

**Home Minister's philosophy**



The Home Minister's homilies

A gangster, married to a sister of a gangster, was killed by other gangsters (murder of ward commissioner Newton). There weren't any other casualties from crossfire, as the no doubt aptly named, Kala Jahangir fellows managed to shoot straight, quite an achievement for these typically drugged up fellows.

Forgive me for being callous, but does anyone apart from the grieving family care?

In the meantime, the Home Minister came up with the very imaginative sermon, "Life or death is in the hands of Allah and none can do anything about it."

Fascinating idea, but I'd bet a Home Minister who does his job and reverses the trend of Badda becoming something like South Central LA, might have done something to prevent the child from dying.

**Peter Pan**  
Dhaka

The incumbent Home Minister has considerably failed in his task to curb the spate of terrorism in the country, particularly in the capital city of Dhaka. We do understand how Herculean the task it is for him to curb terrorism in a society where the criminalisation process has been institutionally encouraged during the recent years, but that doesn't mean that he should beat around the bush in tackling the situation.

We are happy to know that the Home Minister's recent-most antics in connection with Baby Naushin's accidental murder has drawn flak from the Prime Minister and other conscientious people including the senior BNP leadership (May 12). The BNP leadership

should not forget that the peace loving people who voted them to power in overwhelming proportion expect meaningful, if not total, eradication of terrorist activities from the country. Otherwise the 'Awami Fate' will await them in the horizon. After all, the year 2006 is not that far off! As a peace-loving citizen, I am of course least bothered about the 'Awami' or BNP fate. I am more concerned about my own fate. Can our children or we survive the terrorist onslaughts all around?

It is time to have a change in the stewardship of the Home Ministry in the best interest of the people, and for BNP in particular. I would love to see the Freedom Fighter Col. (Retd.) Oli Ahmed, MP, is given the challenging responsibility, with a blank sheet right from the Prime Minister herself to do whatever he deems necessary and without any political interference from any quarters. Will the policymakers at the helm of affairs listen?

**Ahmed Ghani**  
Dhaka

I read in disbelief the Home Minister's comments about the death of the 20-month-old baby in Badda (11th May). What is his point? If it is that incidents such as this are unavoidable because Allah wishes them, then it appears to me that his job is redundant. Why is the taxpayer paying his salary if he feels that 'none can do anything about' crimes such as these. Is he then saying that murderers are simply carrying out the wish of Allah? In that case, lets do away with the entire judicial system, since we can't hold any murderer accountable for his action.

It seems strange to me that this government is sticking with this Home Minister after his repeated blunders. Let us not forget that BNP government has been given a mandate by the people of our country to improve law and order. Yet, law and order is getting worse, if anyone thought that was possible.

The Prime Minister must keep in mind that in four years time, her party will be up for re-election and I believe that the electorate will judge the performance of her government largely on its handling of

law and order,

**Shameran Abed**  
New York, USA

"Life or death is in the hands of Allah and none can do anything about it. Allah has taken back his creature."

Well, Mr. Minister, it's not only life and death, nothing happens in this world without the will of God. Accordingly, all the murders, robberies and rapes taking place in the country are all acts of God. And we have learned that you cannot do anything about it.

However, there are two things you can do. You can step down and let somebody else try. And you can stop covering the dirty acts of police and muggers. How can you tell "The baby was not the target. Bullets were fired from the other side of the street. None thought the bullet would hit in such a way"? The muggers were firing "indiscriminately" but they didn't think it could kill somebody? Please!

**Rousseau, on e-mail**

I am appalled at the Home Minister's remark at the residence of the parents of Naushin. It looks to me as though the only people who are active, hale and hearty are none other than the terrorists. I watched with keen interest the entire news-coverage of the Home Minister's visit to the residence of Naushin's parents both in ETV and BT. It was disgusting to see the way the Home Minister was conducting himself. Besides with all due respect- although may be of lesser significance- but the way the Minister was attired must have raised the eyebrows of many. He appeared to be all dressed up for an Eid day social visit rather than visiting to condole the victims of a supremely tragic event.

If we are to follow the venerable Home Minister's philosophy we should all sit tight with our hands folded and "do nothing" but wait for the cruel hands of death.

I am afraid things have come to a dangerous pass in this country as far as personal security is concerned. This is what I foresaw

when I wrote the letter "Should our sons come back" Which raised a lengthy debate in this very column of your daily. Security and above all security of life of the general members of the public must be ensured before our forthcoming generation can be "imbibed with that spirit of selfless service to the nation" so often fondly referred to by a handful of zealots indulging in rhetoric as "country above all". As far as I am considered the terrorists and the politicians can kill each other since that is what most of them are so good at. For God's sake leave us, the innocent and the uninvolved. What rights do we have to put the lives of our children at jeopardy. I am referring to those children, of families with moderate means similar to mine, who have worked their ways "through scholarships" and pure hard labour do certainly deserve an environment better than this. Besides given the state of affairs and as the job market goes, with my very limited "connections" as they call it, would be difficult if not impossible for my son to earn a respectable living. Admittedly some still may succeed but then those would be stories, rare and between.

