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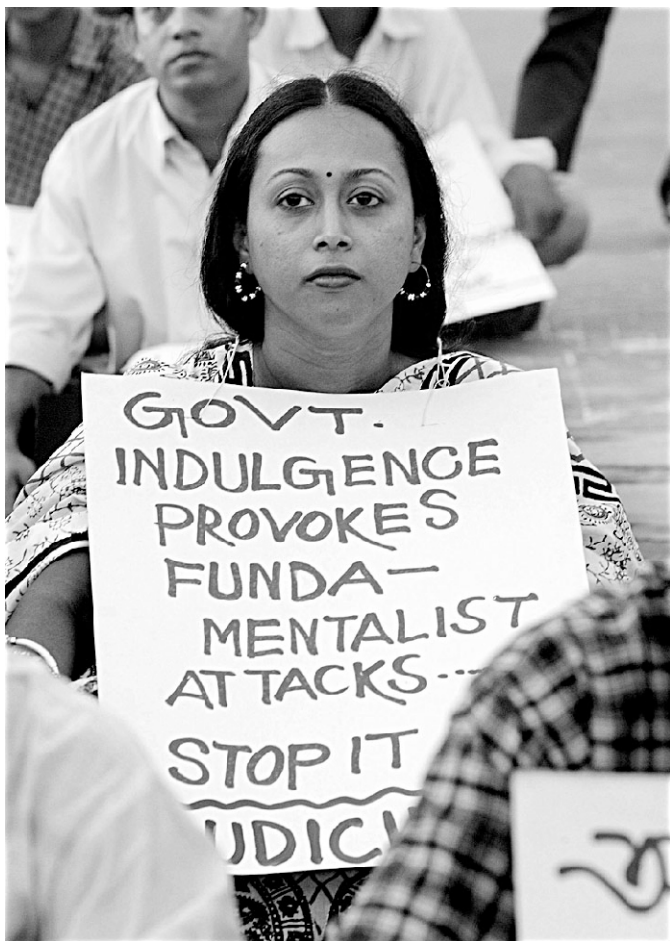


PHOTO: AFP

## Time to call a spade a spade

Now that The Scotland Yard investigators have reasons to suspect that some Islamic fundamentalist groups were behind the bombing incident at Shahjalal Dargah, they should go much deeper into it and find out the root causes behind the incident. As a clear thinking citizen of Bangladesh, I believe that it does not require a Scotland Yard team or some super Hercule Poirot to say that quite a number of Islamic fundamentalist extremist groups have set up their bases in Bangladesh. This is known to people who have been following reports published in international journals like the Far Eastern Economic Review or Time-Asia Magazine. Recent events in some of the northern districts of Bangladesh also clearly point out that these extremist groups are very much in existence in the country. We also know that some political parties, now in the coalition government, have always patronised their activities.

Are the police really interested in knowing about them and arresting them, or are they interested in protecting and helping them in getting stronger and stronger? Recent police-behaviour in Sylhet, northern districts and other police actions in investigating incidents like the CUFL jetty arms haul indicate that these extremists are actually working under police protection. If the police really wanted they could have arrested them, by this time, contacted some of the foreign reporters like Messrs. Bertil Lintner and Alex Perry to gather more information about the extremists.

Instead, the government is following a policy of stout denial about the existence of such Taliban like groups in Bangladesh.

**A plain-speaking citizen, Uttara, Dhaka**

## The fallacy of same-sex union

Homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon. Due to benign interpretations of the homosexual condition itself it is increasingly being viewed as something neutral or even good. Presently, it threatens to destroy the institution of marriage in Canada and the United States.

No ideology, however, can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman. The natural truth about marriage was confirmed by the Revelation contained in the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1:27-28, Gen 2:24). According to consistent biblical testimony concerning homosexuality, there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family. In fact, all major religions of the world consider homosexuality an objective disorder.

The arguments in favour of same-sex marriage are varied and betray a lack of right reason. They are little more than attempts to rationalise without thinking rationally.

Some argue that same-sex marriages are about tolerance and equality. As natural law implies, however, sexual orientation does

not constitute a quality comparable to race, ethnicity, gender or age in respect to non-discrimination. An individual's sexual orientation is generally not known to others unless he publicly identifies himself as having this orientation or unless some overt behaviour manifests it. Unlike race, ethnic background, sex and age, homosexual orientation is an objective disorder and evokes moral concern. In suggesting otherwise one is merely exploiting tolerance in the service of a particular ideology. A popular argument is that same-sex unions can in no way be the cause of any injustice to others. As a civil law, however, they cannot help but play a decisive role in shaping both the thought and behaviour of individuals and society. Legal recognition of same-sex unions would act to obscure basic moral values causing a devaluation of the institution of marriage. It is therefore somewhat naive to suggest, as do a number of proponents of same-sex marriage, that religious institutions will not be forced to perform same-sex marriages in the future if same-sex marriage becomes law. If a government can redefine the term "marriage" they can also redefine any existing laws to which the term marriage is related.

