Simi, Trisha and others

First there was the verdict in Simi's suicide case where four accused were given mild punishment in the form of 1 year's RI and a penalty of Tk.1, 000. Second one was the verdict in Trisha's murder case where three accused were given death sentence.

Both the victims died from the same cause-- harassment. Trisha, though not knowing how to swim but knowing that she would drown for sure, jumped into the pond to save herself from ignominy in the hands of the lechers. In the same manner, even though Simi knew that committing suicide would be a point of no return for her she opted to kill herself to save herself from the fangs and claws of the hyenas of our ever deteriorating society. Unfortunately, the verdicts have been so different!

May God give strength to Simi's family to bear yet another shock that they had received on September 28--the day the verdict was announced.

Wahid Shafi , *On e-mail*

* * *

Just the moment I was bewildered by the impulsive court decision in Simi suicide case, I was blessed with a sigh of relief with the "sentenced to death" verdict of the murderers of Trisha.

Though not kicking, law is still alive in this country.

A Man in Uniform, *Dhaka*

* * *

I'm appalled and utterly disgusted at the verdict of Simi suicide case. While the nation expected an exemplary punishment for the culprits who led Simi to tender resignation to this world-- what we have witnessed in reality! A mockery to humanity!

A former colleague of accused police S I Abul Bashar, S I Abdur Razzak of same Khilgaon Police submitted charge sheet. And the verdict also read that severe lapse of the prosecution side in investigating and framing charges against the accused were found. And the end result was the four accused were sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment!

In another case, 4 cops got 7-yr Rigorous Imprisonment for mugging Tk 800/ from a rickshaw passenger. The verdict was announced the same day. But in a different court-- a special tribunal judge. While the earlier verdict was made in a magistrate court. And it makes all the difference!

Whatever the loopholes or age-old obsolete laws, provisions are still there, they need to be amended and modified to do justice to the rule of law.

We sure expected life sentence/death penalty for the culprits who were accused of such heinous crime. But we saw in the newspapers the convicted cop Bashar showing a V-sign. No wonder Simi's family will henceforth be living in a predicament of awful jeopardy, under duress, constant threats. Not only the family regrets they have been denied justice but also they fear they would not be able to lead a normal life.

It's not my showing any slightest disrespect to the court, which might amount to contempt to it, but scepticism about the persons who have the privilege to be there to uphold law and justice.

Simi's family will go to the upper court to appeal. But this will be of little use unless the media, civil society and human rights organisations come forward and demand justice.

Remember that it was a vernacular daily that ran Simi's suicide story. Three ministers including the Home Minister rushed to the spot and the trial got underway. But who knew that it would end up this way?

Akbar
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

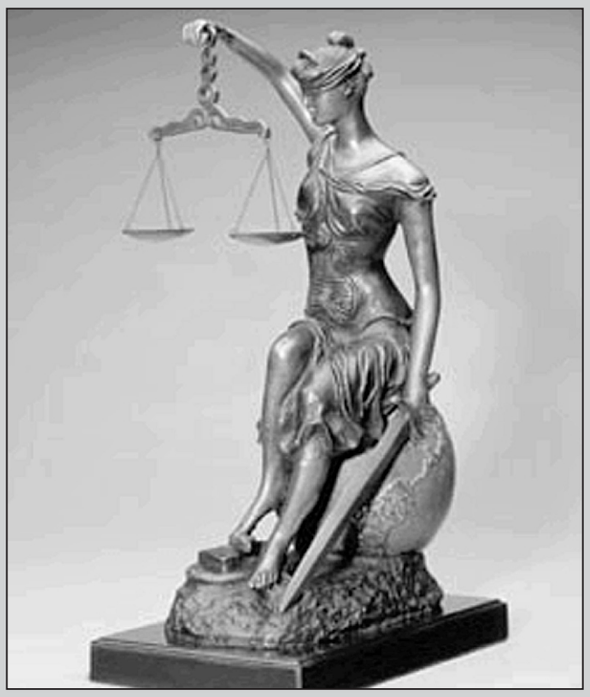
* * *

This is to our honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who is a woman incidentally. Since the day one of her reign, she has failed to do justice to the women of the country, keep aside the general people. Her government is most inefficient in punishing any culprit since most of them roam around with her party's label.

