

**Solved the US Puzzle in Dhaka**

I find Afsan Chowdhury's well-written column "Straight From the Heart" very enjoyable. I would like to thank him for sharing with us interesting incidents. In fact the last week's (January 22) write-up on enemy list took me to my childhood and I found some missing pieces of a puzzle I left unsolved for a long time.

My maternal-grand-parents' house was in Segun Bagicha not far from the Press Club and the American Cultural Center better known as USIS-- United States Information Services. I used to visit my grand

mouthed. In her last days as minister, she called Khaleda Zia as "graveyard jackal" while delivering her vindictive salvo in the Jitoy Sangshad.

So the government must be firm to deal with these people.

**Iskander Meah**  
Dhaka

**A few questions on revenge ?**

I am not a Constitution specialist and there are many more like me. However, we do have many questions.

51 per cent majority is required to overrule the opposition's stand and

party alliances are in power. Thus I am confused whether the ruling party governs the laws and Court.

During last couple of months many government high officials were transferred and some went on forced retirement. It was explained that this was necessary for the country. Who can be sued in that case? The previous government or the concerned officials who do have specific offences that went against the interest of the country? Or even such actions are of remedial measures, should not we know about the losses suffered? This is now open secret that the key government officials do abide the motto of their lobby, which consists of followers of the ideology of specific party or parties. Thus it is also open secrets that who are powerful under which ruling party or parties. Then how can we believe that these government servants can serve the country, while the relevant service ethics and codes do not respond automatically in the process and procedure of conducting the service?

**An Ignorant Citizen**  
Dhaka

**Small mistake**

I think there was a small mistake in the letter "Taliban connection in Bangladesh" (January 21) by M Gholam Mostafa.

Mr Mostafa said, "He (Jimmy Carter) said he knew how much it hurts when as an incumbent President he had the taste of defeat in US polls which elected Bill Clinton his successor." Jimmy Carter (1977-81) was replaced by Ronald Reagan and not by Bill Clinton as Mr Mostafa has said. Both Carter and Clinton are Democrats while Reagan, Bush Sr and Bush Jr are Republicans.

**Mahmud Hasan**  
Dhaka

**Sheikh Hasina's errors ?**

To the best of my knowledge, this is the third time a Contempt of Court petition has been brought against the Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina.

Previously in the high profile case brought by the Former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Habibul Islam Bhuiyan, as reported in 51 DLR (AD) 68, the Appellate Division said that it expected more circumspection, understanding, discretion and judgement on the part of the Prime Minister because of the high office she held.

In deciding whether there was contempt, the Court merely pointed out a famous dictum of a very highly regarded Judge of the House of Lords, Lord Atkin, which said, "even the wrong headed are permitted to err therein".

It is very clear that the Chief Justice only went in this path in order to prevent the Executive and the Judiciary from coming each other at loggerheads and also to preserve harmonious co-ordination and co-operation between the two wings of the State.

But now since, Sheikh Hasina is not the Head of the Executive, we can expect that the Court will take this matter with utmost importance and deliver a judgement to show the people that no one gets away with making such comments towards the Judiciary. We are eagerly awaiting the judgement from the High Court.

**Ariful Islam**  
University of London

**NGO offices in residential areas**

There are thousands of NGO offices located in almost all the residential areas of metropolis Dhaka. So far no regime has announced any corrective measures to shift these offices and business houses on roads, not earmarked for business activity, to other areas.

One step is to encourage the developers of state properties to construct multi-storied office complexes to encourage such shifting. The metropolis cannot develop in this haphazard manner. Without enforcing government restrictions in residential areas (these regulations already exist on paper, but are not strictly implemented), these offices would not be inclined to shift to other designated areas.

For example, the building next our residential building is housing the head office of a big company, which is also used as a temporary godown. There is considerable daily flow of traffic and visitors, including around 100 sales staff. For more than a year civil construction work on development and expansion is going on, with resulting high noise levels most of the 24 hours a day. This registered company. The floor below my flat is also occupied by an NGO office, as also most of the surrounding buildings on this road in a strictly residential zone.

