



Khatib's unsolicited remarks

On Eid Day congregation at National Eidgah, Dhaka, the Khatib of Baitul Muqarram Mosque has criticised the US and UK government and strongly supported the Taliban and Osama-bin-Laden.

In the past he had commented on various political issues and created controversies. 4-party BNP alliance always took his side while they were in the Opposition.

In fact there is strong lobby in the government by those who represents the fundamentalist political parties or supporter of them and are very much active to bring religion into conflict with Bengali culture and nationalism.

BNP was very close to "fatwabaz Mollahs" who declared the two High Court judges "Murtad" for their landmark verdict prohibiting fatwa by unauthorised persons as epoch making judgement.

Refugee rights

Some of the governments of 141 countries, who met in Geneva on 12-13 December to affirm their commitment to refugees, have actually adopted laws and policies that undermine the letter and the spirit of the Refugee Convention.

It is ironic that the very same states that conceived the 1951 Refugee Convention fifty years ago are now the main culprits in whittling away this important human rights instrument.

Key industrialised states have been violating core provisions of the Refugee Convention in recent years. They are Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Union.

For the past two decades, these states have steadily eroded their obligations under the Refugee Convention. For example, the refugee definition is being restrictively applied and narrowly interpreted in many countries.

The anti-terrorism measures taken by some states in the aftermath of the 11 September events on the United States will also seriously erode core refugee protection standards.

Furthermore, proposals in the UK exclude asylum seekers from refugee protection if they are suspected of terrorism, without any substantive investigation of their asylum application.

Asylum seekers often have been falsely prosecuted for crimes in their countries of origin, especially if they belong to a persecuted political, ethnic, social or religious group.

States must comply with their obligations under the Convention to cooperate fully with UNHCR in its duty to supervise the implementation of the Convention.

States currently interpret and implement the Convention in vastly inconsistent ways that often serve their own political interests.

M. A. Obaydullah

Is this democracy?

We call ourselves a democratic nation. But do we really practice democracy? Why has there been nomination for posts like an MP or Mayor or others?

Syed Towhid Hossain Dhnanmondi, Dhaka

"Brutality Bangladesh style"

I've just finished reading Anita Lee's letter 'Brutality Bangladesh Style' (December 5). And I would like to thank her for her feelings for the victims of such brutality.

Whatever one's personal beliefs regarding the purdah, a democracy's support of individual freedom should be even greater. Therefore, whether or not a Muslim woman decides to observe the purdah or not is her decision.

Apart from the threat to democracy, freedom of speech, civil liberties and women rights there are growing risk of the fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh, they may obtain sufficient strength under the umbrella of present government and may cause serious damage to our political culture.

We, the freedom loving people of Bangladesh condemn the Khatib's unsolicited remarks and demand unconditional apology from him.

Principal Delwar Jahid Secretary General, Center for Social and Peace Studies, Spain

Freedom of speech

Khatib Maulana Obaidul Haque is a veteran Islamic thinker. Recently, he has made comments against America in the presence of the President.

At the same time, the Khatib has the liberty to speak freely in his sermon. He is not a government employee. He just receives some honorarium from the Islamic Foundation.

Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury Dept. of English, M.C. College, Sylhet

Holidays cancelled

What is the government trying to accomplish by cancelling August 15th as a National Holiday? Can the government truly justify that the 15th doesn't merit a national day of mourning?

Partisan political agenda got us nowhere and it never will. The country has far more pressing things to be addressed given the state of our economy.

Partisan political agenda got us nowhere and it never will. The country has far more pressing things to be addressed given the state of our economy. It is a shame that the government decided to waste government time to address national holidays, especially when the main purpose, with all likelihood was to cancel the holiday on the 15th.

Such thoughtless decision will only provoke violence and cause further rift between the major political parties. The unfortunate fact is

Band banned

Anyone who admires Rabindranath Tagore should be a supporter of post-modern literature. That's what Tagore preached and that's why he's still remembered.