Where adopted children are involved in same-sex marriages,

they are deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood and hence the opportunity for full human development.

Men and women with homosexual tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation. Nonetheless, homosexual acts must be considered wrong because they close the sexual act to the gift of life.

**Paul Kokoski**  
One-mail

## "Libraries in search of a future"

I want to draw your attention to the article "Libraries in search of a future" written by Mr. Ron Chepesiuk, published in DS on May 29. It has not given the right information to your readers on borrowing books and other resources from the libraries of the foreign cultural centres. Alliance Francaise de Chittagong was established in 1965 and since its creation we are allowing our students/members to borrow books and other resources on a regular basis.

**Cumer Doyel Dey**  
Manager Resource Centre, Alliance Francaise de Chittagong

## Hizb-ut-Tahrir poster

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a non-violent Islamic organisation which has been working in more than 40 countries all over the world since 1953. Besides, all over the world there is no evidence of any relation between violence and Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The poster which the organisation has released is a legitimate protest against the atrocities on the Iraqi people committed by the British and US soldiers inside Abu Ghraib prison. So, basically it was neither an anti-British nor anti-US poster.

Regarding that I would like to remind all that this is the age of democracy where we have the right to protest and speak freely.

**Acitizen**  
Bariidhara DOHS, Dhaka

It was reported in DS on 25th May, 2004 that Hizb-ut-Tahrir had allegedly posted anti-British and -US posters around the holy shrine two days before the bomb blast, second in five months at the 700-year-old site.

However, the poster was displayed by the daily Azker Kagoj on 24th May, 2004, and it was the same poster that has been posted by Hizb-ut-Tahrir not only in Sylhet but all over Dhaka city. I have witnessed it myself. As a matter of fact, the poster has nothing against the British or Americans. It is basically a protest against the oppression inside the Abu Ghraib prison on Iraqi people by British and US soldiers. This is a protest against barbarism.

**Wamia ul Ferdous**  
Malibagh, Dhaka

This is in response to a news item published in DS, which said that several militant groups are suspected to be involved in the shrine blast, including Hizb-ut-Tahrir, an Islamic group.

I saw many young and educated activists of this party (Hizb-ut-Tahrir) from various institutions like North-South University and DU distributing leaflets and organising meetings to protest coalition atrocities in Iraq. They were not violent and were actually exercising their freedom of speech.

I don't understand what was wrong with such activities.

**Ehsan Uddin**  
On e-mail

## "Extortionist at work"

I haven't read "Extortionist at Work". But the favoured reaction to the piece by Mr. Joy (May 24, 2004) caught my attention and was chosen to be disfavoured. Whether "heavenly blessing" poked through

on us to the accompaniment of the launching of the programme of Operation Clean Heart is disputable. But indisputable is the fact that many of us were heart-cleansed to the point of losing their mind to tell the desirable from the undesirable. Agreed that Operation Clean Heart offered us, to some extent, an atmosphere of un-terrorised sighs, but the days of "chopped bodies" were also replaced by prison abuse and unwarranted death! Let's put this aside and speak of the idea that brought those days of "heavenly blessing" to life.

The attempt was merely a histrionism by the government, whose shallow brilliance blinded us many. And if the intellectuals attempted to thwart the programme, it was warranted on the ground that they were discrete enough to see that the heart-cleaning project was destined to be doomed and that after its days being numbered, another wave of man-slaughtering was awaiting us in an even heightened form. You weren't deaf to all that, I hope. Besides, was it not, on the part of the government, a gesture of defeat to turn to the armed forces to seek its succour when we have a specific department to deal with these domestic affairs?

**Mohammad Ali**  
Shyamoly, Dhaka

## A cue for the detective?

Your newspaper reported that, just before the blast, a Sylheti beggar was wearing "Green Kurta", the colour of Bangla Bhai's skull cap. Is this green colour a coincidence or a clue that the shrine bomber left behind?

**AG**  
On e-mail

## JMJB's Afghanistan link

It is with alarm that I read your Friday (May 28) report of links between Bangla Bhai's JMJB and Osama Bin Laden. I also note that till now the police have been half-hearted in their attempts to arrest Bangla Bhai.

I hope the government realises what an awful impact this link will have on our relations with the West. The American response is quite easy to predict. If there are Taliban/al-Qaeda elements in Bangladesh, it will simply become impossible for any Bangladeshi to get a US visa.

The only way to avoid such an outcome is to seriously tackle the vigilante group.

