

"The passenger's plight in Biman flight"

I was not at all surprised by the letter (January 16) of Dr. KMA Manzur about the trouble his daughter-in-law went through with Biman.

On January 12, I was at the airport in Manchester, England, waiting for my cousin to arrive from Bangladesh. I waited for hours, staring at the terminal screen saying the flight was delayed, until I received a phone call from my cousin. He told me that Biman was having some technical problem as the plane was leaking fuel and would not be arriving in Manchester till later on in the evening.

Biman did not bother to check these technical problems before boarding passengers. It also shows how incompetent they are, risking passengers' and crews' life. And I don't want to start with the behaviour of the stewards and the stewardess during the flight and the attitude of the ground staff in Bangladesh airport.

Unless Biman's services and customer relation improves many people will not fly Biman in future.

Nozrul Islam Manchester, England

Bitter pills on plate

Call me cynical but I really can't see the government taking all these very necessary and laudable steps. I might have been a bit more convinced if the PM would bring up these reforms and their rationale in her address to the nation rather than her achievements, questionable as they are, in the 100-days.

Our government still seems to feel that all public discourse is only for self-aggrandisement and haranguing their opponents. Maybe they should come to the realisation

Ziaur Rahman as our national leaders.

Statues of those five national leaders could be built either at Kalurghat, from where the declaration of Independence of Bangladesh was made or at Mujibnagar, where the first provisional government took oath in 1971.

Iqbal Ahmed Dhaka

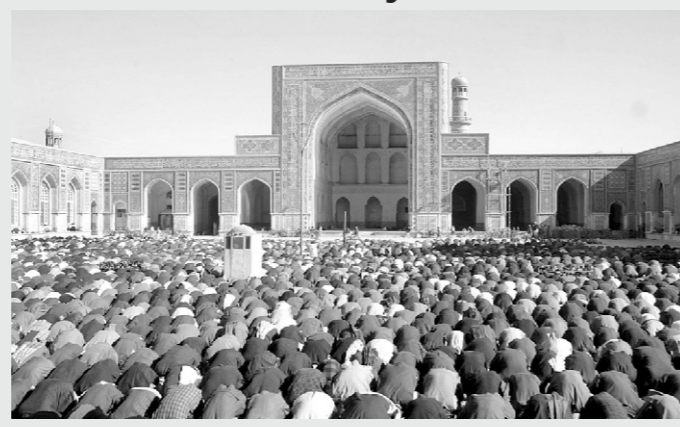
Dual citizens: Should they occupy official positions?

During the initial days of the previous government, the question of dual nationality of some Members of Parliament-- one can recall especially the reported British nationality of the then State Minister for Foreign Affairs-- had created a furore.

We have noticed that an expatriate after serving in the World Bank for over 20 years or so, making his life in the USA, having huge property there returned to Bangladesh, joined BNP and got elected as MP and obtained a Ministership. Another World Bank employee, after retirement (at the age of 63), has joined as Governor, Bangladesh Bank. He has also been away from Bangladesh for over 30 years. World Bank officials do retain their original nationality till retirement as that enables them to enjoy the maximum benefits in terms of allowances, etc. But they also buy properties, prepare all documents for Green Card and get full US nationality in many cases immediately following retirement.

Such appointments can hardly bring any benefit to the country. First, one always wonders as to what stake these retired WB/IMF/UN officials have in Ban-

Islam and The Daily Star



Tears in heaven, tears in earth...

Recently discussion regarding Islam has become a centre-point in the Letter section of The Daily Star.

Here are some of my comments and questions:

- 1. Some of the writers claimed that the 'Khatib' is not an employee of the state. May I ask why not? As far as I know he takes money from the government for the post he holds. Can anyone give me an example of the Imams in the time of our prophet took money for Immamati?
2. Those who are concerned about Hijab, are they following all the cannons of Islam? If not then should they not first try to perfect themselves before jumping on others?
3. Mr Pir Shaib ("Tears in Heaven", January 11) quoted some verses from the Quran to show that one does not need to be Muslim to go to heaven. As I am not sure if I'd be in heaven or not so I rarely bother with issues of who is going to heaven and who is not. But this opinion shows lack of knowledge regarding Islam.
One should know that many Islamic scholars have spent all

their lives in learning and in understanding Quran and hadith and Islam as a whole. We, who spend most of our study period to ensure enough money for our life, should not try to create new meanings from Quran. We should refer to the tafsirs to understand the Quran.

