

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.

Comments on commentary

I fully agree with every point of the commentary "Does the PM really believe in democracy?" written by Mr. Mahfuz Anam on March 15. It's a shame! It's a shame not only for BNP leaders and supporters but also for me because I led JSD in an educational institution for four years. It's a shame for the whole nation because the people of Bangladesh elected them. What BNP did to former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and his supporters was absolute violation of democracy, violation of human rights. It is really true what Mr. Anam mentioned very specifically, "Be with the BNP and its allies and you can get away with every form of abuse of power and enjoy all its consequent 'benefits'. Be against them and all hell will break loose."

Thirty-three years have passed after independence. What have we achieved? All that we have achieved is people are living in our country with daily killing, robbery, forgery, corruption, terrorism, violence, inadequate health care, no social security, inequity and a lot more. Not only before independence but also from the beginning of 1972 to present, our country and its wealth have been owned by some so called corrupted leaders during all governments - from the elected governments to the army-led governments - no one had or has the democratic attitude. We are frustrated. We are desperate to see something new in our beloved motherland. We are bored and scared with family-owned dirty politics. Our country is not a family owned country - we, all people, are the owner of the country and we have appointed BNP for five years to govern the country honestly, not to abuse the power and resources. If the present government continues to stop the voice of this new growing platform, its own future will be destroyed. No dishonest and brutal dictators so far could survive in the history of the world. It's the basic human right of a citizen to criticise the government or opposition. Therefore, I urge to the present BNP

government to concentrate on the development works of our sick and poor country instead of creating violence. If they do better, we, the people of Bangladesh, will obviously recognise their contribution. The ultimate result of stopping one's voice creates unhealthy situation throughout the country and it takes the country backward the development.

Faruk Ahmed  
Via e-mail

PM should read the DS commentary

The commentary "Does the PM really believe in democracy" (DS March 15th) was very timely and articulated the frustrations of a lot of your readers who feel let down by the Prime Minister. The issues she was to tackle after winning the election like law and order, corruption, etc were difficult ones, no doubt. We never hoped that she miracles would happen and she would turn things around like the way we all wanted.

We are not disappointed by her lack of success on these issues, for we are aware that these are deep rooted and would need support of all parties to resolve. Our disappointment is with the events that have been unleashed upon us in the last few weeks and her reactions. The heinous attack on Dr. Azad was followed by spontaneous protests. It is true that political elements have tried to gain political advantage out of it. In that context, we even thought that some reaction from BNP's youth wing on similar lines to the spontaneous protests. But then a pattern emerged. These BNP youths were no longer looking like enraged youngmen.

They were looking more like 'Hitler's Brown Shirts', a term that the editorial used and I think rightly so, for they did not stop just in beating people inside the DU campus with police as its ally; they also extended their net and went after B Chowdhury and beat up his supporters in perfect fascist style. If some of us were still willing to support the PM, we couldn't. She

let us down again by allowing her thugs to go after Mr. Mannan and made it clear in no uncertain terms that no one should dare to leave the BNP. For they would be dealt with in the same way as it's been with B Chowdhury and Mr. Mannan. The recent events have made us believe it was decided at highest level of BNP that the best way to deal with defectors was to beat the hell out of them.

The leader who had shown uncompromising potentials for establishing democracy during the movement against Ershad's military dictatorship and articulated the same democratic aspirations while in opposition during AL rule and was equally determined to establish democracy in the initial days of her current stint in power, has suddenly made a u-turn by either siding with the extremists in her party or willingly allowing herself to be run by these elements.

The PM is not only allowing democracy to be a casualty; she is proving what Sheikh Hasina can not, that her government is indeed turning fascist. Time is running out fast for Khaleda Zia and before tackling B Chowdhury or Sheikh Hasina, she needs to tackle her party. She cannot afford to have her political secretary justifying that police was protecting B Chowdhury from public wrath when the public knows that the likes of him turn the thugs he controls on innocent people, people who were just expressing their frustrations against a government that is being run by government with sycophants like him around the PM. The future of the country lies squarely on the PM and her ability to return to democratic norms. We urge the PM to read this editorial seriously for it can save her and the country from destruction.

Rashed Ahmed  
Gulshan, Dhaka

Open book exam

The English department of BRAC University is planning to stop the open book system in their semester exams. I know why. In Nilkhet or Aziz Super Market you will see lots

of book shops and if we check, we will find lots of note books of Ramji Lal or S. S. Sen. I am not saying to ban these books or condemning the writers or the book sellers. We cannot condemn Ramji Lal or S.S.Sen for what they write in their notes, because this is their business.

Students can use these books as their reference, but some students don't do this. They use these books in the exams and copy everything.

I concede that some students can understand everything about English very well. For that, they don't need these notes. But what will the students who do lot of hard work for this subject and need the notes do? Open book exam means open text exam, not open notes. For the subject of literature, open book exam is very necessary because it is very difficult for the students to memorize all the notes.

