

Hindus in Bhola will not be forgotten

The Daily Star readers of Bangladesh should be more concerned about what is going on in their home country. The rape of Hindu women in Bhola is not something a Hindu from Bangladesh, like me, will easily forget. Yes, Afghanistan is important but show some decency to support your fellow citizens. I can assure you that in the coming years Hindus will not be bowing down to such atrocities. We will not sit together with Awami League or BNP. We demand equal rights and we demand the trial of these criminals and rehabilitation of those affected. We demand justice now.

Anup Deb
Arlington, Texas, USA

Bhola outrage

The first of a series of Star investigative report "Harrowing Tales of Depravity" (November 9) has left us dumbfounded. It gave a graphic account of different sorts of atrocities committed on the Hindus of certain villages of Bhola.

This is absolutely outrageous that a section of the citizens of Bangladesh, because of their belonging to a different faith should fall prey to atrocities carried out by the activists of the party having won in the election. It is painful and shameful that such flagrant violation of human rights happened under the very nose of the government machinery. This one report on Bhola amply tells the tales of such incidents in other places across the country. Why didn't the Chief Advisor of the past CTG and the CEC fail to give necessary protection to the Hindus?

Even after BNP took over, the torture and threat continued as before, and in some instances with a vengeance, but ironically they just glossed over.

MdAbdullah
Azimpur government colony, Dhaka

"Harrowing tales..."

I am shocked to read the report "Harrowing tales of depravity" (November 11).

In one hand, the party in power says they do not treat Hindus as minorities, rather as the citizens of the country. To safeguard its citizen is a prime duty of the government as claimed all the time. We have seen in recently held Durga Puja in Bangladesh, how the Hindu populations suffered in enjoying their rights to religion in spite of the government's repeated assurance.

Despite assurance from the Home Minister atrocities continued. Do the minorities really have equals rights? Who is responsible to protect its citizen from any kind of abuse and exploitation irrespective of their faith, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation?

I urge the government to take the side of the victims and bring the culprits to justice. The other day BBC informed that some Hindu minorities have fled to West Bengal in India. Such an incident once again reveals the extent of their vulnerability.

Sahed Ali
Vancouver, Canada

Cry for me, oh Bangladesh

As a regular reader of The Daily Star and someone who treats this newspaper not merely as a newspaper but as a mirror to his country, I must compliment you for highlighting the plight of minorities and for some excellent editorials on terrorism. In the changed political scenario of our country, and it's undesirable impact, the role of newspapers like yours has become very important.

At the same time, I am feeling increasingly frustrated, and helplessly at the way our national ethos is shaping into.

I read in dismay, the collective voices of our "Islamic" fraternity in support of Mr. Osama Bin Laden and his fanatic gang. I see in disbelief the protest rallies in support of the most notorious terrorist of modern times. I watch in horror as he is hailed as the champion crusader of Islam. What exactly has he done for us? In what way has he made any difference to the lives of millions of our people who go to bed with half or empty stomach?

Also, from where did we all learn to be so crippled in our belief and blind in our faith? What has gone wrong with my countrymen who were at the receiving end of terror for most part of their short history?

Sias and Ahmadiyahs are as much our brothers as Sunnis. And so are Christians and Hindus. If this small concept is too difficult to rationalise with our "Mullahs", then I seriously believe that they should be packed off to fight alongside the Taliban. Our nation has more important issues to deal with.

Also, mere shouts of "ours is a peaceful, tolerant and compassionate religion" won't help. Because it sounds hypocritical when we don't stand up and condemn with all our voices every act of violence that is directed in the name of our religion. It also makes world look at us with cynicism and scepticism. And not without reasons. We have the right to condemn and disagree, but no one should be allowed to declare a fatwa on anyone's head. There can be no room for ambiguity here.

What happened to the Bangladesh that our founding fathers dreamt of? Why is that all I can see

is an unending stream of bigots, full of their hate-agendas and reeking of intolerance.