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

**Home Minister is right**

I think the criticism of the Home Minister is unfair. What he said is right and maybe he should have explained it more.

Nothing happens without the will of God and "Rizik, Hayata, Mout and Daulat are entirely in God's domain." Let us all humbly accept his will as the Home Minister has. We need more Imams and Islamic scholars not policemen.

**Fatema Nasreen**  
Dhaka

**Please learn to call apni**

A few days earlier Mr. President walked on the streets of Dhaka and advised people to act politely by addressing every unknown person - 'apni'. It was a good gesture on the part of a president of the country. We wish our people would listen to him and try to change their ways of interaction.

Though I personally thank the President for the conduct, I want to remind him that at present the slogan 'apni' is not that important for the nation. We rather need slogans like "Don't praise the criminals".

Before the DCC election we heard our political leaders praising top-terrorists in public meetings and requesting the electorates to vote for them. We know that many of our newly elected ward commissioners are listed terrorists. While everyone is afraid of them, the politicians are promising welfare of the people by these criminals. Can we really expect development by the terrorists?

Our President's initiative is good. But the common people have no faith on the politicians. So Mr. President should try to restore peoples' faith first.

**Shafiqul Islam**  
Savar

**Submarine Cable Connection**

"BTB offered free landing station equipment"-what more does BTB want! They should sign the agreement today

**FM**  
Chittagong

**Of leaders and laymen**

We used to believe that the leaders' duty is to fight for people's welfare and the general people should enjoy the fruits of their hard work. But the political scenario since 1971 has forced us to believe the otherwise. There is no peace in the society. The law and order has gone down the drains. Instead of protecting the victims, the politicians opt for the killers and terrorists. For how long such politicians would govern us?

**Nurul Islam**  
Dhaka

**ETV: To be or not to be**

This refers to Masum H. Khan's letter on April 24.

ETV has apparently brought in new dimensions in broadcasting. And the slogan 'Paribartaner Angikar' meaning 'A Pledge to change' sounds serious and nice. But I wonder what positive changes an institution can bring to the society

when it started with corruption?

**D G Ahmed**  
Dhaka

**White paper II**

The ruling party has published another edition of white paper on irregularities and corruption of Awami League regime. The paper indicates that during the rule of AL, many high officials and civilians including high ranked army personnel took irregular government assistance for their constituencies or birthplaces from the Ministry of LGRD.

We urge the present government to constitute a judicial body to investigate these matters and bring these responsible person/s to justice.

**Gopal Sengupta**  
Montreal, Canada

**Pauper teachers of rich schools**

Owners of private English medium schools should justify charging the parents with exorbitant fees. We are paying more for the school bus than for my son's education. We are instructed to buy textbooks from their designated outlets and uniforms from the assigned tailors. We are also expected to raise funds through contributions and purchases at the meena-bazaars and the objective of learning is always lost. Fees are increased every other year. How long will we be held hostage to these so-called better educational institutions?

We never heard of school inspectors or auditors making reports or recommendations to any board, directors, parent committees or otherwise.

Owners of English medium schools may have started out with good intentions. But we doubt if they are still interested to deal with the lack of co-ordination, commitment, and accuracy in subject matter and management problems that plague the institutions chiefly because of their size. Will they stop taking in more students or creating more class or school sections than they can handle?

**Frustrated mother**  
Dhaka

**The portrait issue: A dichotomy**

For Muslims hanging portraits should never be made mandatory. Because they are not idolaters. Only the idolaters symbolise a person or a god/goddess of their choice to be revered in portrait and idolise it.

Here none of the Prime Ministers, former and present, are idolaters. In fact they have performed Hajj sev-

eral times. But Sheikh Hasina made it mandatory that every government and semi-government office must hang her father's portrait. The act was repealed in the last parliament session. Now the present Prime Minister is suggesting that the portrait of Saheed Zia and her own should be hung along with Sheikh Mujib's accordance to the respective national status.

New York, United States

**Export of gas**

Considering the present geo-political and economic situation and the ongoing atrocities on the Muslims, we think it is not wise to export our natural gas to India with the assistance of US companies. But, if the US alone wants to set up indus-

**Khaleda Zia's UN address and child killing**



Who will protect the child?

Daily Inquilab of 10 May contain a picture of Khaleda Zia addressing and urging UN to protect children at a special session of the UN General

Assembly on children. Just below contain another picture of a crying mother 'amar sontan ke phirie deen' ("give me back my child").

