

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.

Bangladeshi hostage in Iraq

I am dismayed although not completely surprised to hear about the unfortunate abduction of a Bangladeshi driver who was supplying provisions to an US base in Iraq. My heart goes out to him and his next of kin. In fact my heart also goes out to all humanitarian workers who are by one twist of fate or another somehow entangled in this tragic game of chess where innocent humans are mere pawns.

In the deck of cards, the life of a Bangladesh passport holder is less of a negotiable instrument than that of a US or UK passport holder. By the same token, Bangladesh passport is also less of a health hazard. Quite rightly, Bangladesh was not party to this illegal invasion of Iraq. On the contrary, Bangladesh is a renowned neutral nation which also has the largest and most disciplined contribution to the UN peace-keeping missions around the world. Therefore it would be safe to rule out any political motives behind this abduction and assume a punitive one against the individual and a deterrent against other cheap workers from taking on future endeavours to abate the occupying forces. In pure monetary terms, the cost of "re-building

Iraq" has just increased ever so slightly.

There is one question that naturally arises: what should the Bangladesh government do to protect its citizens in situations like this? I welcome the approach already taken by the foreign minister and his staff which is to clearly spell out our official position in this protracted war and to make a humanitarian appeal for the hostage. In addition, Bangladesh should pursue avenues of recourse against employers who abuse or otherwise put the lives of its citizens at risk, if necessary through international bodies such as the ILO. It should also put on pressure on the occupying forces for failure to provide adequate safety of innocent civilians in Iraq. Finally, the government should make every effort to inform its citizens of potential dangers, but leave the final decision to the individual. As for Bangladesh citizens, they should do what they have always done and make their own informed risk assessment and act accordingly. I pray that this saga comes to a happy ending for my fellow Bangladeshis.

Shabbir A Bashar
On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: AFP

Dismal cricket

I totally agree with Ahmed Kamal from Abu Dhabi on his vision of Bangladesh cricket. Even a schoolboy would have done no worse if he were given such a chance. Now everyone will hold everyone responsible but the truth is that our players have no commitment and responsibility. For a proof just watch how they gave away their wickets not only in this series but also in all the games played till now. So there is no point in making lame excuses on behalf of the players.

Concerned, On e-mail

I think our batsmen can learn valuable batting lessons from our bowlers Mohammad Rafique (63 in the last Test) and Tapash Baisya (66) Bangladeshi bowlers 'out-balling' the batsmen seems to be the norm, rather than the exception.

Serious thought should be given to having the bowlers opening the innings!
Shahnewaz Siddique
On e-mail

I know this might not be as serious an issue as any of the political topics you get letters about, but sitting here 18,000 miles away from home, I didn't know who else to write this to. Is it just me or does our cricket

team have the biggest bunch of losers representing it? I mean, if this was some other country, they probably would have benefited a lot by now, seeing how much international exposure they've got over the past couple of years. Every time they lose a one-day match, they tell us it happened because they're still in the Test mode. When they lose by an innings and 99 runs they'll probably tell us, it's because we're concentrating on our one-day skills.

You have to be competent at playing and not at making excuses. The BCCB had fired Gordon Greenidge because he had the wisdom and guts to say that we weren't ready for Test status yet. Look where it got us. Even such an experienced coach like Dav Whatmore can't help this sorry bunch of cricketers.

I think they should be stripped of the privilege to play cricket. When you lose something you realise the value of it. And anyway, these cricketers aren't good enough to compete with other nations, so why waste resources on them?
Sabik CM Enayet
Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY

guards of the two countries.

Our foreign minister called a spade a spade and that made her very much disheartened. Now when the premier of India is saying that there are militant camps in Bangladesh and they are operating with the help of ISI, she seems to be completely unmoved by this undiplomatic allegation on an unfounded matter.

A caged bird gets a meal three times from its master. It lives quite a luxurious life but it can never taste the freedom of flying in the open sky.

Saif Dhaka

Rab

We came to know from the daily newspapers that the law and order situation is changing for the better after the Rab began its operations.

This is good news for all of us.
Md Azizul Moqsood
Saga University, Japan

Three cheers for Rab!

The Rab is doing a good job these days! I appreciate it and thank the government for deploying the Rab in order to bring stability in society. I'm astonished to see that some people are raising fake issues of "human rights"! They say that the Rab is violating human rights. Very funny! The same group of people say that terrorism and anarchy are on the rise and the government can't do anything!

Seems some people were born to criticise others! Prudent readers, if you carefully listen to the TV news, you will notice that those are not honest themselves.
Cantara Wali Ruhi
JU

Report of UGC

There are 52 private universities in Bangladesh under the private university act 1992. But we know that most of them have failed to serve the purposes for which they were established. We the student of private universities are depressed to see the report of the high-powered evaluation committee led by the chairman of the UGC.