And most horrible and disgusting is the news of ethnic cleansing of minorities from our country. How come we have more compassion for some unrelated people in some far away country like Afghanistan, than for our own brothers who stood by us in our fight for independence, who shared our language, culture, tradition and values, who were there to grieve and mourn and seek solace when we needed them? When and why exactly did we try to alienate them and do away with their

Who we are, and what we stand for!

When your people speak of hating America or Americans may I with respect ask that they give some thought to the following...

I am the average American. I'm the guy who sends you grain when your crops fail and drinking water when your rivers, streams, and lakes dry up. I'm the guy who sends hordes of rescue personnel, trucks, and helicopters to aid you when you suffer earthquakes, floods, and mudslides. I'm the guy who sends in my sons and daughters to "keep the peace" when you can no longer do so.

When those relief workers ration out that rice-- I probably helped pay for it by working some dirty job that I really hate. When that UH-60 Blackhawk hoists your parents to safety from the roof of your flooded house, it's because I paid for it with my U.S. tax-dollars. When those PeaceCorp members dig that irrigation ditch to help your little farming village, it is with my backing and my blessing. And when your neighbour threatens you and your way of life, more often than not it is I who will stand up and make him back down.

But I weep today. I weep for thousands of fellow Americans whom I will never know. I weep for hundreds of brave firemen, policemen, and paramedics who perished while heroically doing their duties. I weep for 244 airline passengers who never reached their destinations. Sadder of all, I weep with the knowledge that I will forever be looking over my shoulder. I weep for innocents lost. I weep for innocence destroyed. I weep for naiveté shattered.

But soon I will weep no more. I will dry the tears from my eyes. I will wipe my runny nose. I will tighten my belt, and lace up my boots. And I will sharpen my knife. I will dry my powder and I will oil my weapon. And as I do so, I will look, and I will listen. I will note the kind word, the shared grief, and the shocked condolences. I will appreciate the support, and be ever grateful for any and all aid offered. But I will also note the gloating, the laughter, the jeers, and the perverse joy.

And I will remember I am an American. I am resourceful. I am determined and I never forget.

Sleep well, World, I'll see you soon. God bless America.

Bill Rouchell
505 Celeste Ave. River Ridge,
Louisiana USA 70123-1444

existence?
Something has seriously gone wrong with our moral and national ethos.

Cry for me, oh Bangladesh.

Ahmad Jamali
CA, USA

Oppression on the Hindus

We are regular readers of Internet edition of your newspaper. Thank you for upholding the standard and authenticity of news in the context of Bangladesh. Where most of our newspapers suffer credibility for their news and authenticity.

We the Hindu Community of Bangladesh living in Australia have been observing with great concern the atrocities of the Hindu population in Bangladesh. We thank you for your effort to bringing the news on atrocities to the authorities in Bangladesh and to hundreds of thousands of your readers worldwide.

Recently we organised a rally in Sydney, Australia against the atrocities against Hindu population in Bangladesh. To provide news to media we opened a temporary web site.

For Bangladeshi Hindu Community in Australia
Prabir Maitra

Repression on minority

I don't care if the victims belong to any other religion or voted against BNP, to me they are just like any other citizens of Bangladesh. And as a citizen they definitely deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

All the culprits must be brought to justice and be given the death penalty for their acts. Is this how you people in the administration promise us one thing and do just the opposite?

A Ahmed, on e-mail

Pakistan mindset?

The situation has become very critical for the Hindus in Bangladesh. It's not just what is on within the country but the obvious lack of concern by the majority towards the minorities. We see an outpouring of sympathy for distant Afghanistan and Muslims elsewhere but nothing for their Hindu fellow citizens in the same land. Has it occurred to anyone that this may lead to a bigger conflict?

I think the problem is that Bangladesh is still run by the Pakistan mindset of 1971.

