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OIC's call

Islam, unlike other religions, strictly adheres to prayers being offered in a totally peaceful atmosphere and in complete silence signifying voluntary surrender to Almighty and it cannot be a religion that would promote violence and terrorism, as propagated by the West. Rather, Islam preaches and follows a peaceful propagation of the tenets of the religion and peaceful co-existence right from the days of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

But the world powers pursuing an anti-Islamic agenda have conspired to provoke Muslims to violently react to terrorist actions of the powers that be. Islam had faced constant attacks since it was created "but in recent years the phenomenon has assumed alarming proportions and has become a major cause of concern for the Muslim world." The anti-Islamic forces, cutting across their religious contours and variations join together to use the occasion to denounce Islam and insult Muslims and try to finish off Islam by engineering conversions to other religions, have been at work for ages. But the Sept 11 event in the USA has been used by all these anti-Islamic forces to slam Islam and torture and kill Muslims all over the world. The civilized world, the West, has been in the forefront of this evil practice, known as Islamophobia.

Last week, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) called on Europe and America to take stronger measures against 'Islamophobia' in a report prepared for a summit of the group's 57 members in Dakar and warned that an "alarming" rise in anti-Islamic insults and attacks in the West has become a threat to international security. This monitoring group has requested Europe and North America to do more, through laws and social action, to protect

Muslims from threats and discrimination and prevent insults against Islam's religious symbols. When the West behaves well, the rest of the world would follow suit. They acknowledge that many Muslim countries are themselves victims of terror and active partners of the international community in combating terror and extremism.

The report the OIC has prepared has added that Muslims in many parts of the world, in the West in particular, are being stereotyped, profiled and subjected to various forms of discriminatory treatment. It called on OIC member states to "step up their counter-measures by keeping the pressure on the international community at multilateral and bilateral forums." The OIC said the Muslim world must launch a campaign to show that it is a "moderate, peaceful and tolerant" religion, closely monitor and raise the alert over anti-Islamic incidents and organise more inter-faith initiatives. Victims of Islamophobia must be encouraged and given necessary help to file complaints.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
Analyst, Researcher
Commentator & Columnist
Delhi

Uttara plot allotment

It is very heartening to hear that the caretaker government is making all out efforts to undo the irregularities associated with allotment of plots in Rajuk's 3rd phase of Uttara. It has already cancelled allotment of plots that were found to be allotted beyond lawful means by the previous government. I would like to urge the present government to consider the following while re-allotting the plots in Uttara:

1. Give preference to those applicants who were not considered last time and who have not withdrawn the application money from Rajuk.
2. Applicants who have genuine white money (as per income tax

records and, if necessary, through another assessment by an appropriate government agency such as the NBR) and who can pay off the entire cost of the plot at a time should be given preference.

3. Applicants belonging to the private sector were given much less preference in allotment last time compared to applicants belonging to government service. Since the number of private applicants is substantial, there should be a reasonable quota for them.

Through this column, I would request the Advisor to the caretaker government in-charge of Housing and Public Works to kindly look into the matter and do justice to the applicants (including those from the private sector) who were not considered last time.

TA Chowdhury
Green Road
Dhaka

Poor postal service

I refer to the recent letters published in your daily on the above subject. Go to any post office in Dhaka or any other city, you will be appalled to see the situation. Generally, the post offices are over crowded with people standing in long queues. The staff at the counters work with a glum face and it is clear that they are ill fed/undernourished. Therefore, they are just doing their jobs reluctantly.

Hence, the government has to look into this matter and find a good solution. People want fast and efficient service at reasonable costs. The government must look into this matter and take appropriate steps for improving the "postal services within the country" quickly.

We all know that due to the inefficient postal service, people have been compelled to turn to "courier service companies" and are paying very high charges.

Therefore, we all want that the

government appoint a high powered committee to look into the affairs of our postal department and take corrective measures for improving the situation. I am sure with better and efficient service this losing concern will earn more "revenue" and make profit for the government.

Naseem Begum
Narinda, Dhaka

Rootless people

There are many street boys in our country. They don't have any identity. Their identity is the street. They are called street boys or tokai. It's a great social problem. Many of them become hardened criminals in due course of time.

