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Is Iran bluffing?



Iran says it wants to develop nuclear power for peaceful purpose. Yet, in the same breath, Iranian President Ahmadinejad threatens to wipe out Israel from the face of earth. He also utters dire threats against the United States. This doesn't sound much peaceful.

Why is Iran threatening the United States and Israel when it could develop its nuclear weapons discretely without uttering such threats? Mark Bowden, a columnist for the Atlantic magazine and author of "Guests of the Ayatollah," thinks that Iranian Mullahs are using the present confrontation with the United States to rally support of the masses in the same way earlier Shiite revolutionaries like Ahmadinejad used seizing of the American Embassy in 1979 to rally support for the Shiite revolution. At that time, the Mullahs faced intense competition from secular parties and holding 52 Americans as hostage, triggering a confrontation with the United States, helped them to consolidate their position, marginalising other political groups.

Similarly, Iranian President

Ahmedinejad, a young revolutionary in 1979, may be again using the confrontation with the United States to consolidate his power in the face of growing discontent. As Mark Bowden writes in the New York Times: "Today, as the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, presides over an increasingly restive, unhappy population, President Ahmadinejad, has picked a new fight with the United States of America. ... In openly pursuing nuclear power and defying world opinion, the old revolutionaries are shoring up their stature at home by appealing to nationalism and foreign attack. And why shouldn't they? It worked before."

There may be also another reason for Iran's bluster. Every time Iranian president utters his threat, oil price moves up, bringing billions of dollars into the Iranian coffers. In other words, Mr. Ahmadinejad and the Iranian regime are using the confrontation with America to both bolster his faltering regime and oil prices. Before taking any military action, the US should take this into consideration.

Mahmoud Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Fibre optic



I am sure that the term 'fibre optic' has been part of many closed-room discussion which takes place among the IT professionals of this country when they sit together to tranquillise their hurt feelings of not getting a job. Lots of issues are taken up in such discussion but all burning questions revolve around the issue of unemployment and it boils down to the same initial pathetic question as to why they are not getting job despite the fact that they are much more capable than others? They discuss the issue of 'fibre optic'.

Let me throw some more light on the term 'fibre optic' to underline the importance of these two very important words, which have brought about a revolutionary change in mass communication over the last ten years. We want people to understand how these two meaningful words, which they must have heard on a number of occasions, are making a big difference in overall growth of IT industry in this country as well.

The general cabling system is based upon the usage of copper wire to send electrical signals which at last turn into a meaning characterised information or voice or into a pictorial representation of a character disguising into a video clip. We know that the speed of an electrical

signal is limited by the speed that a wave can attain in a second whereas a ray of light travels at the speed of 1,86,300(approx.) miles per second. The fibre optic uses a glimpse of light to signal one bit of information (A bit is the smallest unit that the data can be measured in).

Oddly enough, telephone companies like fibre for different reasons: it is thin and lightweight. Many existing cable ducts are completely full, so there is no room to add new capacity. Removing all the copper and replacing it by fibres empties up the ducts. Also fibre is lighter than copper. Thus, induction of fibre optic in our system is surely going to make a big difference and, therefore, we should collectively request our concerned authorities to make a little bit extra effort, if needed, to make this fruitful changes in our system, making sure also that our nation-wide internal system properly connects to submarine cable, which is again fibre optic that connects to the whole world across the globe.

Consequently, a new era of development will commence in Bangladesh.

Mithlesh Kumar Singh
On e-mail

ZIA

I can hardly sympathise with Mr Sikander. You seem to be oblivious of the country that you live in. If you were talking about reforming the caretaker govt, yes we would listen to you. Don't you see that the people of this country are spilling blood every day for these reforms? You bring up trifling matters like this which can at best be equated with silly problems (!) like no electricity, no water, no fuel, no gas, no security, unhindered corruption by all, destroyed education system, no image, beating up of journalists, no foreign policy (Behold our foreign minister! He comes back from Europe and announces great success!), umpteen number of accidents everywhere--- the list of such petty problems is endless.

In the end, I apologise to the gentleman and say that I am ashamed of it because I am a retired air force officer and the officials of the air force manage the pathetic ZIA. Incidentally, I have also experienced similar episodes during my many journeys through it.

