable minister has promised to nab the assailants of Prof. Azad.

I tend to believe his no-nuance pronunciation.

But I wonder "CAN HE?"

I have not yet read Prof. Azad's *Pak sar jamin sad bad*. But I know, what it means. It is nothing but a regressive mortal culture hell bent to strangle "ALL" that we sought so dearly and fought for so valiantly in our struggle for independence!

The near mortal wounds of Prof. Azad reminds me of a near-mortal national identity. Let us pray for both...

Mohammad Zaman
Cary, North Carolina

Protest from Canada

The barbaric attack on Humayun Azad is a bloody example of how defiant the defeated evil forces of 1971 have become to implement their blueprint of eliminating the liberal free thinkers.

The greatest sons of the country must be protected from the murderous claws of the fundamentalists.

Lutfur Rahman Riton, Rezaur Rahman, Suman Rahman

Canada



PHOTO: AFP

Another failed test

Bangladesh Cricket team arrived in Zimbabwe for two Tests and five ODIs. The small Bangladeshi community was ecstatic. The two teams are ranked 9th and 10th respectively in the world cricket. Theoretically, if Bangladesh can beat any team, it should be Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe scored 441 in the first innings. Bangladesh bowling was very disciplined within its own limitation. There were only 2 no balls and 5 wides in the two innings of 684 runs. In the first innings, Bangladesh lost three quick wickets. The Tigers fought back well. Shariar (48), Rajin (49), Mushfiq (44) and Rana (35) played sensibly. But the hero of the day was definitely young Ashraf (98). I was watching the game in company with the Zimbabwean Cricket officials including Mr. Peter Chingoka, the President of ZCU. Everyone was full of praise for Ashraf. We were comparing a number of his shots with those of Tendulkar. Though the Zimbabweans were happy for Heath Streak getting his 200th Test wicket, each of them felt sad for Ashraf. We were heartbroken. Bangladesh reached 311. We were reasonably happy.

Zimbabwe declared their second innings with an overall lead of 352 runs. The pitch was slow but it did not deteriorate even on the 4th day evening. Considering that Streak was unable to bowl, a draw was possible with outside chance for a Bangladesh win. Then the thunder struck. The boys put us into a ten-ball shame. It was a procession of zombies. Five wickets tumbled, as if our boys were under the spell of a black magic. It was irresponsibility of the highest order. We left the field, bitter and downcast.

The boys batted responsibly on the last day, but the die had been cast. Bangladesh failed another test. Shariar, Rajin, Mushfiq, Ashraf all failed under pressure of nearing milestones like fifties and hundreds. Rajin failed twice scoring 49 and 47. I am not a specialist, but it is evident that the boys lack mental toughness. Loss of five wickets in ten balls is nothing but cracking under pressure. Dave Whatmore seems to have done well in improving their technique. Would some one instil mental and physical toughness in the boys needed to compete at the highest level?

Dr. Md. Rashiduzzaman Khan
Harare, Zimbabwe

AIDS and some thoughts

The biggest challenge, the world has ever faced is AIDS. This killer disease is spreading at an alarming rate. The world leaders have met many times to take some measures regarding AIDS. Though the summits have succeeded in giving an outline of the action plan, but they have failed to contribute to lessening the rate of its spread. Many countries have started thinking about taking other measures. As people are ignorant and not aware of its hazards, we cannot expect much from them.

This is the right time to make some drastic moves to save the world, as the hope of any medicinal cure being found is not very bright yet.

Unity is power. We should work together in this regard. But along with the collective initiatives every country should take some other initiatives also.

In every country there should be an institution like National AIDS Protection Council (NAPC). This will run a huge hospital-cum-home like a Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre where the people affected with the virus will be transferred. It will be better if the hospital is located in any place outside the congested residential areas. Obviously, this hospital will have to be well equipped. NAPC will diagnose the vulnerable community and the people of the suspected area and transfer the infected people to the hospital. In the homes the patients will be given suitable work. The hospital-cum-home will have different sections for children, male and female.

The government is advertising on the consequences of AIDS and the preventive measures both on TV and radio. The government has to chalk out an action plan. It has to provide jobs to the sex workers and give them residential facilities before banning the business effectively. Mass awareness should be created in every level of the society. Cultural functions highlighting the disease should be held regularly. There should be a volunteer society which will go to every rural house to make the people, specially the women, conscious about the matter. The government will train the workers of the whole system.

Obviously, a huge amount of money will be needed to make this project a success. But as we are heading towards a disaster, we have to undertake such projects for our own survival. We still have time to think about this matter before becoming an African country, when no measure can save us from ruin.

Mithun
North Kamalapur, Dhaka

Old men and women

Most men and women over 60 years of age who are suffering from diabetes, heart ailment, cancer, blood pressure, kidney trouble or any other incurable disease are not waiting and counting their days for getting admitted into hospital or clinic or going to a foreign

country for medical check up and treatment. But they are worried about the last journey to the grave leaving behind their near and dear ones, relatives and friends, wealth or poverty.

They are sitting idle on chairs or lying on beds restlessly moving through the memory lanes. They are heaving sighs and repenting their past mistakes, failures and wrong doings. They pray to the Almighty for forgiveness and seek His mercy. A lot of them wish that if they could get another chance, they could rectify themselves and start life afresh. But it is too late now. Time and tide wait for none.

Undoubtedly, all men and women are mortal. Even a baby born today may die tomorrow. The bottom line is that one has to leave this world today or tomorrow for good. This is the order of Allah the Almighty, the Most Merciful, the All Powerful, the Lord of the Universe.

