



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.



PHOTO: AFP

Middle East situation

This is in response to the letters about the on-going Middle East conflict. Well, as a Muslim I can feel the pains of fellow Muslims in Palestine and Lebanon. But it is high time the organisations like Hamas, Hezbollah, etc realised that violence like kidnapping, suicide bombing against nuclear Israel won't do any good. Israel is retaliating for two unprovoked kidnappings by indiscriminate air strikes. Hezbollah, on the other hand, is waging a so called war by firing rocket barrages, and in between these two, Lebanon is burning. May be, after a few days, Israel will stop upon destroying half of Lebanon and Hezbollah will resurface with the backup from Iran and Syria.

So, the ultimate result is zero, except the sufferings of average Lebanese people. Moreover, I think, they should have already understood one thing-- violence begets only violence and it will only delay the peace process.

Gullive
Dhaka University

Trip to India

We, the teachers of schools, colleges and universities of Bangladesh participated in the "Train the Trainer Program in IT" in New Delhi which was sponsored by BSM Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, conducted by Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. We were sixty three in number. There I experienced so many things including the excellent services of Tata. The people of Tata paid us highest regards during our training. All the trainers were so talented, helpful and friendly that I can't express in words.

During one and half months of our training, we were acquainted with the Indian culture, customs, people, foods and so on. The thing, which pleased me most, is that people of diverse religions, cultures, and languages are living together in peace and harmony. No one can tell who is a Muslim or who is a Hindu or a Christian. They don't have any headache about religion.

The persons, who were engaged in entertaining us, were so friendly, hospitable and co-operative. Anything we demanded for our comfort, they did within a few minutes. They never seemed like hosts to us and never treated us as foreigners; rather they behaved with us as their family members. The reason behind this is that once upon a time, we all were the inhabitants of one country. We are different nations now but as human beings we have fellow feelings for each other.

I was charmed by the beautiful, ancient and historical places of Delhi, especially with the Jama Masjid of Old Delhi and with the newly built Akshardham Temple. The Jama Masjid is very big and nice and I felt a celestial touch when I entered into the holy place. And when I entered the Akshardham Temple, I felt the same divine touch in it.

Besides, I had lots of fun and merriment during our two tours to the historical cities of Agra and Jaipur. Mathura, the birth-place of Lord Krishna is so rich in religious feelings. Brindaban, the love place of Lord Krishna and Radha, also gave me peace of mind.

India through Tata is doing the great job of training the teachers of Bangladesh. Tata took the initiative to invest three billion dollars in

Bangladesh, but it is postponed now for political problems. I think if Tata invests, equalising the benefits of both the countries, it can help us in many ways. It can create employment for many unemployed youths of Bangladesh.

I expect one day it will happen and it will be making the bridge strong enough between Bangladesh and India.

Mrinal Sarkar
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Writing for foreign press

I love most of the articles by the guest writers or columnists, many of who are foreigners. Their points and arguments make them so distinguished and enthusiastic reading.

Last couple of weeks I stopped listening to my favourite radio programmes from North America, switching quickly when it comes to the Middle East's news in our local channels and did not read the reports on the current attack on Lebanon and Palestine that appeared in international weeklies.

I personally encouraged and assisted our columnists to write in foreign press. But to my knowledge and effort none could make it so far. To me it is a huge disappointment and do not see much of hope in this respect.

There is a great shortage of professional writers, yet the existing few have an improper focus. Perhaps, it is the same psyche that plays here as well. Too much of (noisy) optimism when foundation is too narrow and fundamentals are restricted by mere jargons - human rights, freedom, constitution, democracy, liberation spirit, patriotism etc.

I believe until the fundamentals are broadened and foundation is made in-depth, we will keep on hearing more noise but with little substance and my hunt for an indigenous name in foreign press or an in-depth writing will be unending.

MM Haque
Jeddah, K.S.A

Stop attacks on minorities

In the recent years, many people, especially the minorities, have been subjected to serious threats and assaults in different parts of the country, particularly in the remote village areas where hundreds of incidents have taken place, and unfortunately not even 30% of them have been reported to the authorities. These crimes are committed by unidentified groups known as terrorists / fanatics whose action seems to be inspired by wickedness.

Reports published in the news dailies between the years 2002-2005 say that many incidents of rape, torture, extortion, acid throwing and land grabbing have taken place. The victims of these incidents are apparently scared to report the same to the law enforcement agencies due to fear of repercussion, because sometimes the authorities fail to find clues to the incidents just to avoid any action against the culprits. Ever since all these incidents have taken place, the victims and their families are passing their days in great uncertainty.

We urge the government to ensure security and take the necessary steps to stop attacks on minorities.

Peter J. Rebeiro, West Rajabazar, Tejeon, Dhaka



Gender discrimination



Gender discrimination means showing different attitudes and giving different treatment to different people on the basis of their gender.

