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PHOTO: AFP

## A (near) visit to Mobile Mela

June 4 was the last day of Mobile Mela, which was supposed to start at 9:00am and end at 8:00pm. Fantasy Kingdom, Nandan Park, Sports Zone etc are well beyond my afford, so I was planning to visit it on Friday ever since I came to know about it. I had no clue what I was preparing for.

I anticipated that there would be a huge crowd, as it was Friday. But I don't have any word in my vocabulary to describe the crowd, all I can say is that the queue for ticket started right from the ticket booth of Sonargoan Hotel and ended near Bangla Motor. I was adamant (and stupid) enough to join the queue. Some 'clever' people in the meantime made some 'sub queue' for a shortcut to the ticket booth, only to aggravate the problem. I had to participate actively in the continuous 'push and pull' to get my body in the queue and ward off any people from the 'sub queue'. The people returning from the mela discouraged us saying there was nothing fancy inside and the 'hard work' in the queue is not worth it. By that time I felt like I had crossed the Rubicon. Patience and 'hard work' paid off, after 45 minutes the ticket booth came at sight. In the mean time we

were displaced and thrown away almost all the tubs (of plants) in the way as we 'pushed' our way forward.

As we came closer to the ticket booth, an intense competition to get the ticket started, leaving the queue in total disarray despite the utmost efforts of the security personnel. At this point even I, a 'gritty' man, decided to leave in 'peace'. All of a sudden, the tiny ticket booth overturned and unruly mob started plundering it. The security personnel resorted to baton charge. Everyone started running for cover.

Subsequently, all the unwarranted excitement subsided, and we all were asked to 'get out' and clear the premise. There was another hassle of queuing up to get out and outside the unsuspecting people were eagerly waiting to get in. On my way back home, when I reached for my pocket to pay my bus fare, an ominous emptiness shrouded me. Yes, you got it right, my mobile set and Tk 240 in cash were gone. How I managed the bus fare and reached home is another story.

Saif, Dhaka

## Our country's image

I'm a Bangladeshi living abroad, I, however, keep myself informed about local events through various sources, mainly newspapers, and talking to family and friends. When I read a newspaper I am not only ashamed to be a Bangladeshi, but am also disgusted with our political scenario and the overall situation in the country. Every day something tragic happens, people get killed, but nobody cares.

The opposition party is filled with plain white corruption. After promising to the whole country never to call hartal, they just broke their own word. A leader who breaks a promise loses the right to be a leader. If she is really worried about the situation in the country and really feels for it, why doesn't she go on a hunger strike? Why damage the country?

It is sad that being a Bangladeshi living abroad is a curse whether we like to admit it or not.

Shadman  
One-mail

## Same sex marriage

Mr. Omar Sharif, in his letter of June 11, demonstrates a tendency to rationalise without thinking

rationally.

In the first place, Omar seems unaware that homosexuality and same-sex marriages are supported by a tiny minority of people, and countries. While there may be a few fringe religious sects that support homosexuality, all major religions consider homosexuality an objective disorder.

Also, the fact that some people approve of homosexuality does not make it right. A lot of people kill, cheat and steal but no one would claim on these grounds that these things should be tolerated or are socially acceptable.

Finally, contrary to Omar's

claim, homosexuality is not an "equality" issue because it involves 'behaviour' and therefore evokes moral concern.

I am grateful that Bangladesh does not experience the same level of hedonism that is experienced in various parts of the Western Hemisphere such as Canada.

Paul Kokoski  
Hamilton, Ontario

## The natural course

This is in response to Mr. Omar's letter 'Same sex marriage' published on 04 June, 2004. The opinion of the writer is appreciated. The issue is debatable; views and perceptions would vary on the basis of society, culture, religion, place and ethics. But then, the universal connotation of marriage remains unchanged from time immemorial. The Creator's teachings, irrespective of religion, pronounces 'Do good, safeguard against evils'. In the given situation and my stand as a believer, arguably religious values those are otherwise desired 'code of life' precede my perceptions.

In our religion, it is not allowed to enact a general law that limits the freedom of spouse in having children. Even in the Bible, the first command ever given to a man and

a woman was to "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." But then, in reasonable understanding irrespective of any religion, it is permissible to control the timing of births with the intent of distancing the occurrence of pregnancy or to delay it for a specific amount of time based on mutual consultation and agreement between spouses. 'Birth Control', by definition implies regulating birth and certainly not terminating a life.

