

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

# Winnable rendered unwinnable!



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**W**HERE bad ideas have nowhere else to go, they emigrate to America and become university courses." This punchy remark, if a little paunchy if you know what I mean, is from Federic Raphael, himself an American, a writer -- as you can

see -- brimming with a devastating sense of humour.

Such sweeping self-effacing value judgment comes by virtue of the US Constitution's First Amendment. The ultimate in free expression was exemplified in condoning even the trampling of the American flag by a maverick.

Such lofty ideals contrast with a common thread of mental fabric weaving through carpet-bombing, drone attack and sting operation. These are ammos for US War on Terror. They don't risk American lives but takes a heavy toll of others'. Like America fighting to the last European, it is now fighting a War on Terror to the last terror suspect.

The philosophy is to cast the net as wide as possible and take out suspects or offenders, never mind the pillorying of the innocents for a catch of tiny fishes. A needle in haystack approach if you think of the growing ranks of people rife with reactive sentiments against America. The huge collateral damage is incalculable.

The case in point is Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis. Nine months in USA and with damp smell of Bangladeshi soil still rubbing on his body, how could he have sloughed off into a transformed youngster, ready to blow up a huge building in the heartland of New York? Unbelievable, leaves you wondering without a clue!

Of course, as a new arrival bewildered but intent

DRAWING ABOUT JEWS...



DRAWING ABOUT MUSLIMS...



LATOFF 2012

*The double standards need to be removed first by the US if it is to carry conviction with its War on Terror and truly and squarely succeed in its mission. It is high time the costs of such arbitrary anti-terror tactics dawned on the US before it sustains any further loss of goodwill around the world. Somerset Maugham is proven to the hilt when he says: "The only way to make ends meet is to burn a candle at both ends."*

on making his way through a bout of homesickness, he was a vulnerable catch to seasoned FBI operatives out to prove a point, win a trophy. After all, they have had a network spangled. Patriotism perhaps playing a "scoundrel" there.

The elaborate trap they had set up oiled by money as one of the defecting informants admitted: "It is all about money" -- worked with clockwork precision. With no established traces of terror links in the coun-

try of his origin, Nafis ran into a dark, lengthening tunnel to nowhere. Apparently mesmerised by a cluster of wily white and non-white operatives, it never for once occurred to him he was playing into their hands.

It was something of a replay of a mafia or cult culture racket sort of thing -- once, you wear the talisman of evil you have no way getting out of the rut. For you were being constantly on watch as

though of a CCTV camera. He certainly could not have consented to his own unmaking; yet, like the green insect Shyama he got pulled into the fire from the frying pan, as it were.

Sting operations have come under heavy criticism within America itself on the self-evident grounds of these being wholly unethical, immoral, illegal and, therefore, without any locus in law. What is the difference between the ordinary run of police frame-ups and managed witnesses lined up to parrot from a given script to implicate a terror suspect "caught red-handed"?

The US sermonises other countries on human rights and liberalism; but isn't laying a trap based on at best pre-arranged, and at worst insidious, human intelligence any acceptable specimen of respect for human rights? The impression is gaining ground that "if non-Muslim does something bad -- it is 'crime'; but if a Muslim commits the same -- he is 'terrorist'."

The double standards need to be removed first by the US if it is to carry conviction with its War on Terror and truly and squarely succeed in its mission.

It is high time the costs of such arbitrary anti-terror tactics dawned on the US before it sustains any further loss of goodwill around the world. Just measure the fallouts of what they are doing. Casualties are distrust within the Muslim community as suspicion about moles grows internally; alienation between the Muslims and non-Muslims being fostered; and, above all, relations between the USA and a friendly-Muslim country like Bangladesh taking a hit.

Somerset Maugham is proven to the hilt when he says: "The only way to make ends meet is to burn a candle at both ends."

The writer is Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*.  
E-mail: husain.imam@thedailystar.net

## Social business and environment

JAHANGIR ALAM SARKER

**O**UR environment is in serious crisis. As sea level continues to rise due to global warming, Bangladesh faces an existential threat. Social businesses must be engaged along with the existing models that are in place to save our environment. In doing so, not only will we be able to save our environment, we will also be able to enrich it. But we must act now. We must act to create a livable, survivable, and safe environment. And we have a potent weapon at our disposal to combat the crisis -- social business.

Nobel Laureate Dr. Yunus stresses on the potential benefits of social business to remove many social ills that we face today. He also knows that the younger generation has the talent, capabilities, and technological know-how to effectively change the world. "We must use young people to harness the power of social business," says Dr. Yunus.

To provide clean water, Bangladesh has undertaken the world's first social business initiative. A partnership called Grameen-Veolia Water Ltd was created in 2008 to provide clean water for the poor in Bangladesh.

GrameenVeolia Water Ltd further partnered with Grameen Healthcare Services and Veolia Water AMI Ltd to distribute purified water to one lakh people in Bangladesh in 2012. The world today faces grim environment problems. The elimination of forests, global warming, loss of animal lives, and carbon pollution continue to threaten our existence. Bangladesh faces the effects of these perilous environmental pollution and threats.

We must undertake social business initiatives extensively throughout the country. Poor people are by far the largest victims of environmental pollution. We must protect them. To do that, business communities must come forward and adopt social business. Large businesses have the financial resources to undertake social business initiatives more easily than the smaller businesses. They can enter social business without any significant market barrier in Bangladesh. Through social business, they will earn profit and, most importantly, empower lives. Not all small businesses have the necessary economy of scale to enter into a social business. But we cannot ignore them. All businesses in Bangladesh must consider undertaking social business initiatives.

