Dhaka, Friday, August 28, 1998

## Flood Aid

With the enormity of the damages being wrought by the floods sinking in after a month of povenly sentimental hopes that things would get better, the government has formally posted its SOS call for international assistance to meet exigency. From the sounding out time to making the formal request a few days went by. And now, when the donors are asking for a comprehensive report on the flood situation and Bangladesh's specific sectoral needs we should be absolutely prompt in making it available to them, if this has not been done by the time this leader appears.

Considering the huge economic bail-out packages most liberally given to some countries with not much of corresponding results obtained therefrom, Bangladesh's demand for disaster aid worth US \$700 million should look modest. The assistance sought is in the two-some category of emergency food relief and post-flood rehabilitation.

The initial response from some bilateral donors like the US, Japan, UK, Denmark, Germany and Canada and from a few humanitarian organisations has been encouraging. But obviously a greater flow hinges on a quick processing of Bangladesh's request at the donors' end. We lend voice to finance minister Kibria's call for quick announcement and delivery of commitments by the donor community. Since the damages of the current deluge when finally assessed are likely to be bigger than those of the 1988 floods some of the instances of delayed delivery that marked the earlier experience should be

Some doubts have been expressed in the international media about our capacity to distribute aid to the victims. What little is left of the communication links does present a logistical problem no doubt, yet, the concern, we venture to say, is somewhat exaggerated. True, the country-boats would not quite do, we need a large fleet of speed boats to be commissioned urgently. But that is where a modest foreign assistance is required.

The human element of the distribution mechanism should comprise local representatives from all political parties. That would not merely help reach all the needy people there are but also keep corruption largely at bay because of the in-built check-and-balance.

Chittagong port has to work with maximum efficiency. If the diseased trade unionism feeding on the virus of politicisation cannot be ended by anything short of declaring the port services as 'essential' with all that it legally impels so be it. Yes, the customs clearance of relief goods at the ports must be much quicker — on an emergency footing, to be precise.

## Tyranny at Ctg Port

This is trade unionism at its worst: holding the national interest hostage to narrow coterie end. We strongly condemn the disruptive programme given by the coalition of 22 trade union bodies at the Chittagong port to protest government's decision of allowing an American company to set up private container terminals in Dhaka and Chittagong. Following similar work abstention programmes earlier, a six-hour strike was observed at the premier port of the country Wednesday last. As usual businessmen, port users had to court enormous financial losses as loading and unloading at the port remained suspended for the most part of the day. This haemorrhagic practice may recur because the trade union bodies have announced a 24-hour strike on September 22 unless the government cancels the permission to the foreign company by that time.

We ask the agitating trade union bodies was it really necessary for them to indulge in such an utterly irresponsible and selfish campaign when the country is faced with such a colossal economic damage due to the devastating flood? Don't they have any idea how much of an impact every inactive hour at the harbour has on the economy? We believe they have a fair understanding of it and that is exactly the reason why they resort to wild cat strikes more often than not. Adopting such crippling arm-twisting tactics even after being fully aware of their repercussions on country's economy is simply criminal. If they believe private terminals operated by a foreign firm will jeopardise the national interests they could always raise the issue at the proper forum. There is a minister with a specific portfolio to deal with the matter.

We also do not understand why the mayor of Chittagong has to chime with the agitators in public. Being a member of the party in power he should have known better ways to get the message across to the government than siding with the trade unionists with an eye only on his own stakes in regional politics. All this shows how myopic politics can make people. This, however, cannot go on. The agitating TUs must find a less harmful way of registering their resentment.

## Live Long with Us

Nazrul is dead twenty-two years. Before that he was dead in his mind for over three decades. He had an active creative and intellectual life of roughly two decades. These few simple facts, weighed against the ponderous corpus of his output in literature and music and film-making, and in politics and journalism easily bring out the extraordinary in him. And he had to educate himself without ever sitting before a teacher except his Urdu-speaking uncle Bazlul Karim and that too before he was eight.