The government should think in terms of rehabilitating them.

Numan Chowdhury
North Hall
Dhaka College

Teachers and students

Teachers are the builders of a civilized nation and, in fact, their job is dedicated to making good citizens for a country, and in the greater sense, for this world. They are the pioneers of providing education to the uneducated, illuminating them with the light of education.

The motto of teachers should be to direct the students in the right direction with care and love, because that is what the students seek from a good teacher.

Shatabdi Biswas
Officers Quarter
Regional Public Administration
Training Centre
Rajshahi

Playing in Pakistan...

As if defeats after defeats are not enough, Bangladesh cricket bosses have announced their 'Pakistan's face saving' tour just after Australia decided to postpone their scheduled tour over a genuine security fear.

Who gave the security assurance of Bangladesh cricket team in Pakistan when there is no security guarantee of its president, prime minister, home minister, Generals and ambassadors?

Decades long patronization of the extremists and then ruthless suppression of the tribal people of Frontier Province in the name of 'war against terror' are now producing the predicted results. A new phenomenon - wave of suicide bombings - swept all across Pakistan - from the pro-government tribal jirga meetings to highly secured capital Islamabad's cantonment (one kilometre from president Musharraf's house). Now anybody anywhere in Pakistan can become the victim of terrorism.

High profile incidents just in the last six weeks include: (1) Killing of the commander of an army division, a Major General, that is engaged in 'war against terror' in the tribal area; (2) Abduction of the Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan from the tribal area on his way to Kabul (still 'missing'); (3) Suicidal killing of the head of the Pakistan army medical corps, a Lt. General, in Lahore; (4) Twin suicidal attack in Naval War College, Lahore (several Bangladeshis studied here); and (5) A well coordinated twin suicidal car attack (the largest ever) reduced the eight-story provincial headquarters of federal investigating agency building into rubble, and literally shook the mega city Lahore, damaged all the buildings (including Asif Zardari's) in a 0.5 kilometre radius and broke window spans of houses and shops within two kilometre radius.

In this situation, it makes one wonder as to why Bangladesh cricket authorities took such a 'suicidal' decision for the cricket team. Instead, they can invite the Pakistan cricket team to Bangladesh.

M. Emad, Oxford, UK

Medium of education

In urban areas we see a tendency among parents nowadays to send their kids to English Medium schools. The reasons are known to all, the parents want to see their next generation not lagging behind others, especially in today's world where English is not only a language but also the medium for career advancement.

The other day I was watching a report in "Channel 1" regarding the man made disaster in Sathkira through cultivation of shrimps by bringing in salty water to fertile soil from the sea. The soil has lost its fertility.

It strikes my mind whether we are also doing the same in case of different mediums of schools. Children belonging to the same age group are studying in different mediums and learning different subjects, whereas their creeds, culture, colour, heritage, values etc. are common.

Educationists and the authorities may please look into the matter and guide our nation to have a balanced system of education at school level so that we can proceed together, rather than group-wise.

Intiaz
Uttara, Dhaka

Harassment at ZIA

This is in response to the letter dated 3rd January, 2008 by S. A. Mansoor.

I do have deep regard for Mr. S.A. Mansoor and I do read his letters/articles to gain knowledge and understanding. But with due respect, I would like to differ with his writing this time on the above subject.

I have had bitter experience at Zia International Airport. I had to watch silently and helplessly many a deliberate and painful harassment of our simple, mostly semi literate passengers in the hands of this security staff at this airport.

Carrying coconuts in checked-in baggage is perfectly legal. I being a British citizen and an occasional traveller have been importing those to the U.K without any hassle at Heathrow. Those are categorized as fruits. But the security staff at ZIA out of their own motivation and personal gain often try to step into the shoes of others, instead of concentrating on security aspects of the flights. Frozen well-packed fish in small quantity as well as cooked ones are allowed inside the carry on baggage or otherwise, as per the DEFRA bulletin in U.K. but not the meat, diary products. They should look into each and everything from the security point of view and nothing else as is the practice everywhere. As regards food items or any other item, that may or may not be allowed inside the cabin, these should be referred to the airline concerned if they are outside the published list and is of no security hazard. Secondly, once the items are cleared at the entry gate, they should usually be allowed at the boarding gate and objections if any must be raised at the entry point. But security staff deliberately cause problems and raise objections at the boarding point when a passenger is left with no option. In our country rules are frequently bent by the holders of authority out of their ulterior motive. This is the tragedy. Many unhappy incidents take place at the airport which are uncalculated.

