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Human rights

I am browsing through immigration-related websites and I see with regard to Bangladesh that the country has generated human rights concerns in the international community.

I refer in particular to assaults on women and police use of barbaric methods of torture against prisoners.

These practices, if they continue to be left unchecked or overlooked as unfortunate facts of life in Bangladesh, will reverberate negatively on Bangladeshis everywhere, even more so on those residing in the US, where racism and anti-immigrant sentiments have exploded since the 9/11 attacks.

The legitimacy of immigrants' claims to human rights in the face of ever-growing infringements on those rights seems out of place when one considers the flagrant disregard for humanity in their own countries.

S Ferguson
Michigan, US

Re-election of Bush

It is really funny and amusing to watch our fellow Bangladeshis' reaction to America's choice for Bush to be their leader for one more term. The overseas and home grown 'think tanks' and 'scenario geniuses' from all the nooks and crannies of the world have since started jumping for all their worth, like cats on a hot tin roof. It is funny that we are calling the American names and questioning their judgement concerning the re-election of George Bush. What if they start asking us, the 'all intelligent' and 'all righteous' Bangladeshis some questions? What are we doing about the achievement of 'the most corrupt nation of the world' trophy four times in a row?

What are we doing about the fact that our police cannot track down and take to task the heinous rapists and murderers who are marching through the streets like heroes and going arm-in-arm with our politicians?

Why have we voted for MPs (who have later become ministers) who are war criminals that collaborated with the Pakistani army in 1971 to kill millions of fellow Bangladeshis and to rape hundreds and thousands of our mothers, sisters and daughters?

Why are we sitting in a stadium or in front of the TV in thousands and cheering the Pakistani cricket team?

In conclusion, I just want to ask my fellow Bangladeshis both from home and abroad to try and be a bit more discerning. If we want to criticise others, we have to earn that right by being flawless in that particular aspect. Unfortunately, that is far from being the case. We cannot, after all, sit inside a glass house and throw stones at other people. They will throw the stones back, and in our case we do not have the marble house to withstand those stones.

Moinul Chowdhury, Dhaka

Patience and tolerance

It is imperative that the leaders and followers of the four-party alliance government, and all the opposition political parties, should urgently cultivate the human qualities of patience and tolerance; and jointly give efforts to improve our standing as a nation.

The politicians and government functionaries must have the patience and tolerance to see that the citizens of Bangladesh can improve the quality of life through higher earnings producing quality goods and extending better friendly services.

Golam Ashraf
DOHS, Baridhara, Dhaka

Indian visa

It is reported that almost every day hundreds of Bangladeshis show up at the Indian High Commission in Gulshan for visas. Though the Indian High Commission takes all the trouble to issue around 500 visas

a day, people even line up at night to get a chance to submit their visa applications next morning. One can understand the miseries of the applicants and the burden of work pressure on Indian High Commission.

I was wondering if the Indian

to myself - when will people keep their emotions aside and be more practical while judging someone or judging a nation. Everyone has to understand this fact no one or no country is perfect in this world, and we all have different viewpoints. Yet some countries have achieved



Selling "My Life"

Here I am stuck at a traffic section in front of a hotel in Dhaka. It will take ten fifteen minutes before we can move forward. The cars really move at the whim of the traffic police.

In the meantime you are surrounded by vendors convincing you to buy what not! The recent trend is selling My Life along with other best-sellers of home and abroad. Some are controversial literary works. But they sell well. Once I was allured to the trap and ended at the other side of Brick Lane. The young chap who is selling does not know what they are contributing to the readers - a pirated copy, some obnoxious monologues, some not so pleasant books, and many such similar things.

Why is the authority so quiet on the forefront? Where is quality control, where are intellectual property rights issue?

A ten or twelve year old or even some in the older age group do not understand what they are selling. They do not want to know and they do not need to know. They need the commission from their sale proceeds for their existence and in course of time they will shift the commodities from books, magazines, cigarettes to obscene stuff, drugs, to arms and grenades. The exploitation still continues.

Let us hope this country as a land of opportunity. For many, it is. We are all hoping it will happen but nobody (the political stalwarts) gives the efforts for it.

Ashfaq Ahmed

Dhaka

High Commission could open a separate counter from 10am to 4pm and issue coupons to would-be applicants with passport number inscribed on each coupon and a date for submission of visa application. Applicants would then submit their applications along with the coupon attached on the appointed day. This I think can bring relief to the miseries of applicants and lessen the pressure on the High Commission. This will also prevent the applicants from being fleeced and cheated by brokers buzzing around the High Commission office.

The High Commission should also consider issuing one year multiple visa against a small fee.