Many of us try to be inspired by great minds and lives, but in a shirker's way. We must closely comprehend the art and teachings of both Tagore and Nazrul and be in constant debate over these. Only then shall we be able to dip our whole people into the creative and critical intellectual sea of nectar that they had bequeathed us. Nazrul was perhaps only one in the line of Rabindranath in that he too was not only a literary figure. And all that he was besides being a rhymer of haunting and exciting verses has a lot to help us out of our present woods. He was our first and best poet believing in socialism and revolution. He wrote for both, he lived for both. An inveterate anti-colonial fighter he was the perfect model for a Bengali Hindu-Muslim amalgam — richer in every intellectual and artistic way than the members of the two communities taken separately. It cannot be said we have taken much from these achievements of Nazrul. And yet, for Bangladesh there is no way out of its present predicaments but to heed Nazrul and take in large helpings from his exhortations and admonitions.

Through his music we have access to the finest melodies of the subcontinent of the last three centuries. Always there are divine words set in divine airs in hundreds of his songs.

May he live long in our lives.

## Of Communication and Transport

The airports at Bangkok and Singapore are stretched to their seams. Dhaka should be in a position to handle diverted international traffic. But that would require, better airport services and facilities, urgent conversion of Chittagong airport into an intentional one; and upgrading Sylhet airport to handle non-resident Bangladeshi traffic from the United Kingdom.

infrastructural facilities A for power, telecommunications and transport are es-sential pre-requisites for economic growth. I have written about elusive energy and the lagging telecommunication eastern and northern frontier services in this column earlier. Today, I shall write about the states of India coupled with the conversion of the single-track need for efficient communication and multiple forms of railway along Sirajganj-Ishwardi-Rajshahi to a double line transport, so necessary for moving not just people but also broad-gauge railway and the industrial freight along an inproposed meter gauge railway ter-modal network. What follows is basically an effort at Rajshahi metropolitan area collating analytical materials and the growth of other urban from knowledgeable sources centres in the western districts, and it borrows extensively from a long-run prospective study, namely, Bangladesh 2020 (The namely, Nawabganj, Bogra, Naogaon, Sirajganj, Joypurhat World Bank/BCAS; UPL, 1998). and Natore. Similarly, district

DEQUATE

A major transformation that is gaining momentum in Bangladesh is the pace of urbanization. Bangladesh has essentially been a rural country with four out of five inhabitants living in the countryside. By the year 2020 nearly every other child, woman, and man will live in an urban centre. Given past and present trends Greater Dhaka as a mega-city will grow by more than double in terms of population, with the port city of Chittagong closely

following ization will be spurred along the Tongi - Joydevpur-Gazipur corridor with new road and perhaps commuter train link between Dhaka-Joydevpur. Road improvements will facilitate urban development along the Sripur-Bhaluka-Gafargaon -Trisal-Mymensingh corridor. Further if a road bye pass and commuter train as well link Dhaka-Comilla-Feni-Chittagong with the northern corridor. Tongi-Joydevpur-Gazipur in particular, that will reduce pressure on Dhaka city and, more importantly, integrate northern districts with the economic hub of the south.

Commissioning of Bangabandhu bridge over the river Jamuna will enhance the importance of Rajshahi metropolitan area as a regional centre of the western districts. New physical links between

through Bangladesh. And that presupposes considerable expansion and upgrading of existing roads and highways.

along Sirajganj -Bogra will further augment the importance of towns in the northwest like Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Dinajpur and Lalreal business then. monirhat will also blossom, if

the regional transport-links are there. Another important consideration for decentralized urbanization is the growth of thousands of market-towns, the most important prerequisite being investment in transportation infrastructure. World Bank's Rural Infrastructure Study (1996) has identified 2100 of such growth centres.