Passengers and their rights ought to be given due respect.

So the authorities should think of those common passengers, who earn valuable forex for the country, exempt them from unnecessary hassle and make them feel at home during their journey.

Who cares for the harassment and exploitation of poor wage earners?
A.B. Mohammed Zakaria
Stanwell, Staines
UK

"Shaheed Sagar"



At the North Bengal Sugar Mills Ltd. at Gopalpur in Natore district, about one hundred innocent people, including my beloved eldest brother, then General Manager (Administrator) Shaheed Lieutenant Anwarul Azim, MALLB, officers, labourers, staffs and others of the mills, were killed on the staircase of a pond in the main mill premises by machinegun burst-fire on May 5, 1971 by the beastly Pakistani soldiers. This holy pond is now called "Shaheed Sagar" by the local people.

I believe a museum should be established

on the mills premises, preserving photos and all other articles belonging to the martyrs.

I, on behalf of the families of these martyrs, earnestly request the caretaker government to observe this genocide day in honour of these martyrs in all sugar mills in our country.

Can't we pay back a bit of the debt that we owe to the martyrs of our glorious Liberation War?

Mohammad Anwarul Quadir
Advocate and Journalist
Masterpara, Chakdev, Naogaon

Traffic jam

We the common people of the big cities have to suffer a lot because of unbearable traffic jam. As we start for our workplace early in the morning we get stuck up in long rows of vehicles. The huge line of vehicles inches onward, causing irritation to the commuters who travel by bus or CNG run baby taxis. In some thoroughfares it is the rickshaws that are responsible for traffic congestion. Private cars also add to the already aggravated traffic situation. Again drivers often disregard traffic rules, giving rise to a chaotic situation.

As the winter season is over, the weather is getting warmer day by day. Getting stuck up in traffic gridlock can be a suffocating experience as the roofs of the vehicles get heated very easily. As you travel under the sun, you sweat profusely. Thus traffic jam is making life difficult for the city-dwellers.

Some initiatives have already been taken to ease the problem. Some roads have been made off-limit to rickshaws. Some of the main roads have been widened. The authorities may allow more

buses as they can accommodate more people.

Finally, we hope the authorities will come up with pragmatic solutions.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Clinton campaign

What the Clinton supporters are saying makes no sense at all. How can you lose the race and still say, "Oh, I think you should be my Vice President..." Secondly, why would the Clinton campaigners even want Obama as a Vice President...a VP will take the president's spot if something happens, so that person should be able to run the country in case of emergency. If Obama, according to them, can't be the commander-in-chief, why would they think it is all right for him to be the Vice president hypocritical! I have been watching the race very closely. It's not rocket science. The sooner the majority of America realises that, the better!

The recent comments by the Clinton camp which diminishes Obama by somehow attributing his achievement to the colour of his

skin and the unwillingness of Hillary to deny that he is a Muslim, is not racism; it is simply proof that she is willing to do/say anything to win. But yet she is willing to invite Barack as her running mate. Yeah, she has found a "solution" to her failing campaign!
Nasim Jamil Joy
Elephant Road, Dhaka