We hardly understand the futility of the ongoing feuds over hanging portraits of national leaders instead of following their ideals. We hope the political leaders will concentrate more on how to prosper our country than on fighting over portraits.

**M Mizanur Rahman**  
Dhaka

We should forget about the portrait issue. Bangladesh has a lot of things to catch up on. Our government should think about the future of Bangladesh instead of the portrait argument.

There are people in the Awami who like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and accept him as the Father of the Nation. Then there is BNP who think that Ziaur Rahman should be equally respected. I think that people should have the right to decide whether they want to hang any portrait or not. The government should not make this issue mandatory. It may go for some kind of a referendum.

**Shadman Samad**

tries in Bangladesh to produce gas by-products and other related items and therefore wants to install pipelines from various gas fields, we may allow them to do so without any hesitation.

It's a pity that only a small section of people of this country is able to use the natural gas. So the government must first consider the possible ways of distributing gas within the country.

And for international distribution we should not wholly depend on the US. We may invite Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Iran, Turkey, Canada, Saudi Arabia, China and UAE to invest in our gas industries along with USA.

**Farhan Quddus**  
DOHS, Dhaka

I was quite taken aback by your story on May 12th about the national gas utilisation committee's impending report. Your story mentioned that the committee thought that Bangladesh's gas reserves would not even be sufficient to cover domestic

requirements for 20 years - but then went on to say that the committee would recommend export of gas!

How can both these contradictory conclusions be part of the same report? One suspects that this committee's logic has been compromised by political pressure.

Anyone who has considered the political realities of Bangladesh knows that we should not export

**Time to criticise**

Should the public criticise party leaders or stand silent in the face of their repeated betrayal of principles?

I have received a number of notes including an e-mail-containing virus from people complaining that by criticising Ex-Prime Minister on occasion, I was aiding and abetting the other side. I'm not offended by the charge, but I think it cries out for a message. So here it goes.

Let's start with a few principles:

1. We have no kings/queens in Bangladesh -- all are subject to the law and to criticism.
2. Political parties should not become ends in themselves, but exist to advance core principles.
3. To the extent that a party's ego and drive for power swallows its primary purpose of advancing its principles, it has lost its proper course.
4. When the two main political parties begin to sound more and more alike on issues, at least one of them has lost its proper course.

Now, what should public do when his party's leader or other leaders stray from the course? Should he remain mute, so as not to embolden the enemy? Should he abandon the party, seeking purer alternatives? Or should he seek to effect change within the party through various means, including blunt criticism? Well, I think it depends on how far off course the party strays.

I respectfully suggest that those of you who think your party's leaders should be immune from criticism ought to reconsider. Are supporters of the party supposed to just sit around and say nothing while their representatives betray their principles? I think not.

I abhor the AL's constant pandering to minorities and exploiting them for political gain. But BNP have no business doing it either. The both parties should stand for the principle.

It is disgusting that politicians of both parties talk about the corruption when they completely ignore the infinitely more corrupting phenomenon of spending the public fund. Mr. Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, the incumbent Home Minister used helicopter rides to his village costing the exchequer a hefty sum of over Tk. 29 lakhs. There are also allegations that Ex-Prime Minister did spend public fund of Tk. 19 cores for her personal purpose during her tenure.

Where is the outrage? Should we just let these things slide without comment?

**Azad Sarwar**  
NY, USA

**Visa restrictions**

The Home Ministry continues to amaze me. Are they really trying to destroy all foreign commerce in Bangladesh?

These new regulations are so silly that I refuse to believe that even the philosophy spouting Home Minister read the directive before signing it. What I do find really

**want hartals?**

The 4-party alliance government is acting undemocratically towards the Awami League. They are not allowing any kind of meetings, processions and congregations of AL. But it is the constitutional right of an opposition party in a democratic country.

Consecutively, the leaders and activists of the Awami League are being arrested. Overall the present government is denying the rights of the opposition party which is dangerous for any democracy. In order to protest the atrocities, AL is likely to go to the streets. And they have already called several hartals. But we cannot afford anymore hartal. So the government must change their attitude towards the opposition and save the country from further ruin.

**Tuhin Hossain**  
Bangladesh

**Remembering Tagore**

I was shocked at the observation of Mr. Akbar Hussain in his letter 'Remembering Tagore' (May 8) that "Shakespeare is a powerful poet no

doubt but his genius was not that enlarged as we see in Tagore."

As a versatile intellect and renaissance man par excellence, Rabindranath Tagore was the ultimate representation of our literature, culture and spirit. He lifted our culture and awareness to an unique stage of revitalisation.

William Shakespeare too is not only a powerful poet but he is also one of the greatest playwright, genius dramatist, super actor, extraordinary writer and royal author ever born on this earth.