This will no doubt further ease the pressure on the High Commission and bring relief to frequent travellers. India is after all our immediate good neighbour and the only place for the low income group to visit either for holidays, shopping, treatment, studies, or to see relations. Our population will keep on growing and so would be the number of applicants for Indian visas. The government of Bangladesh and India should find out an easy solution for travellers between these two countries.

Ziauddin Ahmed
One-mail

In response to "Ohio has failed the world"

I wonder when people would become more rational rather than being cynical. After reading many comments about American presidential election/Iraq issues on The Daily Star's 19th November, 2004 issue (under "Ohio has failed the world"), I had to ask this question

superiority over others because the way it treats its human beings. Whether you accept it or not today most people in the world know that the US is the most powerful nation on earth just not because of its military might and an economy that greatly exceeds any other, just not because of its culture or education or movies, food, clothing and technologies that are so strong today that no power in the world can balance it, but also because it offers people the freedom the freedom of speech or whatever sort of freedom you want as long as it doesn't hurt anyone something which most countries in the world still can't give.

I think because of all these facts, instead of bothering about any other country in the world, we all enjoy talking about the US either positively or negatively.

Hussain Touhid
Texas, US

Mohakhali Flyover

I had to drive several times over the Mahakhali Flyover recently. I was very much disappointed when I saw that people were walking over it without any hesitation. They are using this flyover for an evening or morning walk. Some couples were using it as their romantic meeting place! Some people also stopped their private cars on this flyover for sight seeing. Thus, some ice-cream hawkers were also riding this flyover for doing their business during the Eid holidays. All these are very much shocking to us.

I would therefore request the appropriate authorities to close this flyover for pedestrians. I would suggest to arrange security checks on both ends of the flyover. A traffic

policeman should stay at each end of this flyover.

Dr. Md. Showkat Rahim
Chowdhury
SECS, Independent University,
Bangladesh (IUB)

Extortion in a different form

The responsibility of collecting kitchen waste and other garbage and its safe disposal rests on the city corporation. But due to their 'sincere' service some people have taken the job of collecting the garbage on area basis and this is a good effort. Recently, we shifted our house to the Central Road area of Dhanmondi. Here this noble work is done by some boys' club and they charge Tk 30 per month for this from each family. (It was 10 taka in the area where we previously resided) They collect it in the first week of the operating month as they pay their employees in advance! Here, most of the buildings have six stories or more. In a six storied building at least 15 families reside. So they are getting some 450 taka from a single building. Any one visiting this area knows how many such buildings are located here. So you can imagine how much they get in a month. In the month of Ramadan, boys from the same club sang religious songs and helped us to get up for Shahri (though not regularly but to their sweet will) And the price was Tk 50. I have learnt that here the cable tv operators charge Tk 400 per month, which is some Tk 200 in all other places in Dhaka (something I could not afford). Nobody seems to care about these things.

Saif, Dhaka

Rancour grips BNP leaders

Your news item under the above headline on 21 Nov. was very interesting.

The report that grounds of senior politicians in the BNP are shifting and being overruled by the "Young Turks" within the party is not surprising. These senior politicians engage in charitable acts and not just Americans. However, it is true that Americans do an excellent job of trumpeting whatever they do, so that over time, their rancour overshadows all else. Americans may try to improve the community around them, and food shelters etc, but that is based on their belief to provide handouts. Let me clarify this. Every year there are food drives to help the poor and needy -- majority of whom are African-Americans and single mothers. But then at the same time, social assistance to such communities are cut, as are school luncheon

programmes (in many cases the ONLY source of a balanced meal for many undernourished children) and back to work training programmes, to pay for tax benefits to the wealthy and other political benefits. As a result, a single mother may get a can of peas, but won't have any work the following day or job training. African Americans (descendants of African slaves) comprise a large segment of the American population, but are among the most economically and politically deprived. I would dare Mr Siddiqui to venture into the African-American neighbourhoods of

Stop genocide in Iraq

What happened in Fallujah is nothing but genocide. Bodies rot in the streets. Iraq's Red Crescent has sent seven truckloads of food and medicine to the city, but US forces blocked the aid convoy at Fallujah's main hospital and said it could not

enter. Dogs eat up corpses, starving Fallujans beg for food. Wounded children pay the costs of Bush's Fallujah offensive. Humanity is abandoned as human corpses are left to be eaten by dogs. Ex-US ally Saddam killed innocent Iraqis to remain in power and Bush is doing the same to control oilfields in the Middle East. How long will the world leaders tolerate this genocide in the name of establishing peace and democracy in Iraq?