We judge the overall academic atmosphere at the private universities on the basis of some criteria like number of full-time teachers, infrastructure, curriculum, examination system, grading system, library, laboratory, entertainment facilities etc. It is true that most of the private universities have failed to fulfil the required standards.

As students of private universities we are totally disheartened to see what is happening. The authorities concerned and the private universities have to find solutions to the existing problems.
Mamunur Rashid Tomal
Department of English, DIU

A letter to Yasser Arafat

Present Israel is deemed to be more than a part of the US. That is clear from the activities of the US and Israel's importance to America. No American president, no Congressman, or Senator, whoever he maybe, is not seen to act against the will or interest of Israel. America has given Israel an open license to do whatever it likes. From this, it is not difficult to realise that present Israel is the most powerful country in the world. So, you have no hope to achieve your goal in the way you are struggling against Israel. So much blood, so much loss of property, so much atrocities perpetrated on your people, but no reaction in the so called civilised world. It is because, Israel and its allies to whom power of media, money and technology belong have been distorting your image and as a result people of America and people of the advanced world, whom we think are on the side of justice and peace, do not and cannot see you in your actual plight through the smoke screen artificially created by the media. Your Muslim and Arab brethren are in deep slumber.

In spite of this, you cannot surrender, and you cannot give up hope. But your course of struggle should be changed. I suggest you to give to your people a peace of cloth, that is a badge wherein it should be inscribed "Israel, stop your occupation of our hearth and home, live in peace and let us live in peace." You ask your people to wear this badge. Every man and woman, young and old, must wear it and continue to wear it until your goal is achieved.

Mahbub-E-Rabbi Chowdhury
Al-amin Steels, Chakbazar, Comilla

National anthem and mobile phone

I would like to appreciate the views of a respected teacher, Md Abdur Rahim of Comilla Zilla School, in his letter "National anthem and mobile phone". Responding to his earnest request to DS readers to express views on this, I would like to offer mine.

It is true that a national anthem of any country has its own incomparable dignity, so does ours too. Mobile phones of today bear ring-tone of

the tune of our national anthem. Is it adding to the glory or degrading it?

We have to keep in mind that on whichever occasion the national anthem is played, not all the audience understands its highness. Unfortunately but true, many people of our country don't even know it's our national anthem. These people are either poor, belong to slums, or are so busy earning their livelihood that they know very little of what is a national anthem. But yet, they are also our fellow Bangladeshis, and we cannot ignore that.

Syedra Sultana
Gulshan, Dhaka

With due respect to the teacher of Comilla Zilla school, Md. Abdur Rahim, I would like to say that respect is not a showy matter. It comes from heart. If anyone has respect for the national anthem I don't think he/she needs to stand

But mobile phones are not used by such category of people. But, these ring-tones help us, to some extent, to spread the tune into the many ears in the crowd, thus reaching out to many people in society.

The time has come when our national safety, security and integrity are at stake. We should rise from the barriers of political separatism and unite to beautify our country, and bring back the glory which is much lost by now. Many would not even agree, but Bangladesh is being talked about as the "Problem Country" in many other nations. In a situation like this, the national spirit is to be held high in our hearts now, and I feel that the national anthem should not be confined to a handful of occasions only.

Any medium, that can contribute to the wake of patriotism in the need of the country, should not be stopped or forced to go under cover. However, in normal circumstances, the national anthem should be carefully handled, and it should be seen that no one can ever challenge its glory or honour. But are we running through normal circumstances? The country is rocking due to bomb attacks. The ordinary people are living in terror every day. All these cannot be the picture of a normal society. So its time we should save our country first, bring back the pride of being "Bangladeshi" as it should be. The constant ringing of the national anthem will certainly not do any harm, rather it will encourage our hearts, and maybe some of our fears may ease out.

Syedra Sultana
Gulshan, Dhaka

With due respect to the teacher of Comilla Zilla school, Md. Abdur Rahim, I would like to say that respect is not a showy matter. It comes from heart. If anyone has respect for the national anthem I don't think he/she needs to stand

when it is played. Some people use its music in a mobile phone because they like it. Doesn't respect come from liking? I think so.

He also wrote that it (NA) is sung and played on particular occasions. But why on particular occasions? Can't we listen to it when we like to?

I don't want to say that we need not stand while listening to the national anthem. What I want to say is that if we don't stand when it is played, it does not mean that we don't respect it.

