

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.

Exciting match

I would like to congratulate our under-nineteen cricket team for their excellent showing in the Plate final. It is our great achievement when failures far outnumber successes in cricket.

Though it was an excellent match but the cricket fans of our country could hardly enjoy it. The new stadium chosen as the venue was yet to be ready for a game like this. BTV could not telecast the match for what it called a technical problem. As a result, we opted for the radio. But the radio commentary was not good. The commentators used some words which I heard for the first time. They could hardly give us the picture of the game. One commentator said, "We can see many *lolona* (girls) watching the game. Undoubtedly, they are an added attraction in the stadium full of cricket fans."

Here again technical flaws came. When only two hours of the game were left and Australia were near their target, the broadcasting was suddenly stopped. After some time a voice was heard which told us to wait until the technical problems were solved. We waited curiously. When the problem was finally solved we heard " Bangladesh have won a very exciting match".

This is how I enjoyed our great victory in the Plate final.

Mithun
Kabi Jasim Uddin Road,
Kamalapur, Dhaka

Playing politics with misery

I was waiting to write this letter after being sure that Dr. Humayun Azad was out of danger. Our deepest gratitude is to the Almighty for sparing the professor his life. We should all spare a moment and in our prayers communicate this thought to our Creator.

In the days since Dr. Azad was attacked, we have expressed our views clearly, harshly and unequivocally in condemning this dastardly act. This speaks of our qualities of the heart when an act like this does not fail to move our souls, for indeed the incident reached beyond our hearts and touched our souls. But then there were other things we have done with this act that, now with Dr. Azad on way to recovery, we should reflect upon to see whether we have acted rightly or otherwise.

Let us take our political leaders. The PM, to deflect any blame for this attack on her government, blamed the AL. The AL, not to be undone, blamed the BNP with equal conviction. Our intellectuals went overboard and demanded that the public forcibly "overthrow" this democratically elected government, harmonising their views with the AL that has seen this unfortunate incident as an opportunity to call for the BNP's ouster.

If an attack on a university professor can lead to such reactions from those upon whom we have placed our destiny, it is little wonder then that we as a nation are going nowhere. We have heard from these leaders about the academic qualities and distinctions of Dr. Azad. But I have no doubt that very few of them would be able to tell us much about his works, for people who indulge in such negative politics cannot have much time for reading the books of writers like Dr. Azad.

I was, nevertheless, heartened by the spate of letters that appeared in these columns. The writers expressed shock, sadness, contempt but almost all did what the politicians and the intellectuals failed to do; rise above politics and look into the matter dispassionately. It is time that these politicians and the intellectuals

take lessons on how to act from the people they are supposed to lead.

There are people evil and intolerant amongst us as there must be in such a large population, but their actions should not lead our politicians and our intellectuals to support hartals or provoke people to take law into their own hands and try and force out a democratically elected government.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka

Political crisis

The two and a half years old political impasse between the Awami League and the BNP-led government has plunged Bangladesh into a genuine law and order crisis and economic breakdown, especially during the last one month. Although the government responded overtly to the minimal threats to internal security by deploying the police and paramilitary and, in some instances the army, it failed to control or punish offenders who contributed to the prevailing lawlessness by engaging in violent clashes with their political opponents, attacking their rivals whomsoever they are and assaulting and intimidating even journalists, jurists and writers.

The opposition, for its part, enforced numerous general strikes that paralysed the country's commercial centres for days at a time. Furthermore, in bringing its anti-government campaign into the streets, the opposition set the stage for disruptions of all modes of transport, destruction of vehicles and hampering of economic and social activities.

Now, some political parties joined hands with the AL but all should take concrete steps to ensure that renewed violence does not jeopardise Bangladesh's return to democratic governance. The international community should also press the main contenders for power to avoid militancy and be prepared, if elected to office, to fully investigate all reports of violence and abuse and punish those responsible as required by law.

Sirajul Islam
Social sciences researcher
and consultant
Shyamoli, Dhaka

Nobel Peace Prize

I am somewhat surprised like many others around the world to read in the newspapers that the names of President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have been proposed along with some others for the award of Nobel Peace Prize this year. Perhaps those who proposed the names have done this in a somewhat lighter vein. Sharing their spirit, I would like to add also the name of Iraqi President Saddam Huessin to this list because without his courage and whole hearted co-operation Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair wouldn't come this far.

Frankly speaking, I won't be surprised if Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair share the prize. After all if Henry Kissinger could get the Peace Prize, what's wrong with Bush and Blair? Dr. Kissinger, the most powerful American Secretary of State in decades, was a great friend and supporter of President Yahya Khan in 1971 when the Pakistani army ruthlessly massacred hundreds of thousands of Bengalees. We haven't forgotten the past. If Kissinger is a peace lover, who is not?

