

Complaint case against the Khatib

I came across a news item in this daily that some Advocate Nazrul Islam lodged a case against the Khatib of the Baitul Muqarram Mosque on the plea that the US-Bangladesh relationship would be in jeopardy due to the Khatib's remark. I'm not sure, being a Muslim, which side Mr Nazrul Islam belongs to— Muslims or America/Israel? Being a Muslim, why is he talking against the sermon of our nation's top ranking Khatib? Does he have any valid argument against the Khatib's sermon which was delivered from the point of view of Quran or Hadith?

It is shameful that Mr. Islam is considering America/Israel side, while the US government has put at least six Muslim countries on the Terrorist List, although they have been supporting Israel for the last fifty years. The US government never cared about the relationship with the Muslim countries.

I would urge Mr. Nazrul, to ask his conscience and then proceed with his complaint.

M. Nayemur Rahman, on e-mail

The Khatib is against Islam?

Any man who advocates the demolition of an entire country is not only violating laws by encouraging violence but is breaking the fundamental principles of Islam.

The Khatib has called for death of innocents and that is a *haram* under every cannon of Islam. Please quote one statement of the Holy prophet which supports the murder of millions like the Khatib and his role model Osama-bin-Laden does.

One may ask for the trial of individual criminals but to seek wholesale death of a people and the end of a country is both a crime and a sin. Anyone who is on the side of the Khatib and his guru Osama is not a Muslim.

Baharul Azim Dhammondi, Dhaka

Islamic perception

This in response to Mr. Rasheed's letter "Freedom of speech" (December 27). I thank Mr Rasheed for his reaction but humbly disagree with him. I would again like to assert that the Khatib is not an employee of the government and his oration does not necessarily express the view of the government. What the Khatib delivered during the Eid congregation is based on Quran and Sunnah.

I also condemn the remark of the US Embassy in this regard. We live in an independent country and no one should be interfering in our internal affairs. Throughout the globe there is an increasing displeasure with the US foreign policy and the Khatib was speaking only on their behalf.

Let the Islamic scholars review the Khatib's statement and give their verdict. If they find him guilty, the government may take steps against him. But no one should be harassing the Khatib in any way.

Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury Khasdobar, Sylhet

Tears in heaven



AL in search of Taliban?

Serve national interest

Bangladesh is the only Muslim country where communal harmony has been prevailing for years and people of different religions irrespective of colour, caste and creed have been living peacefully side by side for ages.

Unfortunately one of the major political parties the Awami League and its supporters both at home and abroad are trying their best to portray Bangladesh as a fundamentalist and Taliban country. But their evil design will be proved wrong sooner or later.

Sheikh Mujib united the 75 million people into one nation under his able leadership. But it is a pity that his daughter Sheikh Hasina is dividing the nation into various groups to fulfill her own interests. It is time she knew how to serve national interest

Iqbal Ahmed, on e-mail

What is she up to?

I am really disturbed by the recent irrational and irresponsible posturing of our Ex-PM. Though this is nothing new of her, but in this occasion she and her party leaders have crossed the limit of sensibility. Do they think all these foreigners and Bangladeshis are goof?

At this sensitive juncture of new global political dimension-- what are they trying to achieve by convincing the British Prime Minister of the present government's linking to the Taliban?

Since 1991 this arrogant and power greedy leader has been damaging the image of the country. It's time to remind her that enough is enough! Either she should learn to behave or find her own destiny, which she often loves to choose at the time of crisis in the country.

Shamim Ahsan Huston, USA

One doesn't necessarily need to be Muslim to go to heaven. God promised in Quran:

"Those who believe (in the Qur'an) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians and who believe in God and the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve." Holy Quran, Chapter 2 (The Cow), Verse 62.

"Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians whoever believes in God and the last day and does good-- they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve." -- Holy Quran, 5:69.

Hard to believe when our Huzurs

priest or are somehow involved in Pir business, there's no way we can learn about true Islam from them.

Say ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord; we make no difference between one and another of them, and we bow to God (in Islam)." Holy Quran, Chapter 2, Verse 136.

But our Huzurs claim Muhammad (PBUH) is the greatest of all the prophets which is also contradictory to the *darud-sharif* we recite in *salat*. This is just another example that we can't be depended on our priests/huzurs.

God says in His Quran: "And We

Abu Dhabi, UAE

Let's not view America through a tainted prism

This is a response to the letters "The Khatib and the Bosnian Muslims" (December 31) and "A Simple Response to US Supporters" (January 9).

