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How to make the UN more functional



On mission 'uniting nations'?

In response to the letter by Mahmood Elahi, July 4th.

Unfortunately Arab/Muslim countries are not taking this important issue, as with every other issue, seriously. They are least bothered with the fact that, whenever big decisions are taken by the UN, all they do is occupy their chairs and obey the orders given to them. I agree with Mr Elahi that, those countries, whose human rights records are not good, should be corrected, so that they will think twice before repeating it. But

this will not solve the problem entirely because then we will have countries fighting with each other saying none of them violated any human rights, after resolving all the disputes among themselves, only then we can decide about what exactly constitutes a "violation". And when that happens, all the big countries will come up with all sorts of fancy terms to hide their violation of human rights, for example, the illegal Iraqi occupation as "liberation"!

Therefore, to have a "just" and "fair" UN and to make it more effective, we need to remove the idea of the permanent membership. Then it will give the same rights and power to everyone. And when everyone has the same power, they can use their voting - while passing any UN resolution. After all, the name "United Nation" is supposed to provide "unity". How can we achieve unity and justice when some countries are more powerful than others?

It is a waste of time to try

uniting all the countries together, trying to do what is best for the world and then suddenly one permanent-member comes along and vetoes the whole plan simply because that selfish country can't make money out of it! It is pitiable. Removal of permanent-membership from the UN would also prevent countries from abusing their powers by doing a favour to its friends and bullying its rivals.

For example, we know George Bush is now desperately trying to get the Indian troops in Iraq, and to influence the Indian government, he recently suggested that, there may be a possibility of India becoming a permanent member of UN. Why? What did India do all of a sudden, that it should be granted a permanent membership in the UN? I don't think permanent membership has anything to do with a country's size or its economy.

However, if we look closely at all the permanent members, they have only one thing in common: Nukes! Yes, UK, France, USA, China and Russia all have lots of nuclear and other war weapons.

If anyone is even remotely interested in bringing peace and to create a proper "United Nations", then lets start by treating everyone equally. Is it too much to ask for?

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Lancashire. There had been some race riots in his town and he decided to contact the leader of his local mosque. The growing friendship between the two men blossomed and the two congregations met, shared a meal and tried to get to know one another better. In this and a thousand other ways, ordinary Christians and ordinary Muslims are building bridges quietly - but they usually like to keep out of the media for good reason

As Shukla Mirza said, it is good for religious people to study their religious writings and world history and pray - but I would wish also for more dialogue, including here in Bangladesh, but maybe it is happening but quietly among those who do not want it publicised and so spoilt by the intrusion of those who do not understand its motivation and might misinterpret it. I hope so.

As for those who think that Christians (missionaries or not) could take pleasure in fingers being chopped off, or in the tragedy of war - I give up!

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Dhaka

"Government, foreign aids and development"

I refer to the letter entitled "Government, foreign aids and development" in the Daily Star 6th July.

Your country is by no means realising its full potential and indeed instead of being taken forward into the 21st century by an active government you are being held in 20th Century.

I am sure that if your government opens up and makes more easy investment opportunities for foreign companies, investment will increase rapidly and vastly.

But there are so many hurdles at present for the companies who are keen to invest. And for that the foreign investors lose patience and interest in investing very quickly; and eventually turn to other countries (that have much convenient foreign policies) to invest in.

I am sure that there would be no need for foreign aid, or at least limited, if the gates were opened to foreign investment.

AlFulani
One e-mail

DUTP, Car Fair, and traffic congestion in Dhaka

If you live in Dhaka, and own a car, then you know better than me about the traffic congestion every day on the road. The traffic congestion was a hot topic for discussions, as well as suggestion, even a few years back; and then came the DUTP to ease this situation. Actually nothing much was done. The DUTP prompted introduction of costly air conditioned buses, most of that are second hand vehicles brought from other countries and not environment friendly, and started a corruption blemished fly-over at Mohakhali and Khilgaon with traffic mismanagement. The plights of citizens multiply when a diversion road through the Cantonment remains closed for hours during the peak traffic movement time. DUTP could not deal with this. Their only success so far is banning two-stroke three-wheelers from the city roads.

The government provided easy remedies by introducing cheap cars in the name of taxicabs. And are we sure that these cars are friendlier to the environment than the two-strokers?

Our urban planners probably



An unwelcome peacekeeper!

Sending troops to Iraq

Should Bangladesh join the coalition troops in Iraq? That is the question on everybody's mind right now. In foreign affairs, national interests are important than foreign relations; specific policy is needed to safeguard national interests. Beside that enlightened self-interest, ideals, principles and even public emotions also come into play.

In general view, UN and international law, the war on Iraq and the US occupation still considered as illegal and immoral. The whole world knows the deceptions, lies, and manipulation of evidence and facts done by the US officials. In post war Iraq, security, and basic human rights rests in the hand of the occupied forces, and no outsiders are allowed. Both the US and the UK have proclaimed their resolve to stay till they complete their "mission" in Iraq.

Bangladesh were neither a willing nor a concerned partner of the coalition force. On the contrary, its people, like elsewhere in the world, raised a strong voice against the war on Iraq.