Payaz Khan
Joar Sahara, Dhaka Cantonment

"We want to come back"
I was reading Dr. Mohammad H. Khan's article in the March 5 issue of The Daily Star on his feelings

Women's Day and Bangladesh




PHOTO: AFP

Why dedicate a day (8th March) exclusively to the cause of the world's women?

The United Nations General Assembly, composed of delegates from every Member State, celebrates International Women's Day to recognise that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women, and to acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and security.

For the women of the world, the Day is an occasion to review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development.

You might think that women's equality benefits mostly women, but every one-percentile growth in female secondary schooling results in a 0.3 percent growth in the economy. Yet girls are often kept away from receiving education in the poorest countries that would best benefit from the economic growth.

Until the men and women work together to secure the rights and full potential of women, lasting solutions to the world's most serious social, economic and political problems are unlikely to be found.

In recent decades, much progress has been made. On a global scale, women's access to education and proper health care has increased; their participation in the paid labour force has grown; and legislation that promises equal opportunities for women and respect for their human rights has been adopted in many countries. The world now has an ever-growing number of women participating in society as policy-makers.

However, nowhere in the world can women claim to have all the same rights and opportunities as men.

The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women.

On an average, women receive between 30 and 40 percent less pay than men earn for the same work.

And everywhere, women continue to be victims of violence, with rape and domestic violence listed as significant causes of disability and death among women of reproductive age.

Masiha Nazrul
Baridhara DOHS,
Dhaka

Karbala carnage

The carnage in Karbala in Baghdad by rocket attacks and bomb explosions which killed 185 people and injured several hundred others on the day of Ashura is so appalling that we are stunned and just cannot believe that this sort of an incident could happen. In Pakistan, a Shia procession was attacked by gunmen in which 50 people lost their lives and many more were injured.

We are feeling very sad, the Iraqis had suffered so much and their agony is still not over. We urge the people of Iraq to remain calm, try to understand that a third party is trying to instigate a civil war. So Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds all should remain together and thwart the loathsome plan. In our country Shiites and Sunnis live side by side in peace and harmony. Ashura is a public holiday, it should be like this everywhere.

The US has attacked Iraq unjustly. They have come to stay, they will create chaos and anarchy so that they will have an excuse to stay there for a longer time.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer

America lost a great man and I lost one of my favourite personalities when retired Admiral Thomas H. Moorer passed away last month aged 91 at the National Naval Medical Centre in Bethesda, Maryland. A 1933 graduate of the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, he was commissioned into the US Navy as an officer the same year. In 1941, as a member of the Pacific Air Fleet, he survived the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. During the 1950's, Moorer achieved the rank of Rear Admiral under the Eisenhower Administration and served in the Korean War. In 1964, he became the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet during the Vietnam conflict. He later became the Chief of the US Navy in the late 1960s, and President Richard Nixon appointed him as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military post in the USA, which he held from 1970 to 1974. Here, however, begins his odyssey. A person who never wanted to fade into oblivion even after his retirement, Admiral Moorer helped in making Americans aware about the misdirection of his country's military and political policies, commenting on every major problem faced by the US government. Forceful to the end, Moorer's final public statement of 09 January 2004 took on the unspoken US double standard, where he dared to bring up the inequities and loyalties of the USA to a favoured nation (Israel). A true defender of the US, its principles and its people, he refused to cave in to the slander/libel intimidation tactics of Washington's most powerful special interest lobby.

Moorer's greatest legacy to America illustrates the measure of a leader and a true patriot, someone willing to go against meticulously moulded public opinion and foreign lobbies, and to maintain an advocacy of honouring the needs and interests of his country before all others. His death leaves a vacancy within forceful activism toward US values and true patriotism. I cannot help but note that the United States and the world will be much poorer in his passing because his stand for patriotism is a positive direction for patriots all over the world.

As a young school student back in the 1980s, I grew up admiring this honest and sincere man.

Tashique Mannan
Department of International Relations, DU

Disturbance at night

On the night of 1st March a renowned mobile company at Rd-8, Gulshan 1, had a party with loud band music that disturbed our sleep.

As it was the night of Ashura a renowned mobile company at Rd-8, Gulshan 1, had a party with loud band music that disturbed our sleep.

Imagine our plight when we could not sleep till 2:00am. Over seventy, this sleeplessness badly affected me and also my wife who is over sixty. This total disregard of civic behaviour by the company, knowing that it is a residential locality where such things cannot be done, is disgraceful for a responsible multinational.