Like any other responsible nation the foreign policy of the United States of America is formulated for the sole purpose of preservation and advancement of its national interest. This, however, is tenuously balanced to conform to the internal political dynamics. The religious and cultural affiliation of its popula-

United States to act early on. But it was not meant to be, simply because, the American Muslims lacked a voice, loud enough to be heard by the US political establishment. As I pointed earlier, one modifying tuning string of US foreign policy is its inner political dynamics. Israel shrewdly plays on this very string with enviable result. Pro-Israeli lobby wields an intimidatingly enormous power in terms of money and media. The politicians can ignore them only at their own peril. This is how democracy works in this country.

All I am trying to allude is that, the US, like any other nation, minds its own business. It fights and befriends people irrespective of their religious and cultural affiliation.

Falkland War, the US can achieve its dual objective and Pakistan should be aware of it.

In the event of such an eventuality the Muslim world will receive the most crucial setback in world politics.

A concerned citizen Dhaka

SSF security to Sheikh Hasina

One of the hot issues in current Bangladesh politics is the repeal of Special Security Act for Sheikh Hasina.

One of the arguments put forward by the government is that such security provision costs a lot of public money. I agree with it. However, I have learnt that SSF security is currently being provided to former President Shahabuddin Ahmed and the former Chief of the caretaker government.

Wouldn't this cost public money as well?

Abdul Hannan Ontario, Canada

The opposition participation in the JS

The Parliament does not belong to the ruling party only. It belongs to the people, to the state. It belongs to all the parliamentarians whether they are of the treasury bench or of the opposition. So the question that ruling party is to create congenial atmosphere for the opposition to join parliament does not arise.

The opposition members are pledge bound to the people, who voted them as their representatives, to participate in the parliament. If they shy off the pledge on the pretext that the ruling party is not creating congenial atmosphere for their participation in the parliament, then they are in fact shunning their duties and responsibilities to the people as well as to the country.

The opposition party's participation in the parliament cannot be conditional what so ever. It can walk out of the parliament in protest of any act by the treasury bench, which is not its liking. But the walk out should not be a permanent.

During the last government we saw that the opposition members did not participate in the parliament for the last two years, but drew their allowances as the Members of Parliament regularly.

We are afraid that that history is going to be repeated again during this government. What a bad precedent is getting shaped in Bangladesh! Can there be minimum hours in a month that an MP should spend in the parliament in session to be entitled to draw allowances?

Faruque Hasan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Educate people through the media

Educating the citizens of the country through the media is one of the best ways to make the people of the country alert about certain issues. BTV, ETV and Channel-1 should initiate program that is educational and would help in bringing out positive changes for society.

Schemes should be taken where educational and alertness programs are shown in a lively manner, which would help change, the thinking pattern or the attitude of the people of this country. Throwing litter on the roads, using the dustbin properly, using the public toilets, maintaining queue when there is a line all can be projected in these programmes. Education doesn't only mean the book, the pen and the copy to write in. It is all-together the etiquette and the manners we should all go abide.

Arjumand Wohra Dhaka

Is future of Bangladesh at risk?

The idea of Bangladesh being low lying land and prone to sea level rise

Blunders committed by BNP



100 blunders?

Some of BNP's actions to date do not reflect the wisdom or foresight of a democratically matured political party. Not that the forerunners of BNP were any wiser.

The absence of reference to Bangabandhu covering the Independence day celebrations either in the electronic media or the print media in no way reflected the people's sentiments and aspirations. Like it or not Bangabandhu and Bangladesh are indivisible.

The Arahazar incident was not a mere vandalism by an unruly mob or ordinary criminals. This was a full-fledged organised terror and hooliganism by a section of the people under the backing of influential BNP party cadres. The incident immediately reminded people of the infamous Joyal Hazari episode.

The withdrawal of 15th August from the list of GoB Holidays for the year 2002 is yet a sequel to the above.

The remarks made by the Khatib of the National Mosque at the Eid congregation in the very presence of the President and many senior members of the cabinet including the Mayor of Dhaka City to say the least is outrageous. The government should have suspended the Katib straightaway.

Then there is the Shahriar Kabir episode. Be that as it may it has now become twice more complicated. Firstly the manner and style in which the arrest was made to say the least was medieval. Secondly the entire nation continues to be in the dark as to the real nature of the charges.