I request to the Head of the English Department of BRAC University not to stop the open book system in the regular exams and to punish only those students who abuse the system.

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee  
English Department, BRAC University

Unprecedented demands

The attack on Dr. Azad was an unprecedented action and of the most serious nature. The fact is that it is a symptom of the deteriorating health of our nation, a very severe one. The teachers have rightly gone on strike but there are people who called for the withdrawal of the strike. Those who called for the withdrawal either do not realise the seriousness of the attack or ignore the fact.

Unprecedented action calls for unprecedented reaction. The teachers need unprecedented reaction to let the masterminds of the attack know that they will not sit still and pretend nothing has happened. Otherwise, attacks on professors might become all too common and easy like so many other evils in the country accepted

The best cricketer in Bangladesh?

A very difficult question and as difficult to answer. But let's take a shot and see where we go: Akram Khan, Athar Ali Khan, Nannu, Shanto, Habibul Bashar? Who is actually the best? The choice is difficult because hardly any of the Bangla-deshi cricketers have performed consistently.

Firstly let's address the question: what do I mean by the "best"? Well, the best cricketer would be the one who gives match winning and consistent performances, whose presence should be felt in the team, and team should feel handicapped without him. At the same time, his statistics should speak for themselves.

Bangladesh has won just 4 matches (against Pakistan, Kenya, Scotland and Zimbabwe) and there hasn't been one player who has provided winning performances in all of them. We can be sure that none of the above performers have been consistent if we have a look at their ODI status.

Does this bring us back to square one? Not really, in this letter I want people to think beyond the big names which we hear all the time. I want people to think of a performer who has always been in the Bangladesh team, but never been as popular as he deserves to be.

The unsung hero. He played a vital role in 3 out of 4 victories, vital role in the Multan Test, vital role in all the matches whether Bangaldesh has been close to win or lose. One player who comes down to the field with his head high no matter in what situation Bangladeshis.

He is Mohammed Rafique, the highest one day wicket taker and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest test wicket taker. Man of the match against Kenya, gives three runs an over on average in most of the games, bowled superbly against Pakistan in '99 and in the latest test serieses, in Australia and Zimbabwe. One of the most consistent bowler in terms of line, length and accuracy. Though his career has been dogged by controversy, his absence will definitely handicap Bangladesh.

I have been watching and keeping track of Bangladesh cricket for the past 10 years (half of my life), I now live in Canada, but still keep track of my favourite team.

I hope this letter is read by people who are in a position to make a difference. Well not getting too detracted and going back to the main topic: in my opinion, I rate Rafique as the best cricketer ever to be born in Bangladesh.

Shadman, Toronto



as a normal part of everyday life.

Some possible unprecedented reactions: Most importantly, the teachers can demand that the post of Vice Chancellor be made non-political, that is the government should no longer appoint a Vice Chancellor. They can also demand the withdrawal of police from the university who provide no security and attack students and teachers (Dr. Anwar, Biochemistry) and replace them with a security force directly under their authority. There are many other demands open to the teachers but the two above would be unprecedented.

Ragta  
One-mail

Democracy?

Lately I have been following the news of B. Chowdhury's notoriously painful experiences for standing up and speaking out against the current ruling party.

It's truly shocking and shameful the way they are treating Dr. Chowdhury and Mr. Mannan, especially destroying his business ventures and freezing bank accounts. I strongly believe that it's profoundly repugnance violation of democratic rights as well as obvious breach of human rights. This is a very self defeating strategy for the BNP to send the signal to others that they would face the same fate as Mr. Mannan if they speak their mind.

I think people in other democratic countries including USA, and my beloved country Bangladesh, are very content with the notion that democracy is all about protecting and promoting majority's rights. But I believe that not a single democracy will ever survive in the long-haul without advice and consent of minority (political party like Mr. Chowdhury's one). The BNP should do some soul-searching. People should be ruled by the law of the land not by the will of other ignorant men. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the very best luck to Mr. Chowdhury and Mr. Mannan in their noble endeavour.

Sohel  
Via e-mail

Malt beverage

I would like to give thanks to Farhana Sultana for her letter on alcoholic beverages (Mar 10). She has made valuable points in her letter, especially in the lines "..... It is a sign of strength and character to avoid drinking alcohol, to be able to say 'no thanks', rather than to give in to something that has no real value".

In this connection I would like to share an incident That I have heard from my younger sister. Last week some of her friends went to a shop to buy some dry foods. At that moment, a boy entered the shop and asking for a 'Hunter', which the manufacturing company is calling 'malt beverage'. The shopkeeper informed the unavailability of the drink and the boy went out but came back within a few minutes and offered hundred Taka for a can. The shopkeeper then agreed with the boy's offer and brought out a can from a small room of the shop. So, we see how this kind of malt beverages are destroying our future generation and how the unscrupulous businessmen are making money in such a filthy way.