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Niigata University of Pharmacy,
Niigata, Japan

Playground for citizens

I am a citizen of this country but the rulers of this country is violating my rights by creating an unhygienic environment. I don't have any playground or gymnasium and therefore I cannot keep my body fit for work or study.

Actually, we don't need anything luxurious. We are a poor country but resource distribution exhibits disparity. We are spending a substantial amount of money for promoting cricket. But the amount of money spent for infrastructural development is meagre as I see there is no progress in the issue of public welfare and sports. Every country should have a vision for future. Despite internal turmoil Sri Lanka is maintaining a balance in their resource distribution and Sri Lanka is not a very rich country. They are doing reasonably good in every sector. They don't want to be super rich but want to utilise their resources in a justified manner.

I am giving the rulers of this country a period of ten years to provide me a place where I can play and resource distribution shall be so justified that there will no ultra poor. Believe me, I am very serious!

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury
English Department, BRAC
University

US voters

Let me correct Mr. Khurram Siddique (The Daily Star, Sat Nov 20, 2004) by stating that people around the world (including Bangladeshis) engage in charitable acts and not just Americans. However, it is true that Americans do an excellent job of trumpeting whatever they do, so that over time, their rancour overshadows all else. Americans may try to improve the community around them, and food shelters etc, but that is based on their belief to provide handouts. Let me clarify this. Every year there are food drives to help the poor and needy -- majority of whom are African-Americans and single mothers. But then at the same time, social assistance to such communities are cut, as are school luncheon

Thoughts of an expatriate

My father has advised me to stop thinking that I will be going back to my land. And he has asked me to start to believe that Canada is my final home.

I am now in the Leddy Library, one of the two libraries in University of Windsor. It is my regular habit to read all the national newspapers of Bangladesh from their internet editions. Technology is one of the best friends of human kind. I am listening Moushumi Bhowmik's "Jessore Road" from thousands of miles away. And I am thinking about the canal beside our house. I am thinking about my first love...Bangladesh.

I was wondering why I am doing this. As an obedient son, soon I will be giving up my Bangladeshi passport and will become a proud Canadian. My national anthem will be "O Canada". I will be known as official minority in multicultural Canada. My house will be in Richmond Hill, my children will call me dad, and I will not go with my son to Eidgah, as I used to go with my father. My Children will never know about "Pahela Boishakh".

I was conjecturing at the end of the day why my dreams all are around Bangladesh? Why I dream that I can make some differences, while I know I will not be allowed to return. I am very much disappointed with my prejudices about Canada and decided to stop dreaming about Bangladesh. Henceforth I will be thinking myself as a forthcoming Canadian who will be one of the residents of Richmond Hill. I will not think anymore about health and education systems of Bangladesh. I will refrain myself from searching the word "Bangladesh" from the political science books. I will not reciprocate Bangladesh when I will read my development studies books; instead I will be eagerly bluffing myself with the notion of divulging my education with Canadian inclining economy. Definitely I will be a happy man. In fact one of the happiest persons in the world, as I will kill my inner voice pretty soon. And certainly I will kill the love for Bangladesh, for which my father fought at the age of 19.

Abu Md Falze Arif
Windsor, ON, Canada



programmes (in many cases the ONLY source of a balanced meal for many undernourished children) and back to work training programmes, to pay for tax benefits to the wealthy and other political benefits. As a result, a single mother may get a can of peas, but won't have any work the following day or job training. African Americans (descendants of African slaves) comprise a large segment of the American population, but are among the most economically and politically deprived. I would dare Mr Siddiqui to venture into the African-American neighbourhoods of

Boston, New York, Baltimore, Detroit, Cincinnati and other major cities. Same is the case of the Native-Americans. They are confined to "reservations" which are supposedly "Independent Indian Nations". But each such "Nation" being surrounded by a state and therefore dependent on it for progress and ingress, is subject to the politicians of the state. As a result, the Native-American communities are economically deprived with high rates of alcoholism and drug use. Their dwellings are on par with any slum in Dhaka in comfort and appearance. Unfortunately, the

sense of community of the Americans that Mr Siddiqui champions do not extend to the black neighbourhoods or the Native Indian reservations, or any neighbourhood for that matter. I would be hard pressed to find a black contractor, a builder or an experienced years of character assassination of the African American by your friendly neighbourhood Americans has portrayed the African American male nothing short of a drug dealer and an all around bad guy. The only time one hears of the "Native American heritage", is right before elections as each party tries to swell its voter ranks.

