

## "Blanket immunity for the World Bank"

I must thank Mr. A. H. Monjurul Kabir for another wonderful and substantial legal analysis on the vexed issue of immunity of international organisation with reference to its status before national court ("Blanket immunity for the World Bank", July 21). The article gives detail, informative account of a particular case study and relates it with broader issues like politics, human rights and international organisation (The World Bank).

I like very much his conclusion where Mr. Kabir attempts to shed light on possible future discourse of the critical problem. I thank *The Daily Star* and its Law Desk for such stimulating contribution.

**Kumar Murshid**  
Beijing, China

I would like to congratulate the author of the article "Blanket immunity for the World Bank?" In most of the developing countries, government, media and intellectual society are reluctant and hesitant to speak against international financial institutions like WB, IMF, ADB etc.

World Bank (WB) is involved in numerous projects in developing countries. And it has become quite apparent that many such projects don't always consider issues like human rights etc. For example, the construction of WB supported Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge caused serious social and environmental problems around the project and adjacent areas. In order to save a few million dollar the project narrowed down the width of the Jamuna river to 4.8 km from 17 km in the project site. This caused numerous problems including unexpected and sudden erosion of chars. Consequently, thousands of char dwellers had to leave their home, land and belongings. Thus the project brought a massive adversity not only to the livelihood of the char dwellers but also to environment and morphology of the river. I am not opposing the construction of the bridge but ignoring of these related issues by WB and the concerned government agencies during the implementation of such large project.

The author of the article has emphasised on UN mandated investigation into the accountability of the international financial institutions like WB involved in various projects in developing countries. But I am not sure if UN will do anything against the purpose and will of WB. We all know UN is nothing but a one-eyed deer and always preaches for the North. Only the concerned governments and members of civil society can go ahead to do something positive to preserve and uphold human rights of the disadvantaged people ignored and violated by WB. Unfortunately, the governments in most of the developing countries bear a very weak and fragile moral strength and always are in favour of these international organisations desperately ignoring its own people and the issues like human rights and justice.

**M. Nazrul Islam**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Adamjee closure

This refers to the article by Syed Akhter Mahmood on Adamjee Jute Mills (July 24). The writer like most other experts termed the closure of the Mill a historic and bold decision of the government. As the Mill was incurring loss over the years, so it should be closed down. And this is the view of most of the columnists.

But from the press reports, it may be said that it is the corruption, which is behind the closure. Then I would like to ask the writer why didn't he urge the government to punish the culprits? It has been projected that the workers of the Mill are involved in corruption. Therefore, they have to suffer. But it is not due to corruption of the workers but due to corruption of higher level officials the Mill incurred such a huge loss. They are not being punished, instead the government has punished the whole country by closing down the mill. Bold decision indeed!

The jute farmers are directly or indirectly involved with the jute industry. Hasn't this bold decision punished the farmers? Transparency International has unearthed the corruption practices of our higher government officials. The trade union leaders are also corrupt. But who are these corrupt leaders? They belong to the major political parties including the ruling party, which has taken the bold decision of closing down Adamjee. How come the closure of the Mill by the government is considered bold when the government is not bold enough to punish those who were involved in corruption?

Now when Adamjee is closed down, many are for building IT-village there. Yes we are passing the age of information technology. We are told to believe this is the magical remedy of the curse of poverty, low GDP and other things. All are shouting that IT will solve all the problems we are facing. If we miss the train of IT, then we will jeopardise our future.

But IT creates jobs for the middle and upper classless not for the working class. As most columnists are from higher or middle class origins, they are always advocating for this IT industry. After the closure of the Mill, will the skilled workers of the Mill get a job in the proposed IT village?

Even though the golden days of

the golden fibres are gone, yet it earns a huge amount of foreign currency. If the jute industry suffers set back, the farmers will become poorer. And the effect of closure of jute mills will be on the farmer community. When the jute industry in the neighbouring India is expanding, in our country the bold government is trying to strangle this industry. We don't want to see any more influx of landless farmers and skilled workers of jute mills joining the profession of rickshaw pulling.

