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### What about the ethnic people!

All citizens of Bangladesh are entitled as 'Bangladeshis' by the constitutional provision to enjoy equal rights and protection. And, everybody has equal fundamental rights to live and expect high state of security from the state. Because the supreme law of the country, the constitution, in its article 27 holds that "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law".

It is stated in this article that every citizen either ethnic or aboriginal, Hindu or Muslim has equal rights. They cannot be deprived of any civil or public rights excepting when such deprivation occurs due to national security interests.

But the state always failed to provide proper security in the hilly areas. Is it not a discrimination against them, or display of double standard by the government? If it continues, how can there be a peaceful atmosphere in the hills?

So, we should start recognising them as Bangladeshis and ensure their basic fundamental rights as is enjoyed by everyone else.

Gopal Chandra Pal  
Jagannath Hall, DU



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

### Save Shahjalal university

The Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) is a leading university of Bangladesh and it has immense prospects undoubtedly. But, this university has been a circus ground of late!

Let's clarify my assertion. It's the September running. We finished our last semester exam last month, and were to start the next semester from the 7th September. But the most interesting thing is that, the university is yet to be opened and I am now writing this script from my home being frustrated as a student of SUST. Even the result of the last semester exams are unpublished yet. In this way, all the students of the university are now enjoying their unexpected vacation! Actually these

shortcomings are not new for us. We have many more problems like this in our university.

Of the problems, the university's academic atmosphere ranks prominently. We have huge lab rooms, but not sufficient apparatus. We have money to hire buses everyday but no fund to buy a new bus. Everyday we enjoy our bus journey to the class being "Bat-mans". That's a scene too sore to observe. Another horrible thing that you would see here is that the university students are having their food sitting beside the dog of the canteen.

It's an unbelievable glimpse, but sadly true. We do not have a hygienic canteen and we do share a canteen-hut with our teachers everyday where you may observe the scene I stated. Besides, we have a fantastic Optical-fibre-

based internal networking system in the university, but we don't have sufficient Internet facilities for all. We have a great library but we can't use all the books freely.

Actually our university is now closed for some problems. The predominated problem is "teacher wanted". The young teachers are now taking the classes, trying their heart and soul to do their jobs. I am so sorry to mention that, these young teachers are not even given their salary properly and no new teachers are appointed to help them.

We strongly urge the authority to save us from this frustration.

**Md Shahjalal Bappi**  
Dept. of Chemical Engineering and Polymer Science (C.E.P.S)  
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), Sylhet, Bangladesh

### My experience with plastic licence

Being a citizen of this country, I value the right to be able to drive a car -- I have been a licensed driver since 1988 and have just got my drivers license (the green book) transferred to a new 'plastic' card since the law changed.

The new law is a great step towards modernisation as we, as a nation, are climbing up the steps of development and I would like to thank the authority concerned for this long awaited change.

I am from Chittagong and after depositing all necessary papers, photographs and fees for transferring the book to 'plastic', I was told that the license will be issued in Bengali. Myself being a frequent traveller overseas-- and also in possession of an International Driving Permit explained to the authority that I need it to be in English as it's a requirement to have my valid license along with the permit while I go overseas.

Being very understanding, the gentleman told me that he would have to send all the documents to the authorities in Dhaka for the issuance of my license in English as it cannot be done here in Chittagong, and the process would take about 4/6 months. Having no choice, and since it's all procedures, I had given him the go ahead.

Six months later, I approached the same authority just to remind him that my license has not been issued. He said it would take another 3/4 months. Having no choice, I waited again and eventually got my 'plastic' card issued.

I have been a resident in the UAE and was a licensed driver there (1997-2002) and the value of the license is not only to drive a vehicle but also to use it for various purposes of identification at banks and high security premises. My license was issued by the BRTA and it has an error (my date of birth) which I can't fix easily as the concerned authority says I have to re-apply for a new copy and surrender my old one.

