



# Why I am not migrant

During my recent visit to the US most of the educated friends I met wondered what attractions kept me in Bangladesh. They were engineers, doctors, executives, etc. All of them were critical about the way Bangladeshi state affairs are being run. These Bangladeshi Americans were happy-go-lucky people, enjoying nice houses with green backyards, maintaining a nice car, etc. They were happy in securing American citizenship for their whole family. They were behaving as if by escaping from Bangladesh they have secured the way to Heaven. All the while, I wondered why I did not migrate.

Migration has been constant in the history of mankind. But the present state of migration is the creation of states having different privileges for its people. Unsatisfied ones opt for bountiful states. But it is not only wealth or empirical patriotism that decides migration. The mind-set is the most important factor that makes one leave.

During my study period in Europe 30 years back, many of my friends opted to stay back in Europe and North America. But I came back. From the beginning, together with medical services to people, I was deeply involved in community works -- helping the poor, arranging wedding of poor girls, finding jobs for educated youth, etc. Together with others, I organised things in such a way that practically no one in my immediate locality is so poor as to take Zakat money during Ramadan. That did not happen in one year, it took years to accomplish the task.

Once a week I provide free medical service to people of my area. I become overwhelmed when some poor people tell me that they fell sick a week ago, but did not consult any other doctor and have been waiting to see me. My joy knows no bounds when a poor fellow is cured without much investigation, and of course which is beyond his capacity, and he expresses his gratitude by lifting both hands. My joy was endless, when, as a result of my direct appeal to the PMO, some coastal poor people got relief material. These are only a few of the major jobs that I could do because I did not migrate.

In terms of financial gain and luxury amenities I am not that bad in comparison with my migrated friends except for not driving a BMW!

It is not fair that people will not migrate. But to evade social obligation is unexpected from educated skilled migrants. Migration in the Bangladeshi context could not yet show positive effects, because most of these highly skilled migrants are busy amassing fortunes for themselves and in some cases for relatives as well, which is nothing wrong. But if these fellows would do a little bit of community work for the underprivileged fellow men and women of their impoverished motherland, a lot of social change could have occurred in Bangladesh. Of course there are exceptions among migrants. We salute them.

Migration is a matter more of mindset than economic prosperity for highly skilled persons. Our highly skilled migrants in North America, Australia, and other developed countries should look at Indian and Chinese migrants. Many of the marvelous hospitals, schools, and social-uplift establishments of India are the result of migrants' endeavour.

True, there is corruption of government, law and order problems, and massive poverty all over, but still educated people cannot evade social obligation just by migration. This country nurtured me and made me who I am today. I definitely owe a lot to my fellow men. I think in the last 25 years of my community work I am endeavouring to pay that debt. Is not it a fine cause why I am not a migrant?

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## Statesman and statesmanship!

As an English newspaper, *The Statesman* of Calcutta was just not good; it was the best in the days of the British Raj. Then its standard as a newspaper was simply outstanding. It was said that educational institutions of the time made this paper a reference material for students learning English as a language.

It is a great pity that this great daily has fallen to such pitiable depths as your excellent editorial of September 2nd articulates so well. There are so many points in their particular editorial blaming the PM for the August 21 grenade attacks that just cannot be explained by freedom of the press. It is time that we take up this editorial with the Indian government

through the official diplomatic channel and demand an answer. I am not sure but there must be some international press organisation that judges the ethical standards of newspapers. We should lodge an official complaint with any such organisation if it exists. The government could even consider suing *The Statesman*.

All said, I am not very surprised that that editorial, knowing Indian politics and diplomacy somewhat, I have seen Indian newspapers play such a role for the government all the time. This editorial reflects the stance of the Indian government. It is now for our government to make an assessment of the new Indian government. It seems the Congress is showing its true

colours and the positive spin our Foreign Ministry gave following the visit of the Foreign Minister to India as an special envoy is boiling down to nothing. The re-activation of the river-linking project is another case in point.

It is time we make a serious assessment of our relations with India under the Congress-led government.  
**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
*Dhanmandi, Dhaka*

Overseas Bangladeshis are shocked to learn that the prestigious *Statesman* of Kolkata has cast aspersions on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Khaleda Zia, by labelling the tragic events of August 21 as, "Khaleda's game plan..." The assassination attempt on the leader of

### Internet cafes and our inspector closeaus

Anyone with a working knowledge of the Internet (hint: no one in the Technology-related Ministry!) knows that it is possible to "spoo" e-mail addresses and even IP addresses, thus pretending to send e-mails from a location while sending from another. It is also possible to hack into e-mail accounts by gaining access to passwords, using some routine queries this is especially easy if the password is an English language word. On top of that, the threatening e-mail was sent from an open-access cyber-cafe, where any one of dozens of people could have come in and used the terminal. Thus there is very little tangible proof to show that Saibal Saha Partha actually sent the e-mail in question.

