

**Mr. Kibria to share the responsibility**

In his objections to *The Daily Star's* editorial dated January 7, 2002, Mr. Kibria blamed Ex-president Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed of remaining mute during the nationwide assault on the minorities in the wake of the last elections. In fact, it is not the Ex-president but Mr. Kibria, being a leading member of one of the political parties of the country, is to share the responsibility for the assault.

We are to find out the root cause behind under which backdrop it was possible to commit atrocities by some people against the minorities of the country, if we don't want the recurrence of these sort of heinous incidents in the future. Mere being vocal against the atrocities or blaming the then caretaker government for its inability to resist those atrocities will be of no use.

During the past successive governments, a 'culture' has developed in Bangladesh that if a police officer dares touch a criminal having a party identity, he will be in the bad book of that party.

In the wake of the last general elections, when the cadres of the BNP—the party which emerged victorious in the elections, started assaulting Hindus, the police, despite the frequent orders issued to them by the caretaker government to save the victims, remained inactive fearing displeasure of the would-be ruling party. They did not pay heed to the orders of the caretaker government as they knew that that government's days were numbered, so it would not be possible on its part to take any actions against them for disobeying its orders.

The political parties, which have contributed to the development of the 'culture' above mentioned, are to share the responsibility for the atrocities committed unhindered to the minorities of this country. And these political parties have no scope to make Ex-president Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed or the then caretaker government chief Mr. Latifur Rahman the scapegoat for failing to resist those atrocities.

**Faruque Hasan**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

**Teachers and politics**

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's remarks about involvement of the teachers in politics is really appreciable. Teacher's duty is to teach the students, not to go for politics. In fact our politicians have made the political arena so murky that no peace-loving gentleman should have any fascination for politics.

Some of our teachers have in remote and recent past been involved in politics and has got their rewards. Appointment of the new Vice Chancellors in different universities is just one of the many examples. Does not that inspire the teachers to actively participate in

**Taj Mahal threatened?**



Taj Mahal under threat

There is debate going on in these columns about India covering the Taj Mahal. Some readers are claiming that India is afraid of Pakistan attacking the Taj. Others are claiming that it is just India's propaganda tactics to defame Pakistan.

The real reason is that the Taj is made of white marble shines during moonlight and could be used by Pakistani pilots as a reference point to locate military targets.

**Sohail Ahmed**  
Houston, Tx, USA

politics? That there is difference between the deeds and words of the government is clear. That is what a politician is.

**Dr. Birendra, on e-mail**

**PM's son replaces Saber**

As a disinterested observer, being neither a fan of Awami League or BNP nor a great fan of cricket, Saber would appear to have done to best job leading Bangladeshi cricket since independence.

Couldn't Arafat Rahman just be nominated in some by-election for Parliament instead?

**MA, on e-mail**

**Open drug trade in Dhaka.**

I live in Rajabajar, Dhaka. In front of my residence there is a phensydl selling centre and according to some people, this is one of the most popular phensydl selling centres in Dhaka. To go to Panthapath, we use a tiny road close to the newly developing Bashundhora Complex. When I pass this road with my little son, he asks me number of questions like 'Dad, what are they taking?'. I cannot answer him and just

**We love Shahabuddin Ahmed**

At last the former President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has spoken out. I wish he would come out in his defence a long time ago and set the record straight for once and for all. Because, if a lie is allowed to perpetuate, the lie itself becomes the truth. Thank you for unmasking these politicians. Better late than never.

As a citizen of this country, I was appalled to read all the baseless remarks and false accusations made by some senior opposition politicians who, only a few months ago were at the seat of the government. To think we entrusted these miscreants to look after our personal and national interest and security for the last five years is disturbing at best.

If there is a single personality whom the entire nation is indebted to, it is Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed. Can we name any other person who has so unselfishly served the country by safeguarding our process of democracy?

I wish Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed a long and pleasant retired life.

**Serajus Saleheen, on e-mail**

**Shahabuddin's image is lost by his own action**

The former President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has at long last broken his silence and protested the various remarks made against him.

