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Stampede *tragedy* at Mina



PHOTO: AFP

We feel extremely concerned due to Mina incidents occurring almost each year. One would expect a broader elaboration on the matter. People should come forward with suggestions for the authorities to arrange a more safe ritual at Mina.

Personally, I would recommend and give stress on two things:

1. Stricter rules and conditions can be imposed for safe ritual at Mina. By and large we are aware that Saudi authorities are quite strict in imposing discipline. In this case the authorities have to consider more than one option such as one related to physical changes and the other is discipline among the pilgrims.
2. The pilgrims should undergo some

orientation sessions at home before leaving for hajj. The need for safe ritual at Mina should be well covered including rules and regulation imposed by the authorities.

We expect more comments on the issue from the readers.
Probashi Bangladeshi
On e-mail

Rise of leftists in Latin America

Now the world is experiencing the United States' domination over the entire world. This country is a hard supporter of democratic rule, laissez-faire economy, individual freedom and gender equity etc. In

Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela are ruled by leftist governments. Socialist Michelle Bachelet is the first woman president of Chile who is a good diplomat and economist too. Again, former president Oscar Arias got 36% vote and need 40% to run off. He was a loud critic of Ronald Reagan's

the work of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen one wonders why the police and government are so unsuccessful in making arrests and punishing the culprits swiftly and strongly. How many more people have to die before our government clearly defines a method for controlling these acts of terror?

should be expanded so that people not working in the buildings maintain a certain distance. There should be continuous security arrangements with trained personnel patrolling the areas. There should be announcements on radios, newspapers and other public forums asking people to be

have to be lost so that something substantial is done to fight this evil!
Zeenat Z. Syed
UPS eDeployment

Anatomy of madrassah

I spent the Eid holidays in a village far away from a town or city. It was a delightful interlude away from the noise and pollution of Dhaka. The major activities were gossiping, walking, taking rides in cycle vans, taking fresh tasty food and rest and relax!

Unfortunately, the village environment was not as simple as expected. The tentacles of militancy seemed to be creeping in. Voluntary madrassahs are a common part of the village society. A new quomi madrassah was being set up hardly hundred meters from the house where I spent the vacation and it was altogether a different cup of tea! Within six months they got land; built the main single storied dormitory with toilet, washrooms and tube-well. Sixty plus students lived there and it was already functioning! More structures like office and other facilities were being put up; all under the auspices of invisible kind hearted donor! The kindness of their heart however was something to worry and wander about! The land was supposed to be a donation, and registered as such; the owner (a needy villager) who donated the land was however given more than the fair price of the land; of course off the record. To expedite the construction, earth for filling, constructing the semi pacca structure all was done at speed with

for the unaware like us. On enquiry it transpired that Arabic and Urdu (!) were the main subjects taught! On being pressed, they agreed that Bengali, English and Mathematics were also a part of the curriculum; although no syllabus or books on the subject were seen, or could be produced!

However the ladies of the visiting families were cajoled and impressed by the young well-tutored children during house calls, to donate the skins of the sacrificial animals as also some cash for the welfare and education of the needy orphans! Some of us lightened our purse with cash or promises for supporting the needy orphans. I was the sole skinflint among the lot, as the whole edifice appeared questionable to me, and the purpose of the institution apart from producing semi-skilled Arabic and Urdu students appeared a pointless exercise. In contrast the ramshackle state of the nearby high school without such a magnanimous and anonymous donors was something to be pitted! I gave my pledged annual donation to the school providing support for a number of needy students of different classes to help their educational effort. However finance-wise, and organisation-wise the High School was no match for the fast developing quomi madrassah with an open purse string!

A citizen
One-mail

Zia Int'l Airport

I think Mr. Aziz Mallick spoke for the entire expatriate Bangladeshis. I hope the decision makers will understand that the Dhaka Airport is the face of the country. The country should put the best face in front of the visiting people when they arrive at the airport. I am always concerned when I go to visit Bangladesh about what my US born children will say if they see the gross mismanagement at the airport.

Some suggestions to the airport authorities:

Place CCTV at the immigration, baggage handling, and customs locations and connect these to the offices of the Ministry of Aviation, Immigration, and Customs, and Rab Headquarters.

Publish general Immigration & Customs policy and have a copy ready at the airport and inside all aircrafts landing at the airport.

Each immigration officer will be required to say the following: "Welcome to Bangladesh. I hope your stay in Bangladesh will be a pleasant one". This will at least teach those immigration officers that they are the country's servants and a part of their salary comes from the money that people send from overseas.
Shafiq Islam
California, US

Voter registration

In a democratic country, a responsible citizen directly takes part in forming a government by casting his / her vote in the election, provided the election is free & fair. Casting vote properly, I think, is the most sacred responsibility, which should be discharged very carefully. And the first step to casting one's vote is the registration as a voter. Already much has been discussed about the preparation of a new voter list ahead of the next general election.