Bangladesh ranks at the bottom of the world in Internet connectivity. Because of our refusal to join the submarine cable network a few years back, we have fallen far behind while even laggard Pakistan is now ahead of us. Thus, we can imagine the technological prowess the DB brought to bear on this case to catch their man. Saibal Saha Partha's arrest and subsequent torture is another example of the bumbling work of our detective force.

"Innocent until proven guilty"? No, in Bangladesh, it is, "Torture until confession."  
**Naeem Mohaiemen, Shobak.Org**

### Living in Bangladesh

Sometimes some news items leave me wondering what kind of a country I live in! A Pakistani citizen with his BNP sidekicks allegedly attacked the members of the eight Hindu families at Adam Sarkerpara village under Pirgachha upazila in the district of Rangpur. The bandits torched 22 houses of Hindus, injured 20 villagers, and looted their cash, crops, and cattle.

The victims are still living under the open sky while the "desperate" attempt by the police to nab the "absconding" criminal is proving futile as usual. The extremist elements are also targeting the Ahmadiyya community. Bangla Bhais are murdering and maiming people in the name of religion, and at the same time BNP cadres are barring people even from attending Janaza prayers. Clandestine training grounds for militants are thriving with new recruits. Anyone divulging such news risks being on

the hit list. Bombs used in the battle field are easily available to the ever increasing militant outfits.

Yes, we do have a government. It consists of self-declared war criminals, alleged arms smugglers, bigots directly aiding the religious fanatics, and so on. The PM seems not to be aware of what is going on. She even made fun of the death threat issued to the opposition leader at Ankara.

The indifference to party members and coalition cadres has gone too far. Is she really in control? Maybe she will have to pay the price for the deeds of her partners. Is she ready for it?  
**Sumon, Dhaka**

### The vat vexation

The latest spread of value added tax (VAT) bug recently hit home when I went to have lunch at a Gulshan restaurant with my niece. The bistro offers a popular buffet lunch for only Tk. 250 per person. The main attraction is a great salad bar, in addition to a variety of delicious main dishes and decent selection of desserts.

I had been to this eatery several times. This time though I experienced a befuddled double take when the bill arrived. The Tk 540 bill, including cold drinks, had magically transformed itself into a puffed up Tk. 621 outrage. When I inquired about the inflated amount, the response from the waiter was that the extra was VAT, more specifically, Saifur Rahman's VAT. This VAT monstrosity has raised it's ugly head and has now spread the tentacles in the cooked food sector. This makes a pleasant eating experience somewhat distasteful. It leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

The US public, especially significant strand of tax rebels and resisters, has always opposed the VAT fiend. It is a dubious way for the government to make incredible amount of money on the back of grumbling but pliant and yielding citizens. It is very common in Europe and Japan. The result is evident for all to see. While the US economy has been a job making dynamic machine, hardly any jobs have been created in Europe in over 20 years and Japan has been in a perpetual downturn for over a decade.

All this hypothesising is for the unanticipated and exceedingly irritating buffet VAT!

**Omar Khasru, On e-mail**

### TIB again!

TIB generated heat again in

## Regime change produced football glory!

The occupation of Iraq has at least one positive outcome, that is the superb performance of the Iraqi football team in international arena. At least that is what Mr. Bush is trying to imply. With election days coming nearer and nearer he is desperate to find positive outcome of the illegal invasion.

It is a shame that an educated, conscious, and progressive nation like the Americans elected such a leader in the first place.

**Saif**  
*Dhaka*



Bangladesh, they angered especially the law minister who told Channel I last night that he was thinking of filing a defamation suit against the organisation that publishes corruption index. But how do people view corruption? Obviously, less positively, suggesting that it distorts economic decisions. For example, corruption might result in the misallocation of talent to occupations with large opportunities for rent seeking, might bias authority towards purchases on which it is easier to collect bribes, or might affect income distribution.

Consistent with the less flattering view of corruption, it hampers growth, reduces income, increases inequality and reduces investment, can increase the size of the unofficial economy, and is associated with lower levels of human capital, urbanisation, financial depth, and foreign trade. Corruption is lower in countries that are more open to foreign trade, countries with longer exposure to democracy, countries that are more democratic, countries with greater political stability and greater freedom of the press, and countries with parliamentary systems.

TIB looks at newspaper level data on bribes paid in sectors of the economy. This allows people to

understand the persons or enterprises that pay and receive bribes in addition to the characteristics of the institutional and macroeconomic environment. People may find, going through the report, that excess demand is an important determinant of corruption. Bribes are lower where the utility services of the ministries have been privatised. One potential explanation for this is that private sector might have a greater incentive than public servants to impose stiff penalties upon employees taking bribes and reducing bribe payments.