When Awami League nominated him as President in 1996 he was the most admired personality in the country and it was expected that the day he leaves office his head would remain as high as ever and his presidency would leave a lasting impression in our country's history. Like many, I have lost my high admiration for him to a large extent the day he delivered his last speech in the Parliament.

The speech he gave in the Parliament by castigating Awami League was unbecoming of a President. The speech handed over to the President by the BNP cabinet of course reflected their bad

ask him to overlook it.

The selling of phensydl continues from morning till midnight and the place is always crowded with drug addicts. They often fight among themselves terrifying the entire area.

In the last pre-election speech our Honourable Prime Minister said that Awami League government has handed over phensydl to our youths, instead of pen and book. But why is this government not taking steps to eradicate drug business? Though occasionally there are police raids, it only results in shutting down of business for a few hours or may be a few days.

Please do something to eradicate this menace from a residential area and take stern actions against the drug dealers. It is like living in hell.

**An Embarrassed Father**  
Panthapath, Dhaka

**"Muslim or not"**

Kudos to Mr Jamali for articulating his belief so openly. I fully agree with what Arther Miller wrote in his drama "After the fall" "I think finally one must take one's life in one's arms". Oh yes it is.

After all being a mature person means to take care of one's life as per one's practised principle and not imposing or proselytising others. I

religions are too impatient to judge everyone hurriedly in this world. Do they have any license or authorisation? Certainly not. Because if you are truly blessed with the kindness of God, you would never try to judge others. (I request them to think how we are recipients of God's mercy without being judged by him/her at first place). One who sees light, do not argue on the properties of light as only one experience can understand the other whereas religious debate (*bahas*) can offer a structural nothingness

**Rezaur Rahim**  
Montreal, Canada

**Am I a Muslim ?**

I am responding to Ahmed Jamali's letter "Muslim or not?" (January 4) where Mr Jamali after giving description about himself asked if he was a true Muslim or not and if there was a verdict on him on his life style for his acts from the social as well as religious (Shariat) angle.

Mr. Ahmed Jamali, I always respect and try to follow the people having the characteristics of never cheating, contribution to charitable causes, never ill-treating any girls, never abusing any under privileged nor trying to take advantage of them, never inclining any hatred on fellow beings, never poking fun and laughing at someone's misfortune, never misbehaving with parents or elders and never exploiting those who came to support you, those you have according to your letter.

Again you also said that you don't pray five times a day (but you occasionally pray), don't sport a beard (prefer to be clean shaven), drink at times, can't claim that your money doesn't earn interest, visit pubs and discotheques, have dated females (and have no regrets about it), have never checked if the meat you are eating were halaal or not, have never fasted and have always kept a safe distance from the Proponents of Ummah.

I am not concerned about not sporting beard (to me it's a good Sunnah, but not a compulsory one for a Muslim), dating females (it's your personal matter) and taking interest on your money (I have different dimension of thinking about it, which I don't want to discuss here).

But in our religion there are two types of rights (Haqq). One is Creator's (Allah's) right and the other is creation's right, where both are important and we will be asked about both of them in our after-life. According to your letter I have found you, very conscious about creation's right, which is a very good quality. But you seem to be less serious about Creator's right, which is a binding on us, because the Creator sent us in this world making us unique. So, we have something to do for our Creator. As such we have to pray five times a day, have to fast and also try to restrict our movement according to Shariat.

According to your letter I have understood that you believe in Allah and in His Messenger (PBUH) deeply, which is the main definition of a Muslim. So, there is no reason for you to be considered as a Non-Muslim.

Dear brother, judgement is in the hand of Almighty Allah. But He had given us the outline of his judgement and the rest is in His hand. So, none can say cent percent about the verdict on one's life's acts. But we should try to fulfil both types of rights described in our religion.