Selim Hussain
Dhaka

Some questions to the US Ambassador

I would like to ask a few questions to the US Ambassador Mary Ann Peter who criticised The Daily Star editorial, which protested the US action against Afghanistan. She justified the attack because claiming that the aim of the attack is to annihilate terrorism and not to kill innocent

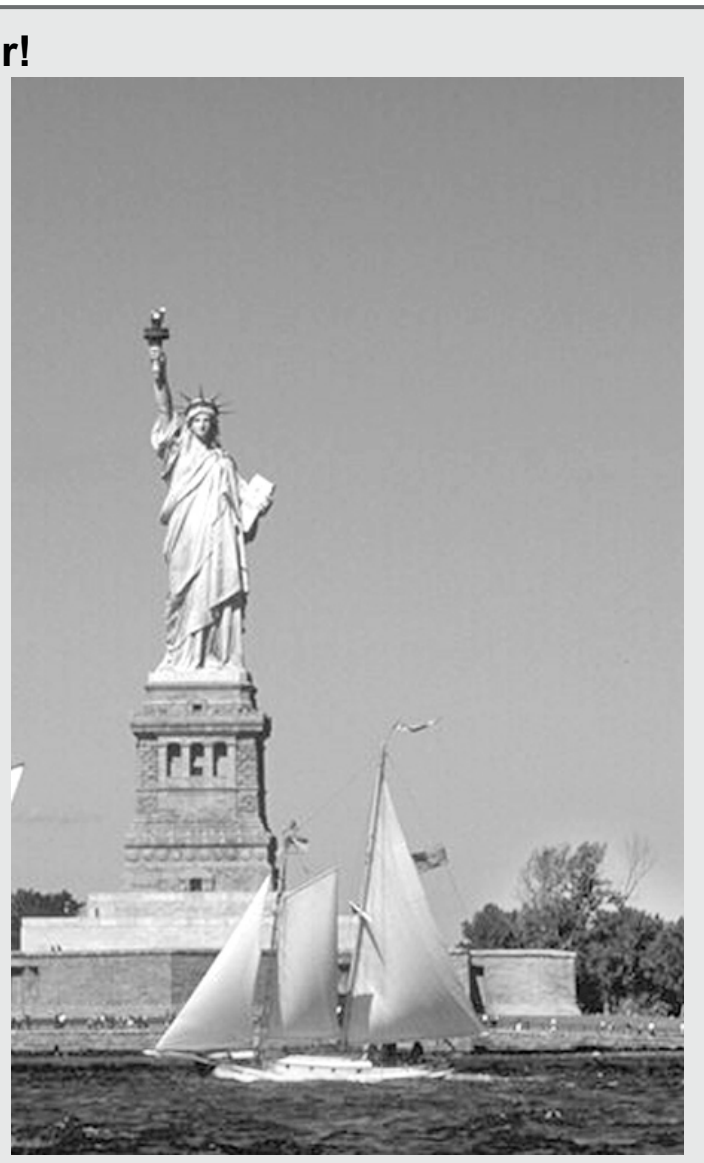
people.

There are enough reasons to disagree with Ms Peter such as: (1) In December 1997, a delegation of Taliban mullahs travelled to America and even met the US State Department officials and Unocal executives in Houston. At that time the Taliban's taste for public executions and its treatment of Afghan women were not made out to be the crimes against humanity that they are now. Americans failed to convince Taliban to allow Unocal to construct an oil pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and out to the Arabian Sea. Now the US is planning to

ted the *ustad!* The same is the case with Saddam, also trained by the CIA. The absurd conclusion: the CIA is harmful for the Americans! Man creates Demons, beyond its ultimate control.

There was a recent news report that the Mossad intelligence outfit of Israel is equally devastating initially (examples cited). Anyway, over a billion Muslims all over the world feel that this war is not being fought intelligently.

A Bangladeshi Muslim
Dhaka



Local eclipses

November 7 was in full eclipse during the preceding regime. It is ironical for the citizens to note that even at the level of 'national holiday' the political parties could not arrive at a consensus for more than quarter of a century. This cannot be a tribute to the prevailing culture of politics in this divided nation. If the politicians cannot deliver who can?