I was rather uncomfortable when the Law and the Parliamentary Affairs Minister in one of his recent interviews on being asked about placement of the bill concerning the withdrawal of the Special Powers Act in the Parliament's forthcoming session said that the bill 'may' not be placed.

Now take the matter of the visit of the Prime Minister abroad during the Month of Holy Ramadan when she had just taken the reigns of the government. What could have been more compulsive than the critical state the country is facing today?

The 100-day program, whose brilliant idea is it? Was there a demand made by the public for such a dateline or was it that the inspiration was drawn following lines of the US Presidency. All eyes on the deck now. People are counting days to see the promised results. If progress to date is any indication of the things to come I can assure you that the 100-day program commitment is bound to fall far short of the target.

Then there is cleansing and streamlining of the bureaucracy and the civil administration. I am certain that there are some genuine reasons behind the actions perpetrated. But the manner and style in which this being carried out it cannot achieve the desired objective. To me if anything it has so far succeeded in destabilising the entire civil bureaucracy. One has to only consider a situation where no less an individual of the status of senior secretary to the government receives orders transferring him to different position as many as three times within a span of 45 days or so. This is simply nothing but playing with human dignity.

Shamsher, on e-mail

disaster is an exaggerated story.

The international media uses the name of Bangladesh to exemplify all sorts of disaster! Bangladesh is not as low lying as some island nations of the world. But they don't use their name, as the name of Bangladesh is more familiar with disaster to the international psyche. We Bangladeshis-Americans should be more objective.

The only part of Bangladesh that is in any danger of rising sea level is the Sundarbans as the average height around the Sundarbans region is 3-5 feet above sea level. And not many people live in those areas. This area represents only about 17 per cent of Bangladesh's landmass.

The central part of Bangladesh is around 10-25 feet higher than the sea level. Other parts of Bangladesh like Sylhet or Chittagong areas are above 30-40 feet.

So trying to portray Bangladesh is sinking is a complete myth. Also the long-term effect of global warming is still under investigation and sea level rise is just one theory, not fact!

Rashad USA

Price hike of gas, fuel and electricity

Price of electricity, gas and all sorts of petroleum products have been increased from the 1st January, 2002 as per government decision. There may have been logic behind this price hike but the government must take into consideration the overall socio-economic condition before taking such major decision. The government has supposedly taken this step according to donor's prescriptions. The World Bank had already suggested the government to increase power tariff by five per cent every six-month to adjust it with dollar rate.

It is well known that our gas, fuel and power sectors have been suffering due to the so-called man made systems loss. These sectors are mainly suffering losses owing to severe financial mismanagement and not because of low tariff rate.

Unrealised arrears with these organisations exceeded all limits. The unscrupulous employees of these organisations are pilfering huge quantity of gas and power.

The business organisations warned that the price hike would seriously hit the country's industries and exports, which have already been affected by the global recession. The decisions are unjustified before taking proper steps to reduce the huge system losses in gas and electricity. So it would be better to pay attention in this respect rather increasing the tariffs.

M.H. Bari Khulna

To the Former Finance Minister



Stranded fox?

First I want to thank *The Daily Star*, as it stood firmly beside Honourable Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed when AL and some columnists like Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury mentally tortured him. I want to say to Mr. Kibria, the former Finance Minister that if a thousand or even a million people believe something (as you have tried to establish) it is not always right. There may be 10 million Taliban supporters but that does not make the Taliban ideology the correct one.

Mr. Kibria, it doesn't matter how many people think like you and your party. The truth is that the people of Bangladesh will always stand beside Shahabuddin Ahmed. They will remember him as the most honourable, neutral, efficient and as a gentleman in our present Bangladesh. But do you know, why Bangladesh is going down today? Because of your negative politics. I am far away from Bangladesh and I can learn about my country only through the Internet. Even I myself know that the former President asked the BNP government to take necessary steps to stop attack on the minorities. It is strange that being such a big shot Mr. Kibria didn't know that!

And as regarding Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, the less is said the better.

Syed Khaleduzzaman NY, USA

Kibria explains AL stance

I refer to Mr. Kibria's letter of 8th January. I am deeply touched by his action of showing to President Shahabuddin "the extraordinary and dangerous provisions of the draft document (Election Ordinance) that not only ran counter to democratic norms and values, these were against common sense and would hit the fundamental rights of the citizens guaranteed by the Constitution."