Iraq case has become very urgent since the casualties are running high by the day. This suggestion by the US officials to send Bangladeshi troops to Iraq may earn a few extra dollars but that in the cost of hurting the emotions of a million people across the country. Is it not a classic case of sharing responsibility without representation?

There is no peace to keep, not yet; the "reconstruction" phase is nowhere in sight. Even otherwise compliant the UN Secretary General this time could not offer UN participation.

Based on all available facts and the intangible yet important particularities of the Iraq case, it is inappropriate and would be unjust-

do not pay any heed to the requirement of the inhabitants of the capital city. I learned that a city or town should have 25 per cent of its area as roads. That is why, every time we visit a foreign country, we find that their towns and cities have plenty of roads. The result is less traffic congestion. In Dhaka, there are only 7 per cent, of the area are roads. What I think, if every year there was at least ten kilometres new roads constructed in last ten years, the present Dhaka city would be better for vehicular movement. The urban planners have the data for the future growth of the city, and they should have planned accordingly. But the present situation tells that they did not do the right planning.

The communication minister told that Bangladesh needs 20,000 cars each year. So, Proton of Malaysia, with their bumper sells during the latest Car Fair held in the city, inspired to set up a production unit in Bangladesh.

I hope, with no increase in the length of the roads, all those Proton cars shall line up on the road according to the output serial number of the factory, and thus adding more spice to the traffic congestion.

Sajjad Waheed
Independent University, Dhaka

We should know our Constitution

The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. The entire legislative, executive, judicial activities and other laws of the state are guided and regulated by the Constitution. It describes the fundamental rights of the citizens' and also narrates the fundamental principles of state policy. Most of the people of our country are unable to take legal shelter to ensure their fundamental rights because of their ignorance of the

Constitution. Taking this chance of ignorance the executive authorities often violate the fundamental rights of the citizens.

In most of the countries around the globe where constitutionalism prevails, ordinary man and woman are more or less aware of their constitutional rights and quite conscious to preserve their constitutional rights.

But in Bangladesh the scenario is different. This situation must change. We should not leave the Constitution only in the hands of the lawyers, judges and academicians. We should all know our Constitution in order to defend it, so that it becomes impossible to make an open breach of it.

Md Shahadat Hossain
SM Hall, Dept of Law,
University of Dhaka

Shahed Jamil
Motijheel, Dhaka

Is there a good decision ever made in this country which did not create controversy?

In how many countries do you know people add iron bumpers in the cars? It has been scientifically proven that even the iron bumper fitted by the original manufacturers is unsafe and hazardous. In many developed countries such iron bumpers are illegal and require removal even it comes fitted with the vehicle.

Saving life is more important than safeguarding cars from dent and damage. People of our country probably do not think this way and we need to change this attitude. The removal of additional iron bumper is a good decision and deserves support from the responsible citizens. Government must give specific time limit (not more than ten days) for removal of these ugly bumpers and stop this footpath business.

Munim Chowdhury
Dhaka

Bull-bars and reckless drivers



Beastly bumper

We welcome the decision of the ministry concerned to order removal of bull-bars from car bumpers in our cities. Unfortunately it took a tragic and horrifying end of a life to draw authorities' attention to the danger and risk of bull-bars (many wrongly call it bumpers) on motorised vehicles. There is misconception (created mainly by roadside workshops who manufacture them and inexperienced and untrained drivers) that it protects your car from the nicks and bruises you get from vehicles on the road. But the truth is that if you have an iron bar in front of your bumper, you can drive recklessly on the road and if you hit a car it is the other car that will be damaged, not yours.

Why do you need that rod in front of your car? Rarely does a car get hit from the front. And when it does it is usually due to the fault of both the drivers. Normally it is on the side that vehicles get scratched by other vehicles, usually by rickshaws. Many argue that an iron bar on your back bumper as on the front one will protect it if you get bashed from behind. But the truth is, if you have an iron bar on your back

bumper, you can drive in high speed on city roads and if you brake abruptly the bar will protect the back of your car and break the front of the car behind you. That is the main use of bull-bars on the back bumper of a car.

We feel that removal of bull-bars will make better and more careful drivers of us all who drive. They are weapons of reckless drivers. We thank the authorities for their decision to order removal of iron bars from vehicles.

Acitydweller
Bara Magbazar, Dhaka

Though belated the govt has taken a right step to remove extra bumpers from cars.

A driver without an extra bumper in the car is bound to be more responsible and cautious. A driver having extra bumpers is prone to be reckless than those drivers having no bumpers in their cars.

Extra bumper culture has allowed many to develop various types of bumpers and most dangerous are the arrow-type bumpers which can tear off a transport very easily. It happened

with me once over the kanchpur bridge some time back -- we survived miraculously.

I sincerely welcome the move especially being a sufferer. Thanks to our government.

Mian
One-mail

I have read with interest the letters published on this subject in your news paper on July 6.

First of all we need to know the exact reasons of using such bumpers. In my view bumpers are fixed to protect ones car from the perils of rickshaws and other menace on the road.

The authorities should sit down and try to find out the real problems on the road and then come out with directives. Why was fixing of iron bumpers allowed in the first place? It cost money to fix and also to remove them.

Road accidents happen for many reasons. Now should we ban the use of wheels? No. So we better try to resolve the real problem first, which is control the issuance of driving licence.