No IT village in the place of Adamjee. We want better prospects for the farmers and the working class. Adamjee Jute Mill (though it may seem to be unrealistic) should be run again in the same place with renovation and new management.

## Oblivious of Dr Shahidullah



The forgotten monarch of wisdom

I am 10-years-old and I study in class V in Scholastica School.

My father is the grandson of Dr Mohammed Shahidullah. My father always tells me that Dr Shahidullah was a very learned man and that I should follow his footsteps.

I have not seen him. I have also not seen Rabinranath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Begum Rokeya. But I have read about them in the newspapers on their birthdays, death anniversaries and other days. Then how come I did not read anything on Dr Shahidullah either on his birthday (10<sup>th</sup> of July) or on his death anniversary (13<sup>th</sup> of July)?

Mr Editor, will you please tell me whether my father tells me all these stories about Dr Shahidullah so that I study hard or is it true that he knew all that many languages etc?

**Manisha Satiya Tarak**  
Mirpur, Dhaka

Dear Manisha,

You are absolutely right in pointing out our fault. As your father told you, Dr Shahidullah was a great scholar and knew many languages. We published a lot on him earlier, and will do so more in the future. You must study hard and try to become a scholar yourself.

-Editor

Because the country's backbone is not the higher or the upper class, but the farmers. And they are the majority.

**Protik**  
Dhaka Medical College

## Sexual harassment

This is in regards to Afsan Chowdhury's column on July 23 about the plight of women at the workplace. I certainly sympathise with the women who suffer from harassment at work and I do agree that it may be quite pervasive.

To keep this issue in context remember that Bill Clinton was also one of those middle aged men pawing a young intern besotted with his power. There was also the case of the US Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas who was successfully accused of sexual harassment by Anita Hill and most recently the case of the murdered Congressional intern Chandra Levy.

As for domestic help, in Victorian erotic fiction it was pretty much an accepted turn of events to abuse the maid and that was not limited just to fiction. As a matter of fact, the maid's uniform is a long-standing favourite of fetishists all over the world.

The problems in Bangladesh do not even approach the degree to those in Chinese societies and in Africa where older men often infected with Aids, enjoy underage virgins. Then again I wouldn't know.

Afsan Chowdhury in an otherwise unobjectionable column does throw out one of his increasingly misdirected barbs. He accuses Structural Readjustment Programs as one of the culprits in making women sexual victims.

In other words he's accusing the IMF for their reforms. I would really recommend an excellent book Mr. Afsan, called "Eat the Rich" by P J O'Rourke, in which he surveys different economic systems around the world. He was trying to find out why some people are rich and others poor.

We are not poor because of STR's. We are poor because we live

Many a times this has been taken to the notice of the WASA authorities but to no effect.

Out of the two deep tubewells, one went out of order on June 23 and was fixed after three days, though the mechanical team had to work only four to five hours to make it operational again. Was it too difficult for the authority to fix it earlier? This belated action only proved WASA's irresponsibility and we, the local people paid the price for it—72 hours without water supply.

When we went to the WASA office no one except a pump operator took the matter seriously. The Mirpur WASA office replied that the mechanical division was not under their control. And afterwards they sent two trucks of water for the 50,000 residents of the area.

As the pump resumed its operation the local musclemen started hijacking water. In this area there is a system of allocating time for different areas but the musclemen started diverting water in their favour during the allocated time of others. And hundreds of families were deprived of water for 7/8 days. But none from WASA came forward to control the situation.

After much persuasion the MD of the WASA took a personal initiative to install a new pump in Sheorapara but unfortunately due to wrong design and lack of space it did not work. WASA has a big area of land in Sheorapara but the whole space is occupied by its employees from different offices under the patronage of WASA Employees' Union. They have built houses and rent them regularly. When a space (90ft x 90ft) was needed to install the new pump, none was ready to sacrifice. Finally a space was made available adjacent to the old pump, whereas to get sufficient water the new one should have been installed 400 feet apart.

The WASA has two kinds of line for water supply — one is 18 inch, which is a reserved line, and if any one encroaches on it he is liable to imprisonment. The other one is 6-inch line that is called the service

line directly connected to the customers. Recently it has been observed that a number of residents have taken illegal connections.