MWZ
Dhaka

English Movies

Earlier, BTV used to show a lot of good hit English series like 'Six Million Dollar Man', 'Charlie's Angels', 'Bionic Woman' etc. But now a days its standard has deteriorated. BTV has shown Alfred Hitchcock's 'Psycho' twice, 'Lawrence of Arabia' thrice, 'Earthquake' twice and so on. Even if they show any new movie that is totally of third grade and dubbed in Bangla.

If the BTV authorities don't have enough funds to show new movies regularly then they should stop repeating one movie several times. We don't need to memorise those like school home task. And as for ETV, all I can say is that they have a fascination for Bengali *natak* and

"Harrowing tales of depravity"

I write this letter to you in the hope that you have the stomach enough to listen to some honest criticism.

Has not the country suffered enough from the post election trauma? And when things were getting to normalcy and people are heaving a sigh of relief, your paper decides to steer up the old wound again and play the minority card patented by Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League. I refer in this regard two reports in your 9th and 10th November issues by your Roving Team.

Why was it necessary for you to file such reports when such incidents have already been reported in other news papers time and again - correctly or incorrectly? Readers like us are of the opinion that as nothing sells better than sensational news, you decided to join - although rather too late - the band wagon of Awami news papers like Janakantho, Bhorer Kagoj etc. to create some more sensation for your readers. Being your regular reader, I would have much preferred a constructive article from Mahfuz Anam on the post election minority issues - no matter how credible the reports were.

Sadly, though, you have chosen otherwise that makes us sick and tired of reading constantly your 'Nakphul' (nose ring) incidents after every few lines. While the country needs stability and better understanding between the two major political parties, you seem to be providing ammunition to the opposition, who is already on the warpath having lost the October election, to create more trouble; and thus make the lives of public more miserable.

I am sorry to say that your two reports do no service to our society.

Ashfaq A. Chowdhury, on e-mail

commercial Bengali movies, which are not worth watching.
Alwina Sharmeen
Wari, Dhaka

Weekly holiday

The recent announcement of weekly holiday on Friday and Thursday as half working day cannot help our country and economy. This way, we shall be cut from the rest of the

world by additional one day.

Bangladesh is a Muslim country and not an Islamic Republic and it is not right to say that if Friday is working day, it will hurt the religious sentiment. Islam teaches to practice religion and also work sincerely. Example: Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey observe Sunday as weekly holiday being largely Populated Muslim Nations. I urge to BNP government to revise weekly holiday to Sunday and Saturday as half working day and Friday lunch break half an hour and additional one hour to cover Jummah Prayer.

can citizens feel about it?

AH
Dhaka

Ban smoking

Recently the Law Commission has submitted their recommendations to the JS to pass an order to stop smoking inside public vehicles and open places. Recently India has announced smoking as public nuisance. Our country has never taken any step to control this menace. I hope the present government will announce its decision to stop smoking in public places and ban cigarette ads.

Sultan Talukder
Gazipur

Nuisance factor in politics

There is no denying of the fact that political parties in Dhaka thrive on the nuisance value they can create in the pool, and it seems to be claimed as an achievement: the greater the mischief it can unleash on the docile people, the greater the negative satisfaction.

The agitators seem to have firm faith in the non-cooperation movements. We are familiar with this cycle for the last ten years. Somehow two initially autocratic regimes thrived rather peacefully for 16 years. What did these leaders practise which is elusive to the elected politicians? The art of peaceful coexistence? Are we too moralistic and stiff on paper values and thrive on back door trading?

Now corruption and political and general terrorism have increased to unmanageable levels, even after two or three general elections. Why doesn't democracy seem to work in this forsaken part of the world? Our political leaders have enough maturity and political side experience to sort out the good from the evil practices. Perhaps the leaders are hostages to the followers and the environment.

The JS is too crowded. Perhaps we can decentralise politics and go for four provinces with legislative assemblies. Centralisation attracts evil practices, and too much power is tempting. A referendum in 2003 might reveal what we need.

Abd
Dhaka

Who own the footpath?