After waiting for 10 months just to have it issued, I don't want to go back to a wait for a period like that whereas the similar type of correction can take about 15/20 minutes maximum, as all records are present and its only a typo matter. When explained to the authority, he told me, 'don't worry about it, just go ahead and use it the way it is, no body will notice.' Is that the way someone in authority should suggest how to use invalid information?

The error on my license does not match my international permit -- what can I say to the person checking my permit when I'm away from Bangladesh?

When making a change for better, can't we do it right the first time and every time, instead of doing a job because it has to be done with no importance whatsoever?

Would the authorities concerned look into this matter and implement shorter processing times for transfers and other miscellaneous requirements?

Once again, proud to be a Bangladeshi.

**AJ Salgado**  
Chittagong, Bangladesh

### Bravo to president Musharraf and PM Mahathir

President Parvez Musharraf of Pakistan appeared in the BBC World talk programme last night (September 14, 2003) and very aptly answered a flurry of questions from people across the world on serious issues like Islamic extremism, national and international terrorism, democracy, secularism, Taliban and so on. I must congratulate President Musharraf for not only depicting the true image of Islam vis-à-vis the Western world but also for giving a statesmanlike direction for redressing the prevailing misgivings between the two camps.

He portrayed Islam as a religion of peace and moderation, based upon social justice, secularism and democratic concepts which are embedded in Islamic teachings and values. President Musharraf unequivocally stressed upon exposing the correct picture of Islam and at the same time urged the Western leaders to be fair and just to Muslim's religious sensitivities.

To sum up, the deliberations of President Musharraf are on a par with those of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, another great leader of Malaysia. The Muslim world needs leaders of such outstanding calibre who are able to steer and guide our people toward the right directions.

**Hafeezul Alam**  
Management Specialist, Dhaka

### Why discriminate Bangladesh?

It is learnt from a news published in The Daily Star on Sept. 14, 2003 that the Paris-based journalists' rights organisation, Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), has expressed concerns over proposed changes in the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act, 2001. According to their opinion, the change in the Act would tighten control over e-mail traffic,

legalise invasion of piracy and undermine freedom of expression.

The government, on the other hand, has taken initiative to amend the Act to tighten national security and to fight violence. It is observed that it has become a practice of some international bodies to raise a hue and cry whenever any action is taken by our government to protect peoples' interest.

But if similar action is taken by any other country, especially the developed ones, no such outcries are heard. For example, after nine-eleven, US government put embargo on or started to monitor the flow of information to and from USA with many other embargoes on so many activities. But that did not concern the international bodies.

There is another favourite topic for the international body(s)/media and that is the minority oppression in Bangladesh. It is often flashed in international press that minorities in Bangladesh are being oppressed. It is an undeniable fact that Bangladesh is now in the grip of violence and people are getting murdered/ becoming victims of the situations often.

But how many of them belong to the minority community? May be less than one per cent, although almost 10 per cent of the population comprise the minority. If there had been minority oppression in the country, a considerable percentage of the victims could have been from the minority community too. But it is not the case. However, there may be some incidences, but these are isolated and mostly of personal nature.

It is difficult to understand why Bangladesh is being treated with discrimination by the international body(s)/media. Is any quarter trying to humiliate or defame us?

**Fakhrul Alam**  
Siddeswari, Dhaka

### Foul-mouthed politicians

I read Sheikh Hasina's demands for her party to go back to the Parliament with both amusement and frustration. One of the five conditions she stated is an apology from the PM for some comments she made somewhere. Has the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia elected the AL to the parliament? Who does the AL owe their seats to, the voters or the BNP parliamentarians? I have heard many ridiculous demands but this one takes the cake off my mouth!

Coming to making foul and unsubstantiated statements in public, the voters know too well that almost all of our political leaders have done that sometime or other.

In the first term of the BNP, the AL abstained from the Parliament for three years or so. In this parliament, they are doing the same. If they are so convinced that the parliament is not working, why don't they resign and leave? It is illegal, unethical and immoral to be elected by the people to represent them in parliament, take perks/salaries/allowances as a member of parliament and then stay out of parliament because the PM or some minister has said something about some local AL leader! I mean when are our politicians going to act less like school childrens and deliver matured leadership?

