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Blind hatred and religious fanaticism



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas are both elected by the Palestinian people. Why then are they shooting at each other? Why are Sunni extremists systematically slaughtering the Shia Muslims in Iraq?

In July 2005, a group of young British Muslims bombed the London mass transit system, killing 52 and injuring many more. They claimed they were merely retaliating against the killing of Iraqi Muslims by the coalition forces. "Until you stop bombing, gassing and torture my people, we will not stop the fight," vowed one of the bombers in a pre-recorded video statement.

This perverted logic cannot hide the fact that it is extremist Sunnis who are bombing the Shiites in Iraq. Sunni extremists have bombed Shiite mosques filled with worshippers and schools and markets crowded with children and women. And the only person

responsible for gassing Iraqis is Saddam Hussein, who used poison gas against Kurdish Muslims. Recently, the Sunni extremists destroyed the Golden Mosque, one of the holiest Shiite shrines. Now the Shiites are retaliating by attacking Sunni mosques. In both cases, it is Sunni and Shia fanatics who are slaughtering each other.

Religious extremists are also spreading their gospel of hatred around the world. Now they are using the Internet to poison young and impressionable minds. Hatred is a powerful tool to incite people to commit acts of extreme violence. But the Internet can also be a useful tool to promote understanding between different religious groups. In Iraq, moderate Sunnis and Shias should be encouraged to use the Internet to oppose violence and promote understanding between the two Muslims sects. It is a great pity that

while calling themselves Muslims, the Sunnis and the Shiites are blinded by hatred and killing each other. During Saddam Hussein's reign of terror, the Sunni minority brutalised the Shiite majority to maintain their total grip on power. Now having lost their hold on power, the Sunni minority are murdering the Shiite majority with a viciousness never seen in the long brutal history of Iraq. This cycle of hatred between two Muslim groups must end. The Sunni and Shia fanatics must not be allowed to continue their butchery of innocent Iraqi women and children.

As for the Palestinians, they should stop shooting each other before they can ask for international support.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Child like simplicity

Child like feelings are the feature of a child. Children do not understand many important aspects of life. So, they always expect everything to happen as they want, like a child can say, "Papa, I want to have an ice-cream!" If his or her father ignores the demand, s/he fails to accept it.

It is said, "The child is the father of the man." In this sense, we can understand that child like feelings can exist when a child grows up to become a man or woman and then to become old at the last stage of life. When a child grows up and becomes an adult, s/he becomes busy in different works. They get busy thinking about other matters. They do not have any curiosity about having chocolates and ice-creams.

Child like feelings, indeed, are the best features of a human being in his or her whole life. But that does not mean that we will act childishly. Seionara Shehry

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Bangladeshis harassed

Recently, two British young men of Bangladeshi origin were arrested for alleged possession of chemical weapon. The British police conducted a lengthy search but nothing was found and they were released unconditionally.

Now who will compensate for the psychological trauma that the two brothers, the family and the community went through? Areader

One-mail

Our MPs

The more we read about our MPs in the media the more horrified and alarmed we become. What kind of persons people are electing to represent themselves in the highest legislative body? The recent activities of Shahidul Islam of Bheramara, Kushtia-dubbed as Jainal Hazari of Kushtia, activities of certain Rajshahi and Natore MPs and numerous others instances leave us petrified. With each successive election since 1970 the quality of MPs is deteriorating fast-

even faster than the growth rate of Bangladesh. Now, the sole intention of most of the MPs seem to loot, maim and plunder the country and divide and share the booties among themselves.

This is indeed a very sad, unhealthy and alarming situation. We can only appeal to the parties to look back to the past parliaments, take lessons from the past mistakes and nominate deserving candidates.

Another relevant point is the percentage of businessmen among the MPs which stands at a staggering 54% in the present parliament. Traditionally, lawyers, doctors, social workers, educationists, retired civil and military officials were given tickets. If we consider Pakistan there is hardly anybody from the business houses like Adamjee, Dawood, Menjis, Khosh Naser in the MP list. Tata, Birla, Godrej, Bombay Dyeing, Grasim people, Reliance group, Escort group, Mafatal, Oberoi group, Polders of West Bengal and others in India have hardly shown any interest to compete in the national elections and become MPs. Other countries also prove

the same theory. Conflict of interest is bound to be there. Business people can advise, lobby or indirectly raise funds but they are not suitable to be nominated as legislators. It is simply not their domain.

So, we would like to see not more than ten percent of businessmen and industrialists in the next parliament. It may sound like a utopian idea but political parties should take note that unless they act in the proper direction the parties will be simply eaten up by the 'industrywalas'.

We can only hope that good sense will prevail upon the political leadership and the parliament can be restored to its past honour and glorious traditions befitting the sacred institution.

SN Mamonoon
Dhaka

Football is good, but...

BUET has played the pioneer role in technological education and earned fame at home and abroad. Recently, its students forced a postponement of their exams for two months to watch

the World Cup. Be it football or cricket, the students quite frequently ask for rescheduling of the exams.