Seminars on building codes and practices about metropolitan Dhaka urbanisation are being covered by your daily at regular intervals. During the recent caretaker government, demolition of unauthorised buildings and structures were published in your esteemed daily but there are still a number of unauthorised establishments in Moghbazar-New Eskaton-Paribag areas.

I would like to draw your attention to some pose multi-storied buildings located in these areas.

These palaces have occupied

Withdraw voting rights

We have learnt from different sources about the sufferings of the Hindu community and the only way to solve this problem is to withdraw their right to vote.

It is better to live without the so-called voting right and live in peace. Every Hindu are labelled as the Awami Leaguer and this is the main reason of their sufferings. So if the Hindu community does not vote then no party will be against them. The fact is that the Awami League did not do any special favour to the Hindu community while in power. So why would the Hindus suffer for them?

This is the only way for the minorities to survive in this so-called secular country.

Robin Dutta
Kalabagan, Dhaka

the footpath totally and even a portion of the main road while poor footpath peddlers, seasonal fruit sellers etc are being chased by law enforcing agencies. Let the City Corporation, Rajuk, PWD etc, take a gentle look at these areas and assess the encroachment. Enough shanties and slums have been demolished. But to reoccupy these government properties dynamites are needed.

Mahbubur Rahman
New Eskaton Road, Dhaka

Utilise the vacant space

Soon the Dhaka central jail is going to be shifted to a new location outside the city. The huge vacant space need be utilised properly keeping in mind the environmental requirement and recreational need of the people particularly of the older part of the city.

The entire vacant area should be turned into a park with garden, playgrounds etc. Medium size aviary may also be added to the plan. We should be very cautious about the vested quarter interested in turning the space into a commercial complex.

A citizen's committee should be formed right now to resist any malpractice concerning this vacated space.

Tarin Ahmed
Dhaka

To those who are ashamed

I am talking about those who raise questions about the loyalty of Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ to our nation after a remarkable election.

This dichotomy of our nation by a few serves the purpose of a few who tend to be active from early 1960s. These secular people are the highly privileged ones in our society who were supported by foreigners without a proper definition of secularism. After thirty years of independence these few decadents tend to divide and debilitate our nation in the name of pro and against liberation.

These few start screaming with alleged notion of minority violence in Bangladesh. My challenge to these people is to find a secular country in the world, which will serve their version of secularism. The person who preaches secularism denies others rights of free speech.

My suggestion to these people is not to find the compatibility between "democracy and Islam", but to find the compatibility between "Islam and Democracy". The killing of some Hindus recently is rather political assassinations, which were started by the both political parties before the election but in no way it could be called as a communal violence. According to BBC Internet edition of 8th November, Government recently detained 154 Bangladeshi Hindus who were crossing border illegally into India not because of communal violence, but for family reunion. I believe that our patriotic journalists should be more careful of publishing news before jumping on the wagon.

Nasim Islam, on e-mail

Loadshedding

During the last 5-year rule of Awami League people were fed up with constant load shedding of power and it became a national issue. Soon after the election of BNP government load shedding has decreased almost to nil and PDP is forecasting everyday through national dailies the quantum of power that would be available during the day. I wonder what went wrong during the AL rule.

The same PDP employees were working during AL period but how come the power supply has improved overnight after BNP came into power. Will it be like that if a political party of their choice is not in power the service will deteriorate or is it that the past government was truly inefficient?

Ziauddin Ahmed, on e-mail

Old ship furniture

Through your daily I want to raise an issue regarding the use of old ship furniture. Many of the ship furniture are made of asbestos with veneer finishing. Asbestos dust is known to cause cancer in humans. Long use of such furniture may cause damage to health.

So we should be careful when we are buying such items, which is often attractive because of their relative low price. There are study tables of asbestos with veneer finishing.

