

### Bangabandhu's portrait, the PM's proposal and our identity crisis!

Yet another disappointing news in the headline of an Indian daily, "The Asian Age", in its 23rd March issue, "Political storm in Bangla as Mujib portraits come down".

I ask the politicians what do you call a country, which still can't agree on the issue of its father, even after 31 years of its independence? We are sons of such a nation that doesn't have a father and that is the root cause of all the confusion, conflicts and disagreements.

In India, whether BJP or Congress is in power, one can see the portraits of Mahatma Gandhi in all the government offices and like. Even in Pakistan, the portrait of M. A. Jinnah is seen irrespective of who is ruling the country. It's bitterly disgusting to realise that the semi-literate politicians have kidnapped our identity and we shouldn't expect anything from them, because they couldn't give us a father in the first place.

People will soon silently witness the same old tradition of renaming, boycotting and protesting but one shall never see the true development of my poor motherland. We have nothing to be proud of as we don't have any leader.

A last request to those politicians in power, either get some thing done for the country or get lost. Enough is enough!

**Shehzaad Bin Shams**  
Internations Students' House, Delhi, India

Much is going on regarding the "portrait" issue. It's high time the two 'ladies' forgot about this irrelevant matter and concentrated on developing the nation. I believe I am not the only one with such 'unpatriotic' feelings.

What fails to amaze me, is why no one, meaning our esteemed leaders, ever ask what the public wants, whose face is it that people want to see on the bureaucratic walls? Unless of course



The hanging portrait

they reach an agreement however unlikely that is.

It would seem to us, the ordinary citizens, that hanging the portrait is a measure of sorts, regarding respect to the 'father' and the 'architect'. Does it mean that if you hang the portrait more respect is shown! Oh please...they could not have shown more disrespect.

Talking of disrespect, another thing comes to mind, what is this renaming of all the roads in the name of showing respect! All we

have to wait for is another catfight, if indeed the ruling party decides to rename the roads and the streets and the avenues and the stadium and....

**NZY, on e-mail**

Some of our new generation may not know much about Bangabandhu. We should not forget that the majority of our populations except the Razakars, Al-Badrs and Al-Shams, joined the Liberation War. Mr Editor, your editorial "Portrait display repeal bill passed", (March 23) is correct. Bangabandhu, Liberation War and Bangladesh are inseparable.

Starting of a Liberation war without notice, without mobilising people or creating a congenial atmosphere was an unthinkable affair. There is no such incident in the history where someone started a Liberation War whimsically.

Bangabandhu started raising his voice against the Pakistani rulers' exploitation, gave 6-point programmes and boldly spoke about the disparity between Bengalis and Urdu-speaking people. He had to mobilise people and this he started from his teen age. The climax of Liberation of the Bengalis reached its highest peak in 1971.

Our young generation would also be interested to know about Ziaur Rahman. Who was he, what was he, how he declared Independence? When they would study history, they would know the real history of our Liberation War.

Whatever distortion of history is made (by our politicians), it would definitely be amended in time. So whatever BNP or Awami League tries to do, only time will tell who will live through the time.

**Shafiqul Islam**  
Fulbaria, Savar, Dhaka

It is also mentioned that "Candidates who have passed at least 5 papers in GCE O' level and 2 papers of A' level with a bachelor degree may also apply". What does this mean? From what I understand the former is the only basic requirement. Even though they apologised and refunded my fees, my family members had a lot of expectations and were let down.

Was I wrong in interpreting their message or is further

Microsoft!

You are absolutely right, when I think of the over all situation of Bangladesh, beggars shouldn't be choosers, LINUX seems to be the solution.

MS is trying to come up with newer tricks to prevent piracy. As you know, today one can use a pirated copy of win95/98, Me, NT 4.0 or NT 5.0 (win2k) operating system but starting with Windows XP it's not going to be possible any more since XP OS requires mandatory registration. Therefore, it's not only that one of these days Microsoft will sue Bangladesh for money, we will be compelled to buy authentic software.

Incidentally, a few years from now when windows 98/Me/Win2K will seem like black and white DOS, one will have no other choice but to buy the expensive original version of MS OS or migrate to a LINUX. Why not now?

However, there are couple of points you technically avoided that may make you sound like a typical LINUX fan!

(a) Bangladesh government offices do not use or encourage pirated software. Exception is no law. And for home users, software piracy problem is worldwide.