From your understanding, one would comprehend that an atheist loves himself and his fellow mate instead of God. He accepts only knowledge of himself and knowledge of his fellow mate where he can find the understanding that will help to a life of fulfillment. This is purely a matter of 'religious belief'; it does not undermine the social connotation of marriage. This is the simple reason why an atheist does not contradict the institutional meaning of marriage. It would be ridiculous to indulge into the scientific explanation of procreation of human race through same sex marriage, for understandably there is no need for such explanation. Would the readers wonder how same sex couple would be addressed in a social function? Perhaps, we have to wait for a befitting answer.

When a baby is born out of mutual love and care of a couple, he also deserves balance parenting from opposite genders. Taking your argument on gender based parenting, may I reiterate that a father cannot offer the love and affection of a mother and vice-versa, for both father and mother are different entities.

Let us be honest and neutral in contemplating the laid down 'code of life' practised from time immemorial.

Mahub

Dhaka

## Law against hartal

Can't our honourable legislators pass a bill in parliament that any party calling a hartal shall remain legally responsible for any damage to life/property related to that hartal? And provisions should be there so that the president and secretary of that party can be personally sued for the damage.

Azam Choudhury  
One-mail

## Is Iraq separate from M-E conflict?

A predominant view in the Arab world is that in order to solve the Middle East problem the first priority ought to be erasing Israel-Palestinian conflict. In some recent opinion polls Arabs have voiced the same view. The other day, King Abdullah raised similar issues while talking to US media. The King bluntly said most Arabs think that the Israel-Palestinian conflict is the primary obstacle to peace in the region, the Iraq issue is not that important to them. Now, if we follow the King's argument, does the downfall of Saddam have any relevance in the whole dynamics? The first and foremost question would be why and how the Palestinian violence was continuing for all these years? Who were working behind-the-scenes for fuelling the violent outburst? Were the suicide bombers not remunerated in this mortal earth by thousands of dollars? Wasn't Saddam Hussein a privy to this deadly payment plan? If we have the correct answers to these questions, we can come to the right conclusion. In other words, successful end of Iraq operation will be leading to a better future not only for the Arab peninsula, but also for the Israeli theatre as well. Simply speaking, Iraq has much relevance in the whole equation. Unfortunately, the King of

Jordan and his counterparts in the neighbouring Arab nations fail to understand that.

Jamal Hasan  
One-mail

## An appeal to Sheikh Hasina

The opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina, was threatening to paralyse the industrial sector and enforce blockade on roads and highways if the government failed to arrest the killers of Ahsanullah Master within a week. She alleged that some of the killers have taken shelter at 'Hawa Bhaban' and at the homes of ministers and MPs. We are aghast by its implications. How could she say such things, can she prove what she has said?

We are feeling deeply upset by the declaration of Sheikh Hasina, knowing how devastating it will be for the country. Closing down of industries will be just like stopping blood supply to the heart, the economy of the country will be ruined, common people's suffer-

countries are also coming here for cure. The doctors and nurses indeed have set an example here. But they are not getting even the monthly salaries regularly.

Will the busy officials in the health ministry manage some time to look into the matter?

Sumon  
Dhaka

## Fragile top order

We overtly enjoyed the way our youngsters played in their first Test match against the West Indies. The tremendous effort of the 'Tigers' led the frenzied fans at home to watch the second. But once again the top order batsmen's hara-kiri disappointed us. The selection committee might think of the replacement of a few players who have been out of form for long until their recuperation. I think we badly need a strong foundation to go well through the full five days of a Test match. And only that could ensure lives of the rest even in rough weather.

Please think about my sugges-

with the US-UK policy on Iraq or Palestine.

The vicious cycle of eye for eye is spilling more and more blood, of an 'infidel' or a terrorist and the entire human race is paying a high price.

Sumon  
Dhaka

## Dip in Norwegian aid

As an 'Emerging Tiger' of the third world, there is no escaping the fact that our country has to depend heavily on foreign aid. A 40 percent dip in the Norwegian aid is indeed a cause for concern to our economy in general.

Lack of good governance, law and order downside, slow implementation of development projects, corruption et al are the vices that led to such a decision on the part of the Norwegian authorities. Earlier, we had seen our shipping minister getting embroiled in a bitter row with the Danish authorities over a deal that led to the suspension of a big amount of aid meant for the shipping sector.

group are serving the purpose of increasing the perks of the MPs. The common people are the ones losing on all fronts.

