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UK visa

I am writing in response to Mr. Rahman's letter regarding UK visa.

The United Kingdom and other "civilised nations" have the right to reject applications using whatever justifications they see as "logical". The United Kingdom requires student visas for non-EU students, including Americans. Bangladeshis get rejected often simply because a large number of us tend to abuse the privilege of a visa. Countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have strict entry requirements for Bangladeshi nationals too, yet they never ruled us. In fact they were once ruled by the British themselves, but are now allowed to travel as tourists without a visa requirement to the United Kingdom. I have heard from my father that in the 1970's Bangladeshi passport holders could travel to several countries without applying for a visa, but unfortunately that is not the case today. Instead of blaming the "civilised nations" for rejecting our visa applications, Mr. Rahman should appeal to Bangladeshis who abuse foreign visas not to do so.

Rashid Chowdhury, Virginia, USA

wholesale criticism that all the private universities are of poor quality and are nothing more than a money-making machine for some greedy entrepreneurs. There were many students like me who had the option to go to public universities, but we chose the private ones instead because they provided a real alternative. The private universities provided us with an academic atmosphere free from political interference and session jam. In retrospect, I am glad that I chose to go to NSU for my undergraduate course in business education. Business education is the area where the private universities are really providing a quality alternative. Before the early 90s, IBA of Dhaka University had the monopoly in business education. As was typical of a monopolist with no effective regulatory oversight, quality of education at IBA was going down the hill. Thanks to the competition from the private universities, IBA is now compelled to improve its curriculum and make some extra efforts to reclaim its past glory.

Mr. Saif pointed out that the graduates of the private universities get good jobs because of the 'connections' of the private universities. For his information, every university in the USA has a career placement department the primary responsibility of which is to gain meaningful employment for its graduates. The private universities of Bangladesh simply adopted this world-wide practice of career placement services. If the graduates of the public universities cannot get a good job because the public institutions are not trying to get jobs for them, it is a problem of the public education system that needs to be addressed. The private universities should not be blamed for the inefficiency of the public ones.

K M Zubair Sadeque
Pennsylvania, USA

Roadmap or road rash?

The recent escalation in violence in the Middle East is turning the roadmap peace process into a mere road rash situation. The Israeli authorities assassinated the Hamas leader, who was physically disabled. As an inevitable consequence, the Hamas leadership is preparing for a bloody revenge. This vicious circle of 'eye for an eye' method is making the whole peace process blind and it is now struggling to find its way out of the impasse.

Israeli leaders are showing no dearth of rhetoric. Now they are after Yaseer Arafat, who has been under seizure for two years. We do not seem to learn from history. Blood will always beget blood. The

two sides should realise this and act accordingly.

Saif
Dhaka

BBC initiative

It is a matter of great pleasure that the BBC radio has taken an initiative to identify 20 (twenty persons) greatest Bangladeshis through casting of public (listeners') vote. I appreciate them for taking such a remarkable initiative.

I don't know whether they have any plan to select the greatest Bangalee women of all time. If they do that, it would be appreciated highly. Otherwise, I will request them to consider women too, not only men, in the process of selecting the greatest Bangladeshis.

Minuara Begum Binu
Gulshan, Dhaka

Punish the human beasts

We are really concerned that the number of rape cases has increased. And rape victim deaths are on the rise. The lack of effectiveness of the law enforcing department has crossed such a level that instead of seeking justice, victims are taking the path of committing suicide. If they don't, these girls are forced to lead a life of misery and despair. It is really shocking. From various newspaper reports, we come to learn that not only teenagers but also the life and dignity of young married women are falling prey to the lascivious instincts of some sex hungry beasts. And, indeed, the physical harassment of young housewives has become the latest trend. Like other cases, the lives of housewives do not usually end in suicide, but they do dare to ask for justice, lest the honour and sanctity of their family should collapse.

The situation has deteriorated so much that the parents prevent their daughters from going out all alone even during daytime, despite living in cities. It is really a matter of shame that in the age of women's liberation, our girls have to face malicious insinuations on the roads. The situation in the rural areas is even worse and village girls are badly affected. Unwanted pregnancies and deadly diseases inflict them because of sexual harassment.