(b) LINUX/UNIX is a good choice for Server but it has failed to be a desktop and/or workstation solution comparing to popular MS operating systems. There are two main reasons why LINUX failed to be the choice of home users. We all learned about the computer in Microsoft way. You can't all of a sudden make the end user go through such know-how difficulties with LINUX. Secondly, most games, photo or video editing software, used by the home users, are not LINUX compatible in addition to that there are hardware compatibility issues. This compatibility problem will fade away as more people start using LINUX.

Last year Dell and other companies launched a massive promotion for LINUX laptop and desktop, this year you'll rarely find those in the market. Hey, we are talking about a highly paid programmers effort Vs.

amateur programmers fantasy. Yet, I support your suggestion.

**Pir Saheb**  
New York, USA

### "Beware of Bangladesh"

"Beware of Bangladesh" is the cover story of April 04, 2002, issue of Far Eastern Economic Review. It has warned the whole world about the emergence of fundamentalism, minority persecution, and lawlessness in our country.

Such cover stories could be highly damaging for Bangladesh. We need the world's help to take our country forward and therefore a good image is essential. There is no denial of the fact that Islamic fundamentalist forces are getting stronger and stronger in Bangladesh with the help of our power hungry politicians.

We must wake up now and start weakening such forces like *jamaat*, *harkatul jihad* before they cause further damage to our country.

**Masum Khan, on e-mail**

### "Secularism: Eastern vs Western style"

This refers to the letter by Shukla Mirza from USA (March 22). Although the letter provides some interesting reading, some of the aspects are unclear. To me it appeared that the writer either wanted to make a comparison between Western and eastern concepts of secularism from religious stand points at the same time make a point of which is better. Be that as it may, I would like to take this

impairing a knowledge or information be it in the areas of religion or a social science a rapport has to be established between the disseminator and the receiver before the discourse takes effect. It is my experience that this is where we are extremely deficient. The majority of Muslim clerics particularly those of the subcontinent are highly deficient in this regard. I have often observed and personally experienced that on most occasions a Muslim cleric will, if I may say so, begin by instilling a fear of the religion. How is this done? Very simple, The cleric begins by saying that unless you do this or that you shall burn at the stakes of hell. The inductee thus feels somewhat threatened or become reluctant right from the start.

Islam, the aspects with which I am acquainted, is undoubtedly one of the most comprehensive and liberal amongst the religions of the world. The problem lies with its dealers and defenders. In the West you will find a clergy to be well conversed with the various branches of modern day science and technology alongside his religious faith. But the majority of the Muslim clerics (the majority of whom come from the traditional *madrassas*) have only a compartmentalised and extremely shallow knowledge of Islam itself let alone modern day science and technology.

It is this aspect of weakness or drawback in the dissemination of our religion, we must improve upon, else a question will always remain in the minds of the West about our

### Attention Surma International

The authorities of Surma Int. have removed most of the struts and rods, which were in place for the construction of another of the famous Gaffar Bhuiyan MP-DCC concrete death traps at Raj Lakkhi in Uttara.

Amazingly they have left the huge concrete slab spanning the entire width of the road with no other support for the last week or so.

Hello? Gaffar Bhuiyan MP? Mind removing that? Even if I were a depressed existentialist I'd still hate driving under that everyday.

**MA**  
Dhaka

### "Cigarette and our responsibility"

I am writing in response to the letter by Arani Siddiqui (March 25), who seems to have seriously misinterpreted my March 22, letter regarding cigarette advertisements. First of all I would like to point out that the objective of my letter was to stress on the influence of cigarette ads in our newspapers and televisions. So, the Benson & Hedges Star Search was irrelevant. Since s/he has raised the question, I would like to say that such pageants also have a bad influence on youths. But one wrongdoing cannot justify another, so I see no reason why we should not criticise our newspapers and television for neglecting their social responsibility. Why should we treat cigarette as 'a simple product that has a right to be promoted' when we know that it causes cancer, heart disease and numerous other physical complications?

I did not 'charge' *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo* for featuring such commercials. But since I am a regular reader of these two dailies, I felt that they are in a position to create social awareness against smoking and should not let us down by carrying cigarette advertisements so frequently. Just because I mentioned the social responsibility of newspapers and TV stars, it does not mean I am not aware of the other advertising media used to promote tobacco products. However, it is foolish to think that a simple newspaper or TV advertisement has very little influence on people. In fact, such advertisements do make a lot of difference. Otherwise, the manufacturers would not spend huge sums of money to advertise their products on TV and newspapers.