Assault on women is nothing new in our country, but this has reached an extreme point now. At every level of this society women are insulted in the most disgusting way. Raped, tortured, abducted and strangled to death-- these are just some of the ways women in Bangladesh nowadays meet their fate. Criminals guilty of these crimes roam around scot-free, as if such consequences were normal and had to be met. The jury's decision on the Simi case did not surprise me since for long 'a good verdict' has vanished from Bangladesh's history. Where the Shazneen murder case is still continuing with faint hopes of the guilty being punished, this was most expected.

Since the October 2001 elections, so many women have been raped, assaulted and murdered that mentioning them would fill up pages. And then assault on women took a new form when the police attacked Shamsunnahar Hall at the early hours of the night and dragged students out like they were animals.

Honorable Prime Minister, do you ever read the newspaper? Or do you think that the press is lying and these kinds of things never took place. Being a woman, does it not ring anywhere in your mind that you could perhaps feel 'sorry' for us ordinary women and give us proper justice?



The unbalanced scale of justice

Instead of celebrating *'shishu konna shoptaho'* and other occasions, and making big promises that you would never keep; please take some action to correct this situation.

I was born a free girl in a free country and I want to enjoy my freedom.

Arani Siddiqi
IBA, DU

Criminal Court"

I would like to respond to Barrister Harun ur Rashid's column where he has opined that the US is bypassing the International Criminal Court whose jurisdiction has been accepted by most of the countries and ratified by their respective parliament or congress also.

But in USA it has never been ratified in congress (House of representative and senate; and possibly it might be necessary to amend the US constitution by at least two-thirds of the states also). It has been clarified by the Secretary of State, Mr. Collin Powel several times in international forums-- why USA cannot accept the jurisdiction of International Court over its armed forces for peace keeping or participation in the allied forces for any wrong doing or damage to other country.

All US soldiers take oath to protect US interest and its constitution; not any other interest or UN charter or any other constitution. If the US soldiers get involved in litigation in foreign or international court, the US soldiers or their parents may sue the US government for that violation of US constitution. This proposed change is subject to ratification by legislative procedure in USA that is why USA is not accepting any jurisdiction of International Court yet. Possibly it is only in USA a sitting President can be sued in the court of law in USA while performing his duty both personally and also for his official duty. In the famous quotation of the 26th President Theodore Roosevelt, "No man is above the law and no man is below it", he definitely meant the laws passed by the US congress and US states.

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

UN vs US

This is in response to MA who feels that we should give up our favourite pastime of America bashing and instead we should hold the UN responsible for all the ills of this world (September 22 & 27).

But that would be like blaming the puppet for its inaction or out-of-sync move instead of criticising the puppeteer while watching a puppet show.

By the way, to protect Israeli interest, the US applied its veto power to 30 UN resolutions out of 33.

Md. Sadek Hossain
On e-mail

US policy in the Middle East

This is an opinion I have, and not a historical fact based comment against anyone in particular. My personal thoughts on the subject of the US and Israel are apart of what I believe is nationalistic in nature. The US supports Israel for political reasons, and a sense of historical guilt and Israel likes to keep sticking the point of the knife into the wound as a reminder that the US is a responsible ally.

The State of Israel is a thorn in the side of Islamic beliefs. Israel will always be an aggressive nation that will need protection from someone, as it could not and cannot exist on its own. I have serious doubt about Israel ever being able to go up against a united front of Arab nations by itself.

The US works through various Arab nations to secure the fact that there will not be such a united front and if you are looking for a standard, its called, "divide and conquer"

Jeff vanden Boom
USA

Big brother

Many PC users may not realise it, but Windows XP and the Windows Media Player are bringing your computer into the Big Brother world of George Orwell's novel, "1984".