Ahmad Kamal
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Death of credibility

Politics of Bangladesh lacks reliability. There always prevails an acute discrepancy between the promises the politicians made to the mass people before the election and their actual endeavours after being elected.

The mass people whose major part lives below the headline readily forget throughout the five years their deprivation of the promised things made to them by the politicians. Whenever an election approaches, creating a festive environment the politicians deftly devise a plan to get the extremely simple poverty-stricken people allured by offering immediately a sizeable amount of money with sweet words of eradicating all sorts of deficiencies after entering into the parliament. But in course of time those are proved just empty words. Brushing aside the commitments to the people the parliamentarians rather become corrupt and pile up wealth. They remark ludicrously about the actual purchasing capability of the general people. They don't assure the utility services, let alone other facilities. To the extreme dismay of people, they engage the people in uniform to lash out the protesters who raise their voices to fulfil their legal demand; the law-enforcers are totally bereft of humanity and cultivated manner. Justice especially in case of murder is still a far cry.

The state of the poor people remains unaltered, insecure. Still with a new version of optimism they cast votes. Such passive reactions are unlikely to continue for long. The 'Kansat Tragedy' is such a grave warning for the politicians who thought that by exercising military power they would strangle the rising, but that heinous attempt failed. There is a great lesson for the politicians from that incident. So on the verge of another election, I urge the politicians not to make any false commitments playing with the emotions of the general people and you must be credible to the mass people through your pragmatic actions and refined behaviour which will be exemplary for the rest of the countrymen and this can also rescue the image of the country from the disgraceful tag 'failed state'.

Muhammad Minhazur Rahman
Jahangirnagar University

Deprived of medical facility

People need medical facilities. Unfortunately, about two lakh people of Eadgong area under Cox's Bazar Sadar thana are deprived of health care facilities. The largest bazaar of the district is situated here. People from seven unions are dependent on this bazaar but there is no hospital at all except a family welfare centre. These unions are about 30 to 50 kilometres away from the district town.

Realising the significance of the problem, the government has

decided to set up a 20-bed hospital in this area. On behalf of local inhabitants we are committed to donating three acre land for this hospital (near Chittagong- Cox's Bazar highway). The district administration sent necessary documents to the health ministry for final approval of the project about two years ago. But the project is yet to be implemented.

The government should look into the matter immediately.

Md. Alamgir Chowdhury
Eadgong, Cox's Bazar

Judiciary

Is independence of judiciary necessary? The issue is an intriguing one, given its role all over the world.

It is time we found out how to clean the whole system, how not to depend on the judiciary alone.

Rabeya Rahman Mira
Washington DC

New voter list

I strongly feel that the new voter list should have been published in the Internet, so that people could have checked whether they have been included or excluded. Then people could have lodged complaints or taken necessary action in this regard.

Now I have another thought regarding the voter list. I can find out whether my name has been dropped or not. But WHO is going to check how many voters are fake? How can one investigate it? Perhaps our media has a role to play here.

I would suggest a joint collaboration of news reporters and volunteers for this specific purpose.

A concerned citizen
On e-mail

Journalistic ethics

Today, many view freedom of the press solely in terms of overcoming government oppression and censorship.

However, the fundamental moral requirement of all communication is respect for and service of the truth. By accurately reporting events and correctly explaining issues, the media have a strict duty to foster justice and solidarity in human relationships at all levels of society. The media serve freedom by serving truth: they obstruct freedom to the extent that they depart from what is true by disseminating falsehoods or creating a climate of unsound emotional reaction to events. Only when people have free access to true and sufficient information can they pursue the common good and hold public authority accountable. If the media are to serve freedom, they themselves must be free and correctly use that freedom. Their privileged status obliges the media to rise above purely commercial concerns and serve society's true needs and interests. The communications media are key actors in today's world, and they have an immense role to play in building that trust. Their power is such that in a few days they can create the positive or negative public reaction to events, which suits their purposes. Reasonable people will realise that such enormous power calls for the highest standards of commitment to truth and goodness.

Paul Kokoski
On e-mail

Elitist society

Too many TV channels. Too many commercial breaks.

The media is controlled by the business magnets. There are too many newspapers. Funding? Open secret. Therefore no competition. High rise flats---too many.

There are many other examples like A/C shopping malls; luxury cars, too many universities.

The cycle rickshaws have no place in the society. Status Symbol is artificial.