The use of these tables should be avoided specially if it is intended for

months ago, most ordinary Australians led political pundits and pollsters to believe that Mr. Howard's uninspiring, incompetent leadership and hopelessly failed or faltering policies would ensure that he, along with his party, were destined to lose power. Yet, the boastful of desperate refugees bound for Australia and promptly and cruelly denied entry by the Howard government, galvanised public opinion and swung it in Mr. Howard's favour. Indeed, "immigration" is now being cited, by astute observers, as one issue that seemed to clearly dominate the election campaign. The Liberals adeptly exploited and exacerbated the newly resurgent xenophobic sentiments of the Australian public, to the extreme. Mr. Beazley and his supporters in the media and professional circles argued coherently, for a more sane and progressive approach to the challenges that immigration poses to Australia. He was pilloried by Mr. Howard and his followers for being a 'softie', 'woolly' and 'wobbly' in a policy matter of such great national significance. Alas, Mr. Beazley's stand was obviously the more morally and legally sound, but unfortunately, most of Australia is, at the moment, in a diametrically different mood.

It's truly ironic, though no one seems to notice how the "Liberal" party led by Mr. Howard is actually a conglomeration of political and ideological 'conservatives'. Much more ironic, is the fact that, Australia, itself a nation of immigrants and 'boat people' (remember, the legendary 'We're bound for Botany Bay' ditty) could so callously turn away a boatload of desperate, poor, endangered refugees.

Sajjad Husain
Dhaka

"A Muslim opinion"

This is in reference to "A Muslim Opinion" (November 3). Although many Americans are not Muslim by name, they are blessed with wealth and strength because of some Islamic virtues they practice. For example they firmly believe in the freedom of religion and freedom of speech. And the Koran mentions the same (and more) in a number of places e.g. Surah 2 Verse 256 with respect to tolerance.

However, Americans most certainly have their own interests and agenda at heart (as with all of us unfortunately). And their policies are not based on what is "morally right" for humanity but what is best for Americans. This is why they have a special relationship with Israel beyond that extended to any Arab state. Most American aid goes to Israel than any other country. And this is unlikely to change.

Muslims however, in my humble opinion, should acknowledge and respect that the People of Moses were assigned the land of Israel (Surah 5, Verses 21 and 26 Al-Koran). And Jews you are command in the Torah "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Exodus, Chapter 22, Verse 21).

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SMMM, on e-mail

"Time for soul searching"

On 9 November 2001, you wrote in your article "Time for soul-searching" a lot of comments about the Muslim world. First, the world Muslim population is about one billion, and not two billion, as you said. Secondly, you have stated that in the last eighty years, the Muslims have contributed very little to the world except producing violence, war and a disgusting expenditure of wealth. The major wars of the last eighty years were World War 1, World War 2, the Pacific war, the Vietnam war, the Korean war, the Afghan-Soviet war, the Cold War, the Bosnian war, etc. Please inform us which of these wars were produced by the Muslims.

Next, the United States has five percent of the world population, but consumes 25 percent of the world's resources and causes 25 percent of the world's pollution. Who causes the disgusting expenditure of wealth (at the expense of the rest of the world)?

You asked us to show you one tolerant Muslim nation like the USA or the UK. The fact that so many Muslim nations have so far tolerated the pushy, unfair foreign policies of these countries should be enough evidence for you.

Then you mentioned that there is no single Muslim leader in the last century like Gandhi, Mandela or Martin Luther King. For your information, they were great leaders because they fought against the oppression of certain of Western powers (I won't mention which).

More over, I do not think that these nations are really "tolerant". The Civil Rights demonstrations did not take place because the USA was being "tolerant". After the 11th September attacks, Muslims were attacked in the USA and UK. Now, that doesn't seem like tolerance at all, does it?

Also, the USA and UK can't seem to be able to tolerate the assertiveness or independence of other nations. Just try to adopt an independent stance with these countries and see how they react. Like September Bush said: "you're with us, or against us."

S. Aziz
Dhaka

Australian election

Hard luck for Australians who voted for Labour leader, Kim Beazley, and saw their man lose to the incumbent Liberal leader and Prime Minister, John Howard, in the recent general election in Australia.

It's baffling, how even a few