People look at 'meritorious' students with the hope that some day they will help change their lives for the better. It is time they concentrated on their studies.

Engr. Hafizur Rahman Arman
East Bashabo, Dhaka

"Tarokader Taroka"

I was watching the other day "Tarokader Taroka" competition on ATN Bangla. The four participants were rendering Nazrul songs on that day. I know Subir Nandi is a renowned artiste but I did not like the way he scolded Rezwan for a mistake.

I believe he could have made his point without being so rude! Tanbir Morshed
Toronto, Canada

Minting money

I never harboured any ills against the myriad of coaching centres dotting our country like bees in a hive, most of which devoid of any standard, alluring naive students and vying to make money alone

WHY does America have to hide facts and even put out lies to befool people around the world? Does it really think people are that simple to believe whatever is given out by America? Certain governments do that only to meet their own interests. Firstly, it was announced that Zargawi was killed in a bombing raid. The pictures shown of the building and the area of the bombing indicated total destruction. Targeted dropping of two 500 pound bombs does not leave anything to imagination. And yet, the US general in Iraq

has said that Zargawi was alive after the bombing. This leads to suspicion that America wants to use the incident later and come out with the disclosure that Zargawi was interrogated and gave out some facts in support of US interests. In this context, the disclosure on Pakistan TV that Zargawi was arrested much earlier, interrogated and then killed to avoid another situation arising like that of Saddam Hossain, or to avoid problems for the present govt. in Iraq in handling him, raises some questions.

Ataul Amin
Malibagh Chowdhurypara, Dhaka

Killing of Zargawi



BSF atrocities

BSF personnel have been killing Bangladeshi people like birds, showing a thumb to the "International Border Act". On an average they gun down one Bangladeshi every day. India has borders with Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar and Bhutan. But we have never heard BSF killing anybody from any other country, except Bangladesh. Why are they killing us? What is their motive? What is the enmity between India and Bangladesh? What is our govt. doing? What does our opposition party have to say about it? We have never seen anybody talking about this either inside or outside the parliament. The main aim of our policy makers is to attain power by hook or by crook. Has anyone heard the govt. or the opposition party protesting the shooting of Bangladeshis by the BSF? They are



calling hartals and destroying the country's assets. Though they remain outside the parliament all the year round, they attend it to increase their salary and facilities! But they do not utter a single word about the crimes being committed by the BSF.

Can the Indian government say when this shooting of Bangladeshis will stop? We hope both our government and the opposition will take the necessary steps to stop the killings by the BSF.

Habib Touhid Aman
Godenail Mir Para, Narayanganj

Embankment and bypass

Recently, a workshop was organised by BWDB on upgrading the feasibility study of the Dhaka Integrated Flood Control Embankment-cum-Eastern Bypass project in order to disseminate the findings. As part of the public consultation exercise, the benefits and problems were discussed in order to get a wide feedback from the participants. However, unfortunately 90 percent of the media coverage on the workshop focused on the negative statements made at the workshop. Some participants even made such sweeping comments as "the embankment and bypass multipurpose project, will cause havoc, adding to the perennial waterlogging across the city, in the absence of effective drainage systems and water retention ponds." Such observations by "experts" demonstrate their lack of knowledge of the basics of hydrological planning and engineering design.

All over the world, in flood-prone areas, the package of flood protection embankments includes provisions for sluice gates, pumps, drainage outlets, flood retention ponds, flood flow zones and channels etc. That some of them have not been effective in DND or western embankments or Meghna-Dhonagoda are due to governance failure and not the result of technological fallacy. The unhappy experiences from mismanagement of these projects should not be used as an excuse to negate future development works. Indeed, 'lessons learned' from them could be utilised to implement newer projects with improved planning and management paradigm.

Despite many shortcomings,

BWDB still has a better track record in operation/maintenance/management than any other public utility agency. It is an irony that, if eastern parts of Dhaka (including Motijheel Commercial Area) are flooded from above-normal rainfall in the future, the same group of "experts" who are now engaged only in highlighting negative points of the embankment-cum-bypass project, would be most vocal in blaming the authorities for NOT taking flood protection measures.

Planners (of any persuasion) would do better service to the society if they evaluate any proposed development work in a constructive mood and avoid wilful, fault-finding and blame game.

K.B.S. Rasheed
One-mail

Why this poor performance?

An embassy is a place where a country should represent their best to the world. Instead, when they call the Washington DC Bangladesh Embassy, here are just a few things fellow Bengalees face: A poorly recorded answering machine that directs you to various choices, when you select an extension, guess what happens next? You listen to about 5-6 minutes of music, then another gift from God, 'Hey, I'm Karim or Rahim, not available now call later.' Then you call later and later and later from 8:00am to 1:00pm, no luck first day. Let's try it the next day, same old song, third day, finally a Thai or Indonesian female voice "What duooo yooo wann." I said "Madam, may I speak to the visa section please." The funny voice says "Wait I am connecting you." Finally my hopes are raised, guess what I got this

time? The same music tone for a long time then suddenly I am disconnected.