In our country the girls are the worst victims of gender discrimination. Social prejudices and customs tend to degrade their position, the girls are discriminated right from their birth. When a female child is born, it is not regarded as a happy event. She is not welcome with the deep warmth of heart. Instead of being delighted, the male members of the family think that she has come to add to their misery. The female members also think the same way. She is regarded as a liability to be got rid of as soon as possible. Gender discrimination tells upon the mental, physical and psychological growth of the girls. Their health and education are affected because of gender discrimination. The girls eat less than their male counterpart. So they become physically feeble.

Education of the girls is not taken up on a priority basis. Most of the parents think that the girls need no education. Their educational cost is regarded as a useless cost.

After the marriage they will live in their husband's home. So the parents do not want to edu-

cate them. The parents think that only the boys should be educated, because they are the future property of the parents. This notion of the parents is the main obstacle on the way to women's empowerment. On the other hand, the girls are married off by their parents before they come of age. And in selecting the bridegroom the girl's opinion is not sought. Even her marriage drives her parents mad as dowry has to be paid. Her parents try to find a husband for her even before she attains physical and mental maturity. The parents think that early marriage of the girls is the best way to get rid of this burden. The parents don't understand that today's girl is tomorrow's future if they are educated properly.

Today women are playing an important role in all spheres of life. They are no longer confined within the four walls of their parents' or husband's house. They have come out of the kitchens and are working hand in hand with men in all the development programmes of the government. By receiving higher education they are becoming pilots, doctors, engineers, teachers, administrators etc. They have been able to prove their worth. They have changed their family a lot with their earnings.

They are contributing to their family. They are contributing much to the economy of the country. Without female education a nation's satisfactory development is not possible. It is true that only an educated mother can provide us with an educated nation. An educated mother knows how to keep a family small or to enjoy a better life. Whereas an uneducated girl is totally dependent on the males. They are considered weaker by the male members of the society. So my opinion is that a girl can be educated if her mother is also educated. In order to bring about a change in the position of the women, women themselves should rise up and protest.

To remove this gender discrimination all the conscious people of the society have to change their outlook towards girls. Early marriage should be stopped. Men have realised that true development of the country is never possible keeping half of the population idle at home. This realisation must be reflected in our national life.

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PHOTO: AFP

Flood affected people

On behalf of the people of Chakoria thana, I would draw your kind attention to the flood in our area.

The flood has broken all the records of the past. Never before did the water level rise so high, nor was the duration so long. Normal activities have come to a halt for a long time. Thousands of people are suffering. The miseries of the affected people know no bounds. Crops have been greatly damaged. Thousands of people have taken shelter on rooftops, boats and embankments.

I hope the government will respond quickly and send relief materials to the affected people.

Samimo Faryana
Chittagong

Humanity and international politics

The gory sight of the death and destruction unleashed on Lebanon, as bombs and missiles rain down from across the border, being flashed on the news channels, makes one wonder the plight of the Bangladeshis working there. While India has dispatched its warships to evacuate its citizens, and Sri Lankan and Nepalese governments have requested its Indian counterpart for extending the same support for its citizens. We also saw that the Nepalese & Sri Lankans being ferried out along with the Indians in the Indian warships. What has the Bangladeshi government done for the thousands of Bangladeshis living in Lebanon? Nothing!

Bangladeshi citizens in Lebanon approached the Indian High Commission for assistance in moving out of the war-zone, but the Indian High Commission has not acted upon it citing the lack of any official request to the effect from the Bangladeshi government. Is the government so insensitive, so inhuman to its duties to its citizens that it chooses not to request India for support? Are political compulsions so high up on its agenda that it chooses to ignore the plight of its citizens?

The other countries in the subcontinent chose to take help from India because like Bangladesh the other countries do not have the wherewithal to do such evacuation. But have we considered the fate of the Bangladeshis who are there dreading every passing moment in Lebanon, hoping that no stray missile ends their lives. Let us for once rise above partisan politics and give humanity a chance.

An analogous situation, if not of the same magnitude, is apparent at home, where the Tata investment is struggling to find its way

into the country, and in spite of being acknowledged as something that would help the country in ways more than one, it has been mishandled just because of petty political compulsions which will, as above, jeopardise the anti-India stand. In this case, politics is killing national interests.

I think it is high time that the government, instead of having a single-minded focus of retaining power and be bogged down by its political compulsions and ideology, gets its priorities right and focuses on its duty towards its people and the country, and takes immediate actions to redeem the situation.

Bangladeshis are suffering! Honourable Prime Minister, please act & act quickly.
Mohammad Shahjahan
Gulshan, Dhaka

Students' involvement in politics

A large number of students in our country are involved in politics. Many students are immature. They are easily misguided by clever agents of political parties. On the other hand, those who have already joined politics cannot come out easily from it. Many students do not get a job after completing even higher studies. They join politics in order to have something. The political parties utilise them for their own interest. In this way our general students are misguided. The students, therefore, should realise their own position and refrain from doing anything self-destructive.