In over thirty years of residing in my house, we have possibly never been disturbed so badly till so late an hour. I wonder what would have happened if a similar offence were committed by Bangladeshis in any residential area of a European city.

SAMansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

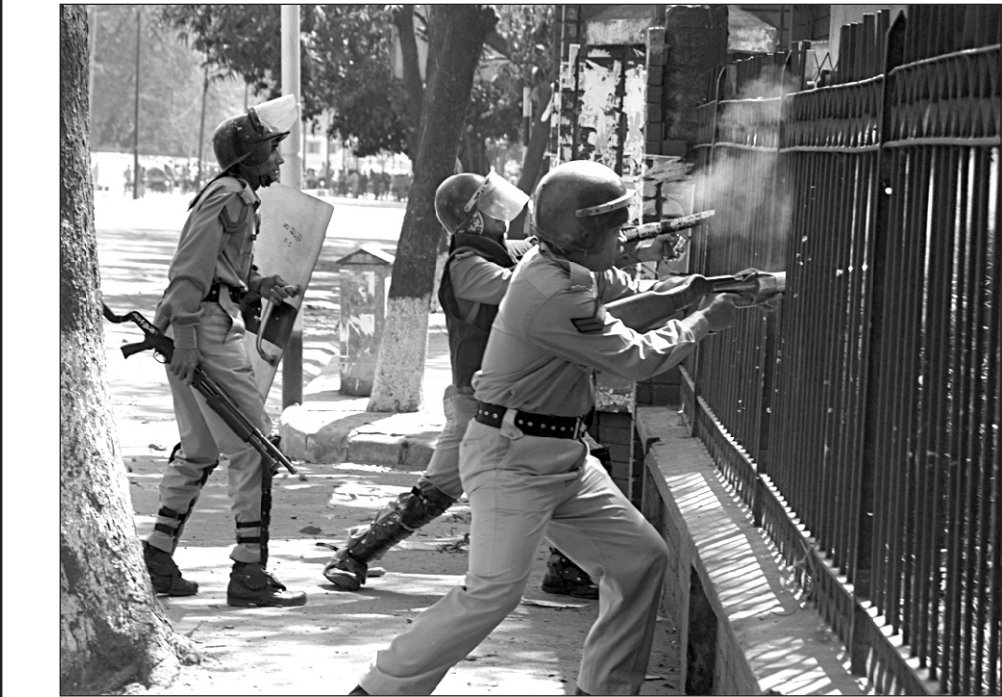


PHOTO: STAR

Police on campus

About 100 DU students were badly injured in a protest rally when the police attacked them without any provocation. This has so far been the role of police on DU campus. Police don't stretch their hands to help when people are robbed, agitating students set fire to vehicles or when a teacher is stabbed. Police overlook the drug abusers in front of the male student dormitories.

ries.

They only perform their duties when instructed by the high-ups. We don't need such a puppet police force to maintain order on the campus.

Syeda Tasneem Towhid
Dept of Microbiology, DU

about Bangladesh and his defence on his daughter's remark. Certainly, the war of independence is the greatest inspiration and the strongest bond with the roots and we deeply respect such feelings.

I have been hearing time and again (not from Dr. Khan) that the post independence generation does not have much feelings for the motherland. This generation lack the motivation and spirit to come and settle in their motherland after having better education and training abroad.

I was born after independence and I am writing this to refute such allegations. I know a community of about two hundred students who are having their undergraduate and graduate education in different universities of Minnesota, USA. I had the opportunity to mix with this population from a very close distance and I know for sure that each and every student feels for their motherland like anything. They read three or four Bangla newspapers everyday through internet, try to discuss the current issues of their country when they see each other, express their frustration and joy in the national events, celebrate, and observe all nationally important days. They arrange cultural programmes, Bangladesh nights and many other things to bring their motherland to their mind all the time. Among them, a good number of students who have completed their Bachelors

wanted to go back to Bangladesh to do some good jobs there. And I am one of the few who have been encouraging them to do so. Yesterday, we had a get-together and all of them asked me how could I justify their home going in such a situation of our country? When life and civic security is such a crucial question, aren't job and decent life far away questions?

As we know, the life that a person leads in an alien country is never a complete life. Their hearts and thoughts always run in the country that they belong to. If our country continues to create such examples for these young men and women, the attraction of coming back to the motherland will just evaporate. Each and every day Bangladesh is discouraging our people to come back home, let alone the international citizens and investors. Will there be a time when this will stop? Will there be a morning without fear of killing? Believe me they need to come back and if we stop them from coming back, this country would be barren at the end of the session.