But the criminals are slinking through the loopholes in the law. The issues should be handled a lot more efficiently by the law enforcers if we want to maintain our façade of civility.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Arms and the man

We have read various statements and opinions covered by numerous news media including a subtle censorial statement from the concerned ministry spokesmen asking the press to refrain from 'opinionating'. We are not to question who, what or how, only bear with patience while the government machinery will grind it into atomic particles to be lost forever in the infinity of space!

Interpol cannot possibly be considered. How can we allow external sources prying and playing with our hard earned democratic freedom, thoughts, words and deeds? Meanwhile the first act of the drama has begun with the CUFL and police in the lead roles, and side roles being enacted by the press and various government functionaries.

I wish we had some one like George Bernard Shaw to pen a drama with the delightful chocolate Cream Soldier who was the man without arms in contrast to our play which has arms without men! Arise ye future dramatist and load your automatic pen, pencil and paper! May be we already have more able and capable government pen pushers to prepare the script that can put GBS to shame! The Nobel Prize in creative writing awaits them round the corner!

SA Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Repair the road

There reside lakhs of peoples in the area from Della Bamol to Dogair Natunpara of Demra Sarulia Union. Thousands of people commute to work in the capital Dhaka and back every day by the existing main road from Della Bamol to Dogair Natunpara. But the road lies in a dilapidated condition since long and the commuters are suffering. Not that the authorities concerned are not aware of the plight of the people, but none is coming forward for its repair.

Now that the rains are also coming the sufferings of the residents of this suburban area will know no bounds.

Therefore, we urge the higher authorities to please come forward to their relief, by way of initiating early repair of this important road..

Raju Ahmed
Della Bamol, Damra, Dhaka

Yes to human shield, but No to hartal

In the name of "No-confidence human shield" thousands of activists of the Awami League (AL) and its affiliates lined up along the major Dhaka city roads on 30th March, demanding immediate resignation of the government for its "total failure to deliver on its promises" including checking price like of

Whither US?



For a world free of "terror"

It appears that by dint of his belligerence, lack of vision and wisdom, the 43rd, and the most unsuccessful, US President George Bush has raged to the dust the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, John F Kennedy, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. He has destroyed the charter and principles of the United Nations, violated the universal declaration of human rights, ruined the image and respect for the US world over and has made the United States of America the most controversial and despicable country in the 21st century by invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, and blindly supporting Israel.

We wonder if President Bush would ever be able to expiate his errors, inefficiency, lapses, omissions and crimes and the US would ever be able to recover and regain its past image, honour and trust? If so how and when? By delivering more and more shock and awe, making heinous attacks on sovereign countries and establishing US and Israeli colonialism?

The victims of the US-led colonialism and Israeli colonialism are not sitting idle. They are engaged in terrorist activities and

carrying out suicide bomb attacks to retaliate and avenge the genocide and atrocities of the US-led allies and Israeli forces. When would there be an end to the world wide bloodbath?

When the US led forces invaded Iraq President George Bush and his Defence Secretary Rumsfeld boasted that when they would enter Iraq they (US led forces) would be greeted by the Iraqis with garlands. Over one year of the occupation of Iraq has passed, but what is happening there? Every day US-led troops face danger and death from suicide bombers, roadside bombers and now ironically from the key Iraqi police that they (US gov't) are training. More than 1,200 US troops and American civilians have been killed in Iraq.

Unless and until the US-led forces and the Israeli hordes withdraw from Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine there would be more terrorist activities and more suicide bomb attacks. If the US-led forces and Israeli hordes suffer from superiority complex that they possess atom bombs, the Palestinians, Afghans and Iraqis also feel proud of possessing suicide bombs. The suicide bombs are no less powerful than atom bombs.

OH Kabir, Wari, Dhaka

essentials and law and order downside. The human shield was 22km long from Pallabi to Bahadur Shah Park. Certainly it's a new dimension in political movement against the government by a major opposition party. It is indeed a democratic way for expressing the views of a political party. This sort of movement doesn't cause any damage to the economy. In the most democratic and developed countries this sort of demonstration is observed for expressing dissent. To take such an initiative is a praiseworthy decision by the AL. At the same time it's a matter of great regret that in the traditional way the AL has also adopted the "hartal" policy, which is the most undemocratic and destructive way of launching a movement. Hartal causes a huge damage to the economic progress. Every sphere of society is negatively affected due to hartal. Hartal is the major element of political instability in Bangladesh that drives away FDI (Foreign direct investment) from our country to neighbouring countries.