One thing I must repeat is that the statutory warning "Smoking is injurious to health" is in fact very misleading because it states nothing about how harmful it is. Smoking is not simply 'injurious' to health; it can even lead to death. People must be made aware of the consequences as clearly as possible.

According to Arani Siddiqui, there are many anti-smoking campaigns going around. But I don't see any significant anti-smoking campaign going on in Bangladesh. The level of social awareness in our country is very low and our media and our celebrities are doing a very poor job of raising awareness among the ignorant and confused people.

**S Hossain**  
IBA, University of Dhaka

In his/her response to S. Hossain's "Cigarette and our responsibility", Arani Siddiqui made some comments that did not seem to make much sense. He/she said that cigarette commercials would have little influence in increasing the number of smokers, but as far as I had known till now, companies advertise their products with the intention to have more people interested in their product. Why would tobacco companies advertise cigarettes if the commercials did not increase their number of customers?

Arani Siddiqui had mentioned that Zahid Hassan had modelled for a cigarette advertisement not for the money but to "change his image". It is quite confusing why any person would want to change his image from good to bad. Although Arani Siddiqui may not think so, a star

should have enough ethical sense so, as not to model for products that people should refrain from.

After all, celebrities need to hold an image that brings them respect. It was also mentioned in the letter that it is not quite fair to hold models or newspapers responsible for an individual's taking up of a bad habit; but celebrities and newspapers easily influence young people to develop extremely harmful habits like smoking. I think that newspapers are the best carriers of informa-

### "Israel is not a democracy like America"

This is in response to Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's article "Israel is not a democracy like America" (March 30).

Native Americans never lived in reservations until white settlers arrived in the 15th century. The North American continent was home to thousands of Native American Tribes. When white settlers came they pillaged the land, massacred millions of Native Americans and conquered vast territories. Native Americans put up fierce resistance but by the end of the 19th century they lost the battle and were forced to sign the so-called peace treaties that put them in reservations, away from white settlers.

America that exists today is based on territorial expansion and conquest. The only difference is that the Native Americans are a defeated people, who have lost hope and motivation to reclaim their heritage and their land. The Palestinians by contrast, are still a defiant people determined to fight to the death. That is the difference.

Dr. Ahmed seems to think that 27 per cent of the land belonging to Native Americans is plenty-- but before the 15th century a 100 per cent of the land, that is called America today, belonged to the Sioux, the Apache, the Iroquois, the Ojibwe, and the list goes on. So what if they live in reservations today? Has the Dr. Ahmed visited any of these reservations? Perhaps if he visited any he would realise the true measure of American democracy.

So you see, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Benjamin Netanyahu, is not exaggerating when he claims Israel and America are very much alike.

**Rahfat Hussain**  
Minneapolis, USA

tion, and so should carry information that will help their readers.

**T.H. Firoz**  
Class VIII, Dhanmondi Tutorial

### "Of police week and police reforms"

Some questions were asked as to what are the legal safeguards and legal breaks in the use of fire-arms or of police excess mentioned in my article "Of police week and police reforms" (February 6).

The legal position is in the use of firearms. Police must use maximum restraints and should open fire only as a matter of last resort. All police action in the use of firearms run the risk of an independent, magisterial and departmental inquires whatever might be the circumstances obtaining in a particular situation. Police cannot open fire without the explicit order of a magistrate. The law in a democratic society attaches maximum importance to the value and honour of the individual.

**Moinuddin Chisti**  
Dhaka

### Nominating terrorists!

So the 4party alliance has finally come out of the closet and declared their forbidden love for terrorists!

Well I must commend the Alliance for their honest and forthright manner of nominating terrorists and reaffirming their vision of state sponsored terrorism.

In light of the new candid alliance strategy for Bangladesh, I think we should keep the current Home Minister. He would fit right in with the policy of BNP condoned intimidation, extortion, murder and what not.

Now, I know that Mr Sadek Hossain Khoka has reaffirmed his commitment to the whole scale slaughter of mosquitoes if (and when) elected Mayor of Dhaka. But what comment does he have regarding the ward commissioners nominated by his party?