**Naushad uz zaman**  
Freshman, Brac University

**"Pakistan and Islam!"**

I read Ms. Hoque's comment with great interest. Actually I was expecting at least one such response. The last thing I want to do is deny the historical facts and events. I am a proud Bangladeshi and am fully aware of the events of the war of independence. However, the simple point I was trying to make is that there is good and bad in every



Shahabuddin's speechwriter?

taste but the President was not at gunpoint to deliver that speech. He could have asked the government to delete some of the contents of the speech if he had disagreed with them. If he had agreed to all the allegations against Awami League then was it moral on his part to stay as President till the completion of his tenure? Why didn't he resign protesting the Awami League misrule? That could have helped Awami League to awaken up and at the same time people would have saluted him for his resolve.

Instead what he did was not only unfair to Awami League but has helped Awami League to substantiate their allegations that he conspired to defeat them in the election. Possibly no protest from his side will be enough to regain his lost image caused by his own action.

**Rubaiyat Quader**  
Tsimshatsui, Hong Kong

nation and at a point in time every nation or 'elements' in a nation makes a 'mistake'. But we do not have the right to issue blanket condemnation and hatred towards any particular nation especially when we have not proved to be such pretty people ourselves. Let me put it this way, I do not want to tagged a rapist or a racist just because my neighbour happens to be one! I am sure Ms. Hoque wouldn't want to either.

Blanket condemnation encourages extremism on all sides, and I would like to suggest here to Ms.

racy at Cross Roads. The principal objective of the institute would be teaching general members of the public the art of retaliatory techniques in dealing with each other's opponents. The desired level of education for admission should not exceed twelve years of schooling. The main subjects would be: how to hold *harta!* and street violence, frame legal charges against opponents, acquire legalised arms and use the same against opponents in order to terrorise and acquire wealth: align yourself with the party in power and at the right time, to

**DU toilets and public health**



Powerful stench in DU toilets ?

Recently I visited Dhaka University and had to use a toilet in the Arts Faculty building of the University. I had to peep into several toilets to find a usable one.

Most of the toilets lack acceptable hygienic conditions. I think one will only use the toilets if he is desperate. The conditions haven't changed since we were students ten years ago.

To my surprise, the Institute of Health Economics, where they teach health issues, is located at the top of the building. I find it difficult to accept that on the one hand the University cannot ensure basic toilet facilities to the students and on the other, it teaches public health issues. I think this a contradiction to be taken care of immediately. First the university should take care of the issues that might jeopardise student health, and then they should consider teaching public health issues.

**A former Dhaka University student**  
Dhaka

Hoque and everyone else, that our cause (an appropriate apology from Pakistan) is not helped by such a mind-set.

Lastly, I hardly wrote my previous letter in the spirit of a tirade, rather, in the spirit of tolerance of everyone's views, which should be shared if we want to advance our democratic culture.

**Zobair E. Anam, on e-mail**

**Politics all the way**

Bangladesh would do well in establishing an international training institute titled Institute of Democ-

make a name and fame by associating yourself with popular issues of the day etc.

If you are an honest hard working professional chances are you might have a carrier or might succeed but if you are a BNP or an Awami professional depending on the timing you are sure to succeed.

There is however this so called majority of the people who do not subscribe to any of the 'cadres' above. Although a larger section of the population, they are being held hostage by these politicians. Politics of today has taken dangerous trends. With all this going around I

**"Pakistan and Islam" An absurd claim?**

I am writing in reference to Mr. Khalid Masud's letter titled "Pakistan and Islam" (January 7). He claimed that the Mukti Bahini treated Pakistanis the way the Pakistani Army treated Bangladeshis. I think this is an absurd claim.

In 1971, the Pakistani Army committed the most heinous crimes including genocide and rape. They cold-bloodedly murdered our intellectuals, leaving us with a damage that we could never recover from. The torture by the Pakistani Army is considered one of the most blatant examples of war crimes in world history.

Did the Pakistanis actually expect Bangladeshis to keep quiet and continue to endure such brutality? What the Mukti Bahini did was a response; it was an act of self-defense. They were fighting for their basic human rights, unlike the Pakistani Army who were trying to destroy a nation. As for what happened to your brother and the families who were 'mistreated by Mukti Bahini', please don't expect us to believe your stories and sympathise with you.