AKM Mazharul Islam
Department of Anthropology,
Minnesota State University, USA

Humayun Azad

Dr Humayun Azad is certainly an unlucky person to be born in this country with such intellectual gift. No wonder, he was attacked. His near-death experience (God forbid) was an outcome of his thought provoking ideas that strikes obscurantism.

But I don't think that matters will improve very soon in Bangladesh.

Mehrin Mansur
Canary Wharf, London

Exploiting democracy

Democracy in Bangladesh comes with its own unique zest. Politicians in Bangladesh have reinvented and formulated democracy, to serve their needs and political agenda. In the name of egalitarianism, the democracy in Bangladesh has created a milieu of methodical, organised, and politically motivated obliteration and disruption of daily life, and the cycle never seems to come to an end.

Recurring strikes, mass open party congregation in downtown, annihilation of public and private possessions impelled by politicians under the umbrella of preserving democracy and show of public service, have debilitated economic opulence and communal safety, and has set a perilous primacy of outlaws administered by politicians. Critics, writers, social workers, business community are captive in the hands of the dark forces. Politicians have corrupted our educational system by injecting politics in school, colleges, and universities. They have shifted the political stage from parliament to street for their own benefit. Unaccountable politicians and their thugs have capitalised on democracy at the expense of ordinary disfranchised citizens. They have failed us, and largely the media, and the citizens are at fault

for not holding the politicians accountable for economic and social downfall.

It is imperative that we, the citizens, take the initiative to change the dynamics of mainstream politics of Bangladesh by compelling constitutional amendment to bar general strikes that paralyses the country, and undermines national security and economic interests. We, the constituents, can enterprise the political transformation to make democracy work as a self-correcting process under a watchful eye. The importance of establishing think tank institutions, watchdogs, and active vigilance bodies to safeguard freedom and democracy has never been greater in the past.

In our country, the prominent politicians have grown old in the spectrum of political theatre, and they are out of scripts. They are too old for political reform. They are not politically cultured for strong leadership. They lack the character, charisma and qualities to be our leaders, and indisputably they are not our acquaintances.

Shadabul Mujib
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Criminals at work

I woke up this morning listening to the NPR (National Public Radio) that Brick Lane, a novel written by Monica Ali, a Bangladeshi woman, is at the top of the Best Seller's list and she is being presented with a recognition and reward in New York. Is not that heartening news when we are saddened by a barrage of news of the heinous attack on a professor of Dhaka University?

Attacks on pioneering thinkers and social revolutionaries are not the sole traits of the Bangladeshis, although I feel ashamed for this attack in my country. Starting from Socrates, Galileo and, in our living memory, Mahatma Gandhi, they all laid down their lives to the rages of their countrymen.

The individuals, who attacked Prof. Humayun Azad, were perhaps poor, uneducated and hired hands. A small amount of money no matter how it reached them was inconsequential. The *Jallads* executioners, were happy that with that tainted meagre money they perhaps could feed their family for the day.

The people, perhaps powerful in Bangladesh, who are behind this inhuman crime, are not different from those who, with their power and wealth, attack another nation pre-emptively.

Whether or not the government of Bangladesh makes an attempt to identify and bring to justice the criminals, no matter how powerful they are, has to be watched. It is interesting to observe that none other than the President of Pakistan, a country well known for their ultra rightist Mullahs, is going all out to curb the power of this group.

Mozharul Hoque
Springfield, Virginia, USA

What is matam?

I read an article about Ashura on Monday, 1st March' 2004. I was quite shocked when I read a couple

of sentences which were misleading. First of all, matam is not self-inflicted torture using knives or chains. Matam is the beating of one's chest using only bare hands. Though many people here and elsewhere around the world use chains and knives to inflict pain, it is not the way matam is performed. Also usage of knives etc. during matam is discouraged in the religion. And, Hussain / Hussein is always spelt with 'u'.

Unfortunately, people in this country wrongly pronounce the name with an 'o', but that should not change the spelling of the name.

Hussain Amir Ali
Purana Paltan Line, Dhaka

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Tashique Mannan
Department of International Relations, DU



PHOTO: AFP

Lecture on HR

A few days back, we got a very negative portrayal on the human rights situation in Bangladesh by the State Dept. of the USA. There is no denying the fact that we do not have a very good standing among the countries in terms of human rights. We do have lots of abuses and malpractice in Bangladesh. Then again, what do you call it when you are sidelined from the mainstream of the population because you have got the

first name like Mohammad or when you keep beard in pursuance of a special way of life? Is it a practice of human rights when the US keeps unidentified number of prisoners in zoo-like cells year after year without any prospect of release? After all these, is not it ironic for the US to lecture others on human rights?

Arif
Gulshan