**Bastiat**  
Dhaka

### "HC verdict on ETV"

I consider it highly irresponsible on your part to write a lengthy editorial on the ETV case (March 29) trying to influence the decision of the appeal to the Appellate Division. We all talk about law taking its own course and nobody being above the law, but when the crunch comes we try to

find excuses to avoid its wrath. What is the difference between what you did and a politician making a phone call to the police to let off a criminal because the latter e.g. happens to be a model family man?

Even if ETV's license is declared illegal and void, it should not spell end of the popular channel. It can resurrect itself as a satellite channel or it can pay BTV proper fee for using its terrestrial facilities and be on air after a short spell. Why should a private channel be allowed to ride

tration) is considered as one of the topmost business schools in Bangladesh. People try their best to get admission in this prestigious institute. That is exactly what I did.

After passing my O' levels, I graduated from North South University (NSU) with a high CGPA and then applied in IBA this year for my MBA. I passed the written test, the viva and paid the necessary fees after which I was told that I couldn't be admitted because of a mistake on their part; their reason was I



The uprooted udivasi

could not meet the basic requirements. I was disappointed, especially after coming this far.

According to the IBA administration, students without their A' levels cannot be accepted. What kind of a policy is this? Isn't my 4-year-bachelor degree enough? Especially since it was mentioned in their brochure that "The minimum requirement for eligibility to seek admission into the MBA program are a bachelor degree and 7 (seven) points". I fulfilled both the prerequi-

rements. I was disappointed, especially after coming this far.

**Khaliur Rahman**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### How Microsoft will kill Bangladesh

After a long time, I have read a good article on technology in a Bangladeshi newspaper. Thank you Mr. Zeeshan Hasan, you could have named it-- How can we kill

"reading between the lines" required.

**Khaliur Rahman**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### How Microsoft will kill Bangladesh

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### "Should our sons come back?"

Maybe the idea of a "dreary suburban house in Dingle Berry, New Jersey with the ABCD kids, the air freighted *deshi* wife and the almost certain prospect of being downsized at 50" does not appeal to Mr MA. But what he fails to realise is that such a life could and does appeal to many a Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and many other third world citizens who come to "the West" in search of a better life.

Maybe people like myself and MA have the benefit of a foreign education, an established family business, political clout, and yes, maybe an unbridled love for Bangladesh to return home and make a difference. The unfortunate fact is not too many Bangladeshis do. And the few that have been able to leave the country and make a living for themselves in the US, the UK, and wherever, should and do consider themselves lucky.

I myself live in New York City, where I cross paths with Bangladeshis on a daily basis. And I take the time to talk to them. Many dream of a suburban house in Dingle Berry, NJ and a very few dream of returning to Bangladesh. It's the sad fact.

I appreciate Mr MA's point of view. I really do. But what he fails to realise is that, there are many Bangladeshis who are not equipped with the tools to succeed in a country overrun by corrupt politicians and an immobile bureaucratic government. For them, coming to the US is a dream come true. Be it driving a cab, selling nuts on the streets, or working as a computer consultant at a NJ corporate park-- they are making a difference to their OWN lives. That really is the point isn't it?

**Cryptic Fate (proud Bangladeshi)**  
New York City, NY, USA

I want to thank Mr. Shamsher Chowdhury for his letter "Should I ask my son to come back" (March 25). This issue is very close to my heart since I am facing the same dilemma regarding whether I should return home to Bangladesh.

I have lived in the U.S. for almost 10 years, received my undergraduate education and have recently been granted permanent residency status. I am not worried about the hartals, the pollution, the traffic jams or any such hassles of daily life in Bangladesh. All that can be fixed with stern, honest and enlightened governance. But there are two things that prevent me from coming back to Bangladesh.

First, during the time I was in school and now in my professional life, I have had the opportunity to come in close contact with Americans of various ethnicity. I am proud to call them my friends as they have stood by me during good times and bad. Over the past 10 years, they have become an integral part of my life as I have become of them. Besides, a majority of my classmates and cous-

ins from Bangladesh have also settled in various parts of the U.S. So my social support has already been established in the U.S.

Although I have repeatedly asked my parents to come join me here, it has been their decision to spend the remainder of their lives in Bangladesh with their friends and siblings. Although I do miss them immensely, I understand that their social support structure is in Bangladesh, not in the U.S.