Life is worth living for whom? We always complain. This is one sample!

A citizen, Dhaka

Our heroes

Why the politicians (in power) have

to decide whom to recognise as hero, and whom to honour? Why we neglect to pay tributes to pre-'71 heroes and great personalities? Not fair. Our local leaders concentrate on post-'71 achievements!

History cannot be buried or ignored.

A Mahasen, Dhaka

Democratic governance

Election and political parties are inseparable in a democratic concept of government. But in the case of Bangladesh, political parties have done incalculable harm by nominating unworthy people to run for MP who by their boundless greed and corruption, have made a hell of what should have been an ideally liveable place for all. There must be an end to it. Parliament must be made a high pedestal of enlightened human aspiration and those coming to this lofty niche as elected representatives (MP's) should have the qualities of head and heart, imbued with the dedication to serve the country. There is no reason to believe that

The democratic system is good but the machinery to achieve it is defective and chaotic. Throughout the democratic world, elections are never found free and fair. Democratic countries like India and the US spend billions on elections but the result does not seem to satisfy many. I would suggest that we discontinue the election process and close down all offices under the Election Commission. The govt. should run under a process of three years' rotation between the two major parties. Smaller parties may form coalition. This three-year rotational govt. will have a few negative sides but would be of great benefit for a country like ours. We shall get rid of many evils such as hartals, toll collection, terrorism, lavish expenditure etc. Students should be banned from being part of a political party. The parliament should work with two parties only with members selected by the party central committees. We, as a poor country, would avoid wasting billions for an organisation that does not work. This money can be used for the poor masses' uplift.

How about a debate at non-political level?

Abdali, Dhaka

Poor law enforcement

I am a service holder in a university. All of us know that in between Gulshan-1 & 2 rickshaws can ply in some restricted areas. On 26 April 2006, I was travelling by rickshaw at Gulshan-2 in the afternoon. On that day I went beyond a restricted area as there was no guard (usually guarded by Ansars) thinking that I could ply by rickshaw in that area. Suddenly the on-duty Ansar came and leaked out the air of the wheel of my rickshaw. The rickshaw puller apologised for crossing the restricted area. But he did not give any hearing. At that time I saw some other rickshaws passing that restricted area. I asked that Ansar to do justice to them also. He misbehaved with me. I told him to behave well. He became even more rude. He started shouting at me. I did not find any responsible office nearby to lodge my complaint against him. I tried to convince him that law should be equal to all as some other rick-