It is good to hear the present generation of Pakistanis regret what the Pakistani Army did in 1971. But Pakistan has not apologised officially to Bangladesh yet, and it makes us wonder whether they really mean what they are saying. The truth is that Pakistani citizen (whatever generation they may belong to) can never even imagine the magnitude of the loss and the pain that was inflicted upon us in 1971.

If Mr. Masud expects us to follow his advice about not bearing hatred and 'negative feelings', he must apologise for his offensive comments on Bangladeshi freedom fighters.

**S. Hossain**  
Institute of Business Administration  
University of Dhaka

am afraid I can no longer be imbibed with what is popularly called *Swadhinatar Chetana*. The only *Chetana* I have is anger and utmost frustration!

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

**Local media insulted**

I was reading an article by M Anwarul Haq on the 4th January issue on "Dhaka ready to join UN troops in Afghanistan".

The following part of the article was very disturbing: "The mainstream local media was denied the professional privilege of having any access to the visiting British dignitary at the Prime Minister's Office, where the talks took place. They had to depend on sources to learn about the talks. While the local media were denied access, nearly three dozen British and Western journalists accompanying Blair were given immediate access, however".

This is absolutely an insult to our journalists and to our citizens. I demand an explanation from our government. Does this has anything to do with the security? If the British government had asked for such action and the Bangladesh government had agreed to it? Or was it solely the decision of our government to avoid our journalists? Every question you can make out of this, I held our government responsible for this insult.

This action had made our journalists look like terrorists and suicide bombers, if it was done for security purposes. What other good reason can our government explain? What just had happened on our won free land today, must not be overlooked.

**Labid Ahmed**  
New York, USA

**Save Kashmir**

The propaganda and the massive mobilisation undertaken by India together with the other moves—including the cutting off of all rail, road and air travel links and the drastic downsizing of diplomatic missions as well as of recalling their high commissioner from Pakistan—indicate a use of the military option.

The Indians have constantly stated that if the US could act against Afghanistan after September 11, India can do the same against the Kashmiri freedom fighters ("militants" as they would say). After all, their ally Israel has also done the same against the beleaguered Palestinians.

Hence the graduated steps beginning with the diplomatic actions, demands for Pakistan to arrest the "guilty" militants and their leaders and now the list demanding the extradition of twenty Pakistanis to India. One has only to recall how the Israelis have been making new demands on the Palestinian Authority in order to justify their military aggression against them to understand the Indian game plan.

The real issue underlying the present instability in the region—that is, the issue of Kashmir and the struggle of the Kashmiri people for self-determination. In the month of December 2001 alone, Indian troops in occupied Kashmir held 5,605 civilians under detention and killed 374 Kashmiris. In addition, there have been 688 recorded torture cases and 54 recorded cases of rape/gang-rape of women by Indian security forces. Quite a record of state terrorism— but where are human rights organisations? S Khan, on e-mail

In a vitiated atmosphere charged with war cries, the only person unmoved is the Kashmir chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, happily holidaying in the festive season of Europe.

If news reports are any indication, he is scheduled to be flying back in a day or so, only following a communication from the Prime Minister to cut short his holiday abroad.

The return of Farooq Abdullah is only likely to suit the interests of the war mongering Vaipayee government that is perhaps hunting for new faces to echo its war cry. He may

**"Cricket memories"**



Ted Dexter(r) was in Dhaka 1962

I thoroughly enjoyed the article "Cricket memories" by Mr. Afsan Chowdhury.

The article took me back in those days of fifties and sixties when Fazal Mahmood, Hanif Mohammed and their team-mates were almost household names in the then East Pakistan.

In fact his article itself served me with a flipper book he mentioned and going through each para was like flipping the book in a slow motion. However unfortunately his memory seems to have failed him in the case of Pak-Australia and as a result the beautifully written article has suffered from factual lapse.