Rent hike

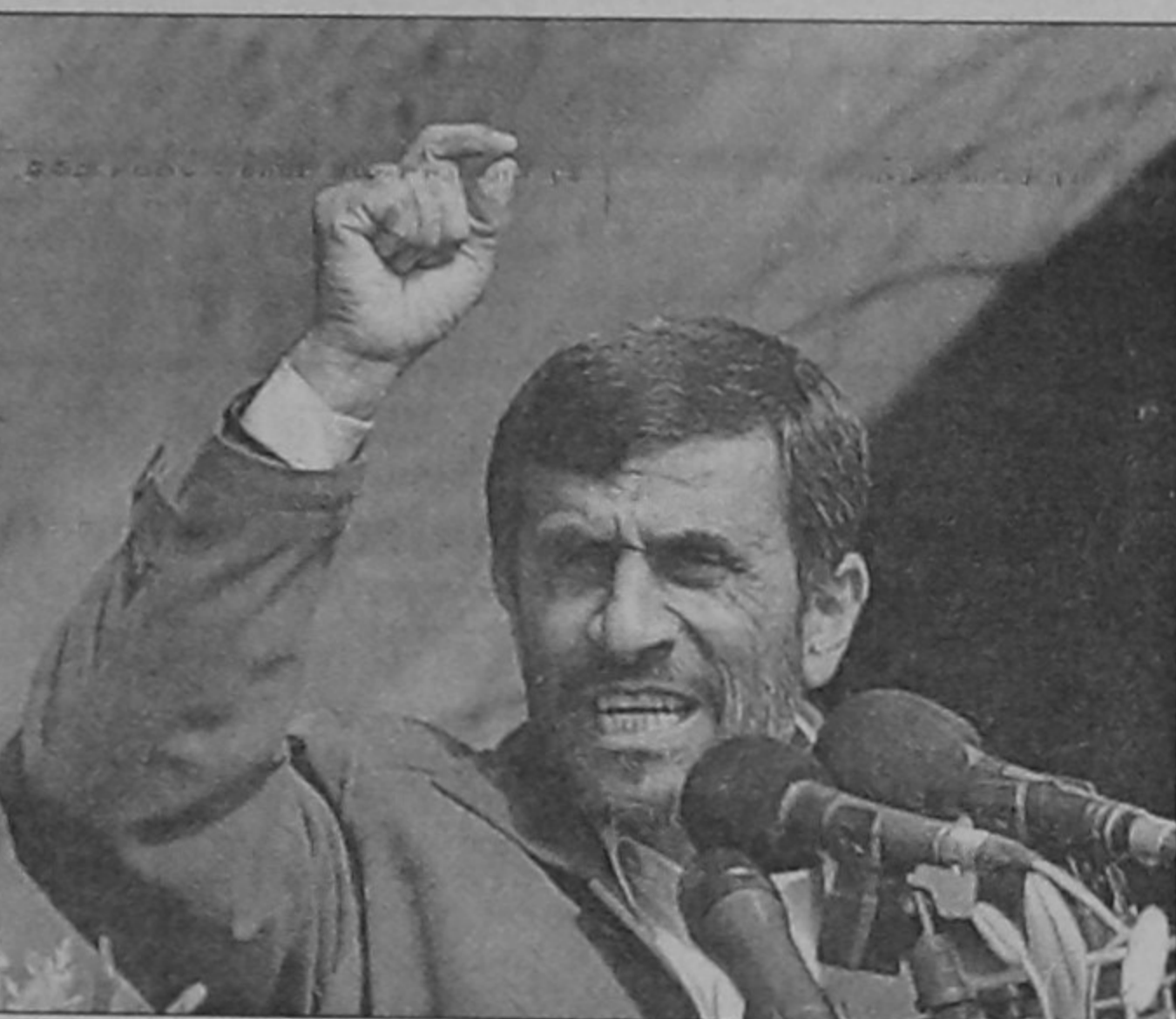
It seems that the newspapers do not consider high rent of apartments a burden for the ordinary service holders staying in Dhaka. Recently, all the house owners in Dhaka increased the house rent by almost 50 percent and there is no report on this matter in the press. Only the rise in price of essentials is reported but this aspect of cost of living is not at all reported. Now an ordinary service holder spends more than 70 percent of his salary on rent only. The existence of the middle class in Dhaka will be threatened by house rent increase, if no remedial measures are taken immediately.
M Islam
Dhaka

Iran election

On 14 March, parliamentary elections took place in Iran. From all evidences, it is clear that the election was a phoney one which has been stage managed by the Shia Mullahs to tighten their grip on power. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, who came to power in 2005 on a populist platform that promised a better life for Iran's poor, has, three years later, failed to deliver.