**Zeeshan Hasan**  
Bankside House, London School of Economics, London, UK

## Our politicians

In local politics, it has become a

## Save Jatka



cliché to say that people involved in crime and terrorism belong to no political parties. There was a time when crime started its own journey towards perversion. Economists often hold widespread poverty and severe inequality in wealth distribution responsible for social crimes. I think this definition was appropriate long time ago when crime logbooks were not crowded with hourly reports of murder, mugging or social harassment. Nowadays, my perception is that more than proportionate criminal activities are motivated,



PHOTO: AFP

## Statue of Liberty

The people of America should pull down the 'Statue of Liberty' and smash it into pieces. Their government does not give a hoot to other countries' liberty, so the standing statue is a mockery of freedom.

Once, America was the dreamland for everyone all over the world, people used to look upon it with respect, but not anymore. By attack-

ing Iraq on a false pretext, turning the historic country into ruins, torturing Iraqi prisoners in a demonic way, killing thousands of its people, including women and children, and supporting Ariel Sharon blindly who is dealing monstrously with the Palestinians, President Bush has destroyed the goodwill the country once had. The White House does not seem

'white' anymore, it has been blackened with the blood of the Iraqis and the Palestinians.

We had the notion that American presidential election was very reliable but when Mr. Bush became president of the US, we were very disappointed noticing that he was not elected but was selected by the Supreme Court.

Bush has an uncanny ability to shield guilty people, his support to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Israeli President Ariel Sharon could be cited as examples. Rumsfeld's body language was enough to prove that he was responsible for the abuse of the prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

**Nurjahan, Chittagong**

either politically or due to personal conflict of interests. The mere proportion of criminal activities which are conducted for life saving and/or luxury rents due to unemployment or disguised unemployment do not characterise the overall crime scenario of Bangladesh. Hence, it is political crime which dominates the crime scene in Bangladesh. Why this generalisation? This vicious cycle started when some office seeking politicians gave birth to criminals to carry out underworld activities for them which would aid their path and existence in politics as a career.

To my knowledge, I have not seen any strategic drive by the present or past governments to arrest listed criminals. I can talk about the politicians' practice of talking cheap in another of my columns in detail. I think most readers by now understand that they will start listening to such cheap talks when the election draws nearer.

Getting back to politicians, I don't remember seeing the present or past government arresting and punishing a purely political criminal, whereas we all (including police, judiciary, professionals, investors, journalists, intellectuals, govern-

ment, and opposition, if any) know their own conflict, often kill each other in the underworld, and if someone amongst them is smart, he survives and eventually becomes a politician!

**Anonymous**  
On e-mail

## Shark gobbling Saarc

Saarc is going the western way, through the prowling shark of mate-

rialism. After Pakistan, now the footprint in India is going to be larger, after the sharp change noticed during the recent general elections. Next course on the menu: Bangladesh (Dhaka has no option to escape). Our local politicians are too insensitive and narcissistic to analyse the long-term implications within the next decade. The recent BDF meet in Dhaka threw light on money laundering (of course the finance minister brushed it off). The first world can't live without the third world—the sustenance factor works both ways!

Let us hear more about this

Yangoon road link within the official Asian highway project. Foresight and professional judgement in policy making appears to be missing in Dhaka's intransigent politics, losing focus within the have-not minds.

Who will play Dhaka's next moves? No promoters, with face dug in the local sandbanks.

**AZ**  
Dhaka

## Hai, neta!

The citizens are trapped and cornered by unattractive leaders in Dhaka. We lend our ears, and suffer from political deafness! The sound and the fury are like Kalbaishakis, and does not remind us of oak trees and its benign shade. Floating leaders have no roots. A leader should not shout from the branches. Why he is so fond of climbing? Remain closer to matri bhumi!

Their personalities are built on negative virtues, in a world of virtual reality—the ugliness repels. The regime is not as active as on anniversary days (Nazrul, Tagore), when the voluntary mass participation is impressive. Why the people do not feel the same way for our political culture?

The mock-seriousness and fiery speeches are volatile displays of Sindbad carrying the old man on his back, and the latter refusing to dismount. We are the carriers, where is the engine to pull the train? The guard is sleeping with his flag and whistle. Too many shuffling of (empty?) wagons in the station yard, and too few express trains to national destinations. We bought tickets for stationary voyages!

Hatred, intolerance and impatience have removed all traces of smile from the faces of our leaders. Where is the output of such mock shows? The leaders are supposed to solve the problems at their level; but they complain to the masses who are looking up from the lower levels! Their publicity campaigns are self and party-centred, detaching the people to the gallery stands as spectators (dead mass). They meet us once in five years, during the election campaign. The humility displayed during such begging jars the electorate.

There is no peer-level attitude during social intercourse—it is all one-way communication from the Himalayan streams to the sea level. Such aloofness encourages aloofness, if that is what they want. They wish to rule over us, but do not know the ABC of regulating themselves first.

