

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.

Hijab banned in France

From September 2 Hijab has become prohibited in educational institutes as well as in government offices in France. Considering it as a religious symbol, the French government has prohibited it. Being an advocate of liberty, equality and fraternity, it is not clear how they have adopted such a policy, that interferes with religious freedom and is a direct violation of human rights. Article 9 of the ECHR and article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights clearly states: "every-one has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance". If they respect different religious groups, they should be pleased with the fact that Muslim women are coming out to educate themselves and playing their

role even in government services. If they ban Hijab, in that case either they will remain at home or protest it, which will slowdown their progress.

In this perspective I'd love to mention that people of our country are more careful about the religious rights of the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians and determined to protect all their rights and never support any policy that violate basic human rights. In response to the call of the international conference

held in London presided by Mayor of London Ken Livingstone on 12 July 2004, Bangladesh has joined the International Assembly For Protection of Hijab and celebrating the day creating public awareness on 4 September 2004 along with other 20 countries.

This has definitely enlightened the image of our country. **Ashrafunnesa Flora**
On e-mail

sleep. Get up again after two hours and the strict routine of prayers, cleaning, food preparation, religious and sometimes political teaching continues. The bed time is around 10:00pm. The course curriculum does not include any pragmatic subject. They are usually cut off from the real outer world and live in a make-belief world created by their mentors-'ustads/modarres'- the pseudo-parents. These Qaumi, Hafezi madrasah boys are deployed and used as pawns/'sipahis' by the rightist/fundamentalist politicians to attain their political goals.

The issue deserves a closer look. **SN Mamoona**
Dhaka

Capture of Ahmadiyya mosques?

The alarming news (DS -- Sept. 3, '04) of the plan by some religious bigots, calling themselves 'Amra Dhakabashi', to capture the Ahmadiyya mosques in Dhaka and Narayanganj in the coming days must be taken note of. However, you have been too kind to term them as just bigots, whereas, they are, by their action, plain and simple extremists who want to grab others' place of worship by force!

As plenty has been said and printed in the media about this fanatical group & their likes, I shall simply pose this question to the government in power: What are you waiting for? Now that Amra Dhakabashi has publicly announced their plan to capture the Ahmadiyya complex, the leaders and their shango-pango should be immediately taken into custody as per law of the land to deter them from materialising their evil design. Merely obstructing them by blocking roads is not the solution -- as was done on August 27. The kid-glove treatment appears to have resulted in their holding a press conference to announce their renewed capture plan. I am not a lawyer, but I do understand that even to plan a crime, in this instance -- to capture others' property is a criminal offence & punishable by law.

Ashfaq Chowdhury
Dhaka

Envoys

The actions of some envoys in Dhaka never fail to surprise me; sometimes they anger me and sometimes bring embarrassment. An ambassador represents his/her respective country's sovereign authority and hence theoretically can reach, if need be, the highest level of political authority in the receiving country and discuss any subject. However, in practice, their functions are guided by diplomatic

norms and they just cannot meet anyone they like nor say whatever they want.

It seems Dhaka is one capital where the diplomatic norms guiding an Ambassador's role and functions are controlled by the diplomats and not by the Government on whose behalf the Foreign Ministry should be doing this. Following the August 21 blasts, a number of diplomats have gone to the press expressing views about the Government that were very critical, and un-diplomatic. Taking the cake was a news I read that said that some envoys declined to attend a briefing by the Foreign Minister on the 21 August blasts and one envoy even went to the press to mention the reason that was most embarrassing to the Foreign Minister!

Tata investment

Two billion dollars FDI offer by Tata, a business conglomerate of India is uncertain. A few months back, a Bangladeshi delegation went to India and convinced Tata to invest in our country. As per reports, Tata showed interest to invest in steel, fertiliser and power sectors. But sadly enough, after the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally political situation of our country became very volatile and turbulent. So Tata's FDI proposal is totally uncertain. Mr Ratan Tata, the chairman of this business heavyweight, has postponed his visit to Bangladesh. If Tata undoes its offer, Bangladesh will lose a great bonanza. The government should take this matter seriously.