Let me conclude with a statement from the leader of the Opposition in the last one week or so and then leave it to the readers to conclude who among our politicians indulge more in foul talks. Sheikh Hasina said in this statement that the BNP has made a list of 8,000 of AL activists whom it wants to murder and she is on that list. Does she realise she is accusing the government of plotting murders? What proof does she have? If she has proofs, why does not she go to the court? While she is asking the PM to be sorry; who will she express her apologies to for all the foul statements she makes all the time and for which she is now widely known in the country and abroad?

**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
Dhanmaodi R/A, Dhaka

### US veto represents minority view

Prior to the launching of an illegal and fraudulent war on Iraq, Bush gave his ultimatum to the UN, either it legitimises his war or else it would become irrelevant like the League of Nations. When it became apparent that France, and possibly Russia and China would veto a second UN resolution authorising the use of military force, the Bush-Blair spin doctors called it an "unreasonable" veto, and threatened to ignore it.

Now, the same Bush has exercised his veto power in defending his client state Israel when the overwhelming majority inside the security council unanimously voted in favour of the proposed UN resolution that condemned Israel's belligerency (please note it was only a condemnation not even a threat to use force or enforce economic sanctions). So the question is, which veto is reasonable and which one is unreasonable?

In order to find the answer, no great minds are required. Firstly, for the sake of simplifying the issue, we will overlook the number of times the UK and the US have exercised their veto powers over the last fifty years. Secondly, we can safely assume that one of the purposes behind the

UN is to reflect the voice of the majority of the world's nations (international consensus) and its population in line with the much-talked about democratic principles.

Ironically, democracy also happens to be one of the rationales behind the UN's silence when Iraq was trampled by the coalition forces to oust Saddam. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to take this principal as a yardstick to evaluate which veto is reasonable and which one is unreasonable.

France, Russia and China reflected the opinion of their own population as it was indicated by their opinion polls and large public demonstrations. Given the combined alliance of France, Germany, Belgium, and Turkey along with the largest demonstrations held all over Europe (including in the pro-war UK and Spain), it would be sound to assume that France was also representing the opinion of the entire European continent. Most certainly, one can also safely add the opinion of about 1.5 billion Muslims (perhaps with the exception of some of the wealthy Kuwaitis, Saudis, other Gulf states and the Iraqi National Congress) who inhabit in the regions of south-east Asia, Central Asian republics, Middle East and most of Africa.

A vast majority of Latin and Central American countries, as well as Canada, Japan, and India were also opposed to the war, as was indicated by the same massive frequent demonstrations, and the opinion polls. So it would be fair to conclude that the veto threatened by France and other Security Council members was not unreasonable by the above democratic principal since they were clearly representing the majority of the world's nations and its population.

As for the recent veto, it was only the US that exercised this power, whilst eleven members of the Security Council voted in favour and three countries abstained. Clearly this is democracy working in reverse, since it is the will of the minority prevailing over the majority.