Md Sazzad Hasan
On e-mail

Salvage education

The University Grants Commission has conducted a thorough investigation into the functioning and quality of the private universities of Bangladesh. The probe body has found that most of them do not go by the provisions of the Private University Act, 1992. Alarming, private universities have mushroomed in our country, especially in Dhaka city. Maximum universities do not have rudimentary infrastructure. They hire teachers from public universities on part-time basis. They have no permanent campus, but they accommodate their students in a rented house. Frankly speaking, most of the private universities, sans a few ones, are nothing but coaching centres. They are run on commercial basis.

The government should wake up from the deep slumber to rescue the quality of education from an imminent catastrophe. The UGC probe body has recommended cancellation of registration of eight universities and adoption of corrective steps for many others. The govt. should take this issue very seriously.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU

Jail killing

The judgement on the jail killings has after all been delivered. Much as I would like to, I would refrain from commenting and request you to write a commentary on this.

I would just like to quote some old adage learnt from my elders "Dishonesty begets Dishonesty, Crime begets Crime, Murder begets Murder."

Aleque Zargoza
On e-mail

Private universities

The recent declaration/ categorisation of private universities by the UGC has raised eyebrows of various known circles who are concerned with the present poor state of educational atmosphere in the public universities. Undoubtedly, there are some good private universities imparting education, even better than some public universities. But before categorising private universities, the UGC should first tell us something about those universities which are operating on the tax payers' money, following the same syllabus without any change for the last 30/40 years. The UGC was basically established to oversee the operation of public universities. It does not make any sense to burden them with added responsibility where they are failing to perform their primary role. Moreover, the allegation of inclusion and deletion of names of some insignificant universities in exchange of graft or the management having kinship with the regime also need to be clarified soon.

Our society even now possesses a number of respected educationists/personalities and if the government is really sincere, a permanent separate regulatory body, as it was done under the UGC, should be reconstituted and made autonomous under the minis-

try of education comprising retired professors/vice-chancellors who are not associated with any political think tank or profit making organisation. I think they will be in a better position to rein in the profit making trend of all private universities and ensure better atmosphere and standard of education.

Zoha
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Attack on Ahmadiyyas

The attack on the Ahmadiyya mosque in Brahmanbaria is simply disgraceful. And so is the conduct of the police, who let the incident pass without registering any cases against the known leaders of the attack. Where is the RAB when it is really needed? The only justification for such a force is to take over in situations where the police are constrained by politics. This is certainly happening with regards to the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh.

In case the government is under the illusion that the world is unaware of what is happening to religious minorities under their rule, I would direct them to any number of international news websites, including Muslim websites such as MuslimWakeUp.com. This is not an Ahmadiyya site, in case anyone is wondering, but one of the most widely read Muslim websites, and it now routinely talks about the oppression of Ahmadiyya Muslims by the fundamentalists in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Zeeshan Hasan
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

I have just read a news item in your daily of 30 October under the heading "Ahmadiyya Mosque razed, 12 houses robbed in B' Baria". The news has made me angry and sad. We must at all costs resist and put an end to recurrence of such he-

Patriotism and objectivity

In response to Md Shahidul Islam's letter to the Editor on 27 October, I couldn't help but chip in my opinion on this matter of patriotism and reality.

I believe the common man should make it a point not to believe in "conspiracies" like the "international conspiracies". Md. Shahidul Islam quotes to "stop [Bangladesh's] progress." It is extremely naive to think that in this world, with problems as deep as looming water shortages, global warming, energy crises, genocide and wars initiated for purely political and economic ends, anybody would care about a small country in South Asia that most people have never heard of. It is indeed true that truth is stranger than fiction, and on most occasions, conspiracies are very easily mistaken for stupidity. The two are divided by a very fine line. The harsh reality about Bangladesh is that nobody really cares what happens in this far corner of the world, and no international conspiracy is out to get us. Disregarding the vast majority of our politicians that come from the lowest crust of our society and academy, if notable intellectuals say something, it's time to listen. If intellectuals say Bangladesh is a den of terrorism, it's time to give the situation a look.

People, however learned, are always subject to their ego, and it is possible that some intellectuals are known for their verbosity and over-emphasis, the academic equivalent of making a mountain out of a mole hill. As such, I would agree that to say Bangladesh is a den of terrorism like, say, Afghanistan was, is libellous. But to say that our patriotism dictates that such a claim, or any other claim that potentially reflects on our nation negatively, is an international conspiracy to hamper the progress of a fledgling, immature democracy, is no less than sheer denial.

The fact that our bureaucracy is viciously corrupt is undeniable. Whether we are the world's most corrupt is debatable, but the fact that corruption is a part of life is as true as the sun rises from the East.

To be patriotic is admirable. To be blind to your own mistakes is blameworthy and will harm nobody but yourself.
Iftekarul Haque, Singapore



PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: AFP