Despite Iran's enjoying a boom from rising oil prices, unemployment and poverty remain extremely high, while the government has been diverting funds for military and nuclear energy. If discontent over the economy is the only visible sign of opposition to the Iranian state, it is because all other forms of opposition, be they political, ideological, and religious or social, have been brutally silenced.

In fact, the tyranny under Iran's Shia Mullahs has replaced the tyranny under Shai. Both the tyrannies share many things in common. A recent case study will make the point clear. Soreya Malekzadeh, a lecturer at Tehran University, wanted to test the Iranian regime's claim to be an open democracy, so she submitted her nomination paper to be a candidate for this month's parliamentary elections. Now, exhausted by state



harassment and imprisonment, she has submitted another set of papers, this time to the Canadian Embassy in Tehran in the hope of obtaining refugee status.

Talking to the Toronto Star reporter, George McLeod, Malekzadeh describes her failed bid to run in Iran's election. Visibly exhausted from years of run-ins with the authorities, Malekzadeh says her vocal stance on women's issues in Iran has left her with little choice but to leave. "I have lost almost everything, my job, my future," she says. "Women can't do anything in this country. The government tells us how to dress and what we say."

Her first run-in with the

Mullahs was in 2004 when she published an article on women's rights in a reformist newspaper. The article argued that women deserve equal status in Iran and should be allowed to dress as they like. After the publication of the article, she was slapped with a 15-day prison sentence.

Malekzadeh's story is not unique. As Iran headed to polls on March 14, hundreds of candidates deemed critical of the Mullah-led government have been blacklisted while dissident newspapers and journalists have been silenced. Iran's Mullahocracy is the very antithesis of democracy.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Come on, cricketers



Everyone is becoming frustrated with the pathetic batting of Bangladeshi batsmen. In my opinion, the defence "We have the talent. Give us 5 more years then we can show the world what we can do", should no longer be valid. Five years has long passed by. Now is the time to consider whether we need to improve as a cricketing nation or just stay comfortable where we are.

To be honest, winning an odd or two matches is not enough for us anymore. Our batsmen would be wrong to dwell in this sort of mentality. Before going to the crease, they should keep in mind that spectators pay a good amount of money, and sacrifice valuable time to watch the tamed Tigers' play.

Our batsmen get themselves out instead of making the opponent work hard for their wickets. Nine out of ten batsmen throw their wicket away unnecessarily. There is no need to charge down the wicket or play a lofty shot if the result is not worthy, rather our players need to soak up the early pressure through patience and guts. After that, they can look for some big shots in the later stages of the 50 overs.

What I mean is: they should keep some important wickets for the last 10 overs. Then a chance will be created to hoist a strong total. I know it is easier said than done. But there is nothing wrong in trying and going back to the basics.

Nasih Ul Wadud Alam (Paolo)
On e-mail

"Collared" tigers

I am writing this letter in response to the recent article by Mr. Sirajul Hossain, published in your daily concerning the collaring of the Sundarbans tigers and some of the subsequent responses in this section, (Letters to the editor). In my opinion a thorough investigation should be initiated concerning the death of the two collared tigers. Mr. Sirajul Hossain's article uncovers some serious issues regarding the drug used to tranquillise the tigers. Also the method of snaring the tiger before tranquillising should be strongly opposed. There is more than enough evidence in the film by BBC to initiate and pursue a legal proceeding for the neglect shown to the collared tigers. After the death of the first collared tiger, the reason given for death was old age (the tiger died after seven

months). If old age was the reason for death, then why was an old tiger collared in the first place? The fate of the second tiger according to the people involved in the collaring process is unknown, but the fate of the second tiger is clearly visible in the BBC documentary "Ganges". It is dead. Why is the collar being removed by re-darting a very sick tiger in the film?

It clearly shows a total lack of judgment on the part of the operator. The authorities concerned should subpoena all the footages collected by BBC and review these to determine the cause of the tiger's death and also find out the foul practices.

Ronald Halder
Gulshan-2, Dhaka