When you use the latest versions of these, you give permission to Microsoft to disable any other software they don't like. In particular, these programs may disable programs, which convert a CD track to an MP3, even though it's both legal and very convenient to play some music while you work. To be exact, you agree "These security related updates may disable your ability to copy and/or play Secure Content and use other software on your computer." (in MS End User License Agreement for XP(SP1) and WMF).

It's like having your own personal policeman sitting in your computer, except the policeman enforces Microsoft's laws, rather than your government's. Microsoft should publicise their new policy: "What will we prevent you from doing today?"

We finally know the Big Brother's name. It is Bill Gates.

Unceremonious exit of Simon Dring

As expected the present popular government has asked Mr. Simon Dring, the ETV Managing Director to leave Bangladesh within a stipulated time. I do not think this is going to enhance the image of the government that endeavours to hold freedom of press so boldly. Again another legal dispute is known to have remained pending in the higher court of justice on the ETV issue. The government's action might now be interpreted as intentional, and will only substantiate the observation made earlier by Dr. Kamal Hossain (August 30) that, "This is not a public litigation. The writ petitioners and their counsels have political identity and ill motive". Could this have acted behind the psyche of the policy-makers in Mr. Dring's case now?

Without going into their political identity, I would like to shed some light on the conscientious journalistic background of Mr. Simon Dring. He not only played a key role in bringing about a new dimension to electronic media in the country from the BTV's traditional monotony and channel invasion from outside the country but also contributed to the cause of our struggle for independence in 1971. For the young generation in Bangladesh I would like to shed a little light on Mr Dring's background of progressive and pro-liberation outlook by quoting from 'The Daily Telegraph', 27 March 1971:

"As the Pakistani Army moved in force to crush Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 25-day-old independence movement all foreign journalists in East Pakistan, confined at gunpoint in the Intercontinental Hotel since the beginning of the fighting, were rounded up and deported to Karachi.

Simon Dring, The Daily Telegraph correspondent, evaded the round-up by hiding on the roof of the hotel and despite repeated attempts by the army to find him and the only other foreign newsman to escape the net, an Associated Press photographer, Michel Laurent, he managed to make an extensive tour of the burning city. He succeeded in getting on a plane to West Pakistan yesterday, missing a check by security men by minutes, and although he was twice stripped and his luggage thoroughly searched he got through with his notes intact to Bangkok early on Monday morning to send this report." (re: Tank Crush Revolt in Pakistan. 7000 slaughtered: Homes burned by Simon Dring)

This is the man who may be held responsible for shaking the world conscience, for the first time, about what was going on inside East Pakistan in 1971 through his numerous reports. This is the man who made up a team to develop a healthy trend in electronic media in Bangladesh after nearly 28 years. Instead of honouring people like him we tend to castigate them in a systematic manner!

Good bye Mr. Dring-- there are people who will love and respect you forever.

Dr. K. Maudood Elahi
Professor, Jahangirnagar University

"Fuel-less electricity generator?"

I thank Professor S. K. Rabbani for taking the issue seriously and making us aware us of such pseudo-scientific claims by Mr. Nazmul Huda. Such types of claims are very common in the Western world, and in almost every such case examinations carried out by scientific community turned out that the claimers were all frauds. In USA, Louis A. Bloomfield, Professor of Physics at the University of Virginia, has the following website, the interested persons can find more on this issue:

http://rabi.phys.virginia.edu/HTW/

Not surprisingly, no "free electricity" machines have ever been released to the real scientists for testing. That's because the results of such testing are certain: those machines simply can't work for the very fundamental and incontrovertible reasons.

Like so many "scientific" conmen, the purveyors of this particular scam claim to be victims of a hostile scientific establishment, which refuses to accept their brilliant discoveries. Their refusal to submit their work to scientific peer for review is supposedly based on a fear that such review will be biased and subjective, controlled by the conspiracy. The sad reality is that the "scientific establishment" is more than willing to examine the claims, but those claims won't survive the process of inspection.