The government has to show its awareness, and make some noises on administrative control and development alternatives. These irregularities should be noticed officially without pointing it out. The real estate industry is passing through a slump hence the developers may offer discount rates to attract the NGOs. It is big business as thousands of offices are involved. But the facilitators, namely the government is keeping quiet, for unknown reasons.

This evacuation will reduce the sky-high house rents for residential purpose. Now the average house rent is more than average monthly salary in most cases, thereby breeding corrupt practices for additional income.

The government's systematic attack on social and other problems of the city should be very much visible like the banning of polybags.

**AZ**  
Dhaka

**Magura paper mill**

**No sympathy for politicians prone to agitation**

I did not sympathise with the previous opposition political leaders who were brutalised by the police while they often tried to hold public meeting on the street in front of their party office obstructing the thoroughfare, ignoring frequent request from the police not to do so. I do not sympathise with the present opposition political leaders who are brutalised by the police while trying to hold public gathering, obstructing the street in front of or near to their party office ignoring request from the police.

The political leaders, whoever in the opposition, and their followers, while in a protest gathering or procession, keep on prodding the police until they start beating them up. Their intention is to earn public sympathy by being victims to police atrocities. They have not yet got the message of the changed attitude of the general mass toward atrocities committed by the police.

I can still remember the day when, in 1973, two students were shot dead by the police in front of the National Press Club while protesting against the US policies in Vietnam. The news of the loss of lives of two students spread through Dhaka City like a wild fire. The City came to a stand still in no time. A shadow of deep sadness covered the whole City. These days when people get killed on a street by bomb blast or gunshot, the life becomes normal, even at that very place of occurrence, with in half an hour or less. Watching so many killings and brutalities day after day, to the credit of the political parties, the people of this country have lost the very human perception of getting shocked. The politicians would do better if they pay heed to this reality.

No doubt, hartal is a democratic right, but not the picketing at all. Nobody has the right, whether an Ex-Minister or a sitting MP, to make people observe hartal by putting them under the duress of picketing. They may ask people observe hartal, but who will pay heed to their call should depend on their own will. It's the duty of the police to save people from picketing.

Bangladesh has become a country of endless political agitation. In spite of hundreds of agitation and sacrificing dozens of lives in those agitations during the last 30 years, we have not yet been able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We now want to

On the other hand Magura Paper Mill group has published large sized advertisements in daily newspapers indicating that twenty per cent Bangladeshis are benefited by Magura group activities. As an investor in shares and debentures we are deprived as the return on investment is zero during the past eleven years while it is unfortunate to observe that shares and debentures

are. In the speech she criticised the government left and right. It seems that she can only criticise.

In her speech she did not touch upon her and her party's performance. Doesn't she have any obligation to people? I have some questions to ask her on her completion of 100-days as a Opposition Leader:

1. Why haven't you joined the Parlia-



Trading in violence...

respite freely, and want to get rid of all these inefficacious political agitation.

We condemn brutality and request the politicians not to prod the police to take recourse to brutality against them.

**Faruque Hasan**  
Dhanmandi,  
Dhaka

**Islamic debate in Star**



*If it weren't for my faith, I would probably become religious.*

I have been following the debate on various aspects of Islam and feel that most people are not really debating but just wanting to be heard. It certainly isn't a free and open debate of independent minds. Most only want to say that that Islam is the best religion, that all other faiths are less, that Islam means certain blind obediences and the proof of Islam's greatness is the higher rate of conversion of western women to Islam. And while the fight was on, the US was a Satan and Osama bin-Laden was the great hero who had stood up to the West.

In the globalized world, freedom and scepticism form the core of progress but this I'm afraid is not present in the debate.

Why is it that nobody wrote like Pervez Hodobhoy in Daily Star (Jan 29) where he spoke with knowledge, love and rationality about Islam? This is the mind of the modern Muslim which is free, faithful and scientific. While you spend time on discussing Hijab, you sound so much like the fanatics of Pakistan, Sunni Muslims killing Shia Muslims in the name of Islam.

Why don't you look into the spirit of Islam which connects you to the present century and let it work for you? How can you keep thinking that God sanctions what the Taleban did in Afghanistan? Are people looking for a heavenly reward in return for blind obedience, something so many seem to think is the best thing about faith. Does faith deny reason?