The younger generation has many things to learn from the colossal stockpiles of knowledge and experience, practical know-how, failures and successes, problems, difficulties, hardships and joys and sorrows of men and women of over 60 years of age.

Let us not disdain or discard, hurt or insult any old man or woman. Let us take care of them, be kind to them, and seek their blessings to lead a better, happy, prosperous and peaceful life in future. Let us not indulge in pomp and show, corruption, avarice and hatred. Let us all be amiable and honest men and women of good character, manners and etiquette to save our country from chaos, corruption and violence.

OH Kabir
Dhaka

An unusual movie

Bachelor is undoubtedly an extraordinary creation. Otherwise, people would not have thought so much

about this movie. Mr. Istiaque Uddin Rifat, February 16, Asif Ahmed, February 20, Rifat Mahbub, February 23 and last, but not the least, Minuara Begum Binu, February 25, 2004 made good criticism about its positive and negative sides in the letters page of The Daily Star. It's obviously a positive thing that people have found a topic (Bangla Cinema! In recent times they used to laugh at it) to debate on.

I live in Dhanmondi and when I enjoyed the movie with my friends, we became puzzled because we felt that someone was telling the story of our lives. Though sometimes I felt bored observing some silly mistakes while watching the movie, I want to thank the writer and director of this cinema. We are enthusiastically waiting for their next and better production.

Md. Razibul Islam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Lawyer's comments

This refers to a comment allegedly passed by Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud in a press conference organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association. According to some newspapers, Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud has asked the government to dissolve parliament as he thinks parliament has nothing to do in the absence of opposition lawmakers. Perhaps the lawyer has overreacted out of sheer emotion. I have some observations which reflect the voices of the overwhelming majority. I believe Barrister Roka has echoed the voice of the leader of the opposition.

Barrister Roka did not pass the same comment when the present PM Begum Khaleda Zia, then leader of the opposition, was prevented from leading a Long March towards Rangamati against the peace deal signed by the then government.

Alcoholic drink

There are certain drinks available in the country which contain alcohol, but the producers do not admit the truth openly.

Alcoholic drink is doing harm to the people of our country. It is destroying the ethics, norms and values of our society! I wonder how some companies are selling such drinks in utter disregard of the existing laws like The Control of Essential Commodities Act 1956, The Pure Food Ordinance 1956, Fixation of Price and Distribution of Essential Commodities Ordinance 1970, Standard of Weights and Measures Ordinance 1982 etc.

It seems that proper enforcement of law is not there in our country. This proves that our consumers are very



Now the AL is absent with 60 of its MPs but at that time the BNP was absent with 114 of its MPs plus some others from smaller parties. Did AL dissolve parliament? During Congress and Muslim League days it was the honourable lawyers who played the pivotal role in the independence movement and in establishing democracy in this part of the world.

But unfortunately, as in other professions, law practitioners are now divided on political lines which does not serve the cause of the people.

We hope to see our beloved motherland flourish in all its dimensions. Can we not surrender our ego to national interest? When we will be wiser enough to identify our priorities? Without working for the millions of

poor, we are fighting to get the better half of loaves.

Dewan G. Ahmed
Shamoly, Dhaka

Independence of Judiciary

Bangladesh is a third world country but specialists have opined that we have prospects to alleviate our stature if proper decisions are taken in the policy-making level and these decisions are properly implemented. To do so, the first step is to restore law and order and restoring law and order necessarily needs one thing, that is, "Independence of the Judiciary".

Before the 2001 polls, the BNP vowed to restore law and order. This was certainly a very commendable intention and it would have been twice laudable if they translated their words into acts. The BNP is now in a suitable position to ensure independence of the judiciary, and other political parties will also appreciate it as it will open their door to speak up in the courts and anticipate a fair judgement without any outside intervention.

I hope the government will take the necessary steps in this regard without wasting any more time.

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury
English Department, BRAC University

GrameenPhone

It has been almost a year that the call-charges for all other GP packages have been reduced to some extent but what happened to "Easy Pre-paid" subscribers who are still paying Tk.6.90 (including VAT) per minute?

Is GP trying to compel their "Easy Pre-paid" subscribers to migrate to GP's other packages in order to be able to sell more of new connections and thus increase their revenue many-fold?

CNR, Chittagong

A happy birthday!



In the recent years, all of the Bengali dailies have started publishing one new variety of advertisement. It is "Birthday Wishes". Usually, father-mother, grandpa-grandmother, or uncles and aunts send those birthday wishes for their one to four to five years oldies. There are some birthday wishes, if you have noticed them for their difference in language and tendency for secrecy, you can very well understand that they are sent for the lovers, or spouses. Interesting. Even a few years back, this was not there in our metropolitan culture. Ekushey and ntv, in their early days, also telecast birthday wishes.

Yesterday was a special day. It was 29 February, 2004. A rare day that has come amongst us, only for twenty four hours, after a long four years of waiting. I believe, there are people who have their birthdays on this very special day. I

sometimes wonder, how these people really look like? I sometimes think that they are not from our all real world. The Almighty has put some of His mysteries with these births. Like us, those who can celebrate our annual birthdays, and who can write very normally that our birthdays are on all other days except on 29th February, we do not feel that thrill of having a four-yearly birthday. For those, who have their birthdays on this very day, they had to wait for this very special day for the last four years. The birth of a child brings all the happiness to the parents, and celebrating birthday actually is a "thanks-giving" for the precious gift from the Almighty; and since those born on this day are very special, -- I wish all of them a belated HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

Sajjad Waheed
Senior Lecturer, School of Communication, IUB, Dhaka