The WASA employees give connection of 18-inch reserved lines without any permission or whatsoever. These people are using water illegally whereas the authorised customers having connections from 6-inch line are suffering.

I hope the government will consider the matter and take necessary steps in this regard.

**M N Anwar**  
Sheorapara, Dhaka

## Terrorism by real estate companies

A vast wet land area under Mouza Joarsahara, Dumni, Barua and Kathaldia, about 2/3 kilometres east of Gulshan Model Town is clearly defined in the Dhaka Master Plan as flood zone and vital retention point for flood water. The area is used as agricultural land during dry season and a flood flow zone during the monsoon. If this area is filled-up flood water will rush towards Dhaka leading to inundation of the entire city area which may cause erosion of Dhaka city flood protection embankment as such the embankment may collapse any time due to heavy rain during the monsoon and onrush of flood water.

A large number of people of this area depend on cultivation of winter vegetables and paddy. They will also have to face hardship if the real estate companies fill up this area.

A couple of real estate companies are engaged in earth filling in the low-lying areas like Joarsahara, Dumni, Barua and Kathaldia. They have also engaged a number of brokers who often threaten the landowners so that the developers can easily purchase private individual lands at a lower cost. They have also forcibly and illegally occupied khas lands and canals (public). There are even incidents of destroying various structures (constructed by landowners) by their hired hoodlums.

Filling of wet land is clear violation of WetLand Protection Act. Would the government please do something to save us and our city from the clutches of the real estate companies?

**Acitizen**  
Dhaka

## Student bodies' 'no'

leaders? What is their *locus standi*? Who have authorised them to speak on behalf of the millions of peace loving silent students who cannot attend classes, take examinations and finish their academic life in time because of the 'mastani' of these student leaders numbering more than, say, 1000 in the whole country? Have these so-called student leaders been democratically elected by the members of their own respective student parties, or by the general students? Have

## Our Test status



Bangladesh helping Sri Lanka achieve world record

'It is premature' was my thought when I first heard that Bangladesh had been granted Test status. Then again, I thought, we have some things that most other countries in the world don't have—enormous love and interest for this great game of cricket and a huge population to look for talent. So, there were reasons to be hopeful. But on the other hand, to spot the talent one needs a proper domestic competition structure and certain level of standard. We have been failing in those areas for years after years. What I fear most is the situation when people will start losing interest. After all nobody likes losers and above all our team not only gets beaten within three days but also, so far, have been unable to show any kind of improvement at all. In any of the matches played so far, no more than two batsmen performed well in a single innings and about the bowling...less said the better. The batsmen all over the world must be thinking they are just having a free run.

Comparison with other nation's performances when they started is simply not valid, just look at the margins of defeat in the dozen of Test matches we have played so far. The game of glorious uncertainty has become the most certain thing when we play. Test cricket was never meant to be easy, perhaps we took it too lightly and now facing the consequence. We need to improve in every aspect of the game and learn to play as a team where every member contributes, not just one or two.

**S. H. Naqib**  
Cambridge, UK

these student leaders discussed the subject under consideration with the general students on a democratic platform before arriving at the conclusion to say 'no' to ban student politics? They have not, and they cannot.

Most of the present student leaders, whose statements and photographs are prominently displayed in the newspapers everyday, and also on TV if they belong to the party in power, are not the leaders of our students. Some of them are not even students. They are self-styled

prison sentence for Hasan Celal Guzel, former Education Minister and leader of the Rebirth Party..." (Human Rights Watch World Report 2001).

Mr. Charge d'Affaires, By allying with Israel, Modern Turkey has lent justification to the naked aggression, heinous atrocities, brutal savagery, mass-killing, terrible cruelties inflicted on the Palestinian Muslim people by the Israeli. Whereas,

However, until the abolishment of *khilafah* in 1924, the Jews, the Christians and other religious people lived safely and securely in Palestine under the fair and just Islamic rule. Even today there is a large Jews community in Istanbul. Who are they? These are the Jews whose ancestors, after having been expelled from Spain by King Ferdinand in 1492, took shelter in the Ottoman land and settled in Istanbul as the "guests" of the then *Khalifah*.