Second, The U.S. culture teaches us to be self-reliant and independent. I was hired in my job based on my merits and have been employed for over half a decade in the same company due to my skills and hard work, not because I have certain "pull" through the management or by bypassing someone else who is more talented. Where will I find a job in Bangladesh where I can afford a house, a car and a decent standard of living on my own without having to suck up to people or becoming dishonest?

As for Mr. MA (March 31), I don't know how long has it been since you've lived in the U.S., but unless you're working in a blue-collar job, nobody here makes \$40k anymore. You should be proud of yourself that you've decided to go back to Bangladesh, but your derogatory comments on those of us who have stayed back seem like a case of sour grapes. I wish you all the best in your effort to "make a difference, make a significant amount of money while not selling your soul." Most people don't get to do that in their lifetime regardless of where they live.

**Mahmud**  
Michigan, USA

I fully understand the position of Mr. Shamsher Chowdhury. Bangladesh is a country where there is no guarantee of life. You might get mugged or shot and killed on your way back from work. It is a place where the police are as bad as the culprits are. A place where you only get jobs if you have uncles in the right places. I really could go on and on. We all know the story. On the face of it, it would seem foolish for people like us to return home.

We should pause and think how lucky we are. Coming from a third world country, we are getting 'A class' education in famous institutions in a developed nation. We should be really thankful to the Almighty. We are getting a comparative view of things. Everyday here is a learning experience. No housemaids to do your chores for you. No private tutors to help you out. Managing your finances, thinking about your next meal, all these are educational. And we, living abroad, appreciate these more than we would have, if we were back home. We are learning the practical aspect of life.

Contrary to what many people think, life is not a bed of roses here. We are learning the hard way. We are acquiring a wealth of

### Tikha Khan is dead



Died in March

Tikha Khan-- the Butcher of Bangladesh has died! From the bottom of my heart I wish him his due share in the after-life.

The readers wish to know more about his good (?) deeds that he committed during his lifetime. Also, it may be a good idea to know about his link to the inhuman act committed in 1971 and earlier.

**A well-wisher, on e-mail**

opportunity to make a few observations on the subject without coming into conflict with either of the two religions namely Islam and Christianity.

Being one with very little knowledge of either of the two religions I normally like to stay away from any discourse involving such subjects. My remarks therefore will be based on their reflections in societies at large and as I perceive them.

It is my impression that in terms of the spread and application of religion the Christians seem to be ever disciplined, systematic and organised. There is no conscious effort of any dogmatic or forced imposition of the religion on any one. As I say this I am aware of the fanatics and the exceptions. To me the best way to deal with anyone's faith is to keep it a private affair. A noticeable difference between a Western Clergy and a Muslim cleric is that, given an opportunity a Muslim cleric will inevitably sermonise and impose his beliefs irrespective of appropriateness of time and place. I have had friends who were Missionaries and was never confronted with any kind of sermonising.

One of the basic principles of

commitment to secularism.

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

### Pauper teachers of rich schools

Some teachers of 'rich schools' i.e. the English Medium Schools are wealthier and richer than those of Bengali Medium Schools are.

However, it is a pity that many teachers of these English Medium Schools are not at all qualified. During these hectic modern days, many parents cannot afford to pay attention to their children and appoint house tutors or send them to coaching centres.

But how would these students be benefited if the teachers are not qualified? What would they learn from these teachers?

Many guardians have told me that some teachers of English and mathematics earn more than 50 thousand taka only from private tuition. Can we call these teachers--paupers?

**Abul Ashraf Noor**  
Dhaka

knowledge. And to be honest, I know, as does Mr Chowdhury's son that going back to Bangladesh may not be the best option. But having said that, I sincerely believe that if we do not go back after gaining so much experience, then we have wasted our time here. Developed nations do not NEED us. Our country does. We need to go back. For the love of God, at least we have to try!

I know people will be saying, what does he know? It's true. I do not know much about the job market in Bangladesh. I do not know what chances are there for me to get a job back home. I am just an undergraduate now. But you know what? I will try. I will go back home and give my best shot. And the rest is the will of Allah. Call me a sentimental fool, but I am willing to give my country a chance and not write it off even before trying!

The views I have expressed here are totally personal. I am not trying to impose my views on anybody.

**Ariful Islam**  
SOAS, University of London