Within this spatial scenario of urbanization, it is important to upgrade the road network linking divisional - district -thana and market town centers. Such improvement will greatly help the private sector to take over inter-city passenger traffic thus allowing the railway system to reorganize itself into a predominantly freight moving profile." Also important is to expedite improvement of standard of major highways as has been done in the case of Dhaka -Chittagong -Cox's Bazar road link.

Another urgent task is the construction of Dhaka by-pass connecting the south with the North and Northwest through the Bangabandhu bridge. It is worth remembering that as and when the Asian Highway is completed, this historic bridge will bear the traffic passing

A proposed bridge over the Ganges at Paksey will open up the Mongla port for commercial/industrial freight from Nepal and Bhutan. A happy announcement by no less a leader than the Prime Minister of Bangladesh herself regarding a bridge over Padma will not only bring the eastern and southern parts of the country together, but also halve the distance between Dhaka and Khulna. Mongla port will be in

senger traffic in inter-city routes like Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet, and Dhaka-Rajshahi to the private sector. Why not handover the maintenance of inter-city trains to private operators? What is important for the future, however, is to restructure the profile of the railways for freight traffic, especially container transport. In that context, improvement of critical routes like Dhaka-Chittagong to handle high volume of traffic rapidly and reli-

ably is most urgent. Also, in the context of the Trans Asian Railway routes, Bangladesh is in a strategic lo-



# A Z M Obaidullah Khan

Again as the document Bangladesh 2020 notes: "Some medium scale bridges such as one over Meghna at Bhairab Bazar, one over Rupsa at Khulna and one over Karnaphully at Chittagong could bring nearly all parts of the country under a single roads and highways network. Especially as a participant in improving the urban network including some urban bypasses such as the one east of Dhaka city on a BOT basis for instance — the private sector can become a major player in Bangladesh's transport network."

Let me now make a transition from roads to railways. Exclusively state owned, the ledger-book of Bangladesh Railways has been heavily in the red. An encouraging initiative by the government is to progressively hand over pas-

disappointment the programme

was shown at 5-10 pm on

23.8.98. The mystery of such a

change is still unknown. Is it

due to gross inefficiency or an

outcome of a snap decision of

the authority. Would the au-

Needless to say that if such

state of affairs continues the

dwindling prestige of BTV will

131-Mohammadi Housing

thority explain?

be down further.

ABMS Zahur

Dhaka-1207

Society

so far envisaged, are through Sylhet and through Cox's Bazar. The routes will connect Southeast Asia-Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore - with India and Central Asia. If Bangladesh upgrades its existing railways to international standard, she can earn enviable revenues.

cation. The two possible routes,

Again, as between meter gauge in the east and a combination of broad and meter gauge to the west of the Jamuna bridge, there is a similar division between South east Asia (meter) and south and Central Asia (broad). "Bangladesh", as the 2020 document notes, " is thus well positioned to develop a hub to switch gages at Sirajganj on land to be reclaimed along the western guide bund" of the bridge.

Having said all that, let me

turn to the cheapest and traditional water transport: With waterways of 25,000 Kilometer, it is naturally so. But due to heavy siltation coming down from the upper reaches, lack of dredging and river-training. the water ways are severely hindered and sometimes a deathly menace. But planned development with both private and public initiatives can make that a blessing, rather than a curse. The ten inland ports in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chandpur. Barisal, Patuakhali, Khulna, Narsingdi, Bhairab Bazar, Azmiriganj and Baghabari, need immediate improvement and upgrading. Some of the ports "such as Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chandpur, Baghabari and Asmiriganj should be developed as container ports with private sector participation. Some of the trunk routes such as Ajmiriganj-Chandpur, Baghabari-Chilmari should be maintained on a priority basis." The coastal regions need to be connected

The greatest opportunity, however, lies in Chittagong port as the gateway for regional freight-traffic for destinations abroad. But what is the current state of the art in that disma port? "Moving a container through Chittagong costs \$ 600 compared to norms of \$ 150 to \$300 at neighbouring ports Bangladesh's competitiveness is so compromised by such inefficiency that the costs to the economy were estimated a \$100 million in 1995 and are expected to reach about \$ 170 million per year by 1999. The forecast for container throughout is as follows:

with the rest of the country by

rapid and reliable transport.