Control population



I would like to share my three decades experience as a General Physician and Dermatologist in a community based Hospital as to the quality of population of our country. A healthy person is an asset to the nation. The reverse is a burden. In our country we have more burdens than assets. A human being needs proper nutrition, proteins, carbohydrate, vitamins, minerals etc in the mother's womb for healthy development. The mother requires all the above-mentioned elements to give birth to a healthy baby. But what do we see in practice? Most of the mothers give birth to sick, ill-nourished babies due to poverty who become a burden to the family and the nation. The parents cannot afford proper nutrition to the babies in the intra-uterine and also first five years of life.

In our practice as Dermatologist we encounter thousands of people with defective growth and development. Skin is an organ, which can be perceived and estimated from outside unlike liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, brain etc. Skin is an excellent indicator of a person's nutrition and development.

Lower and lower middle class people are more likely to contain mal-developed skin than the others. Their skin is either dry or coarse or too thin or 'broken'. A normal skin is shiny, soft, glossy and elastic. In the upper income group we hardly find problems like Dermatitis, which springs from defective development of skin. I feel sorry for those patients and also for our unfortunate country, which is overburdened with a huge population.

What use of those persons in the society and to the country with defective organs, mental dementia etc? They are mostly born in the under-nourished lower income group who constitute majority of our population. It's a vicious cycle. Poverty breeds more poverty. And the population keeps on increasing who are defective with very low productivity or usefulness. They are a total burden.

So, family planning or population control has to be enforced rigidly at this level. There is no scope for complacency or excuse. A mechanism has to be evolved to force the lower and lower middle class to undertake or accept the 'one child' family concept or else we are bound to be doomed as a nation.

Dr. Syed Nasrullah
Dhaka

Some have supported the process adopted by the EC, some not. But do we think how much we remain careful when we give information during registration? Many of us, despite enjoying the privilege of giving the precise information for registration, don't do that just because of laxity. Sometimes a lone member of a family fills up all the registration forms on behalf of the rest of the family members and that, too, with wrong information. What is more bizarre is the official present there also appreciates that, let alone a minor protest.

Given the condition, if we love to identify ourselves as responsible citizens, it is high time we helped at least our near & dear ones realise the importance of giving proper information while registering as a voter to ensure a free & fair election.

Kazi Farzan Ahmed
East Sheurapara, Mirpur, Dhaka

Ponting the great

If we ask someone who the best batsman in the world is, the answer is obviously not Ricky Thomas

Ponting; they either mention the name of Brian Lara or Sachin Tendulkar.

But in my personal view Ponting is the best batsman of our era, who is more consistent than Lara & Tendulkar and more attractive than Hayden & Kallis. He plays the pivotal role for his team. He is the soul of the Australian team, who is capable of doing anything special all the time. He proved his class again SA in Sydney with a century in each innings. With 28 centuries & over 8000 Test runs he is a potential threat to Lara & Tendulkar to break their record. Age is on his side, he is only 31 now. A shrewd captain, he is a destructive ODI batsman too. He's the highest run scorer in either form of cricket in 2006. It must be a record. His recent form is quite awesome; he scored 8 centuries in his last 16 Tests.

Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka



Rush home mired in fog

A blanket of fog disrupted road and river communications severely since January 9 playing havoc on thousands of people going to their villages to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha. A shivering cold wave, first in this winter, also paralysed normal life all over the country, particularly in the northern and southwest regions. The weather forecast came true and it continued to deteriorate further.

As reported from Manikganj on 10 January there was an eight kilometre long traffic congestion at both Doulatdia and Paturia ferry terminals as the movement of ferries remained suspended for the whole night due to dense fog on Sunday and Monday night.

The disruption caused untold sufferings to thousands of homebound people from 15 districts of the southwestern region. Five ferries loaded with 18 passenger buses were stranded for the whole night in the middle of the river Padma. To avoid the disrupted ferry services on Doulatdia-Paturia route, most bus operators changed their route and started moving towards Jamuna Bridge to reach the southwestern districts via Paksey in Pabna, which takes a long time.

Over three million people left the city. But it was reported that many had to join Eid prayers at Paturia ferry ghat.
Gp Capt MM Khairuzzaman (retd)
DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

the name of establishing democracy, the US is trying to establish its supremacy.

Theoretically, a democratic form of government is very effectual for the welfare of people. After the collapse of communism in the 90's, the US is engaged in changing the world according to its own needs. But communist ideals are still very popular in certain parts of Latin America and East Europe. Costa Rica, Peru,

financing to the Contra guerrillas of the neighbouring Nicaragua but is a supporter of Central American Free Trade Area (CAFTA).

I welcome the rise of leftists in Latin America as the anti-thesis of so-called US democracy.

MAH Nazim
University of Dhaka

What is being done?

The bombings in Netrakona killed six people and injured 50. If this is

Bombings, killings, suicides and other atrocities in the name of Islam are not only an act of cowardice but also an act against the country and fellow human beings. Such people deserve nonleniency.

Now given that the most vulnerable places for bombings are courts and public offices etc, the government should arrange strong security checks for people going in and out of buildings. The perimeter around the buildings

careful. This will not result in national panic but will allow everyone to be vigilant. Instead of crowding around a discarded package that could possibly be a bomb people can take precaution and maintain distance. This will also allow eyewitness account of what actually went on rather than depend on hearsay.