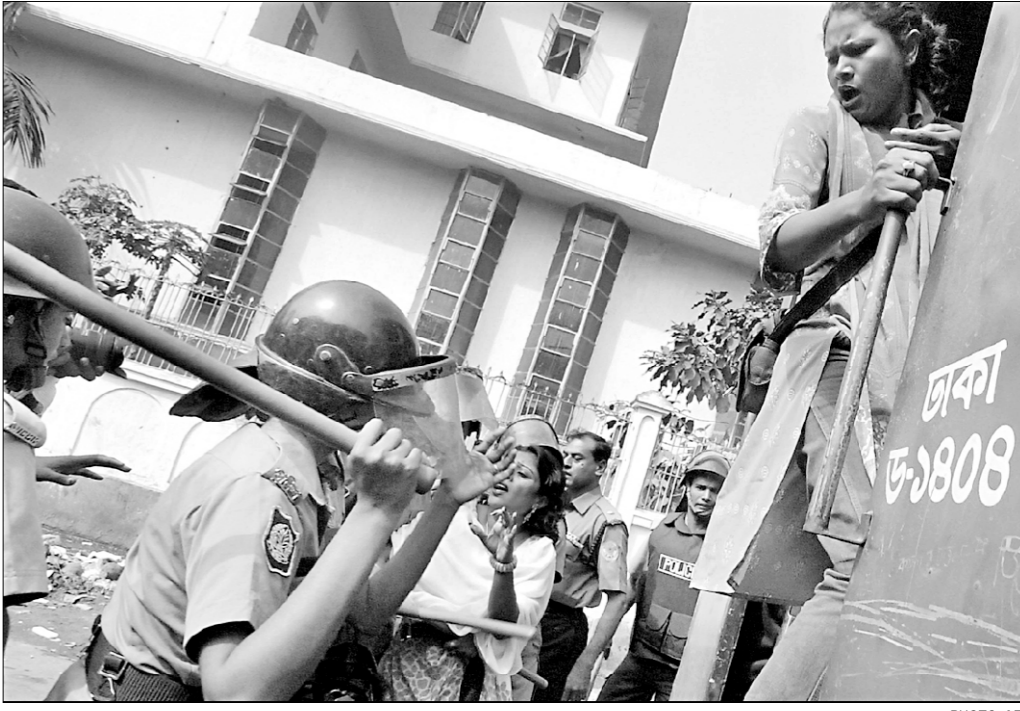


PHOTO: AFP

Police atrocities

The police in Bangladesh hardly ever enjoyed the reputation of being polite, helpful and courteous. They have a public image of abysmal corruption, tyranny, indiscipline and highhandedness. Despite the state minister's eulogy for their bravery and tolerance, in the recent past the police exhibited their real face and loathsome mentality towards the people they ought to serve. The shameful incidents in Dhanmoondi Road 27, at Kansat and at Chittagong, to cite a few examples, amply exhibit the petrification of the police force. We appeal to the people of Bangladesh to pour contempt and raise a loud voice to put an end to incidents like savage beating of a venerable old man in full view of foreign players.

AH Khandaker
172/A Hatirpool, Dhaka

honest and dedicated people despite having no political background will fail to deliver the trust reposed in them.

In this context the CPD supported by The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo can provide a bold leadership role in the selection of candidates who have made their mark in various fields, in addition to the candidates belonging to the political parties. Simultaneously, a vigorous awareness programme should be taken up in right earnest for the benefit of common voters to enlighten them in exercising their ballot in favour of the candidates selected by the civil society. Needless to say, the civil society will need sufficient fund to do this onerous job but while accepting donations they must ensure that these are not coming from predatory sources.

Let me conclude with a fond hope that the civil society's timely initiative with the active support of the media will be amply rewarded.

Rafiq uddin Ahmed
Ex-Director, PDB

Government by rotation

I strongly support the move to remove road restrictions on pedal rickshaw in metro Dhaka (NGO seminar, reported in DS 9/2).

As a double-retired resident, sold my BMW car (can't drive in Dhaka), and use rickshaws for shorter trips. I can't use bus (hassle); and CNG auto rickshaws show disdain for the fare meter (what a show by the ministry!). Limit the number of rickshaws, but no road restrictions.

Do not lick the boots of the newly rich (1% of population). Where are the middle-class politicians?

Make it an election issue.

AZ, Dhaka

Since the parties concerned are sure of governing the country after a gap of three years, they could try to perform better under the watchful eyes of a free local/foreign press which would continuously evaluate and monitor their performance. The party in power would try to compete with the previous terms of the other party and would try to improve. This will create a healthy competition among them resulting in the socio-economic development of the country.

Mohammed Alauddin
Green Road, Dhaka

Battle of non-issues!

As a voter for over 50 years in three nations, I cannot buy the unique concept of temporary caretaker govt to take care of the general elections-practiced nowhere in the world!

What is the merit of the idea? For whom? Not for the honest and simple voters!

When two dishonest groups quarrel, who benefit? Those who do not get the benefit of the doubt go to power! What hypocrisy?

Reform political culture, rather than the voting mechanics.

shaws were passing along that road.

I urge both the ruling and opposition parties to enact laws in parliament to make it mandatory to display the ID number of a law enforcer along with their name in the nameplate. So that the bad elements among the law enforcers could easily be traced.

Muntasir Rahman
Mohakhali, C/A, Dhaka

The Rohingya issue

The Rohingya issue has not received the attention that it deserves. As a result, the Rohingyas are suffering.

The matter should be resolved as soon as possible.

Mohammad Sadek
On e-mail



Allow rickshaws

Share holders in trouble

In Bangladesh most of the Entrepreneurs of Public Limited Companies who have taken money through IPOs are dishonest. Small investors who have bought shares from the secondary market are in deep trouble. They have lost more than 50% of their money since most of the share prices have gone down.

The finance minister advocated investment in the stock market. But by investing in stocks small investors have become bankrupt.

The companies must ensure the rate of dividend prior to issuance of IPO. The government and SEC should also oversee the activities of those companies and in case of any malpractice they should be removed from management.

Adamaas Saleheen
Paribagh, Dhaka