Long ago in 1690, John Locke wrote that legislators "can have

say only Muslims will go to heaven. This is just an example. Quran has remained unchanged but not the religion. Islam has changed/corrupted enormously over the centuries. In order to understand what was really revealed to Muhammad (PBUH) we must read the Quran and try to understand it.

Unfortunately, when we go to Bangladeshi Masjids we see the Imams are reciting Quran in Arabic to a bunch of Bangladeshis. That doesn't make much sense, does it? However, we find them speaking clear Bangla when they quote from their favorite books like Neamul Koran, favorite polluted Hadiths or about their political beliefs. Because many of our Huzurs are either corrupted politician or, professional

have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, but is there anyone who will mind? This verse is repeated exactly, word for word, four times in the Quran (Chapter 54:17,22,32 and 40) whereas, pork or alcohol got less importance. Think about it!

I would like to request my fellow Bangladeshi Muslims to read Quran and be your own teacher. Once you're through with the Quran, you'll see how dangerous some of our Islamic leaders are. It's important to arm ourselves with knowledge specially when many ignorant see Islam and terrorism as a phrase and many misguided Muslims support that idea.

Pir Shahib NY, USA

"Pakistan and Islam"

This is in response to Mr. Khalid Mahmud's letter. Mr. Mahmud's second letter incredibly compares what the Pakistani army did to Bangladeshi civilians in 1971, to what certain Pakistani individuals suffered at the hands of Mukti Bahini.

Pakistan Army was an Army attacking the civilians. How can anyone who has proper knowledge not to mention proper respect for the 1971 atrocities that happened in Bangladesh can even think of comparing the two?

Somehow, after reading that comparison, that Mahmud is of Pakistani origin does not surprise me. Just as there are Pakistanis (and I do know of a few) who feel to the depths of their hearts how wrongful were the actions of Pakistan in 1971 and before, there are also Pakistanis of the same ilk that ordered the attack on Bengali civilians in 1971 and rejoiced in it.

Shabnam Nadiya Green Road, Dhaka

"Bangladeshis not fit to be Muslims"

I am writing in complete disgust as a response to this arrogant gentleman named Mr Ashraf. Looks like living in the USA has not been able to teach him anything that unfortunately he never learnt at home. Which incidentally is also true of most Bangladeshis living in these countries.

Don't get me wrong. Apart from his extremely arrogant attitude, I would agree with most of his observations with only one question-- why do you have most of your Imams and a lot of the religious personalities (in the Middle East) from the sub continent?

Finally it was absolutely abhorrent and certainly, unbecoming of a gentleman to make that last comment about our women's' dress. Mr Ashraf, ignorance is not always a bliss. Don't comment on something you don't know about.

Ahmed Kamal

no power to transfer their authority of making laws and place it in the others hands." In India the British started giving the Viceroy sweeping powers to make rules and regulations because India was too far away from Westminster. In Pakistan and Bangladesh the tradition continued subject to the approval of the regulations by the government.

But where was Mr. Kibria when the Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, the present Chief Election Commission brought to him the black provision of what is known as 2CC of the Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1967. A law annotated by General Yahya Khan. Where was the concern for the fundamental rights and the constitutional rights to do business freely?

Mr. Kibria approved and launched a law, which gave the SEC all rights to make rules and regulation without consulting the Ministry of Law or Finance. SEC now has the powers to make even cross regulations, which abrogate other laws such as the Companies Law etc. It is said that the Chairman SEC pointed out that the USA-SEC had similar powers. True, the US-SEC has the rule making powers but these rules and regulations have to be passed by the US Congress.

Mr. Kibria as a bureaucrat perhaps knows that underlings do the bidding of their master-right or wrong. Integrity and conscience has nothing to do with his acts unless the bureaucrat is totally independent with a tenure.

As the story goes, a fox and a scorpion were stranded on a desolate island. Being each other's mortal enemies, the wise fox soon stuck a deal with the scorpion. The deal was that the scorpion would not bite the fox and inflict him with the poison and in return the fox would save the scorpion by carrying him on his shoulder and swim across the river to the main land. Thereby both would be saved. So the scorpion got on the shoulders of the fox that started swimming across the river. Midway up the river, the fox felt the fatal sting of the scorpion and asked in dismay "why did you bite me? Now I will die and you will also drown and meet your death." Scorpion replied "I am sorry. I could not help myself. It is my nature to bite."

Mr. Kibria forgot that he was the fox stranded on a deserted island.