All great civilizations have flourished because they asked questions but we seem to revel in accepting a decree and never argue.

**Naser Noman**  
Moghbar, Dhaka

parents with my mom frequently and while passing along the main road I would very often see either a number of people demonstrating in front of the USIS; or it is closed after some skirmishes between the police and the demonstrators the day before. (That was up until the late '60s.)

Later on the authorities decided to move the USIS to a quiet area instead of that exposed location on a busy road, and guess what? It moved to our neighbourhood not far from my parents' place in Dhanmandi residential area. On my way to and from Alliance Francaise where I took some French course or to my college and later on to BUET, I used to pass by the USIS regularly. The quiet residential area wasn't much of a deterrent for those enthusiastic demonstrators at all, they kept on displaying their anger or disapproval, whatever that was, as before.

I was never interested in politics so I used to wonder "these people have nothing else to do? They think that the US Government has enough time to even think about Bangladesh, let alone imposing their policies on us? These demonstrators are really paranoid." I was an admirer of western civilisation, and I am afraid, I was a bit pro-American too.

I just learned from "The unbearable lengthiness of enemy lists" (January 22) that even in the '50s and '60s a clearance was needed from the US embassy to get a Government job. What an intriguing fact! Looks like meddling in other's affairs is an incurable (but not contagious) disease whose bugs take enormous shape with time and spread their tentacles all over the world.

Now I know, those disgruntled demonstrators had a point. They were not paranoid at all; they knew what they were doing. I was the one who was naive.

Thanks again to Afsan Chowdhury and *The Daily Star* to help me solve my puzzle.

**Shukla Mirza, on e-mail**

**"Has BNP been elected to take revenge?"**

True to its colour the Awami League is getting ready to launch movements to topple the government. All these hartals, sit-in programmes are just probes to find weak spots in the administration. It is too bad that during their sit-in on 09 January hartal, ex-home minister Mohd Nasim got a taste of the treatment he meted out to the oppositions during their 5-year reign.

In her time Motia Choudhury might have been a good minister but she is not much behind her mentor Sheikh Hasina in being foul-

that goes against the interest of general people. Is that a reason that politicians or people against the ruling party prepare or wait for the time to take revenge taking the same actions in the same way while they will be in power? Has this practice become part of our tradition, where Constitution is helpless? If this is the reality should not we opine that a government couldn't ensure the basic Constitutional rights in these circumstances?

The political victims in jail can manage bail if his or their party is in power. What kind of transparency is this? After getting bail these people are assigned important and powerful portfolios in the government. Should it be done until the court gives verdict that he or they were sued for meaningless reasons. What might happen then after? Once the power is taken over by present opposition in future, they will take those people in the jail again and the reasons will remain same. For example, recently Shah Moazzem Hossain gave his views that his bail was possible as the 4-

**US visa: Why not?**



US visa: Just say NO

I am grateful that you published my letter "Why was I denied US Visa?" on January 16, 2002. And I thank Sarfaraz Khan of United States, Denver, Colorado, as he was kind enough to console me with his words that came out in your esteemed daily on January 19, 2002. Now you would be glad to know that the US Department of Justice took up my case for compensation with all seriousness. The US Justice Department specialist Mr. Fairy D White sent a letter informing me of the impartial review of my case at their point. Since the Americans value poetic vision and excellence and

believes that poetry may ensure peace to the world, the injustice that I experienced is now a matter of concern in the intellectual circle, nationally and globally. Last night I called the INS/NCSC over telephone as per the overseas number and expressed the present state of my mind. Now what matters most is the honour and dignity of my beloved country that I belong to. Let it be an example for others to follow and fight the germs of falsehood with pen.

**Abul Ashraf Noor**  
Dhaka-1230

A letter under the caption "Why was I denied US visa?" published on January 16, 2002 by poet Abul Ashraf Noor overwhelmed me.