The scientists have been looking for over a century for any changes in the laws of physics with translations and rotations in space and with movement through time, and have never found any evidence of such changes. Thus momentum, angular momentum, and energy are strictly conserved in our universe. For the counter rotation device to create energy from nothing, all the laws of physics would have to be thrown in the trashcan. The upset would be almost as severe as discovering that 1+1 = 3. Furthermore, a universe in which physics was time-dependent and energy was not conserved would be a dangerous place. Free electricity devices would become the weapons of the future-- bombs and missiles that released energy from nothing. Moreover, as the free electricity devices produced energy from nothing, the mass/energy of the earth would increase and thus its gravitational field would also increase. Eventually, the gravity would become strong enough to cause gravitational collapse and the earth would become a black hole. Fortunately, this is all just science fiction because free electricity isn't real.

Sajjad Haidar
Associate Professor, Department of Applied Physics & Electronics
University of Dhaka

* * *

Mr Kim in his letter (September 28), raised his eyebrow regarding a front-page appeal to the PM ("Fuel-less, Pollution free", September 25). He made a sarcastic comment that "A Bangladeshi scientist has solved every problem in the world" and wondered why the appellant did not give his contact address as Mr Kim believed that many 'gullible' people would be dying to invest in that 'miracle'.

It appears that Mr Kim does not understand the difference between a sincere appeal and a commercial ad. It is also not understandable why he wants the telephone number of the appellant or what exactly is bothering him. If he has a list of 'gullible people' he should either try to find the owner of the technology, or caution the 'gullible people' in a decent way, while the concerned daily has a responsibility too.

It also appears that Mr Kim was so taken aback by the 'miracle', that he did not have the 'heart' to go through the appeal fully. Otherwise, he would have noticed the fact of piracy of technology of the same inventor from Bangladesh to a foreign land. I would suggest Mr Kim to go through the editorial dt 20.09.02 of the same daily titled 'Piracy made easy'.

For the information of Mr Kim, this 'miracle' has already been registered in a legitimate patent office and I do not see any reason why it cannot be registered in the rest of the world including Mr Kim's country.

I have gone through the appeal carefully and could not find any claim to the extent of 'solving every problem in the world'. The problem created by Mr Kim by wishing to have the telephone number of the appellant (unnecessarily) while keeping himself in disguise, however, remains unsolved.

A miracle is a miracle until the mysteries are unveiled. And it becomes a reality, when everybody starts using it.

A Citizen
Dhaka

"Move the Shahid Minar"

I am really shocked and surprised to read Mr. Wahid Chowdhury's letter (October 1).

The BNP-Jamaat alliance government's taking control of the Shahid Minar is an unprecedented event in our 31 years' history. Even the former military government did not dare to act the way this current government is acting in regards Shaid Minar case. This is not keeping with the spirit of people's democratic practice, respect to the spirit of the Language Movement and our Independence War.

Given the context of the case, Mr. Chowdhury's proposal is an extremely divisive one, showing utter disrespect to our martyrs and their supreme sacrifice for our independence and self-determination. I would like to urge Mr. Chowdhury to read Bangladesh's political and cultural history accurately and unbiasedly first and then to come up with these kinds of ideas.

Syed N Wadood
North Carolina, USA

Zia Airport

Much has been written on our airport and most of the comments have not been too flattering. Recently, the authorities have completed the construction of a multi-storied parking complex. It can accommodate roughly up to a thousand cars. The complex is very advanced in design and convenient in terms of usage.

The parking charge, at Tk.30 is somewhat high. Despite all this arrangement to accommodate cars, I am sorry to say there is no provision for the passengers (i.e. visitors) themselves. The families and friends who come to see off or receive their loved ones often sit huddled up on the bases of the pillars. The guards are extremely rude and do not hesitate to literally push around these visitors. The ticket to the waiting hall inside costs Tk.250, which most of the common people cannot afford.

What percentage of the population has cars? There are hundreds of people who come from faraway cities and towns to see off their dear ones. There should be some convenient waiting space for them. Cars are of secondary priority. I hope the authorities concerned would think a bit before constructing unnecessary structures with the taxpayer's money.