But I'm surprised to see that today's Rabindra lovers are as backward as much as he hated backwardness. They are not open to new ideas.

I am very hurt to learn that singer Maqsud has been banned from BTV and was criticised by the so-called caretakers of Rabindra culture for his "Rabindranath 2010."

Well, that's exactly what Maqsud tried to do, make things easier for the new generation plus it was a good experiment. Maqsud alone brings more audience than all the Rabindra Sangeet singers together in a concert.

No matter how they justify, the reason is their ignorance. Banning or censoring is something that belongs to our former CMLA's and we have to get over that!

"The measure of a singer's freedom is in his own creative personality. He can sing the composer's song as his own... If in our conduct we can follow the law of goodness, we can have real liberty of self-expression.

The principle of conduct is there, but the character which makes it true and individual is our own creation. In our (Indian) music there is a duality of freedom and prescribed order.. I am deeply moved by the western music; I feel that it is great, that it is vast in its structure and grand in its composition.

Our own music touches me more deeply by its fundamental

one-time used item. If a bag can be used several times, its price would go up.

Jute has been there for decades, but this industry is dying due to faulty official policies. Jute is eco-friendly and cheap, but why then it has not captured the world market?

The publicity campaign does not explain the failures. How can jute compete with polybags? Our paper industry is also in the sunset years, and there is no official urgency or priority (same with sugar and agro-processing, cold storage network, co-operative marketing facilities for farmers).

AMA Dhaka

Appreciable action

As a citizen I should thank our State Minister for Education for his bold action against the incident of tender snatching. Most of the government officials take themselves as very clever opportunists, as were the case of the sub-assistant engineer and a few other officials of the Madrassah Board, who were assisting the malpractice for their personal interest.

Like the State Minister, it has become very important to start similar bold actions by high ups to make a workable atmosphere. Otherwise any good is difficult to attain. I once again appreciate the action of the State Minister for going down deep into this case. Such steps are required to save our society from further deterioration.

Syed Towhid Hossain Dhnanmondi, Dhaka

The purdah, The Daily Star and...

Two letters published in The Daily Star about Bangladeshi women and purdah have drawn my attention. The writers' opinions are not what I object to, I believe that as citizens of a democratic nation, they have a right to hold whatever opinions they want to-- no matter how ill informed and illiberal those opinions are.

Whatever one's personal beliefs regarding the purdah, a democracy's support of individual freedom should be even greater. Therefore, whether or not a Muslim woman decides to observe the purdah or not is her decision. Yet, here we have people espousing state intervention in what should remain very private religious practices and observances of citizens.



A disappointed voter Dhaka

Islamic programs on TV

With the enhancement of the media world, people have the accessibility of watching various cable channels. The channels cover various types of programs including Islamic programs.

Besides BTV there are three other local channels, i.e. ETV, ATN Bangla and Channel 1. Among these channels, Islamic programs are mainly covered by ATN Bangla and Channel 1. Although, some Islamic programs are aired by BTV but not a single Islamic program is aired by ETV.

The most popular Islamic program is the "Namaz O Masla Masaye", aired by ATN Bangla. In this program, an Islamic expert answers the questions regarding religion and life. A large number of people have benefited from watching this program. But BTV or ETV never air such programs.

I would like to request the authorities concerned to step into the shoes of ATN Bangla and Channel 1, so that people all over the country particularly the villagers can be benefited from such helpful programs.

Sameer Ahmed Khan Mojlish Dhnanmondi, Dhaka

Emergency areas

It is high time to declare Pallabi and Mirpur areas as "emergency zone", following unprecedented lawlessness and chaos after assumption of power by the present government.

The residents of these areas are in no way secured of their life and property. The measures taken by the law enforcing agencies have failed miserably.

As killings and other crimes are increasing day by day, it is suggested that the government immediately declare these areas as "emergency area" and deploy army to bring situation under control and restore law and order in Pallabi and Mirpur.