The Board of Investment will have to play proactive role to convince Tata. But the political condition should be normalised first of all.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU

"Statesman and statesmanship!"

I was reading through the letters to the editor -- "Statesman and Statesmanship!". I haven't gone through what The Statesman has published, but I have read the readers' comments. I would like to state that freedom of press, suing The Statesman, demanding answer from India through diplomatic channel etc. are just expressing the readers' agonies because somebody has said something about us. Recently, the BNP-Jamaat also indicated hands of India (& America) in the August 21 attacks. So it can well be seen that Bangladesh government is also doing the same thing against the neighbouring nation. They are a much bigger power than Bangladeshis.

Our fight against terrorism is new born only. It's no use accusing the



Tigers' test

The excitement is catching as our heroes are in England for the ICC Champion's Trophy, 2004.

I would like to start by inspiring the Tigers, especially Dav Whatmore and our new stand-in captain Rajin Saleh. It would be really sad to be without our light in darkness, Habibul Bashar. It's like India without Sachin or Sehwag. But we will have to fight. We still have hopes on Javed Omar, Mohammed Rafique, Tapash Baishya, Mohammed Ashraf, Rajin Saleh, Khaled Mahmud and last but not the least, Khaled Masud. Surly, we can't aim the championship but we would be happy if the Tigers qualify beyond the pool stage. I should really like to say that the tail-enders always play the better part in the game. They bowl well, survive to bat and do some excellent fielding. This trophy is a test for us; everyone will have to play his own part. Our team will have to co-operate like what we see among the Indians. What we want from the Tigers is that in a wicket like that of England, they should try to survive the first 15 overs without losing more than one wicket.

Mohammed Fahim Hara
Universal Tutorial, Eskaton Road, Dhaka

Support the national team

It is a shocking fact that 32 years of independence have passed, still many of us show the lack of true spirit of nationalism, particularly in the field of sports. In the cricket circuit we see that about 50% Bangladeshi fans support the Indian cricket team and the rest are crazy about Pakistanis. In many cases our people fight both physically and verbally among themselves for these two teams. There would have been nothing wrong if these teams were supported for their performance only.

But the basic psychology behind supporting Indian team is that India helped Bangladesh win the liberation war. On the other hand, religion is the basis of supporting Pakistani team. Both reasons are sensitive, not acceptable at all for supporting any team as politics and religion must be de-linked from sports.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

neighbour when we could not find any answer to our previous bomb attacks and other civil criminal offences. Better we should look into our own lack of intelligence services than accusing others. Our intelligence failed to unfold the mystery in all the bombing cases. We cannot deny our own failure to secure citizen's lives in today's Bangladesh. When there are so many internal problems in Bangladesh, then outsiders can say and allege anything. Most important of all, I see some readers are showing up their agony, but how much piece of information do we have in our hands to debate on this issue? Everything is going on at the political level. Information is kept secret. So, its useless to blame and counter-blame unless we have enough information about actual facts. Last but not the least, our own country's safety, security and integrity is our own responsibility which is in danger now.

Shafiqul Alam, Banani, Dhaka

I find the letters written by both Shahjahan Ahmed and Arshad Jamil ("Statesman and statesmanship!", DS, September 6) to be premature, if not absurd. Both see India's hand in an editorial written by a privately-owned newspaper without proffering any evidence that such an allegation is true. Now tell

me, how is this any different than what The Statesman has purported to have done? Both authors, in my opinion, are engaging in nothing more than slander mongering.

Niraj Agarwalla
Boston, USA

The grenade attack
The news on the 21 August bomb attack has left the headlines of the dailies. The political arena is also getting calmer but the pain the victims sustained has not receded. We may forget the event today or tomorrow but never they or their families.