Monika, USA

Pre-paid metre

Every day we are wasting our natural resources. For example, a lot of people keep their cookers on even when they are not using it. Some people even dry their clothes on gas cooker. The same thing is happening when it comes to consuming electricity. We often keep our lights or fans on unnecessarily. We must prevent this wastage as we have limited resources.

The metre readers are corrupt and dishonest consumers can take advantage of the situation. I think pre-paid metre is the answer to this problem.

Mainul Quadery
West Bakalia, Chittagong

CEC

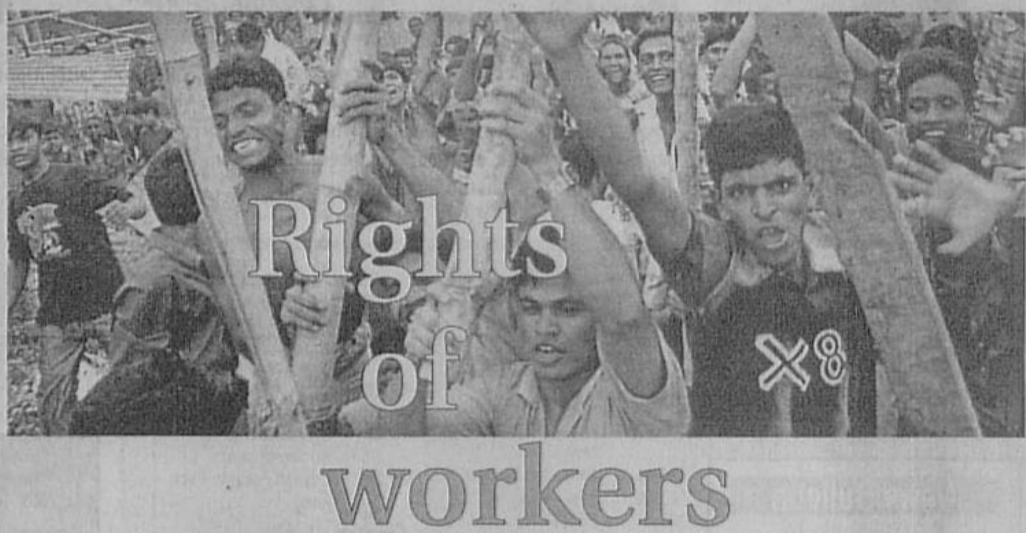
Thanks for the plain and simple assessment of the acts of CEC in wasting valuable time waiting for the written Supreme Court verdict on the voter list. Does not he realise where the nation is heading?

It will be impossible to update the voter list in a credible way within the time left considering the monsoon and political unrest. So the EC as an institution has done enough to jeopardise the possibility of a credible election!

We cannot keep our heads high while Bangladesh comes up in discussion. People here in Australia do not believe that only a small number of our people are arrogant and irresponsible.

Let us hope that all the patriotic citizens will come forward and actively help the process of preparation of a credible voter list as far as practicable.

Saleque Sufi
Melbourne, Australia



Rights of workers

If wages and working conditions are the reasons for violence, then I would like to believe that the expenses to meet the workers' demand would have been much less than the damage caused. Plus it is very important to ensure that the workers are paid sufficiently.

A well-paid work force helps a vibrant economy to grow. A large number of our entrepreneurs prefer to accumulate wealth, denying the rightful demands of the workforce. This mentality needs to be changed to ensure a social balance.

Nisar Hussain
On e-mail

I have been following the recent labour unrest in the DEPZ. To me, the whole thing seemed to have erupted all of a sudden. I don't remember seeing any coverage of worker discontent in the EPZs in the news media prior to the violent demonstrations, which took place recently.

The coverage began only after workers' frustration manifested into violence and the usual burn and pillage mindset. I guess this is somewhat normal in my country as muscle power does attain outcomes which normal peaceful dissent fails to deliver.

It is every worker's right to demand better working conditions and remuneration for the work that they do but they must express this right in a peaceful and civilised manner. This can only happen if the management of the

various DEPZ member companies empower the employees to express their views and demands in a systematic way and are willing to negotiate with workers' representatives in good faith.

The government has the responsibility of appointing capable personnel at the top tier of BOI (Board of Investment) and BEPZA, who are able to mediate with the employers and employees. Political appointments by the AL or the BNP will only ensure repetition of violent agitation in the future, which most definitely will discourage foreign investors from setting up shops in Bangladesh.

FDI is a major contributor to the future growth of a country like Bangladesh and many other countries are competing with us for this investment, with some having better safeguards against the violence we have seen in DEPZ in recent days.

I believe the policymakers do follow the news stories in various media and are very sensitive to negative publicity. Therefore the news media has the responsibility to print and air articles and stories about issues which affect the lives of workers at the very bottom of the corporate hierarchy. This will reassure the worker that their voice is being heard and will also alert the company management into having better dialogue with the workers.

So we don't have to see employees burning factories, which provide their livelihood.

Mohammed Mannan
London, UK