Imtiyaz Husain Dhaka Stock Exchange Bldg, Motijheel, Dhaka

tion or of an alien population is a rather a minor, albeit a significant, factor.

Whenever and wherever, there is a hot spot (famine, political unrest, ethnic cleansing etc.), the international community expects the US to device a way for a way-out. But the US is not obliged to go everywhere. It chooses its mission. Yes, America remained in the background, when the Bosnian Tragedy erupted. The American people also do not cherish to put their boys and girls on harms way for an alien cause, whatever noble, it may be. (Notwithstanding the rhetoric, I doubt that any Muslim country would have committed troops to fight alongside the Bosnian Muslims, for the sake of religious fraternity unless its own national interest was at stake). At the eleventh hour, the United States got involved militarily, not to save the Muslims, but to assure that the Balkan flame did not inflame the contiguous Eastern Europe. A stable Europe is exceedingly important for the US national security. The eventual peace and cessation of carnage was a welcome by-product.

Consequent to the arms embargo imposed by the United Nations, Bosnian Muslims were on a relative disadvantage. And hence, embargo was kept porous intentionally with the tacit approval of the US and its allies.

Being a Muslim and a conscientious human being, I felt the same pain, as the treacherous events unfolded in Bosnia. I prayed for the

Yes, being predominantly white and of European descent, the Americans, in general show a natural bias in favour of their own likes. Don't we do the same?

So, let's not view America through a tainted religious prism, and thus avoid the blinding scatter.

Mohammad A. Zaman USA

India's bias

Because of its nuclear capability Pakistan is the only Muslim country in the world, which is of some concern to some Western countries. With the current tension between India and Pakistan boiling over some opportunistic country or countries in the Western world desirous of negating that capability may wish to use India to achieve its objective as it did the Western Alliance in Afghanistan.

There are no permanent friends or allies in world politics. Being a front line alliance state in the war in Afghanistan the US should not guarantee anything to Pakistan. The massive U.S./British military and intelligence build-up in the Indian Ocean is hardly attributable to the Western efforts in Afghanistan only.

America has been wooing India for long towards a military alliance with it and with just a slight support technologically and logistically to India through its intelligence and guidance facilities in the Indian Ocean, as it provided to UK in the

Shahabuddin vs AL



Shahabuddin War

I have little doubt that former President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed was not given the highest possible honour due to his honest image. But since we are human being, our character or morality or dignity must be tested by time, by the people. I hope his image of honesty prevails.

Of course, the unexpected and unprecedented debate is now at critical stage. President Shahabuddin Ahmed himself gave a statement. He may give more statements and explanations from his side. The nation deserves that from him since the secretary general of Bangladesh Nationalist Party already disclosed some more critical and scandalous information about Shahabuddin Ahmed.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed completed his five years of terms parallel to AL government. There was no indication any disregard towards him from AL during that period. However, recently Awami League blamed the former President for very specific matters, which are controversial and debatable.

The former President was the chief justice for two terms and was also involved in political matters during his presidency, therefore, his action, deeds and impartiality must be scrutinised and tested by the people. Every human being is a judge of his/her own self. Therefore, we cannot say that those who do not believe him do not believe in the truth indeed.

I also wonder about the people who never trusted him as a neutral person from the hearts but now crying for him so much! This President was elected in the parliament when Bangladesh Nationalist party was not in the parliament, they simply did not

join the parliament. This President was calling hundreds of time to stop student politics to all parties but BNP never paid attention to him for a single time. So, what kind of respect do they have for Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed?

Jamal Uddin USA

The recent controversy between the Ex-President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Bangladesh Awami League has made a point worth pondering.

Personally, I am a great admirer of Bangabandhu, who has given us an identity, so would like to see his cherished party AL survives. The unfortunate part is the present AL is failing to understand that, things are not moving in their way. Justice Shabuddin Ahmed is a very rare species of human being in our part of the world who has become a "Living Legend" so far his uncontroversial decisions are concerned. He is a symbol of honesty and integrity. AL should realise that; no one will currently buy their version against the Ex-President. He is not Ex-President Ershad, who had no credibility.

In my humble capacity I will request the stalwarts of AL, to understand the sentiment of people, this is not your time. Be composed in your statements to the press and to foreign head of the states. Be smart and move with the time. Don't create situation where it will be difficult for you to sell your perpetual claim of Independence earner.

Please keep in mind that Justice Shahabuddin has higher acceptability than any current politician to the general mass, and the general mass are not stupid.

Omar Faruk California, USA