395,000 TEU 554,000 TEU 2005 737,000 TEU 780,000 TEU 2020

An examination of existing capacities and future growth of container traffic suggests that the optimum solution might be to develop the existing container facilities using the private sector (Bangladesh 2020, UPL 1998).

Mongla port, as mentioned earlier can handle bulk freight. Another possible option is a deep sea port at the mouth of Shibsa, south of Mongla.

Turning from land and water to the yonder blue of wide open sky, the golden eagle for Bangladesh is state-owned Biman. Lack of adequate fleet, factionalism and apathy have plagued the services in the past. A welcome initiative has been the induction of private operators in selected domestic routes More scope remains including leasing out of unused airports e.g. Shamsernagar or Thakurgaon) to private enterprise for operation and maintenance. Also and perhaps more important is to corporatize and progressively privatize Biman. An important first step is to bring in professional management and appropriate strategic partners. Only thus, the national air-line can cope with rising passenger and cargo-traffic, particularly on intentional routes, so important for an outward looking and growing economy.

Also today, the airports at Bangkok and Singapore are stretched to their seams. Dhaka should be in a position to handle diverted international traffic. But that would require, better airport services and facilities, urgent conversion of Chittagong airport into an intentional one; and upgrading Sylhet airport to handle non-resident Bangladeshi traffic from the United Kingdom. Again, private sector investment and management expertise are much needed. Let us be

nationalistic but not parochial. In the end, I recall the verses that Amit Ray recited to Labanya in Shesher Kavita:

"পথ বেঁধে দিল বন্ধনহীন গ্ৰন্থি আমরা দুজন চলতি হাওয়ার পন্থী।"

## House rent Code

Sir, I request the authorities to promulgate (or revise) the Code of Conduct for Tenants and the Landlords and the Landladies (what awful terms!). as in plot-hungry Dhaka the house rents are leaping up uncontrollably, and too frequently. The tenants have no protection. There should be

NGOs for tenants! As a tenant (a private individual with family), I am the sufferer as my house rent has gone up from 6,000 to 10,000 in eight years; unilaterally. This one-way 'take it, or leave it' attitude by the house/flat owners leaves the tenants unprotected officially and legally. Our 'peoples' government of ... 'should do something about it; and then enforce what it decides.

The rules and regulations should come out of the statute books and walk in the streets and be hung up where neces-

Harassed Tenant Dhaka-1207

## How could we do this?

Sir. We are ashamed and devastated. We couldn't believe that it happened in our friendly campus. We were totally outraged when we learnt about the incidents that three of our fellow students were allegedly raped by the students of 'this' university.

We always felt proud as students of one of the most open and free minded university of this country. But now, all that have been shattered, and a cloud of shame is hanging over our university.

thing? Now who are to blame? Is it us, our teachers or the society we live in? We think its the pro-

How could we do such a

cess and the process server. A Couple of Students

"Thanks, Mr Prince" Sir, I read Mr M Zahidul Haque's letter "Thanks, Mr Prince" (DS of 15-8-98), in which he has thanked Saudi Prince Abdul Aziz for extending generous financial help in establishing the first Islamic Centre/Mosque in North America and for his active ini-

Sir, How unlucky we are. Ev-

ery year, in small scale or large

the flood water comes rushing

in, drowning hundreds and

thousands of huts and houses.

Submerging acres upon acres of

land along with the crops

standing in those. Marooning

lakhs of people. Some being

rendered completely homeless,

some still staying in their

houses with knee deep water

inside them and some climbing

up on to the roofs of their

houses which has completely

gone under water. What an aw-

ful suffering of our people for

weeks or months together every

year. One can only understand

and feel what they go through if

one can put himself in their

shoes. Not everybody can do so

though, because these days we

all are so concerned with our

own selves that we haven't

much time to spare for others

The loss of property for the affected families and for the na-

tion as a whole is also gigantic.