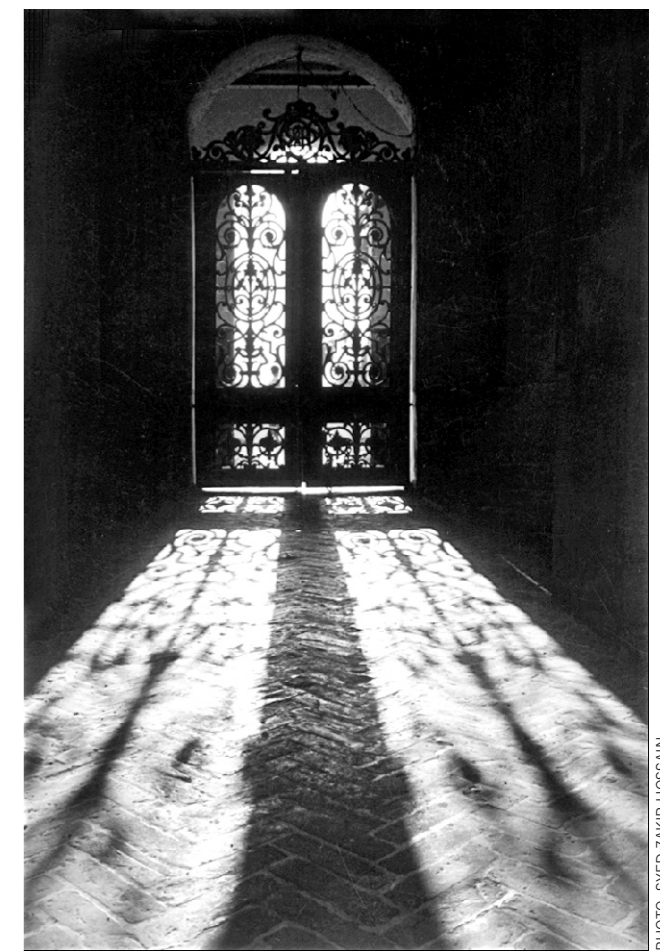
What happened to the UN's democratic principals now? Or is it that the US and the UK intelligentsia only feel and understand "democracy" to bully and abuse the entire Arab/Islamic world for not being "democratic", whilst upholding the racist and apartheid state of Israel as being a model of democracy in the region?

There is a well known Islamic principal which the Americans should now learn, "actions are the only proof (evidences) of ones belief and integrity in upholding a certain principal". Not only the US veto was representative of the minority view with respect to the nations of the world and its population, it was not even representative of its own population. For Bush himself was fraudulently elected, and his government is also illegal by the extension of that same reason.

Above all, the current US government is far more representative of the large Multinationals and the powerful right wing Likudniks (Neo-Cons). Let's us not forget the powerful corporate-funded media manipulation that contributes toward shaping public opinion. Is it any surprise that 60 per cent of the Americans still believe that Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11 operation?

This is not the first time that the US has exercised her voice in opposing the rest of the world. If we cast our mind back to the conference held in South Africa, when the overwhelming majority condemned Israel as a racist apartheid state, the

### "The Quranic medicine"



Let there be light

With keen interest I have gone through an article titled "Treatment of Cataract derived from the Qur'an" which appeared in the 'Health' section of the Star City on August 10, 2003.

It is gathered from the above mentioned article that the cataract of eyes can be treated without surgery. The "Medicine of Quran", that has been made from the instructions of the holy Quran can fully cure cataract. An Egyptian doctor and one Abdul Basit Muhammad have invented it. Registered in Europe and the United States, a number of Swiss pharmaceutical companies have started producing the new medicine that allows the treatment of cataract without surgery.

The cure percentage as reported is 99 per cent. What a miracle drug it is. I think, many older patients are afraid of going to surgeons for removing cataract. The 'Medicine of Quran' has definitely come as a blessing for them.

I would request both public and private authorities to import the 'Medicine of Quran' eye drops and market it in Bangladesh.

**Zahidul Haque**  
Associate Professor, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

American delegation walked out, which was headed by Colin Powell. One would have assumed that he would have understood what those terms meant, and why they were being applied to Israel. By his own admission, Powell himself was subjected to racism in the past.

**Yamin Zakaria**  
UK, London

### DU Gymnasium must upgrade

Everybody knows the proverb "Health is wealth". To fit into this proverb, it is important to take physical exercise regularly. Without taking regular and proper exercise, it is not possible to maintain a sound health. As mental health depends much upon physical health, exercise plays a vital role in building up a better future. How?

A sound mind resides in a sound body. These two together make a sound person. And a sound person is capable of taking responsibilities. That is essential in every sphere of

life. It is a matter of great regret that the gymnasium of the Dhaka University suffers from a lack of exercise instruments. Most of the instruments are outdated and useless. Not only that, students have to wait in a queue for long periods to use these outdated instruments, which are few in number.