Adnan R. Amin
Gulshan, Dhaka

Bombs and Bangladesh

Regarding the Satkhira bombing incident, *The Daily Star* had first reported three persons were killed and next day said "earlier report that three people had also died turned out to be unfounded".

The newspapers in Chittagong had first reported ten persons have been killed and later said nobody was dead! But, amazingly enough, even before the fact was established as to whether any life was lost or not-- the party in power and in the opposition have already embarked upon their conclusions-- each based on their own ridiculous justifications/theories.

The Government party has said it is a sabotage ahead of the celebration (!) of the BNP-led alliance's one year in power and also that the explosions took place following the statement of a Minister claiming the present situation is much better than what it was during the AL rule. The opposition party has theorised that "BNP is expert in manufacturing bombs..." and also that "Jamaat had threatened to bomb the circus party ... in collaboration with BNP". The Detective Branch of Police should immediately be declared as redundant and we should say "bravo!" to BNP and AL. This is just the same old pattern of our dirty politics.

A Distressed Observer
Chittagong

* * *

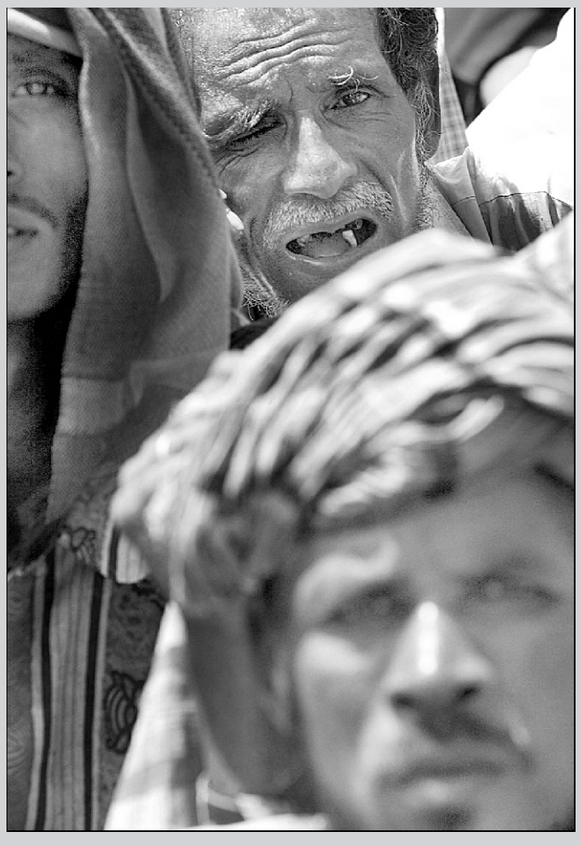
On September 28, two powerful bombs were exploded in Satkhira in a packed cinema hall and in a crowded circus show, killing at least three people and injuring hundreds. In an otherwise contemporary Bangladesh, the news would have been a chronicle of another shoot-out. But this particular mayhem was inflicted to disrupt the celebration of Gurpukur Fair, a local Hindu festival where Muslims also participate in a day of secular merry-making. In this context, it does not need a great imagination to surmise that the perpetrators of this heinous act are the religious zealots who want to make this so-called "moderate" Muslim country a theocratic Taliban state.

In Bangladesh, away from this belt of *jihadees* and zealots, we wanted to build a society based on our nation's one of the cherished founding principles, "democracy" where all will be treated equally. It was a solemn pledge, enshrined in our constitution, we gave to our people and to the world.

We must unquestionably and with singular determination uphold this principle.

We must remember, if we allow ourselves to be shamed and humbled by these religious fanatics, we will betray the memories of our founding fathers, blood of our fallen heroes, and tears of our mothers and sisters. History will find us unfit to survive as an independent and civilised nation!

Mominul Hoque
Pittsburgh, USA



When the humanity is the victim

"Insecurity behind bravado"

This is in reference to the article "Insecurity behind bravado" (September 28).

Just for the record I would like to point out that although the Labour Party did come to power just after the World War II but the Prime Minister was Attlee (who later became Lord Attlee) and not Anthony Eden as mentioned in the article.