More than two hundred people were injured in that grenade attack. All were rushed to the hospitals. But their misery did not end. They are still groaning with pain. Those who are from well to do families have managed their proper treatment in the country or out of the country. The Awami League is sending their leaders abroad at its own cost. But what about those poor workers of the party? Of the injured, many are going to be paralysed for life for lack of proper treatment and many others need much better treatment.

Words are not enough. The victims need help.

Mithun Das
Kabi Jasim Uddin Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka

occurrence. All the consolations and condemnations are weak enough to express our sorrow and hate. Hundreds of school children and their loving parents and guardians died or were injured and mutilated for a cause with which they have no connection whatsoever. We condemn this inhuman act of terror from the core of our hearts. Russians addressed the situation in a most inept manner. No sign of professionalism was evident from their dealings. Not a single ambulance was there when shooting broke out, 58 hours after the siege. Negotiations were half-hearted whereas intervention and an exigency plan was missing. In these days of international terrorism, all the nations including Bangladesh has got many things to learn from the lapses.

We also urge the Russian government to look for a political settlement to the Chechen problem.

M Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka



Death: Is it scary?

Do you ever think of death? Does the thought of dying; leaving this world behind makes you sad. Do you ever wonder what is in the life after death? Death is a subject that seems suitable to talk about when you are old. As if that is the only time people die. If death comes as a topic, we quickly change the topic, leaving sadness with it.

My father passed away when he was 50. Until then I thought only people who are old with skin curled up and soft, grey hair, die. But my father was nothing like that. It seemed right if my grandfather passed away instead of my father. He was 96 years old.

After that I think of death all the time. I do not think death has to be sad, and yet it is scary and sad. We humans do not like the unknown, at least most of us, and thus we are scared of it.

I recently read a book called "the five people you meet in heaven". I guess death is the beginning of another journey. Life does not really end with death. I think life is a very short voyage. And thinking of death at least once a day makes us human, more kind, generous, and honest. It makes sense then not to fight with each other, get angry for little things, not to talk to a close friend for years.

I wish people would think of death more often. They would realise then this life is only for a short while. The next one is much bigger. And in the next life we get rewards, for our good deeds here on earth.

Iffat Zia

On e-mail

Dr Khan's article

I have read "From William Franklin to Omar Hazim: an Islamic Ameri-

can story" with great interest. I would like to thank Dr. Khan for his wonderful piece of writing. Not only in western world even in our country many educated people decode Islam inadequately. Because, as Muslims, we know very little about our religion. Islam is a religion of peace, love and tolerance and there is no place for cast, racism and meanness. Let's enhance our knowledge about Islam and spread its true image to our murky surroundings and clarify all the misunderstanding.

Mohammed Sohel Hara
Tophkhana Road, Dhaka

Transfer of telephone far cry?

I am writing this with a great deal of disappointment regarding the callous attitude of T & T. They not only decided to remain inert regarding my transfer of telephone but also sent two messengers which indicated that I had to go out of the way to get the job done. Two linemen came to my apartment and started shouting at my mother's name (as the demand note is in her name) and 'courageously' demanded bribe. I inquired about the two the next day but the high officials rejected my allegation. I used to reside in Dhanmondi road no 8 and moved to my new apartment in Dhanmondi 3/A. The distance between my previous and present residence is less than a kilometre but is has been more than three months since I applied for the transfer of my telephone and I am yet to have it.

I even sent my brother at least 20 times in the last three months but I have not had a result yet. This is causing me a great deal of problem. I am a teacher and my students

cannot contact me. Due to hartals we rescheduled our classes and I found it really hard to be in touch with them.

Badal Hasib
Dhanmondi

Madrasah students

Every day I encounter a few madrasah students- boys and girls at my working place. I enquire about their well being and treat them for various ailments. The number keeps on increasing.