Ironically, when in power both the AL and the BNP talk against hartal but when in the opposition they forget their words and go for it. If a political party honestly desires the economic upgrading and betterment of the people, then why does it

choose hartal? Isn't it a reflection of its policy?

Md. Foyaz Ahmed
University of Dhaka

A brutal act

Every day we hear about crimes like murder, violence, corruption, when we scan through the newspaper early in the morning. But March 29 gave us a real shock. Prominent businessman Shamsul Haq and his son Russel Sheikh were murdered by unknown assailants. The killers not only took their lives but also chopped their bodies into 200 pieces! It was an unbearable act of beastliness. I cannot imagine how a human being could commit such an inhuman act.

This murder indicates the extent of the deterioration of law and order. People of all walks of life, specially the people of old Dhaka, and businessmen are greatly shocked by these murders. The businessmen of old Dhaka brought out a procession and chanted the slogans, "Why did our brother die?" and "Break the black hands of extortionists". Political leaders visit the victims' house and convey their condolence, but will the culprits be brought to justice?

Md Rezaul Karim
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural

University

Mr Bush: the double-dealer

US president George W Bush is an expert in deceiving which has once again been proved by his tacit stance, after the mind-boggling killing of the Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Yassen. If this incident were to happen to an American, Mr Bush would have declared war against the perpetrators of the crime, describing his action as fight against terrorism. In the name of the so called relentless drive against the spectre of terrorism, this man has been launching full-fledged onslaughts in different countries of the world and thus ensuring America's domination across the globe. But Yassen's killing by the Israeli forces does not raise his sympathy as he seems to be reluctant to consider it as an act of terrorism. His double-dealing policies are widely questioned but all the scolding is a mere waste of energy.

He has been unmasked now. His imperialistic attitude has become conspicuous to everybody. But none is coming forward to snatch away the bridle of domination from him. Even the highest peace-keeping organisation the 'United Nations' has not escaped the bias

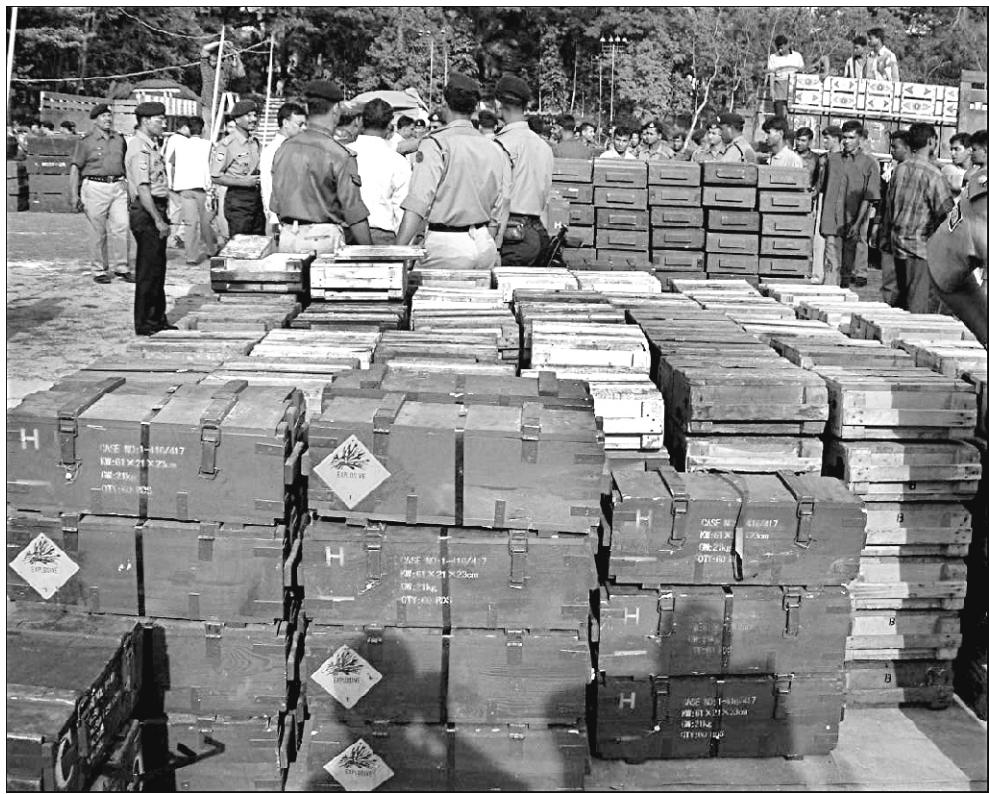
and unilateral interference of America. ABM Shafiqul Islam
Dept of English, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka

Play the ball, not the man

To my mind, football is a strategic game or stratagem to play it, it needs patience, clue: how to capture the ball, how to send it to the appropriate player so that a goal can be scored... etc. Today I want to show a similarity between our politicians' game and football. There is an idiomatic use in English "Play the ball, not the man." Certainly! Because, while playing, if a player is busy criticising or backbiting others, then he/she is out of the show and may not succeed. But if he is a genuine player, he has no time to criticise others.

Like football, our politicians should play carefully in their respective fields to build up the country well. But what is happening? Most of the politicians are seen speaking ill of others.

Md Ariful Islam
RUET, Rajshahi



A good write-up

I have just finished reading, with considerable interest an article by Brig. General (Retd) Shahedul Anam Khan in The Daily Star (April 5, 2004) under the caption "Chittagong Arms haul: Some queries."

I wish to congratulate both the writer and The Daily Star for offering a write up on such an important issue. The article is not only well written but also written in a style and manner which make it easy for the general members of the public to read and understand the real issues at stake without being tainted by political considerations. The article is written in plain and simple language making it "simple and straight".

Before going into the issues raised by the author in the article, I would like to mention one other fact about the author. Brig. General Anam was the Commander of the United Nations Iran/Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG) based in Baghdad during 1991/92 and hence stands out as an expert on the subject of security in the region.

The article mentions the use of the CUFL jetty for offloading of the merchandise, as rightfully described by the author as a key "government facility." Obviously, this matter of use of the jetty could not have been possible without the knowledge of someone of the 'Authority'. The author also rightly points out that the nature of the arms cache is such that these could not have been brought in for use

in any terrorist activities within the country. Not only that many of the arms were "new" even for our army.

I therefore regret the insensible and uncalled for politicisation of the issue both by the government and the opposition. Just consider the statement made by no less than the state minister for home affairs when he says, "Our investigation indicates a party is involved in this haul." He says this while observing and "supervising" the cache in some open field location in Chittagong long before the actual FIR was officially lodged. For God's sake, for once let us rise above petty political and partisan interests and work united to put an end to recurrence of any such incident before Bangladesh becomes a Bali, a Nigeria, an Ethiopia or a Somalia. Last but not least in importance is the suggestion made by the author about the involvement of the Interpol in the investigation process. We should most certainly take it into consideration.

I would also like to state that time is of real essence here. On the other hand, once the facts are established and the investigation complete, the government should make the findings open to the public through the media in details in order to make the people security conscious.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

International Health Day



Regarding the International Health Day (April 7), it should be mentioned that Bangladesh has covered many miles on the road toward reduced fertility and childhood mortality in its first three decades since independence in 1971. It is the only country among the 20 poorest that has recorded a sustained reduction in birth rates over the past 15 years. On an average, in the 1990s women had 3.3 births, one-half the number in 1974. Infant mortality has dropped from about 140 to 88 per 1,000 live births. The government's strategy is now directed toward reducing the high levels of maternal illness and deaths, tackling malnutrition, and consolidating and sustaining the gains already made.

Although Bangladesh had a basic health care infrastructure in the 1980s, much remained to be done, particularly in the rural areas, where the majority of the people faced critical health problems. The main dangers to health in the late 1980s were much the same as they were at the time of independence. The incidence of communicable disease was extensive, and there was widespread malnutrition, inadequate sewage disposal, and inadequate supplies of safe drinking water. The fertility rate was also extremely high. Only 30 percent of the population had access to primary health care services, and overall health care performance remained unacceptably low by all conventional measurements.

Life expectancy at birth in FY 1985, according to official Bangladesh statistics was estimated at 55.1 years, as opposed to 61 years in comparable developing countries. Morbidity and mortality rates for women and children were high. Infant mortality rates exceeded 125 deaths per 1,000 live births, the maternal mortality rate was 6 per 1,000 live births, and 56.1 percent of infants suffered from chronic malnutrition. More than 45 percent of rural families and 76 percent of urban families were below the acceptable caloric intake level and about two-thirds of all families received insufficient protein and vitamins.

Eng. MA Siddique
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