Anthony Eden was out and out a Conservative and he became Prime Minister much later.

Shafi
Gulshan, Dhaka

"US bypassing the International

Monoroma
Toronto, Canada

"Save Iraq from US aggression"

I fully support Ms Nur Jahan's view (September 29) and urge the Muslim world to come forward to save Iraq from US aggression.

America is indeed the most powerful nation and they also have a habit of violating Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Their attack on Hiroshima is unforgettable and so also Afghanistan.

Though America is silent about the plight of the Palestinians, they actively support the Israelis. Why this double standard?

War can in no way be a substitute of peace. It can bring nothing but destruction and violence. So instead of following the path of war, we should all raise our voice against it.

Tom Trottier, *Ottawa, Canada*

"Palestine is still the issue"

The songs of innocence and the songs of violence!

On September 16, I stayed up to watch John Pilger's film for ITV titled "Palestine is still the issue", in which he conducts a series of remarkable interviews with Palestinians and a group of Israelis who support them, 'united by their courage and their yearning to be free'. He also spoke to families of suicide bombers and their victims, refugees, soldiers and an advisor to Prime Minister Sharon.

The stories of the Palestinians, as always, filled me with hurt, anger, helplessness and moral indignation-- a feeling exacerbated by the knowledge that perhaps as a human rights activist there is something more I could have done other than write, protest and rally with Palestinian friends and colleagues-- a feeling that each of us, through our silences and lapses, contributes to this continuing atrocity which goes against every norm or humanity, dignity and justice. This film was different from others in that it surfaced the indignation of some Israelis who find it hard to reconcile with their government, and want to do something to rectify the injustice. For instance, it was moving to hear the father of a 14-year-old Israeli girl killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber say, 'the truth is that both my daughter and her killer were victims'. It also struck a chord when a soldier who refused to serve in the Occupied Territories challenged his government to hear its critics without calling them anti-Semitic.

Perhaps this gives us hope, that in this tumultuous world order, where it is difficult to discern who the real terrorist is or which nation really is the rogue, that humanity will ultimately prevail.

Dr. Faustina Pereira
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

* * *

The American "war on terror " gave Israel and Ariel Sharon a "carte blanche" to commit unspeakable atrocities in occupied Palestine. Sharon pursues a campaign to humiliate, terrorise, and disenfranchise Palestinians. It is an insult to international law, the United Nations, and world community at large. Will Sharon be allowed to succeed? And Sharon has repeatedly proved himself to be incapable of grasping lessons of history or making peace.

The reality is that only the US, which is the staunchest benefactor and ally of Israel (and has given nearly 100 billion dollars in aid since 1967), can bring Israel to serious negotiations and concede a permanent settlement. The moderate Arabs cannot, the UN had tried but failed. Madrid, Oslo, Camp David, Sharm el Sheikh and Taba-- all failed. Time to end all prevarication; time to shed past hypocrisy and double standards-- one for Israel and one for the rest of the world. It no longer takes a political genius to understand the situation. Solution to the most complex problem is often the simplest-- if only one has the courage and integrity to make the decision.

While President Clinton tried and apparently came close, though according to some Israeli scholars, he was the last Zionist, it is now for President Bush to deliver his " vision" of a Palestine. The world will judge Bush on Palestine-Israel conflict by what he does and not by what his vision is. His father had once made the same promise when it was politically convenient in order to get his famous coalition in the Gulf War of 1991. He forgot and failed soon after. As now President Bush has all but declared the second Gulf War and wishes to hold Saddam Hussein to his word on UN arms inspection, he should reciprocate by being held to his words on Palestine-- a viable state with secure borders living side by side with Israel.

DR. Zakir Husain, *Dhaka*

Notice

The coming 10th of October will make the 1st anniversary of the present BNP led alliance government. On this occasion we invite our readers to write us letters in 200 words-- giving their assessment of the government's performance preferably mentioning the biggest success and the worst failure. The readers may also wish to refer to the BNP's election manifesto, PM's pledges, role of parliament, MPs, party activities including that of student and youth wing.

-- Editor