Joy  
Dhaka

## Will there ever be peace in Iraq?

It has been more than a year since the occupation of Iraq began. This brutal and inhuman occupation by the coalition forces was not needed at all in the first place and the US and the UK have proved that they are the most barbaric nations on earth. The brutal occupation and the sadistic behaviour of the US soldiers towards the Iraqi prisoners is disgraceful. President Bush and his closest 'assistant' Tony Blair proved they are the most infamous leaders in the world at the moment. Everyone knows Iraq is in a dire situation. Though the world has seen the debacle of Saddam Hossain, I believe, the world will even be happier to see the downfall of the US and the UK. It is now clear to all that the main purport of the occupation was to ensure the security of Israel, and the US has successfully done that. President Bush proved why he is such an egregious leader. He has the characteristics of Adolf Hitler!

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka

## A mega city or a mega slum?

Dhaka has a filthy lookit is pestered with posters, wall writing, ruthless setting up of obnoxious commercial billboards, irritating and stinking garbage centres, digging of the streets, the most notorious traffic jam of the world, the unplanned and ill-planned traffic system, water full of dust and insects like mosquitoes.

The DCC seems to be in a deep slumber. What should we call it -- a mega city or a mega slum?

Mahfuzul Haque  
Department of English,  
University of Dhaka

## Tigers with no claws!

I was just reading your editorial 'Tigers revelling in Draw' An excellent display of team work, confidence and dexterity. I will only draw your and the readers' attention to the last sentence "then again who knows what kind of surprise is in store for us in the future". Luckily, we didn't have to wait for long. It's all there in front of us. The great Tigers have, as expected, meekly surrendered losing seven wickets for just 12 runs. I think the great animal, tiger, is feeling a bit embarrassed. A more suitable name would be chickens.

Anyway, haven't we had enough of this Whatmore or Whatless and company who leave the team and go away for weeks (when the team for which he is paid a fat purse needs him) just because of the death of a brother-in-law? We cannot go on such leave at our workplaces.

But my main purpose of saying this is, "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH". One of the poorest nations in the world cannot afford this luxury any more. Let cricket die its natural death. Let not this unfortunate nation continue to remain a laughing stock to the world. Let our cricketers play school level cricket and break as many records as they like. But why squander tax payers' money only to bring insult and humiliation?

Ahmad Kamal  
A hurt Bangladeshi  
Abu Dhabi, UAE



## Photographic Afghanistan

I passed some evergreen days of my childhood in Afghanistan. That long lasting memory I have cherished for 15 years. After 15 years, Afghanistan has returned to me through some wonderful photographs. This photographic exhibition was held in Bengal Gallery and these exclusive photographs were taken by Shankar Shawjal and Aly Zaker. Those who have missed this exhibition have missed the tale of a country through photos. In the Bengal Gallery, with the soft melodious Afghan music I enjoyed my childhood's place. During that short span of time, I totally forgot that I was in Bangladesh, I went to Afghanistan - my dreamland. Afghans' friendly culture, their innocent smiley faces, Afghan child's wink-less glance, spring's beauty in Afghanistan, the innate beauty of rural areas, the wreckage of Afghanistan, again Afghans' determination to build a bright future - all have been so simply but so nicely caught in these photos. All these photos signify that the Afghan civilisation cannot be destroyed by Americans and Taliban. It is a civilisation which in the language of the photographers "lives in hearts and minds". After a pathetic experience of long war still Afghans' hospitality and honesty are the same as they had been for hundreds of years. That's why the photographers can say "We found Afghanistan has not changed".

Thanks to Shankar Shawjal and Aly Zaker for their spell binding photographs which have brought the symbols of the glorious heritage of Afghanistan to Bangladesh.

Naomi, Dept of Law, DU

ings will know no bounds, the country will plunge into total anarchy.

We are shocked at the death of Ahsanullah Master and demand that the murderers be brought to justice. But nobody wants anarchy in the name of political movement. There is no denying that crimes have gone up, miscreants are taking advantage of the political unrest, and the police and other law-enforcing agencies have to remain busy most of the times to tackle the many agitation programmes and unruly activities of the opposition.

So we appeal to the opposition leader to be more sympathetic to the cause of the people.

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

## Attention: health ministry

The DS report has informed us of the lone Filaria hospital in the country in Syedpur, which is giving new life to Filaria victims. The fame of this hospital has spread beyond the borders, patients from other

tion before the next match.

Alam Sheikh Sabiha  
One-mail

## Terrorist, infidels and human beings

The recent spate of attack on the foreign 'infidels' in Saudi Arabia has in turn resulted in loss of 'human' lives, both of the 'suspected terrorists' of al-Qaeda and the 'infidels'. This kind of cleansing of infidels is not supported by Islam itself. It is a religion of peace and harmony. Everyone has the right to follow his faith. It is really unfortunate to single out someone on the basis of his religious belief, let it be picking up of an American lawyer Mayfield, a 37-year-old convert to Islam, by the FBI on flimsy grounds, or announcing reward for the lives of the Western 'infidels'.