Many families reel under this

financial blow for years to-

gether before they can fully re-

cover. Many industries, mills

and factories go down under

water with their machineries as

problems.

tiative to spread Islam to every nook and corner of the world.

Well it is very good for the noble Saudi Prince to spread Islam throughout the world and his initiative must be appreciated, but to give financial help to North America (Canada and the USA, because I think North America does not include Mexico) seems a bit too much — like carrying coal to Newcastle! These two North American countries are the richest in the world: in fact both are in the G-7 Group of affluent states, so why do they need financial

help? In fact, it's the poor countries like us (who are at the bottom of the heap of the poorest of the poor) which need financial help. We could use that money to try and improve the lot of our needy and God-forsaken people.

So, will the noble Prince extend some generous financial help to us — the poor people of Bangladesh, who are now facing a severe flood?

The Poor of Bangladesh Dhaka

## Neighbour indeed!

Sir, It is ironical and extremely hilarious that while our government is trying its utmost not to incur displeasure of India in any way, in fact walking on tiptoe, Indian government is bent upon to oust the so-called Bangladeshis.

It seems that they could not tolerate persons who speak Bengali — so in the process the government of India is deporting its own people who speak Bangali to Bangladesh. What an example of neighborliness!

Nur Jahan East Nasirabad, Chittagong

## Gross inefficiency

Sir, Though I am a regular viewer of important programmes of BTV, I must admit that the overall quality of BTV programmes is deteriorating. One of its gross mishandling

of programmes was seen regarding the programme "Shopan" shown on BTV on 23.8.98 (Sunday) at 6-10 pm. At 11-45 pm on 22.8.98 it was announced that the programme 'Shopan' will be telecast on 23.8.98 at 6-40 pm. To our utter surprise and

well as with their raw and fin-

ished products. After one such

flood we found soggy cornflakes

inside new boxes. On com-

plaint, we were told that flood

water is to be blamed! To think

that the company sold this

spoilt product to their valued

customers without any qualms

is really unbelievable and pos-

damages and sufferings caused

by it to our millions of poor

people mainly. Of course middle

and upper class suffer too, but

much less, compared to the suf-

ferings of the poor. Who have no

place to go to, who lose all their

meager belongings to the hun-

gry monster who devours all

their earthly possessions. In

their wake the floods also re-

sult in the spread of various

diseases leading to serious epi-

demics most of the time. Caus-

ing deaths of so many, from di-

arrhoea, dysentery, typhoid

etc., or from snake bits or star-

vation as their crops are all

lost and they are left with no

of ours, just a couple of thou-

sand miles from here, people do

live with water surrounding

And yet in this very planet

cash in their hands.

Getting back to the flood

sible only in Bangladesh.

Illogical Sir, The Indian government has been actively contemplating to forcibly push in lakhs of Bengali-speaking Indians to Bangladesh by alleging that they are "illegal immigrants" In fact they are Bangla speaking Muslims of India. It is a fact that ever since the

partition and independence of the Indian subcontinent, there has been large-scale migration from and to all sides of the borders. Recently there have been reports of illegal immigration from India into Chittagong Hill Tracts. The government of India had, in the part, alleged that a number of Hindus had gone over to India. Now the people whom the government is trying to evict by brutal force are all Muslims. This is a blatant contradiction of the government's

own position.
The government and the people of Bangladesh should resist such nefarious activities. which is clearly been motivated by base communal ideas and orientation. In fact, the civilized world should raise it's voice against such Natzi-like unacceptable government conduct. However, there may be arrangements for the extradition and exchange of criminals and fugitives. For example, as reported in the press a Magistrate in Bangladesh, Devashish Roy posted in Joypurhat raped a young woman named Shahnawaz (Daily Star, page 3, August 19). The criminal was prosecuted, but he absconded. Reportedly he fled to India. He was tried and sentenced by court of absentia to ten years' imprisonment. The victim, Shahnawaz, on August 17 went to meet the Establishment secretary seeking redress, but fainted

A Venice in the East

them all round the year. They

are living so, for hundreds of

years and happily even! They

are rich and prosperous though

living in water. These people

are the Venetians living in the

The city of Venice is one of

the most beautiful cities in the

world and world famous too for

its unique layout. It is a roaring

tourist centre too. All because

the Venetians hundreds of years

ago, had the wonderful idea and

courage to dig innumerable

canals criss-crossing their city.