If one takes the time to read the tafsir for Sura ii62 and V59 then it will be apparent that here the non-Muslims are referred prior to the coming of our prophet or those who have not been informed of Hazrat Mohammed (sw).

Challenging standard teachings of Islamic scholars (especially those from early Islamic period) is similar to a 2nd grader challenging a Physics Doctorate over issues of physics.

Talat Islam Los Angeles, USA

This is a response to Mr. Pir Shahib's interpretation of the holy Quran. I have a humble request to Mr Pir Shahib not to give a fatwa based on the conclusion of a single source.

I know that your source of this English translation of the holy Quran is from the writer Mohammad Yousuf Abdullah. This translation is right, however, this is a Madani Sura; you have to look at the contexts and the conditions of the revelation, in a sense- "Shan-e-Nazul" of this sura.

This sura was revealed to Mohammad (sm) because of the rancour of the Jews living in Medina at that time. Mohammad (sm) signed and committed various treaties with them (Jews and Christians) to protect the newly born Muslim society in Medina. They, except for the few, disregarded all the treaties and with the connivance of Kafirs in Mecca they, at times, backstabbed and harmed this infant society. And this sura was revealed on this occasion. Now, the plain interpretation that you have come up with will not only misinform the Bangladeshi Muslims, but also the non-Muslims. Please read the translation of these two suras from Moulana Moududi's translation also.

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 Koran, Chapter 2, Verse 136.

I agree with you in this regard as there is no room for disagreement, but think about it! For every nation Allah sent Ihlam to the "Nabi" and revealed books to the "Rasuls". What is the meaning of the nation here? To me, here "Nation" means "A community". Mohammad(sm) came for the "Human Nation" and thus He is a prophet for all the community, which is proven from the revelation during the last Hajj that Mohammad(sm) performed.

Our wisdom, understanding for a certain subject matter is limited; nobody can claim for a wholesale championship of understanding for any subject matter; let alone the holy Quran.

Nasim Islam Salinas, CA, USA

A letter by Mr Pir Shahib (January 11) has drawn my attention. The letter reminds me of the saying "A little learning is a dangerous thing". I am not an Islamic scholar but I well understand that only mere translation of a verse of the Holy Quran does not give you total interpretation of the things that has been narrated. It needs prologue discussion.

However, the comments the writer made on the greatness of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is very much audacious. Every Muslim knows that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is the greatest among all the prophets.

May I suggest Mr. Pir Shahib to learn more before making such an audacious comment?

M. A. Sekendar Uttara, Dhaka

Dwelling in the yesteryears

Reading the continuous tirade of messages either in favour or against the current government, and on previous governments makes one wonder if we are relegated to dwelling in the yesteryears forever. This refers not only to the musing that the two major political parties are engaged in over their policies, but the whole battle of proving the supremacy of Bangabandhu and Zia.

I think I speak for a large section of the current generation when I say that we are sick and tired of such mindless games our leaders are engaged in that are precipitously forcing our country towards destruction.

Ironically, perhaps one of the benefits of having books that remould history like shifting sand dunes is that we got to hear both or all sides of the history. And having done so, dear leaders, we would

recourse to partisanship, whose actions are determined by the thought of the collective good, and not of personal gains, and who can accept that they can make errors and in their humility guide us to the prosperity we are capable of attaining but have been deprived of so far. One wonders if it is too late to look up to the intellectual community for such a salvation?

House spokesman that like infamous "Crusade", it was also a slip of the tongue.

I have started believing that decision of five members of the U.S. Supreme Court to put him in office was also a "slip of the tongue". But alas, no retraction.

Mohsin Meer Lahore, Pakistan

SOS (Save Our Soul)

The heinous murder of the two Dutch tourists by BSF men in Srinagar is definitely going to highlight the gross human rights violations that characterise the Indian occupation of Kashmir.

According to the version given by Indian security forces, the two attacked a Border Security Force patrol with knives and were then shot dead.

Whereas, according to the brother of one of the murdered Dutchmen, the two saw the Indian soldiers manhandling a Kashmiri

The media reporting of eyewitnesses has forced Junior Home Minister Najib Suharwardy to rule out the theory of militants launching a suicide attack against the BSF with pocketknives as ridiculous.

If two Kashmiri men had objected to the BSF men's maltreatment of the woman, their murder by the Indian soldiers would have hardly got known to the world.

Instead, the Indian publicity machine would merely have reported the death in a shoot-out of two more "cross-border terrorists."