However, it is a good sign that the government has already banned the product and taking action against the guilty shopkeepers. We, the young generation must

be united to say 'no' to this kind of malt beverages as well as other alcoholic products for the betterment of our country.

Md. Ehtashamul Karim Anu  
West Shubidbazar, Sylhet

Holiday shifted!

If I understood it correctly, the government has declared a public holiday on March 27. Because Independence Day (March 26) this year falls on a Friday (weekly holiday). Now, what was the compulsion in doing so? Does it mean that, henceforth all holidays falling on the weekly holiday will automatically be shifted to the next working day? If so, why such a decision after all these years -- and, as if this

country is short of holidays to such extent that we cannot let any of these go to "waste".

CNR  
Chittagong

DU stalemate

It has been more than 12 days since DU is closed due to DU teachers' strike. Still there is no sign of improvement as the government is indifferent to the prevailing situation. It seems that the teachers have put themselves in a peculiar position from where they neither can pull back nor have any strong desire to come forward and make the government to bow to their demand.

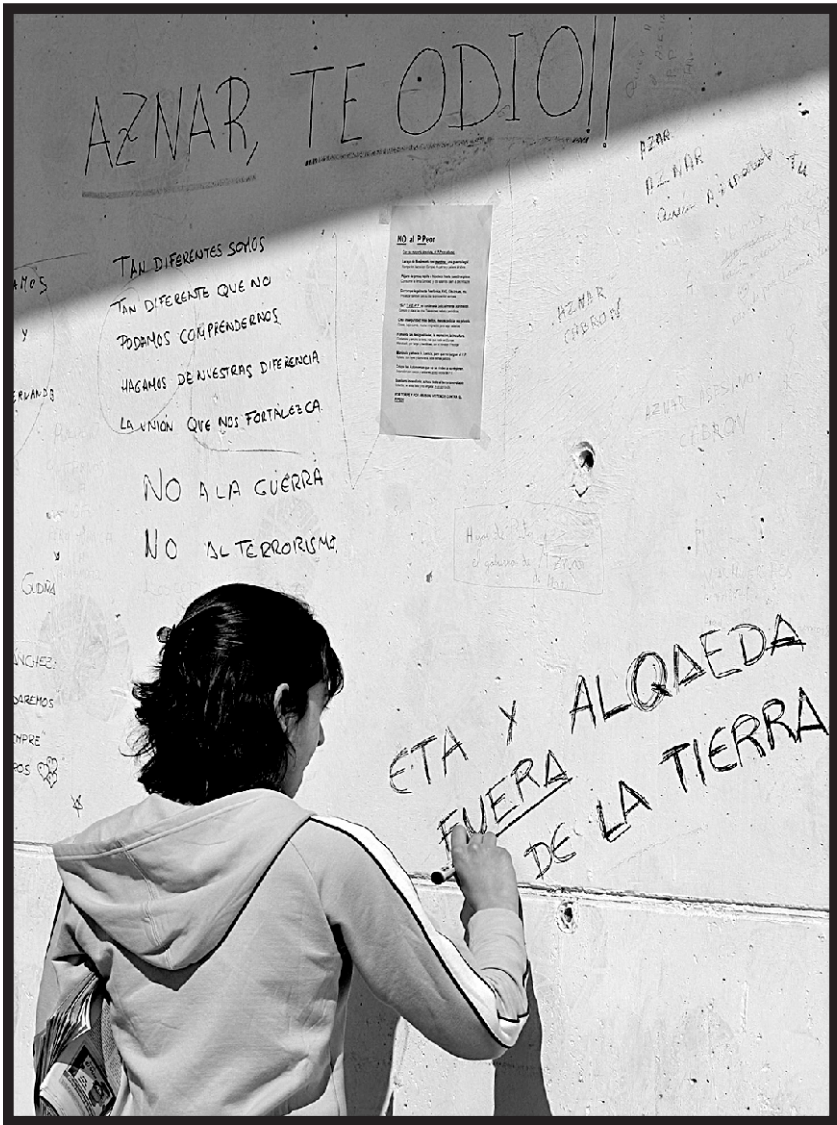
I think there is little chance that

the government will come forward to end this undesirable situation. Because presently the government is not sparing its dissident leaders from being beaten up by its party men let lone the oppositions. So how can teachers expect anything better from this type of government?

Moreover by putting the university into a deadlock teachers are also making an impression to the fellow students that when there is a crisis close down of the university is ok. So I request to the teachers to take other resorts to make the government hear about their demand rather than closing the university.

Md. Mynul Mamun  
Via e-mail

Madrid bombing, death and politics



"ETA and al-Qaeda away from earth"