So that the city itself is a work

of art. The earth from the

canals was used to raise the

level of pieces of land in be-

tween them. The canal sides

were all bricklaid so that the

Four or five storied buildings

were constructed just adjacent

to the canals or rather on their

brinks and amazingly till today

them in hundreds of years! It is

simply unbelievable, unless

The water has not damaged

they stand upright and strong.

earth doesn't fall into them.

city of Venice.

in agony and mental distress in the Secretariat.

I am sure I voice the mind of the nation when I ask the government of India to desist from such activities which will adversely affect inter-state relationship and vitiate communal harmony. We hope bulk of the population of India also will resist such ill-motivated moves. Let us try to build up a secular democratic order in the subcontinent. We have a legacy of a rich and ancient civilization. There is no reason why some mis-guided leaders of government should succeed in making situation turn bar-

Enam A. Chaudhury Dhaka-1207

## S/he, you and I

Sir. Can anybody tell me

why is our society going to dog so fast? I guess that nobody has an answer! As everybody is depending on somebody, therefore nobody is coming forward with simple answer: Yes! I came to the conclusion that we as a nation is suffering this disease SOMEBODY, NOBODY EVERY-BODY and ANYBODY. Or else why are we lagging behind in implementing the basic civic law? Everybody is depending on somebody therefore nobody is coming forward with the solution. People are loosing their faith in law, as there is no implementation of simple civic law in our society, therefore the law and order situation is deteriorating day by day. Isn't it high time to do something about it? Can we overlook this any more? I am sure the answer is a big No! Things are already going out of control very fast But I am sure if we try now, we can come out of it before it is too

I therefore request the Home Minister to go through the newspapers and seriously think about the matters such as public nuisance of many kind, traffic violation, wrong parking, beating the speed limit, cinema ticket black marketing etc.

Do not wait for anybody thinking somebody will advice you, everybody is thinking but nobody is implementing it.

Anvir Adil Khan 30. Shantinagar Dhaka

## BNP MPs' resignation

Sir. We are astounded and baffled to observe the good-fornothing tug-of-war inside the BNP camp for collecting resignation letters from the party

We fail to understand the mystery behind it? Why resignation, mid-term election, byelection, change of government, new party in power, for whose gain or loss? How this would help solve manifold problems, sufferings and hardships of th

We do have the practical bitter experience that whoever is in power some party leaders get rich quickly, the poor become poorer, the rich richer and nobody cares to mitigate and alleviate the grievances and miseries of the masses.

We would therefore humbly request the Awami League, BNP, JP and JI not to accuse each other but to rectify and purify themselves first — for the service of the people, sacrifice their wealth and then hold a neat, clean and fair election for the greater national interest.

O. H Kabir 6, Hare Street Wari, Dhaka-1203

## CMSD tender

Sir. The authority has inserted discriminatory clause to tenders of CMSD for the local currency bidder:

"Payment will be made after successful installation, commission and satisfactory functional test at user's Hospital". But above clause is not ap-

plicable for the foreign bidders A year back, there was no such discriminatory clause inserted in the tender and no other purchase authority in our country put such conditions. It is interesting that the authority put such terms and conditions only for local bidder to bid in local currency but for the foreign currency bidder no such terms are applied in the tender.

On the other hand foreign bidder will get their payment under B/L before delivery of the goods to CMSD stores.