With such a long list of crimes against local population on record, the double-murder of January 13 morning is definitely going to expose tyranny and wanton human rights violations in Indian Held Kashmir.

President Musharraf has rightly appealed the world nations to pressure India to let Amnesty and other Human Rights organisations work in IHK to monitor and control

last election-- she would now love to brand as Taliban. It is no surprise that she has now taken such an anti-people stance. She is carrying out a global propaganda campaign telling the world that Bangladesh is a Taliban-inclined country prone to communal injustice and violence.

How could her irresponsible and shortsighted utterances would help our nation that is so heavily dependent on Western assistance? It is a matter of great shame that her senior colleagues too are echoing similar allegations to visiting foreign dignitaries.

Since September 11, the expatriate Bangladeshis in the Western countries have enough on their plate to tackle as Muslims, without needlessly suffering the additional burdens from being branded Taliban-friendly as a result of Sheikh Hasina's propaganda. After September 11 the world, particularly for Muslims, will never be the same again. As long as the Muslim countries remain dependent on the West for finance, technology, and education, it would be prudent for the so-called leaders to behave wisely and protect the interests of the children of the lesser God.

MC, on e-mail

Lack of morality in Bangladeshi politics

While thinking about Bangladeshi politics sometimes I ask myself, is morality a fantasy in the realm of politics? In the Western world the question of morality in politics is a fundamental one. One can say that there is a difference between oriental and occidental standard of morality. This is true. But the kind of morality the improvised masses of the third world countries expect from their politicians is not different from what is expected in the West. Politicians are no strangers to their respective societies. They are the people smart enough to capitalise on the desperation of the poor masses who always looks for someone who can deliver them something. Education is an important factor for a good moral political atmosphere. Another factor is poverty, which tolerates corruption out of frustration. But a real good politician can make a difference as we have seen in the leadership of Li Kuan Yew of Singapore.

The most unfortunate result of this corrupt political culture is that it corrupts the intelligentsia. A nation's most tragic history begins when its think tank is rotten. That is what now happening to Bangladesh.

Akbar Hussain Toronto, Canada



People burning people

Any civilised citizen would be moved by the recent harrowing incident of setting three muggers ablaze by an angry mob. This kind of incident depicts an outburst of smouldering frustration of people over the law and order situation.

Patience, tolerance and trust in system seem to be adrift by a deluge of anger and frustration (of people) on dysfunctional government agencies responsible for law and order.

However, this cannot be a scenario of a civilised nation. The government should really put its thinking cap on and ponder this situation carefully. Otherwise, things will start getting out of control and innocent persons might be victims of such situation. It is the government's duty and responsibility to make people trust and obey the system.

So, please do something to stop these kinds of incidents from occurring in future because this is not the first time it has happened. How long are we going to close our eyes and pretend everything is normal?

Zafar Hadi Von Karman Avenue

Attention Bangladesh Bank

The Indenting Section of Bangladesh Bank in Chittagong has been under the grip of corrupt practices, which has thrown the local indenting agents community into untold miseries.

This department is not renewing permission letters of those indentors, who could not grease the palms of the concerned persons, which depended on the volume of commissions earned, by the indentors. When the controller of Imports and Exports renew the indenting registration certificates of the concerned indentors against payment of annual renewal fee of Tk 3000-- it becomes mandatory on the part of Bangladesh Bank to renew permission letters to the indentors unless the concerned indentors committed any offence under the exchange control rules and regulations.

But, the indenting wing of Bangladesh Bank in Chittagong is not renewing the permission letters for such offences but for some whimsical grounds which tantamount to harassment of the indenting community. The affected indentors are forced to issue indents to their customers in the absence of renewal of permission letters. Some of the indentors are lured to persuade their customers to import goods against foreign suppliers' pro-forma invoices in which case there is possibility of misuse of agency commissions earned in foreign exchange abroad.

In that case, Bangladesh may lose handsome amount of commissions earned through foreign exchange because of the step motherly attitude of Bangladesh Bank. We draw the attention of the Governor of Bangladesh Bank to this matter and hope the problem with the Bank and the indentors community would be solved soon.

Syed Wahidul Islam Chittagong Indentors' Group Agrabad, Chittagong

India's relation with Israel

Whatever India might do to keep its relations with Israel away from the glare of publicity so as not to disturb its ties with Arab and other Muslim countries, the high-level friendly exchange of visits between the two countries cannot go unnoticed.

The visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told a Press conference at New Delhi that if India chose to declare war against Pakistan it would find Tel Aviv on its side.

The statement does not surprise anyone conversant with Islamabad's firm commitment to the Palestinian cause. The ensuing deal about three state-of-the-art AWACs, whose sale to Beijing had been vetoed by Washington, but has been approved in the case of New Delhi, in the present inflammable climate in the subcontinent sounds a note of warning at the growing nexus between the two countries.

Tel Aviv has already been providing advice to New Delhi in intelligence and suppressing the freedom struggle in India-Held Kashmir on the lines it is following in dealing with the Palestinian protesters.

The defence co-operation between New Delhi and Tel Aviv has been growing at a fast pace. Already the second biggest supplier of weapons to India, Israel might soon dislodge Russia as its main source of military hardware.

Mr Peres' visit has taken place at the right psychological moment for India to sign defence deals with Israel, with grave implications for Pakistan's defence.

Israel's support is the main factor behind India's recent arro-



Role model?

gance, refusal of dialogue and un-ending war hysteria. The world leaders should stop Israel to indulge in South Asia affairs otherwise the peace and security of this nuclear zone will be at great risk.

Salman Khan Dammam, Saudi Arabia

that we are sentient beings, some of us, and may support fiscal belt tightening if the government were to try and sell that to us.

MA Dhaka

Controversy over leaders' contribution

Time has come for all of us to bury once and for all the controversy regarding the contributions of our leaders on the emergence of Bangladesh, and work together to build our country.

I request all our political parties and their leaders to recognise Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haq, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Shaheed

gladesh they have their rich nests of eggs safely tucked away abroad. Second, at this advanced age and on a job for a fixed term, what motivations could they possibly have, what initiatives would they take and what sort of sense of responsibility would they really demonstrate, to contribute their best? Third, the people have the right to know whether they have dual nationality or not.

In fact, the World Bank official turned Minister's younger brother had served as the American Ambassador to Fiji, a political appointment during Clinton administration. The other official worked in the World Bank, not in IMF and he is put in charge of Bangladesh Bank, where World Bank experience to the best of anyone's guess would have marginal use. Why should the

and that was not acceptable.

In 1990, another invasion was taking place in Indonesia: the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, where the US assisted the dictator Suharto with key military and strategic assistance. Senator Daniel Moynihan was the UN ambassador at that time. He remembers in his memoir, "The US wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook." We now know very well how things turned out. Nothing than within a few weeks some 60,000 people have been killed".

Contrary to common belief, the United States is not a generous nation, which keeps the peace and follows the rules. Given the amoral nature of the state system, such a country would quickly lose its power and be destroyed. A world leader must truly follow the "by any means necessary" school of thought. In the case of the United States, this means routinely bending other countries to its will with its military power and economic clout.

Arnab Zaheer UK

America goes hunting!

America's fans everywhere, (including many expatriates Bangladeshis), have been avidly cheering America's craven war against the Afghan people and the Taliban. With the much-maligned Taliban ceding control of most of their country, the US,

"SANCTIONS FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE"



US peace and war: Which kills more?

contrary to media hype, does not believe the campaign in Afghanistan is over.

Indeed, I reckon it's premature to conclude that the Taliban has even been truly "defeated". Meantime, the mindlessly savage U.S. bombing raids continue to target and maim or kill innocent Afghan

civilians and Taliban leaders. Consider too, how the ever-shifting objectives of America's truly dubious "war on terrorism" have ranged from targeting Usama bin Laden, al-Qaeda camps, to the Taliban and to Mullah Umar. America's manic drive for vengeance for September 11th has clearly run amok; witness the blatantly illegal detention and unacceptable harassment of senior Taliban leaders.

I have no truck with the Taliban's obscurantist, repressive ideology. Yet, for all the fashionable and opportunistic flak being flung the Taliban's way, nothing justifies the ludicrous "hunt" for Mullah Umar or the detention for interrogation of Abdul Salam Zaeef and three senior Taliban ministers who have ostensibly "surrendered" to the Afghan government.

No Taliban leader--- Mullah Umar, Mullah Zaeef, or any other-- are 'felons' waiting to be "captured". Talk of possible "amnesty" is absurd when the men in custody are guilty of no proven crime. Zaeef and others must be released immediately and unconditionally.

However, the recent events merely confirm my view that the unjust US government policies abroad will continue to reap justifiably violent back drafts for the American public in the future.

Sajjad Husain Dhaka