Big talk-and big failure

The species known as the Awami Leaguers somewhere in the legendary mystic land known as former Bengal, do know how to talk big. But they do not know how to take a big fall-- not even a peoples' verdict in a general election. We have to do something more than try to solve national problems through politics and political leadership.

Pir Saheb Glencove, NY, USA

India against Pakistan

Some of the Pakistani intelligence cadres have reported that India has taken around 100 Pakistani fighters from Northern Alliance custody to India. This in fact is a very serious development. India can use these poor fighters to implicate Pakistan in the so-called "terrorism" in Kashmir.

Protesting what?

I was surprised to read that Mahila (women) AL protests the repeal of SSF and other security for Hasina and Rehana (December 10). Where were these women when the AL government patronised state terrorism and persecuted their own women folk for the last 5 years in a systematic way?

The rape incidents by AL backed Chitra League leaders at TSC and Jahangir Nagar University are still very fresh in our mind. Why did not we hear a single protest by these mohilas (women)? Where were they during the last five years of the AL misrule?

Expressed their opinion

I would like to mention here that may be because of constraint of space some important lines were missing from my letter published which made the difference, such as "Islam does not prohibit females seeking education and employment. Muslim females may work side by side with males. Even there is no bar to join in army or be a pilot. As Muslim females they only need to protect their modesty in their dresses" "Islamic code and conduct is not deterrent to modern life style."

Female students must not be prohibited from moving or talking with their fellow male students. What they need is to keep themselves within veil not necessary they have to wear Borkkha.

In this regard I would like to draw the attention of the readers specially Mr. Manzur Hasan and Mr. MA to consult Ayats 31 and 59 of Surah An Nur and Al-Ahzab respectively, quote 31 of An Nur "... and tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity, and not to display their charms (in public) beyond what may decently be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms. And let them not display (more of) their charms to any but their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons or their womenfolk, or those whom they rightfully possess, or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire, or children that are as yet unaware of women's nakedness; and let them not swing their legs (in walking) so as to draw their hidden charms..."

These are the authentic verses of The Holy Quran. All believer of Islam must follow these. Ziaul Huda Uttara, Dhaka

Regarding purdah

In response to my letter published in The Daily Star on November 20, I found comments of Mr. MA published on November 21. A concerned citizen, Dallas, USA and Mr. Manzur Hasan also

What makes Shahriar tick?

I do fall in with all sensible DS writings centred on the Shahriar case, letters and editorials in particular, that go to pillory the ostensibly quirky stance the authorities have taken to forestall anticipated projection-induced disturbance in national cohesion.

I must first take my hat off to the journalist's empathy for the alleged anguish-crazed plight of a sectarian minority of our motherland. Secondly, I must appreciate the perseverance Shahriar Kabir has shown by going to a foreign land for super-added vicarious substantiation of alleged accusations through audio-visual recordings. This is just one putative facet of journalistic gallantry discernible in the Shahriar episode.

While we cry for the dingy incarceration of the noted journalist, another stark facet of suchlike missed journalistic gallantry seems to elude me rather poignantly. This is the case of atrocities committed, often in full view of the public, against members of the majority of our motherland.

When the ex-PM's friend Nasibun's son Sumon tortured two young men most brutally in complete disregard of extreme remorselessness of horrendously distraught helpless parents, did Mr. Shahriar make any attempt at audio-visually recording activities of such medieval crime committed in broad daylight. Did he say or do anything during the act, after the mutilated bodies were exhumed from gutters, or after the ex-PM tacitly agreed on the TV that Nasibun was her friend? When the ex-Chief Whip's son forcibly took possession of another's residence illegally or bashed windshields of cars in a traffic tangle the most implicitly simply because he was the boastful son of an unheeding godlike Chief Whip, did the intrepid Shahriar take any trouble to project that? When Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya's son terrorised hundreds of children of a renowned English-medium school and gave the guardians the jitters for not getting the full amount of the extortion money demanded, did Shahriar take any pain to drive only about a score kilometres to put before the public an aspect of hushed-up terrorism? Examples may be multiplied.