The students are mostly drawn and collected from various groups like the urban/ rural poor, from farmers/ workers/ lower income

group/ lower middle income group/ people believing that sending a son or daughter to madrasah is an act of "Sabab"/siblis of muazzins or traditional moulviv/ people belonging to rightist parties/people wanting to correct an errant son/to dispose of an excess sibling out of abject poverty etc. The motives are embedded in notion of social elevation, religious belief, poor man's choice of "good" education etc.

The students are separated from their mothers at a very tender age and are deprived of natural parental love, care and affection. They get up at 4:00am, say their prayers, recite and memorise the Holy Quran. Then they take the breakfast and

Life and we

Life is full of love, hatred, devotion, fiction, pragmatism, blaze, murk, triumph, surrender, bliss, outcry, ambition, despair, complacency, inferiority, astuteness, lunacy, intoxication, cupidity, cannibalism, impetus, revolution, rationalism, evolution, and what not?

Nasir Uddin Roney
Dept. Of Anthropology
The University of Chittagong



Beslan tragedy



Alena celebrated her 11th birthday just the day before she was taken hostage in her school along with 1,500 children and their guardians. After 3 days of deadlock when the crisis ended in the bloodiest of shootouts in Russian history, she was among the 400 dead. Her tiny coffin became the heaviest burden on the shoulders of her parents and relatives. The cute innocent face that they had adored and treasured for last 11 years was left to be confined within a frame only.

Not only Alena, the lives of a few hundred children who were born in Beslan, a city in Russia, met the same tragic end on 4 September. The lives of these little angels were cut short in the most brutal fashion that one can ever imagine. These innocent souls who came from the heaven to heal this earth were snuffed out. The city of Beslan has turned into a mass grave. The atmosphere is heavier than ever before. The city is floating on tears. Weeping silently in

small groups they carry their beloved kids, more precious than their selves. Grabbing their overwhelmed hearts they put those little dead bodies inside the grave. They left water bottles beside the graves if their kids feel thirsty. Thousands of flowers that bloomed over night all over Beslan came to cover the small graves of those little angels.

In my 30 years of life, I have not learnt words that can befittingly condemn an act of such brutality. The video footage what we got from BBC and CNN was simply heart stopping. Its not clear how on earth a group of human beings who are claiming a land for their own can act such diabolically. How mindless one has to be and how insane one must be to open fire on hundreds of children and unarmed civilians. Their patriotism and self-belief must be corrupt. The cause that they are fighting for must have lost credibility. In any part of the world, in any state, such an act

must be termed as wanton, barbaric, mindless and unacceptable.

Our utmost efforts must be concentrated toward making the world a better place for our children, for our next generation. Doesn't matter my kid is a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, a black or a white, to me what matters most...its my kid, my own blood, whom I love more than anything else on this earth, even more than my own life.

Md Bashar Farhad
Mirpur, Dhaka

I have no words to express my shock and grief at the terrorist attack on the Beslan School in Southern Russia killing four hundred people including a large number of children and gravely wounding another seven hundred men, women and children, many of whom would not survive. My daughter-in-law, and two little grandchildren who are school students here in Brussels, join me in expressing our profound sorrow

and grief at this heartless tragedy. What they saw on the TV screen, throughout the whole of yesterday, I hope they don't have to see anything like it in their whole life. Taking children as hostage for political reasons and then kill them, or cause their death, cannot be a civilised conduct of life and deserves nothing but hate and condemnation. The so called Muslims will have to pay for such a gruesome act today or tomorrow.

Our heartfelt condolences and sympathy for the bereaved families.

Michael, Raphael, Shaon and Faruq Aziz Khan
On e-mail

330 persons died, more than 700 injured, most of the victims are school children. This is the result of a seizure of a school on its opening day in southern Russia. As we see the whole tragedy on TV screen live, we feel the agonies and pains of the relatives and friends right here far away from the place of