The test match in Dhaka in which Fazal took the new ball and bowled Neil Harvey out was eventually won by Australia. That match was the first ever defeat

of Pakistan on matting wicket, a wicket ingeniously prepared in Karachi and Dhaka under the direct supervision of the Late Abdul Hafiz Kardar, the founder captain of Pakistan Cricket team.

Incidentally this matting wicket served as a destructive weapon for Pakistan to trounce Australia in Karachi in 1956 and the West Indies in Karachi and Dhaka in 1958.

**S.R Shaheed**  
DOHS (Old), Banani, Dhaka

I read the column "cricket memories with avid interest. I played a little cricket

Myself with Victoria and Wanderers Club in my teens. But there are some memory lapses it appears. The English team was the Ted Dexter led one of 1962. Tom Graveney probably didn't come with the team, Snow certainly didn't because he joined the English team later. Hanif Mohammed's coach was Master Aziz. His son was Salim Aziz Durrani, India's famous spinner.

**Dr. Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury.**  
Eskaton Garden, Dhaka.

Afsan Chowdhury responds: Many thanks for pointing out the memory lapses. There may even be more and I'm glad I had apologised for my fading memory. But it was a pleasure to write on cricket and a pleasure to hear from the readers. Salim Durrani acted in a few movies as well. And Pakistan must have beaten the WI when Fazal led a cheering crowd.

only add to the woes of the people with his slogan of war hysteria, which he is likely to resort to for the benefit of his Prime Minister once he lands back.

From the Pokharan tests to the much recent Afghan war, Farooq has been in the forefront in Pakistan bashing. He has been more vocal than Advani off late in attacking the Pakistan. No wonder Vaipayee needed to summon this jingoist on his side at this juncture to keep an ace up his sleeve in this war of words with Pakistan.

In the ultimate analysis, in the interests of peace, it might be better having him away than having him close, if one views the old proverb in a new coinage—'farther from BJP rulers, nearer to peace'.

**Ravi Karishna**  
Manama, Bahrain

**"Tears in Heaven"**

Allah's mercy is needed for a person to enter Heaven. The Jews and the Christians who perform their religion in its original form are considered in these verses mentioned by the Pir Shahib. This is the general interpretation. One must not think that the current Christians who associate Prophet Eisa (Jesus) (PBUH) with

Allah would end up in Heaven. Clearly it has been said Association to Allah will only lead to hell fire. Muslims, Jews, Christians or anyone who associates with the Almighty Lords would not see heaven. As a Muslim, it is best not to discuss who will enter Heaven and who will not. Allah, the most powerful, will be the judge of it.

I would also like to mention that we human beings couldn't say who would end up in heaven or hell even if that person were dead (Muslim or Non-Muslim). It is not our position to determine. As a Muslim, we can only mention those names mentioned in the Holy Quran who will end up in hell fire, like Iahab (Abu Lahab), or Pheraun (Pharaoh) etc.

**Mijanul Akbar**  
Arkansas, USA

**Submarine cable project by BTTB**

I am alarmed by a front-page article on submarine cable project by Mr. A. Sayeed Khan (December 30), which indicates further delay by BTTB in this project.

It is really unnecessary to emphasise on the importance of such a project for us, and while the past government, talked a lot about it, they did not do much, and we were very encouraged to see the new government, taking it up as a priority issue. Now, as per your column of December 30, the project is again likely to be shelved or delayed seemingly due to inefficiency of the BTTB management and its consultant.

Why does BTTB need a consultant for this? Why can't BTTB not have a look at how things are being done in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar, or even China, and perhaps get it adapted to suit our local needs, and get it done over with? In all of these countries, infrastructure projects like this submarine cable have been done by government agencies (similar to BTTB) and to the best of my knowledge, none of them spent as much time as BTTB has done so far, for reasons known only to itself.

BTTB was built to be a service provider organisation. Today it cannot service itself. It cannot reach a telephone bill to a subscriber in time, it cannot provide a new telephone to people, it cannot ensure communication over telephones in many places. May be it is time in this 21st century to scrap such a junk corporation.

**Sajjad Hossain**  
Dhaka



Victim 1971