It is undesirable that two great myths of world literature of two different generations are to be weighed in the same equilibrium. Tagore must not be compared with Shakespeare.

**Nazmul Karim**  
Dhaka

**Diplomatic triumph in Burma**



Will she deny the Rohingyas?

Our heartfelt congratulation to Mr. Razali Ismail for his diplomatic triumph on the reconciliation process between the Burmese military dictators and the democratic opposition led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She has been released on 6th May 2002 and it appears that a coalition government consisting of army top brass and civilians will be formed. On principle, there will be seven states and seven divisions in Burma as before. It is likely that the Rohingya problem will remain unsolved if their legitimate rights and freedom are left unattended and the due share not given.

According to the history, Islam reached Arakan before 788 AD and since then it played important part towards the advancement of civilisation in Arakan. Muslims ruled the country together with Rakhine. Coins inscribing Islamic logo were in use from 1430 to 1785 AD while the Persian language was the court language of Arakan till 1845.

The criteria to qualify as an indigenous race in Burma have already been met and in the past Rohingya had been recognised as such by the democratic governments in Burma. Given the historical records and the declaration made, it is the birth-right of Rohingya to be a citizen belonging to an indigenous race of Burma and nothing short of this will satisfy them. Justice, equality and legitimate rights and privileges of Rohingya should be enshrined constitutionally. Denial of their deserving status will be tantamount to religious and racial discrimination.

In Arakan State (Rakhine State), it may have its constitution with provincial assembly. There must be at least one-third members in the assembly of Arakan State from Rohingya community and the Constitution should be embodied with religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and educational rights. Likewise, no less than one third of the ministers should be from Muslims in Arakan. Non-Muslims and Muslims should alternate the position of head of the State. Similar arrangement should be made in different strata of the local government and other such bodies. The appointments of Rohingya and their assignment should be in Rohingya majority area and it should be proportional to the percentage of Muslims among the local population.

It is well known to the world that the Rohingya has been victim of persecutions by both Burmese authorities and the Rakhine people since 1942 and as such there should be constitutional guarantee for the security of life and property of Rohingya in both Burma's and Arakan's constitutions. If not, there is every likelihood that Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, etc. will have to bear the perpetual burden of Rohingya refugees as the attitude of army and the Buddhist population along the border area with Bangladesh is to erase the Muslims from Arakan.

**Abul Faiz**  
NLD Arakan State Organiser  
Maungdaw, Burma

**Launch deaths**

In the last week we have seen a compelling picture of political correctness in the UK exposing a real cultural deficit in Bangladesh.

A Conservative member of Parliament in the UK was forced to resign her position in the shadow cabinet for telling an unpleasant racist joke during a dinner party that suggested that people of South Asian origin were so populous in the UK they could be thrown from trains as an example of something with no value because they were so many.

The mere assertion that South Asians are so many and that



Do we care?

they have no value was enough to cost this senior British politician her career.

In Bangladesh last week nearly 400 people died in a launch accident probably compounded by the inadequate construction of the ferry and also by a lack of effective safety regulations. The same day the fullness of tragedy was reported and the extent of the deaths were finally known, the Bangladeshi Prime Minister left the country without visiting the scene of the disaster or meeting any of the bereaved families. In fact the whole government seemed to show a complete lack of sensitivity for the people involved in this tragedy.

It is hard to think of another country where a disaster of this scale could be so easily ignored by senior politicians. It seems that it is not only British conservative politicians, who think that there are so many South Asians that they have no real value or significance.

The behaviour of the Prime Minister demonstrates that in her opinion the tragic loss of 400 Bangladeshi lives certainly does not warrant delaying her trip abroad, nor does it require any meaningful comment.

If treating South Asian people as worthless and insignificant in the telling of a joke can destroy a political career in the UK, it is a shame that in Bangladesh the actual treatment of real people as worthless and insignificant is so common that it goes completely unnoticed, even when such disregard is manifested by the Prime Minister.

**Md. Rahman**  
Surrey, UK

**Pollution and traffic jam**

The BNP government is taking steps to prevent environmental pollution by banning auto rickshaws and that is encouraging. But nothing is done about the cycle rickshaws that is chiefly responsible for traffic jams.

Nowadays moving within the city has become more difficult for a certain group of residents of Dhaka who cannot afford a private car and find it inconvenient to travel in public buses. Most people of this income group travel in Nirapad or Premium bus services. The government should import environment friendly auto rickshaws and more taxicabs to meet the requirement of these people.

I hope the Communication Ministry will ban two-stroke auto rickshaws from the streets of Dhaka only after ensuring enough taxi cab facilities. Otherwise a few million residents of the city will face great difficulties.

**Dr GM Khan**  
Dhaka

**Does government**