No one has questioned the legitimacy of Mr Bush's win. Who America chooses as their president is their business. But when a candidate with a history of creating global political and economic turmoil is elected, then Bangladeshis have every right to question the judgement of the American voters. This is not "arrogance" by any means, nor is it a conspiracy. It is the worry of every person about his or her lot tomorrow - economically and politically. After Mr Bush's win, Mr Powell stated that the Bush policy for the Middle East will remain "aggressive". In his victory speech, Mr Bush has promised to bring "freedom" to every middle eastern country. With Iran being next in the "axis of evil list", I guess Iran will be showered with bombs of freedom very soon. It cannot be denied that such rhetoric is irresponsible and does not bode well for the rest of the world.

Unaware to Mr Siddiqui, Bangladeshis have taken care of their country. Compare the Bangladesh of 1971 to the Bangladesh of today. There is a world of economic difference. We are no longer the "basket case" of Mr Kissinger. Our lack of political stability cannot be denied, but that has not hindered our economic progress. With continued economic progress political stability will follow. However, more needs to be done, and that requires the help of every Bangladeshi. In this regard, it is my sincere hope that Mr Siddiqui will enlighten us on what he has done for Bangladesh, so that many of those who are currently posturing will have a positive lead to follow.

Ahmed Sobhan, Akron, Ohio

Rapid Action Battalion

I honestly believe that Mr. G Sarwar from the US (letter to the editor: Sun, November 21, 2004) has absolutely lost all humanly emotions! I just cannot envisage how he could ever think of those grossly imaginative killing methods that he suggested. It is an absolute disgrace. No man with the slightest human attribute can ever endorse these extra judicial killings by the Rapid Action Battalion.

Could anybody or Mr. Sarwar himself show me any statistics that these heinous crimes have made any difference in the soaring crime rate? The RAB doesn't act against the godfathers of these criminal victims, what they are doing is nothing more than an eyewash.

Chowdhury Mohibul Hassan
Law Department, London School of
Economics & Political Science (LSE),
Houghton Street, London, England, UK

I love freedom



Everybody loves freedom, so do I! Everybody admires the Heroes, so do I! I was not there in 1971, so I don't know how it feels to be oppressed by foreign rulers. But I can feel the freedom of sovereign Bangladesh. I can touch it, and I don't know whether there can be anything more beautiful and more loveable in this world than freedom! And really, I don't feel sorry for those who sacrificed their lives for freedom because they are not dead-- the Heroes never die! However, I would have remained unaware of the cruelty and atrocities of war if US coalition troops had not invaded Iraq, and the horrible pictures of that prison were not unveiled.

Shame on you Mr. Ayad Alawi, shame on your moronic supporters and shame on me that I live in a planet where humanity fails, and on the contrary lure of power and wealth wins! I wonder whether blindness is an acquired or a congenital disease for some people! Well, if it's congenital, then I've nothing to say!

Cantara Wali Ruhu
Dhaka

Big sky country



I was travelling through Montana. Everywhere I go in western US there are wide open spaces and very wide skies. I usually study language, literature and film. Sometimes I look at the similarities between a book and a film. One of my favourite writers is Marilyn Robinson and her book Housekeeping. I also watched the movie on Housekeeping. The story is based on the fact that sisters from the same family can be very different, one sister lives with freedom, and does not conform to narrow, social rules (Cain and Abel in the Bible were two different brothers). The story also shows the beautiful scenes of Montana. The other story and movie that I liked was A River Runs Through It, which is also based in Montana. It makes me realise that the world is a very, very big place. Walt Whitman said America and American people should be like the land, vast, and broad minded. What I love most about America is the natural landscape in the wide, wide west. The defiant mountains, the widest skies, and wild flowers all over the place. "The Colorado Rocky Mountain high, shadows from the starlight is softer than a lullaby, talk to God and listen to the casual reply." There are problems in America,

but there are problems all over the world. I think what Whitman meant was that Americans should have big hearts. I did find that thousands of American people, especially in the west did have big hearts. All over the west, the national parks, Yellowstone Park, Dinosaur Park, etc. are examples of the magnificence of nature and the greatest creations of God. In my mind I hear the song of Red Thunder, "Beneath the wind, beneath the sky, oh Great Spirit set us free." When I look at the wide skies, I think that I can see the entire universe. At night, it is the widest sky filled with millions of stars. In Montana and many of the western states, there aren't a lot of people, but there is a lot of natural landscape. In Utah, Arches National Park is made of the natural rock sculptures created by nature and God. While I travel through Montana, I see the roads and the rivers winding throughout the mountains. The land is covered with wild flowers. The wide desert, and the mountain deserts spread far and wide. As I travel through the landscape of the west, the sky gets bigger and bigger.

Estelle Mahnuma, Fraulain M Chaudhury
One-mail