Abdullah Sarkar 146. Motijheel C/A,

you see for yourself how old the gation. Thus solving our two buildings are. You cannot help major problems of rainy and but marvel at this engineering feat of ancient people. Long before science had so developed. How strongly with ancient tools and materials they had built multi-storied buildings on the banks of the canals with the water lapping against its walls, all round the year and yet with minimum erosion and decay. In rainy season the level of

water simply rises up in the canals, thus saving the houses from the flood water. The inside of the houses therefore remain absolutely dry and clean so do the shops and all habitations. Why can't we borrow this idea? It is an excellent way of protecting human habitation, mills and factories. A network of systematic canals can be built with concrete walls and banks. Small bridges can be built across it at short distances. In rainy season the level of water will only rise in these canals. The surrounding high grounds will have a good drainage too because of the canals.

In dry season these canals deep water soon! can be used for irrigation. So double purpose will be served flood prevention as well as irri-

dry seasons, by an easy and simple way. Why build em bankments? Dig canals and let the water run into them to be used during the lean season when we are so short of water They will act not only as water reservoirs but also as carriers to take water to inland dry areas. Embankments have a risk of leaking and breaking down and they do not much help in dry season when crops need artificial irrigation. Our engineers must look into this matter seriously. Instead of looking up at others for aid every year, it is high time that we help ourselves and take steps to solve this chronic problem of ours for once and for all. So that our unlucky people don't have to suffer every year, year after year. Because of the Green house affect parts of Bangladesh are expected to go under-water. Maybe a network of canal will save some parts atleast if not all. We must act real fast or else we all will be wading in knee

Dr. Sabrina Q. Rashid Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

### Going through hell While 99% of the students of

the Indian Institute of Technolgies (IIT) come abroad mainly to US for advanced education (MS & PhDs), one or two students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) are harassed by the US visa officers before they can get the F1 visa these days. Around the June time frame this year, people trying to obtain the F1 visas were being rejected randomly left and right.

These Bangladeshi's were being told they have insufficient fund even though calculation showed some of them had much more than the minimum sufficient needed. Some of them were rejected based on their looks and without being asked any question. Some were rejected as soon as they told that their family will sponsor them without the visa officer even bothering to look at the bank statements. Many are randomly rejected based on the clause

you won't come back".
But looking at the universities in the US, it seems that Indians and maybe Chinese don't have as much problems getting the F1 visas. And how many Indians come back to India after finishing MS or PhD in US? The answer is: very very very very very very few. Yet how come 99% of IITians and also from many other Indian Universities are given the F1 visa and so few from Bangladesh. The population of India is 6 times more than Bangladesh but there seems to be more than 1000 times Indian students in US. I have never really heard of any Indian getting rejected due

A woman whose husband was critically ill in the US, tried to get a visitor visa in US consulate in Bangladesh. She was rejected again and again till her husband died in USA unseen by her.

to "you won't come back" clause or the "insufficient fund" clause from my Indian friends. When I was a graduate student, I have seen Indians come from all over left and right. Most of these Indians were not really rich and none of them went back to India after finishing MS and PhD. But I have been hearing nightmare stories from intending Bangladeshi students who face the US consulate.

A few months ago, I also heard an extremely sad news: a woman whose husband was critically ill in the US, tried to get a visitor visa in US consulate in Bangladesh. She was rejected again and again till her husband died in USA unseen by her. Would this have happened to her if she were an Indian? And this definitely would not happen if she were a white Eu-

Definitely, it seems that the US State Department which oversees the Consulate offices has hidden policy which specifically targets Bangladesh in this subcontinent. Bangladesh is not the country with the nuclear weapons, or is it that Bangladesh needs nuclear weapon to make a point to US consulate?

Our people need education and both the government and the opposition should unite to make this point clear to the US consulate. I feel that Consulate officials are ruthlessly biased against Bangladeshis. Maybe if and when Clinton comes to Bangladesh, our president should raise this point. I don't see this as a moot point that should be ignored.

Romel Khan A Citizen of Bangladesh