As stated, Abul Ashraf Noor, a prominent English writer and poet was supposed to be inducted as an 'International Poet of Merit' by the International Society of Poets, USA on August 17-19, 2001 at Hilton hotel, Washington DC. Accordingly Mr Noor went to the American Embassy, Dhaka on an invitation by the vice-consul of the Embassy on July 19, 2001. But surprisingly he was rejected. The line "Death is preferable to humiliation I had to go through" is enough to understand his state of mind.

Poet Abul Ashraf Noor, an ex-cadet college Principal in his late sixties wrote a letter to the President of USA, Mr George W Bush for justice.

Meanwhile I would like to draw attention of the US Ambassador in Bangladesh to the incident mentioned above and would request her good office to look into the matter, so that Mr Noor's reputation as well as the reputation of US Embassy could be restored and retained.

If such act of humiliation continues then we would be left with no other alternative but to refrain from accepting honours/awards offered internationally by different reputed American institutions in recognition of talents and scholars in various fields of art, science and culture.

**M Zahidul Haque**  
Dhaka-127.

**denying shareholders ?**

Enough hullabaloo was made during the recent visit of the Chinese Premier in Dhaka in respect of joint venture, development assistance, cultural co-operation, industrial promotion and so on.

But as a humble shareholder of Magura Paper Mills Limited, my experience is bitter. Magura Paper Mill raised share capital in January 1991 but till date no interest on debentures has been paid as promised in the prospectus duly cleared by Security and Exchange Commission (SEC).

tures are yet to be listed in our Stock Exchanges.

The Finance Minister and SEC should look into the affairs of Magura Paper Mills and do something in the context of accountability, transparency as it preached so often.

**Mahbubur Rahman**  
Dasani, Bagerhat

**Questins for Sheikh Hasina**

The Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina circulated a speech in the Internet on the completion of 100-days rule of BNP led 4-party alli-

**Is milk essential?**

I agree with the expert nutritionist opinion expressed by Umme Fatema Chowdhury ("Why is milk essential?", January 16) and Amina Asma ("Is milk essential?", January 26). Yes, milk is the most nutritionally complete food, containing nearly all the constituents of nutritional importance to humans. In particular it is essential for the development of strong healthy teeth and bones in young children. Milk contains:

- High quality protein required for repair and maintenance of the body.
- Easily absorbable calcium which aids bone growth and strength.
- Riboflavin (B2) which is essential for utilising energy from food.
- Vitamin B12 which helps prevent anaemia.
- Drinking more milk as a teenager could help both men women in later Life.

However, for the adult population (over 35) the story is little different. The whole milk can be one of the main culprits in Coronary Heart Disease and Atherosclerosis. It is high in cholesterol and saturated fat, which should be avoided for a heart-smart life style. So, in matured years only non-fat milk is recommended by the American Heart Association (Please see



Milk: Good for all

<http://www.americanheart.org>

**Rokeya Mahmood**  
Cambridge, USA

**Separatist movement in India**



A bad joke or reality?

29 villagers were gunned down and many more were severely injured in India's Northeast state of Assam during the last two weeks. The officials said that the massacres were carried out by the activists of outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland. The NDFB is fighting for an independent homeland.

Since Assam is thousands of miles away from Pakistan, it will be hard for us to link these incidents to the cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.

New Delhi should take urgent steps to address the grievances of the separatist movements in different parts of India. Let us learn lesson from the fate of the Soviet Union, which could not safeguard its territorial integrity, despite having unprecedented military might. The Soviet Union had collapsed, because its component states were kept within its fold with brute force.

Indian secularism-- Nehru and Gandhi's founding vision of a state that doesn't favour any religious group over another-- needs to be re-introduced in this great country which is unfortunately heading towards Hindu militancy.

**Ravi Krishna**  
Manama, Bahrain

reality of our status in Pakistan.

The founding fathers of Pakistan were the leaders of the Muslim League. It was a party known for its unconditional support for British colonialism. Khudiram and Sir Syed Ahmed were contemporaries but oh so different! These "glorious forefathers" would go down in the history of British India as the reactionary

were killing the gentle Germans and hence the Holocaust was a direct result of such violence.

Well, 1971 was our Holocaust and redemption from evil and we will never forget that.

**Yahya**  
USA

justified at all.

He wrote, "Why women of this