Mr. Charge d'Affaires, your comment "...which freed the minds of the Turkish people and provided western type of civil and political rights..."

"is inherently flawed.

In Turkey, uttering a single word against Kemal Ataturk is a sacrilegious act. I think no editor in your country would ever risk prosecution and imprisonment by allowing this kind of debate in his/her newspaper. Unlike our Turkish brothers, we are not destined to consecrate, to sanctify or to deify our Father of the Nation, a great relief after all!

**Monirul Haque**  
Dhaka

Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk will always remain controversial throughout Muslim world and in the western countries also. As for

## Shamsunnahar Hall incident: Brutality at midnight



Choosing soft targets?

Through this letter I would like to appeal to the conscience of all members of the civil society to rise and condemn, the police brutality carried out at the Shamsunnahar Hall. In this connection I would also like to refer to yet another related news "Home Ministry asked to amend police law".

This incident is yet another one, which is reflective of the dark ages and absolute state of brutality in all manifestations in which we continue to live. Frankly incidences like these often make me feel small, after all I cannot ignore or deny the fact that I am also a product of the same environment and hence this hangs heavy on my conscience.

I no longer feel angry or agitated but sad. The only thing that keeps my optimism "afloat" is my profound faith in that scientific theory that—every action has an opposite and equal reaction and perhaps, someday soon, by a miraculous act of God we shall be able to put an end to all such senseless acts.

And now "Home Ministry asked to amend police law". For Gods sake no more directives. We are tired of "committees" and "directives". We need some real sincere actions to put an end to this sorry state of affairs.

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Texas, USA

It was the British colonial period. The police got the tips that Surjo Sen, the fugitive and main accused in the Chittagong Army Looting Case, had come to his residence. The police surrounded the house but did not enter inside to arrest him, for the sun was set. Next morning after the sunrise police entered the house and

maintain supremacy in the political front.

The irony is that we don't find any offspring of our politicians in student politics. They are sent abroad to build up their career. It is only others' sons who are used for dirty purposes and given political protection to cover up their negative acts.

Unless every political party comes to a consensus student politics will continue to go unabated.

**Reazul Mahmud**  
Al-Ain, UAE

Debenture-repayments

In 1995 a few companies were allowed to float debentures calling for public subscription. One of the companies was Bangladesh Zipper Industries Ltd; This company promised to pay back the money along with interest at the rate of 14 per cent in instalments payable on 1st February and 1st August each year. The instalment due on 1st February has not yet been paid by the company.

Recently The Securities Exchange Commission issued a directive to the Company to pay off their debenture obligations within a week. After more than two weeks from the SEC directive I went to the office of the company to get my money but to my utter dismay I could neither get my payment nor any assurance from any body the probable date of payment, whether at all it is going to be paid.

I do not know if at all SEC has any authority to issue such directives to such delinquent organisations and in case of non-compliance with their directives whether they have any authority to penalise the wrong doers. All said and done can any one let me and other sufferers like me know where to seek remedies?

**BA Khan**  
Dhaka

## Saifur sees evil axis

It is quixotic to hear Saifur Rahman bitterly complaining that an 'evil nexus' is hindering his efforts to reform the sick nationalised banking sector. Last time I checked, the gentleman was the Finance Minister of the government. If he cannot

example, wearing 'Hijab' or headscarf is illegal in Turkish Government offices or Parliament. One American lady of Turkish origin was expelled from her membership in the Turkish Parliament because she will not discard her headscarf in the Parliament. This Human Rights violation of freedom of choice is being criticised in western media also.

They strictly go by the Turkish National Constitution and laws formulated during the time of Kemal Ataturk and it has its reason. Turkey was once called "The Sick Man of Europe" and Kemal Ataturk and his policies made Turkey free and prosperous under secularism and less influence of Mullahs and Moulanas. Turkey is the only country where the Constitution is interpreted by a Panel of Military Officers not by the Supreme Court of the country.

The point I wanted to make is: countries following secularism, may be at the cost of some violations of fundamental human rights, have more peace and progress than the countries that do not have secularism lawfully followed in their system.