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### The burial grounds of Madrid

It was 1969 and I stopped in Rome. I was visiting Madrid and observing historical architecture, the Al-Hambra palace. I walked through the halls for quite a while. I became so tired that I was left behind the large group of tourists. I came to the burial grounds of the royal people. After I left Madrid I was in Manhattan. Madrid and the graveyard in Al-Hambra left a strange haunting experience of the past. The haunting experience sometimes led to sleepwalking. After a week I recovered. I spent some years in New York. I started reading a book on geology called *Secrets In Stones*, I also read folklore, *The Ghost*, *The Russian Witch Baba Yaga*, and *The Goblin and Mystery in the Woods*. I spent a lot of time in the yards across the Whitestone river. The city, the island of New York and the river became a part of my life. I was reading the *Wizard of Oz* and it was very interesting to learn about Dorothy. I did not live in the city. I was living in a quiet town. There is a difference between an island, a city, and a town.

**Estelle Mahnuma, On e-mail**

### Unqualified high court judges are unacceptable!

I agree with The Daily Star editorial (August 31) and the Point-Counterpoint article by Mr. M. Abdul Latif Mondal (September 2) that only the best and qualified lawyers should be appointed High Court judges. That is why it was so disappointing to hear the comments of, Dr. Kamal Hossain, on August 29 about the nineteen newly sworn-in additional High Court judges: "Who cannot write a sentence in English and who does not know how to proceed a case will now deliver judgement. He will hand down death sentence without hearing the case. It's a shame." And unacceptable!

magnitude without any shred of evidence is juvenile journalism, speculative journalism at its worst, and it only illustrates *The Statesman's* ill-will and hostility towards Bangladesh.

Unfortunately *The Statesman's* editorial represents the attitude of a certain section of Indian population and media who are jealous of Bangladesh's enormous success as an independent nation and wants to destroy its image. Bangladesh is after all a moderate Muslim majority democracy ruled by two democratically elected women, and is courted by all and sundry and has become a far more sought after destination for the world's politicians, dignitaries, intellectuals, and yes,

statesmen than Kolkata, for instance. To reach back its glory days, *The Statesman* should desist from interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbouring country and should take the lead in forcing the Indian Parliament to relinquish to Bangladesh an amount of land equal to the Bangladeshi enclaves Dahagram and Angarpota, which a trusting Sheikh Mujib had handed over to Indira Gandhi's India thirty years ago in a land exchange, and which India is obliged to honour legally and morally, but has yet to do so.

**Arshad Jamil, New Jersey**

Macavitys and the Napoleons of crime, are flushed out and taken to task?  
**AZ M Abdul Ali, Uttara, Dhaka**

### Modernise the intelligence agency

To ensure security of a country, a dynamic and functional intelligence agency is urgent. But the intelligence agencies of Bangladesh seem to be lethargic and impotent. They lack technical know-how and dynamism. Most of them are corrupt and like to impress the government for personal gains. The members of these agencies do not get proper training and incentives that makes them venal, sluggish and unsmart. The government has also been callous towards the need to revitalise our intelligence agencies. The recent grenade attack on AL rally reminds us that our intelligence agencies should be modernised.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
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### Praying for Partha and his family

After the horrifying grenade attack there was a brief news about Partha, who allegedly sent an email threat against Sheikh Hasina to Bangla daily, Prothom Alo. I do not know him personally and I don't even have enough information about this young man. I could only imagine Partha surfing the net and writing emails in the Cyber Cafe. I could also imagine many other Parthas, Sohels and Taniahs doing the same thing.

I find it very alarming that his religion and his education across the border are being highlighted in some newspapers (in a desperate attempt to find some news of Partha I even searched some newspapers which are my least favourite!)

There have been so many deaths in custody that I am now extremely scared for Partha! I request the government not to make Partha a political scapegoat. If he is guilty please follow the proper procedure. I leave it up to our very 'efficient' intelligence to dig the truth out. Though it sounds horrific, but I hope he doesn't die too in custody after 'torture' like so many promising lives have before.

However, I can well imagine his family's ordeal and desperation. I want to tell them that many others like myself are thinking of them and praying.  
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## We deeply mourn



We deeply mourn for the victims and their families in the August 21 carnage. The 1st September issue of Daily Star has recorded the plight of many injured victims, who are still in need of medical attention due to hundreds of splinters in their arms, limbs, eyes and other organs. It is appreciated that the hospitals have so far provided free medicare to these victims. But more needs to be done, such as long term treatment whereby the splinters can be taken out one by one. Many of these people were the sole earning members of their families. Some form of help needs to be provided for them too. We appeal to the government to take up each individual case and arrange for their proper treatment in the country. After all, the government is ultimately responsible for providing security to every citizen. The living victims of the latest vicious and violent attack need the caring hand of the government now.

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