The government must spend money on security. Many lives have been lost. How many more

more than satisfactory payments being made. Possibly time was of essence.

The head Moulvi, and some seniors (students?) who also coached; were mostly from outside the district! The head Moulvi was paid over Tk. 12,000 per month which in that remote village was more than one can dream of as regular pay!

To showcase their capabilities they put up a short talent display

Post-Sharon Israel

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel is still in a critical state after suffering a massive stroke. Mr. Sharon will not return to normal life even if he survives. This has serious ramifications for the Middle East and the world. Sharon had completely changed the political scene of Israel by breaking away from the hard line Likud Party that he had founded to recently form a new party-- Kadima. That leaves the Israeli politics in a state of flux. Mr. Bush, who was a big supporter of Sharon, must be worried about the uncertainty his removal from the Mid East scene creates. Palestinian President Abbas has lost control not only of Palestinian government but also of his own group Fatah. The militant wing of Fatah, The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, is in open rebellion, while the militant Islamic group Hamas is trying to tone down its militancy and is gaining ascendancy.

When Sharon vacated Gaza it was not because he had a change of heart and became a dove. He believed that unilaterally separating from Palestinians after permanently annexing vast areas of West Bank and Golan Heights was the only way of guaranteeing Israel's existence as a Jewish state. This stand would never have led to permanent solution. Sharon's removal from the political scene helps the peace process in the long run.

In the imminent future we might see an interim leader such as Ehud Olmert or Amir Peretz of Labour or even Benjamin Netanyahu coming to power at the head of a coalition government. But soon we might see that, instead of hardliner Netanyahu who is considered an opportunist, or the inexperienced Peretz, former prime minister Ehud Barak may gain ascendancy. Peretz has been trying to sideline Barak in the party, but only a trusted general who is interested in genuine compromise can fill the void created by Sharon's

departure. Barak may not insist on annexation of large areas of the West Bank and may resume negotiations with Syria. Syria itself may see a more representative if not a democratic government. The winds of democracy are sure to gust stronger in the other Arab countries. The corrupt old guard of the Fatah is on the way out and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Hamas will have to undergo a moderation metamorphosis as the PLO into becoming political parties acceptable to the pragmatist leadership in Israel and the US. After the next presidential elections neo-conservatives, who are the biggest supporters of hardline policies of Likud are likely to lose their clout in the US.

Israel and Palestine started their modern history of coexistence from hardline positions. For 2000 years, the Jews had suffered the worst persecution at the hands of the Europeans and always dreamt of returning to the land that they believe God gave them for exclusive use. Around the 1890s, when the Zionist movement was founded, the European Jews became powerful enough to influence the imperial and colonial powers in Europe. But they never trusted the European powers and they were proved right when they were almost wiped off the face of Europe by Hitler. The matter of restarting their saga in Palestine was no longer a matter of dream for them but became a necessity for survival.

But in their religious zeal and struggle for survival, they did not realise that Palestinians, some of whom claimed ancestry to the people of Canaan, whose presence predates the arrival of the Hebrews in Palestine, would see them as colonisers, especially as the Jewish immigrants and militants had the support of the colonial occupiers. Many Zionists, not only wished that the Palestinians would just disappear; they forced the Palestinians out through

terrorism, expulsions, massacres and wars. For a hundred years, the Zionist movement and the Israeli government denied the very existence of Palestinian people. Millions of Palestinians still live in camps dreaming of one day returning to their homeland.

Israelis and Palestinians now must do what they have done through the last century: that is let history

take its course. Just like war and violence was a natural phenomenon when the two groups competed for the land, eventual compromise and settling down in peaceful cohabitation is a natural consequence of such struggles.

Just as the great and noble Salahuddin made a deal with the Crusaders accepting to share the land between the two kingdoms, Arabs and Israelis must



do the same. A just and permanent solution of the Middle East conflict coupled with the advent of representative governments in the region will send Al-Qaeda into a coma. This will also remove the impediment in close cooperation between the Jewish and Muslim communities in the US, giving much needed boost to the civil rights movement to strengthen American pluralism that are under an onslaught from the rightwing extremists in the US.

Shaik Ubaid
One-mail

Everyone living in the streets of Palestine sees him as an opponent in wrestling matches, which they are fighting for decades. Some may see him as the "war-hero," and to few "a man of peace," but to him, his name Ariel Sharon is the only thing needed for an introduction.

Ariel Sharon achieved dignity from the Israelis, the Jews, becoming a hard-rock army man and later as a political leader, but for any person it is hard to judge whether he has more virtues than sins. Analysing his military and political career, no one can blame him for not loving Israeli, or for not taking steps to secure it. But now he is fighting with something that does not need any political experience or social skills. After leaving the Likud Party, he formed Kadima, which means forward. It's awful to say, but the man who did not move forward while being prime minister, and fenced Arafat for years, has walked so much distance that he now cannot move back.

Tahsin Hyder
Dhanmondi, Dhaka