**Golam F. Akhter**  
Convener, Bangladesh-USA Human Rights Coalition, USA

arrested Surjo Sen. At that time there was a law that police should not enter a dwelling place from sunset to sunrise. The colonial police used to respect that law.

Is that law still in force in Bangladesh, or has it been rescind to show respect to the human rights of the citizen of an independent country? If it is still in force, would someone make the VC of Dhaka University aware of that law, please?

Once again it is the student and teacher politics, that have so obviously rattled in the Dhaka University, one of the highest learning centres in the country. In the backdrop of student and teacher politics we want to know, is the removal of a provost, whether politically motivated or not, by the authority illegal? If it is not illegal, may it be immoral and indecent, the general student have nothing to do with such removal. They may at best hold a protest meeting, or bring out a procession against such a move. If the removal is illegal, the aggrieved party may go to the court; though his/her case will be hanging in the court, overburdened with litigation, for a time, who knows how long.

In this country our emotion so easily drags us to the extreme! And most of us have little respect to law. So, often we pay the high price of our extremism.

Blaming police has become a pleasant pastime for us. We use them and afterward make them scapegoat. Without permission police would not dare enter the premises of Shamsunnahar Hall.

**Faruque Hasan**  
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

The actions at DU on the early hours of July 24 defy explanation. I am just shocked. But before I am misunderstood I must reiterate that I am shocked and dismayed by the police actions on unarmed, non-violent women sleeping in their halls. That is all. I have no particular sympathies for the DU students in general because they do appear by and large to be rampaging thugs. Frankly I am also impressed with the ferocity of the females amongst them.

I would have been outraged at the police action on an institution of higher learning if the students hadn't responded with violence and arson.

Rioting mobs deserve no sympathy even if they are the so-called students protesting police atrocities. Violence only begets more violence.

But the more I think about it, I still don't get it. Why would the government go for such a heavy-handed provocative action?

**Thor, Dhaka**

carry out his government's policy in face of such shadowy opposition, he should step aside in favour of someone who can.

**ES**  
Missouri, USA

Saifur Rahman is the Finance Minister and, as such, the political leader of the country. How does he blame political leaders for the failure to close failing banks?

Can the government blame itself for its failure?

**Ahsan Habib**  
Michigan, USA

## UNDP telephone bill

It's very disappointing to learn that UNDP has given an ultimatum regarding telephone bills and services of BTB. I've also learnt from BBC, Bangla Service regarding the same issue as well as explanations from the management of BTB where the BTB gives its lame excuse regarding the allegations of UNDP.

If a UN organisation fails to receive better service from BTB then what would be the condition of the ordinary citizens?

Would the government please look into the matter so that our image is not further tarnished?

**Gopal Sengupta**  
Montreal, Canada

## Education down the drain!

I just read the news on Jagannath University College students who went on a rampage on the streets injuring innocents and damaging cars (July 24). Then there is a picture of agitating students of Shamsunnahar Hall demonstrating against JCD's bid to remove their provost. To top it all off is the article about the impending session jam in BUET.

One glance at the paper and it is obvious that higher education is a waste of time and money in Bangladesh. Of course there are students who do try to study in spite of all this, I've even met some, but they are the exceptions. In the US, it is in university that people mature and discover so many things. In Bangladesh you discover the joys of burning cars and either gang raping women or organising groups to protest the gang rapes.

Do you actually imagine that any of these graduates are going to be employable? There is a distinct class difference appearing among graduates in the job market these days. In the past it was only a few rich kids who studied abroad and came home to their businesses. But now increasingly upper middle class people are coming home to good jobs. They will get obvious preference for any position than any Bangladeshi graduate, if only because they don't know how to rampage. Next in the strata are the IUB, NSU and IBA people. By the way, just to prove you there's no unemployment in Bangladesh, every NSU Economics graduate who was looking for a job has already gotten one.

**Kishore Pasha**  
Dhaka

Secularism vs human rights?

Secularism vs human rights? The point I wanted to make is: countries following secularism, may be at the cost of some violations of fundamental human rights, have more peace and progress than the countries that do not have secularism lawfully followed in their system.