It was more shocking to learn that the journalists of BBC had come under attack. An Irish cameraman, Simon Cumbers, 36, was shot dead and a British security correspondent of BBC Frank Gardner, 42, sustained injuries in a terror attack. They were just doing their job and had nothing to do

Topics like poor governance, slide in law and order and corruption are catchy agendas for seminars and symposiums. There the bigwigs in the ruling alliance stress the importance of good governance, better law and order and fair play. But situation on the ground remains unchanged as ever. Worse still, they are the ones who make most of these aids, we already have seen huge amount of money 'going down the footpath' in the name of Dhaka city beautification project.

Due to diplomatic norms, the donors cannot say directly much about these, whenever they say (as in the case of Danish-Akbar affair) we vehemently accuse them for breaching the code of conduct and bringing the image of Bangladesh in disrepute. So the inevitable outcome is the slash in aid.

Aid has been cut significantly after this BNP got assumed power, while foreign investment is also becoming a mirage. Our finance minister is talking about a self-reliant economy without any 'begging' from the foreigners. The interest rate cut, imposition of newer taxes on the meagre income

## Prisoners of conscience in Burma

Burma (Myanmar) is a country infamous for its human rights violations. The country has been ruled by military juntas since 1962. In 1988, massive protests against the ruling junta were repressed and thousands of people were killed, and not until after that has the rest of the world started to react. The situation in the country has deteriorated and Aung San Suu Kyi, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, was arrested May 30 last year and is still in custody.

According to Amnesty International's estimations, there are approximately 1,300 political prisoners in Burma, but abuse go further than that with well-documented human rights violations such as forced labour, systematic rape and forced relocation of minority groups. The Mon people in southern Burma are among those who have been affected very hard by the persecution. Dr Min Kyi Win is one of the leaders of the Mon National Democratic Front; in 1990 he was elected to the parliament that the military junta disqualified. He was sentenced to hard labour on December 11th, 1997, after peaceful protests against the ruling party. He has spent more than six years in prison, separated from his wife and three children.

There are more than 300 Amnesty groups around the world campaigning actively for the release of Burma's many prisoners of conscience, among them Dr Min Kyi Win, for whose release we and others work. There is still a lack of coordinated measures from the international community to improve the situation in Burma. Today the situation in Burma is facing a potential change toward democracy, with the National Convention on the Constitution of Burma scheduled to be resumed. We feel that it is the responsibility of the international community in general and the countries in the region in particular to actively support the peaceful democracy movement and the struggle against the military dictatorship in Burma. Especially the ASEAN-countries can influence the Burmese government. It is necessary to take decisive actions to ensure the release of the prisoners of conscience and the cessation of the human rights violations in Burma.

Magnus Lundgren, Sweden



PHOTO: INTERNET

## Models for advertisements

We have some good models, both male and female, in the country. Like other professionals, they deserve patronisation from industry and commerce, as well as from the government. They need to be nurtured like men and women in any other calling. But are we really taking care of them?

To cite an example, the first movie in the country started with Jaharat Ara in Mukh-O-Mukhush, who had no acting experience but she set a tone in acting career which ultimately developed in a meaningful way. In fact, the novice actors and actresses were encouraged and we can now see how the industry has developed. If we invited the successful ones from outside the country, we would have nipped long back the present giants in the bud.

What are we doing in the field of models? We find commercial advertisements on bill boards, televisions and newspapers by local and multinational companies with cricket and film stars like Shahruk Khan, Sachin Tendulkar, Rani Mukherjee, Saurav Ganguly, Juhi, Tulshi, Reshmi Ghosh and many others with the results that our models are deliberately left aside and discouraged. How are outside models being paid? Are they working free? Should not the government look into the matter from the standpoint of money laundering or money transfer?

No non-nationals should be allowed to appear in commercial ads for any products manufactured in Bangladesh. We must have a sense of patriotism and practise it instead of allowing cultural infiltration into our society in the guise of trade liberalisation. Let us not cut our own throats.

The government should issue guidelines to develop our own models in different areas, and let us be satisfied with what we have so that in the long run quality models emerge in the country. There will be no dearth of Nobels and Mous provided we nourish and patronise the new ones to attain perfection and professionalism.

Rahmat Ali, Mohammadpur, Dhaka



PHOTO: ZAHED KHAN