As a result, most of the students have to remain satisfied by taking only free hand exercises. Exercise with instruments is a crucial part of physical activities. Without this type of exercise one can not expect a beautiful body. So, Dhaka University authority should come forward to provide more up-to-date exercise instruments in the gymnasium.

**Md Foyaz Ahmed**  
Economics Department, Zia Hall, Dhaka University

### Muslim and the media

It's really a pity that the Muslims are getting such a bad name and a bad press. Truly, we deserve a part of it and the rest have been inflicted upon us because we kept on sending wrong signals again and again. We failed to take the western media into confidence by our tactlessness and lack of rapport.

The root of all these evils may be traced to the rise of radical Wahabism in the deserts of Nejd, i.e. in the present central Saudi Arabia. Abdur Rahman Wahab proclaimed himself to be a little bit short of the Prophet and spread hatred and radicalism in the name of Islam. Kutub of Egypt was one of his followers. The Deobandi school in India was influenced and rather created by the Wahabis and so is Ahle Hadis. They emphasised on the literal meaning of the Holy Quran.

For them, the Hadith, Qiyas, Izme are not important. They have relegated Islam into a static, terror driven religion. With the rise of oil price in the Middle East in the early seventies and with the resultant windfall, the Wahabis and their lackeys started forming political parties and recruiting members, Jihadis etc. from the poor, unemployed Muslim youths in all the Muslim countries.

They have also wrongly interpreted the Holy Quran and still try to propagate the Islam without Prophet Muhammad (sm) and his teachings of tolerance, good deeds and pragmatism.

Islam is basically a religion by the traders, of the traders and for the traders. Our Prophet started his life as a trader. His tribe is Qurais which means trader. It is not a religion

for spreading terrorism or hatred. We believe in peaceful co-existence and mutual respect, and conversion not by force but through good deed and love. In my opinion, the Sufism carries the real face of Islam.

Muslims should learn to co-exist with other religionists and be not radical in views; should not unnecessarily enter into childish arguments regarding which one is the superior religion. It reminds me of an incidence in Vienna where we, the Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis went to study to obtain higher degrees. A Pakistani doctor entered into a totally unnecessary argument over religion with an Indian doctor from Deccan Hyderabad, which resulted in fist-fighting and resulted in broken window panes and bad impressions. We lost our face to the authorities. Our reputation suffered. (Incidentally, the Pakistani doctor lost the fist fighting!)

We, the Muslims, need to correct our image by good deeds and by showing tolerance. We should act responsibly and be pro-humanitarian and welfare oriented. The Westerners and all good moderate Muslims should be sympathetic to each other and nurture the moderates and try to rectify the radicals through empathy and patience. The influential press should play a helpful role in this regard. The process of change of heart will be slow. But patience, non-violence and empathy will be the winner in the end.

**SNM, Dhaka**



PHOTO: AFP

### Railway service

Our communication minister often talks about Maglev train service and other hi-fi plans. But why not improve the existing poor rail service?

I frequently travel in the Dhaka-Kulaura-Sylhet routes on Parabat, Joyanika, Upobon and Paharika Express, in both 1st and Shovan chair. Except Parabat, every time I travelled on other trains, I found that many hawkers and beggars (exposing deformities or raw wounds) often block the narrow passages and thus cause inconvenience to the passengers. Sometimes, when someone takes snacks or food, the beggars cause much nuisance. Occasionally, I complained to the attendants and guards of the trains and sent written complaints but with no avail.

I found the guard or attendants as very reluctant to supply the train complaint book. And often the trains that depart from Sylhet are very dirty.

Now the inter-city trains take more time than they used to. The journey time has increased to 8 hours or more and the worst part is that the trains are frequently late. We, the common people, like to travel this distance in 5/6 hours now rather than 1-1.5 hours in a Maglev train after 5/6 years.

About 40 per cent of Dhaka passengers (my estimate) of inter-city trains use the Airport station. But, surprisingly, there is no opportunity for telephone enquiry about that station's timing of trains' arrival and departure.

Will the railway authority take these necessary minor actions?

**Kamal Ahmed**  
Baridhara, DOHSS, Dhaka