One of Grameen's initiatives, Grameen Shakti, has undertaken to provide solar energy as an alternative to electricity. To date, Grameen Shakti has provided solar panels to 70,000 households. Initiatives like this will create an ecological balance. Another social business project, Grameen Bank Biogas, is providing portable low-cost and low-maintenance cooking stoves for the poor people in Bangladesh.

Social business has the ability and the tools needed to address the current environmental crises and human conditions. Because the current economic worldview is capitalistic and business-driven, the improvements should first be made within that system and not with attempts to completely reverse or debunk it. "When a large number of people are vying to do the best possible job of developing and refining an idea, and when the flow of money toward them and their company depends on the outcome of the competition, the overall level of everyone's performance rises dramatically" (Yunus 27). This is an undeniable benefit of capitalism, as compared to socialist ideology where it has been generally accepted that motivation is not created.

"Competition (and its benefits) will factor in since social business will compete with profit-driven business and other social businesses" (Yunus 26). "The utilisation of competition will further the company's social purpose, whether it be developing renewable energy systems and selling them at reasonable prices to rural communities that otherwise can't afford access to energy,

or recycling garbage, sewage, and other waste products that would otherwise generate pollution in poor or politically powerless neighbourhoods" (Yunus 23).

"The negative impact of single-track capitalism is visible in our everyday lives -- among global corporations that locate factories in the world's poorest countries, where cheap labour (including children) can be freely exploited to increase profits; among companies that pollute the air, water and soil to save money on equipment and processes that protect the environment; in deceptive marketing and advertising campaigns that promote harmful or unnecessary products" (Yunus 5).

Social business makes sense because it is not profit maximising, therefore it has no fundamental reason to pollute, harm, or exploit the environment or its labourers. Obviously, not every problem can be solved immediately, but this concept offers a viable alternative to traditional business models and is worth considering.

Technologically, the field of natural science has improved drastically. This advancement has enabled us to predict weather patterns, which saves lives from killer hurricanes, storms, and other natural disasters. In today's globally connected world, disasters in one country affect others. Therefore, we must proactively undertake measures to preserve our environment. Social business is a new idea but its potential has already reached beyond the borders of many countries in the world. We know too that it can enrich the lives of the generations to come.

The writer is a lawyer and human right's activist. He is author of *Mohammad Yunus and Social Business*.  
E-mail: advsagar29@gmail.com

## Passengers' role in reducing highway accidents

RIDWAN QUAIUM

**T**HE alarming accident rate on the highways of Bangladesh in recent years could help them earn the title of "death trap." The number of highway accidents in our country is much higher than in any developed or even developing country. One of the major causes of these accidents is the failure of the drivers to abide by the traffic laws such as violating the speed limit or passing other vehicles at no passing zones (curves).

It is not a secret that many of the drivers who are operating vehicles on the highways are inexperienced. What is most alarming is that some of them do not even have a valid license. Another major cause of these accidents is deficiencies in the design of the highways. The problem with both of these issues is that it will not be possible to solve them overnight. However, there is still something that can be done to reduce this alarming rate of accidents on the highways, and that is active participation from passengers in reducing highway accidents.

Many people will be going back to their hometowns this holiday season to spend good times with their families and loved ones. Due to the limited capacity of the highways, there is no doubt that this will cause huge traffic jams. The journey time may be three to four times more than what it should take. Despite all this, passengers should remember that speeding or violating other traffic laws to get to their destination faster puts their lives and lives of many other people into great risk, which is not worth it. It is better to be a little late or even abandon the idea of going than getting injured or killed.

To ensure that passengers are able to go to their hometowns and also return to their job sites safe and sound, they have to actively participate in enhancing their safety and the safety of others on the highways. During this

holiday season and also from now on, whenever passengers see that the driver of their vehicle is speeding or violating other traffic laws, they should immediately request him to slow down and maintain the speed limit or to drive according to the traffic rules. If the driver does not cooperate, request assistance from the other passengers to make the driver cooperate. Explain to the driver and other passengers that by trying to save a couple of minutes of their journey time they are exponentially increasing the chance of an accident.

Like any other holiday season, there is no doubt that the supply of transportation is going to be much less than the demand during this holiday season. Buses and other types of transport such as trains and

launches are going to be overloaded. Passengers have to realise that overloading makes a vehicle very unstable. Sometimes it may not be possible even for a very experienced driver or operator to control an overloaded vehicle. This greatly increases the chance of accident. Therefore, passengers should not ride overcrowded vehicles and instead wait for the next one. If they think that the next one is going to be equally

crowded, then it is better to abandon the trip altogether. Once again they should realise that being late or not going at all is far better than getting injured or killed.

Traffic related accidents cause unexpected and undesirable injuries and deaths, which causes distress to us and our loved ones. Let us try to ensure our own safety and that of other people during our journey by actively participating in enhancing traffic safety. A collaborative effort from every passenger in enhancing traffic safety will certainly help to reduce the number of accidents on our highways.

The writer is a Research Associate at the Thailand Accident Research Center.  
E-mail: ridwanq.aitc@ait.asia

*Let us try to ensure our own safety and that of other people during our journey by actively participating in enhancing traffic safety. A collaborative effort from every passenger in enhancing traffic safety will certainly help to reduce the number of accidents on our highways.*