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Interpretation of the Holy Quran

I refer to various correspondences in these columns (20 July Mahfuzur Rahman, 24 July Commodore Alam BN (ret'd)). As it happens both of them are right in the most crucial matter of interpretation of the holy book which is that Tafsir or Shan-e nujul etc are required to fully comprehend the matter. Also that holy verses had limited application in time, place and circumstances which the Tafsirs point out and then expound.

All educated ordinary Muslims cannot also carry around a voluminous collection of Tafsir or Sunnah with them, especially now that they are spread around the world. The interpretation of the verses which had a limited meaning and application when Allah first bestowed it to the Prophet (pbuh) is not of much use in any case. Digging into the Tafsir means restricting more

and more the interpretation (as a trained Mullah is supposed to do) looking into the past, whereas the verses are crying out to be of universal import and application if Islam is to be a truly world religion. Of course, some verses cannot be universally applicable for instance if a paragraph starts with the words, 'Oh you desert dwelling Bedouins...' then such a paragraph (without further modifications) should not be applicable to a Muslim of, say, Bangladesh. Enforcing such application (by trained Mullahs) will cause enormous physical and philosophical problems and the grandeur of Islam will be lost thereby.

So although Commodore Alam is correct as to the strict interpretation and applicability of the verses quoted, I agree with Mahfuzur Rahman that many 'modern

censored. Should student politics be banned or allowed to continue? It is now a question that needs to be addressed.

Before probing into the feasible solution of the question, if would be pertinent to shed some light on the various aspects of student politics.

Students of a country are the most conscious citizens raising voice against any despotic and unlawful decision of the government, which does not conform to people's rights and interests. Today everything is under the influence of politics be it social life or cultural life or whatsoever- so much so that our mind cannot be haunted by political thoughts.

Speaking simply, nothing goes beyond the immeasurable authority of politics. If that is the absolute reality, then the students should,

politics are now gone by in keeping with the perpetual passage of time.

The students caught up in the vortex of politics work as agents under different political parties consolidating their respective positions. The general students are, so to say, hostages to them--irrespective of the BNP or the Awami League.

Campus violence, a much discussed issue, must have some connection with the evil practice of student politics. The peaceful environment of study in every educational institution is being massively spoiled due to the awful consequences of student politics leading to horrendous session jam that causes an irretrievable loss to a student's life.

The bright prospect of a student is, thus, nipped in the bud. The

JMB kingpins in a sub-jail



Muslims would personally interpret the Sharia in light of present day reality and seek to regulate secular life and try to find their place in a pluralist world'.

We must not lose sight of the fact that not only the Holy Quran is of divine origin, but you, I, and we all are also divinely created as is Time. So we must seek a dynamic interpretation applicable to a modern time and place and not be satisfied with only a restricted and static interpretation in a Tafsir. If one only knows and preaches the latter surely universality of Islam is lost. The two interpretations (static and dynamic) are not in opposition but are complementary to each other and both have their correct places of application.

Shafi Ahmed
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Student politics

Since the introduction of student politics, it has, to be sure, always been the topic of discussion, no matter whether appreciated or

very reasonably, have the propensity to involve themselves in politics in order that they can fulfil people's as well as their own rightful demands.

The supreme sacrifices of students for the country need not be exemplified anew. The invaluable contributions of student politics in the critical moments of our country are known to all and can never be undervalued in any way. In 1952, 1969, 1971, 1989, student politics marked the watersheds in the history of Bangladesh. These glorious contributions of student politics will remain ever fresh and ever shining in the hearts of people.

The proactive and spontaneous participation of students in political activities in those hard times of the nation sped up the nation's struggle for achieving independence from the erstwhile Pakistani oppressive rulers. These all are now golden history of student politics, which we all take pride in. Those glorious days of student

The sole reason for keeping the JMB leaders in a sub-jail, as it seems to me, is to prevent them from talking to other inmates about their sources who provided them financial and logistic support.

While some of the murderers of Bangabandhu are in the central jail, the present government is allowing a parallel prison system for a selected few.

I do not think this government is capable of bringing these terrorists to justice.

Towhid Salam
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students, instead of paying attention to acquiring knowledge required for later professional and family life, whole-heartedly devote themselves to the whirlpool of politics. Ultimately, they cast a cloud of irremovable darkness and despair over their own future with the future of the nation.

The first and foremost duty of a student is 'study'. Today's students are tomorrow's helmsman of the country, who will lead the confused nation to the right direction and usher it into the way of perpetual development.

The students in general should renounce student politics without any delay, as the ominous results of student politics are now more apparent than the desired optimistic results. At the same time, the influential political high-ups of different political parties have to stop patronising and abusing student politics.

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