I ask favour of your perceptive readers for getting a line on this. If he did show any such concern for the majority too, he deserves my unqualified praise. If he did not, then Mr. Shahriar's cry for the minority, righteous as that in itself may be, is I am afraid more propelled by political motive than caused by journalistic fervour.

Eklmur Raza Lalmatia, Dhaka

Women University

This is in reference to opening Women University. I see only positive result out of such a decision. I have been living in the US for the last 19 years and will soon be moving back to Bangladesh. There are still a lot of families who do not like their daughters to go to a co-ed university and as such these daughters are deprived of higher studies. They end up getting married instead.

When somebody wants to do something good, please do not discourage. As it is we have very low literacy rate and education is one of the main pillars of success, opening more universities (co-ed or no co-ed) is very essential to the success of our people and the country as a whole.

Let us all work hard to make our country a success in the global market. Do not compare us with countries like USA. Find countries similar to Bangladesh and then compare. Shahid Ullah Los Angeles, USA

"Biman Wakes Up"



The article "Biman Wakes Up" (December 21) states that Biman officials offloaded 16 passengers to accommodate the Foreign Minister, State minister and their families "in the interest of the state". This boggles my mind. I don't understand how someone who is a key figure in the government; someone who should set an example towards the general population; display such disgraceful behaviour?

I commend The Daily Star for reporting such an article but I am ashamed to read that the minister failed to comment on the "Interest of the state". When will the government servants in Bangladesh realise that with power comes responsibility? If we fail to be accountable for our actions, we as a country will go nowhere. This is even more disheartening for professionals like me who plan to come back home someday and start a business in my motherland.

The head of the state (PM) should track such acts and make sure such actions are not repeated. Everyone, including ministers should be made accountable for their actions and must report to people. Unless they realise that they are 'employed' by the people and for the people, they will continue to display such disrespectful acts.

T. A. Boston, USA

It is shameful to read the news of off-loading regular passengers to accommodate ministers and their families. How dare the foreign ministry official invoke "national interest" to accommodate not only the ministers, but also their entourage.

In the interest of the nation, the off-loaded 16 passengers deserve apology from Biman, form the Foreign Ministry, and personally from the honourable ministers. By the way, the ministers have been elected to serve the people not to serve self-interest.

Mohammad Zaman North Carolina, USA

I was surprised to see the news "Biman Wakes up". I was also surprised to see The Daily Star not commenting anything in this regard. Foreign Minister M Murshed Khan and State Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud and their family members missed their flight. Whose fault is it? Why did the 16 innocent passengers suffer for the fault of the immature ministers and their family members?

People have voted them to power not to insult people. People have voted them to work for people. The people who can't reach the airport in time and create sufferings for other innocent passengers, how can they represent the country? It's a same for us to see these ministers as our representatives.

Arif Hasan University of north London, London Please read the editorial "Biman Investigates Power Misuse by Minister" (December 22).

from political sections. This is what India is. Any incident, which happens against India, is considered to be the handiwork of ISI without even any impartial inquiry.

There was a storm which broke out when it was revealed that Indian defense ministry was making money from the coffin deals during Kargil war while the so-called brave Indian soldiers were dying in Kashmir for Bharat Dharti Ma. The leaders of this Dharti Ma were not even bothered about the dead soldiers. They were filling their bank accounts. To cover this up an incident was likely to take place to divert the attention of masses. That's exactly what has happened in Delhi Parliament.

USA and other world leaders have to distinguish between terrorism and genuine freedom movements. Kashmir is burning. The Kashmiris want justice. They want to exercise their right of self-determination, according to UN charter, which has not been granted by India. During all this war against terrorism, India did not take any step to resolve the burning Kashmir issue with Pakistan. The world leaders should press India to have a joint inquiry of this attack on Delhi Parliament building. The evidence gathered by the joint probe committee should then be presented to UN Security Council. Let the world see

how serious India is in eradicating terrorism. Shah Affan Ontario, Canada

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