We need stress-free leaders, who never look ruffled, angry and worried. Such poise betrays confidence (both ways). There is no inner storage space to reveal a calm and cool stance, under every stress. Ego drags them to the front of the stage, thus forgetting the responsibilities of working quietly in the background most of the time. The redundancy factor in their boring speeches is too high. The gift of the gab suits a stage comedian, not a political leader.

**Mawaz**

## Think straight, but think sensible!

This is in response to Mr. Omar Sharif's article "Are we thinking straight" published on 24 May 2004.

Following the legitimisation of same sex marriage in USA, for the first time, on 22 May 2004, Pope John Paul stated, "The Church teaches that the love of man and woman made holy in the sacrament of marriage is a mirror of God's everlasting love for his creation". President Bush is believed to bring about a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage before meeting Pope in June this year. There is a need to comprehend the religious, cultural and social connotations of marriage honestly and neutrally. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that 'men and women are twin halves of each other' which once again reaffirms that marriage is an institutional agreement between men and women; a religious duty and is consequently a moral safeguard as well as a social necessity. It is a social necessity, because through marriage, families are

established and the family is the fundamental unit of our society.

From historical perspective, Adam and Eve were created with the concept of procreation of human race; meaning men and women can provide company to one another, love each other, procreate children and live in peace and tranquillity. Underpinning this sacred notion, your views on 'homosexuality' and consequently 'same sex marriage' are contradictory to the notion of procreation of human race. Love, respect and understanding between same sex such as brother-brother, sister-sister, friend-friend and the like is universal and appreciated in all societies; but legitimising same sex relationship to only fulfil biological instincts and lust is purely an act of perversion. Your belief on, 'what is inevitable is going to happen one day' is not debatable; but should we forget that 'prevention is better than cure'?

We should not be carried away by the fallacy of western society in such matters; rather being a rational person and a believer, we should be able to completely and correctly contribute to bring about changes those need our attention and involvement. Our religion urges us to control and regulate our desires, whatever they may be so that we remain dignified. We should not be frenetic to inculcate 'malpractice of homosexuality amongst Romans and Greeks'; rather we should try to take lessons from the magnificent contributions of both races towards enhancement of human civilisation. Finally, one would always appreciate simplicity in thoughts and actions; but then our thoughts should be rational and pragmatic that would result in piety and elevation of society and its inhabitants.

**Mahub**  
Dhaka

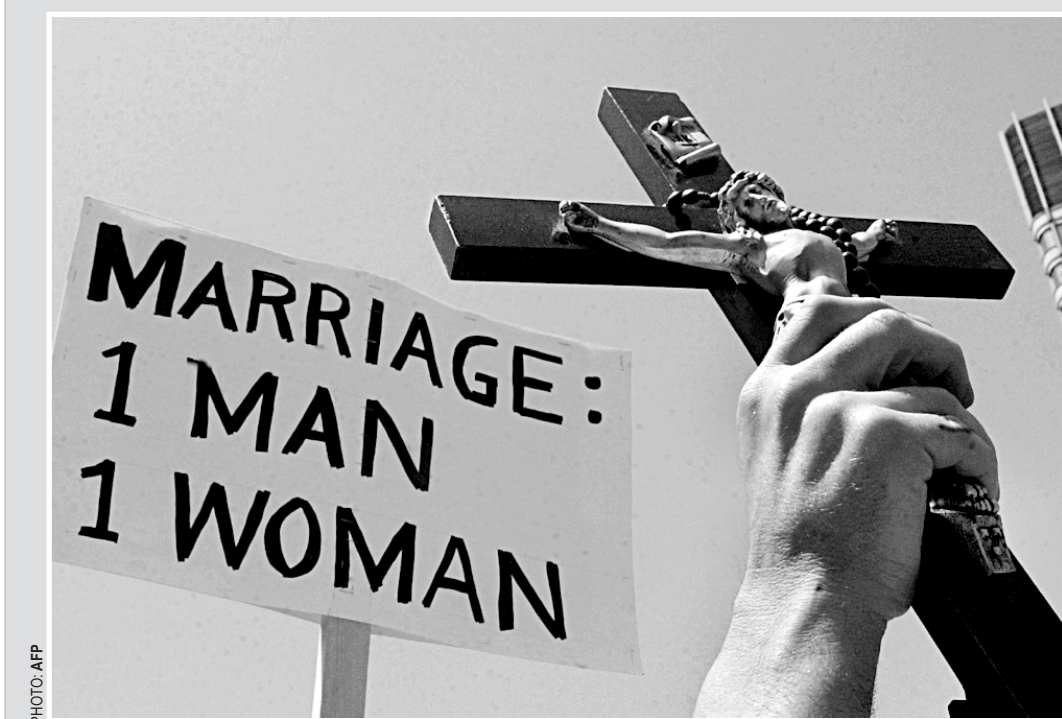


PHOTO: AFP