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## Why only Zidane?

It was a pity to see the golden career of a great genius like Zidane's coming to such a terrible end. It is believed that Materazzi called Zidane son of a terrorist. He was subjected to racial slur and had to put up with the harsh treatment of his Italian opponents for 110 minutes. For how long can a normal human being keep his calm and composure after being treated so roughly? If Zidane was shown a red card, Materazzi should have been shown at least a yellow. No matter what the world says, to me, Zinedine Yazid Zidane is a hero and I will always look at him with tremendous adulation and reverence.

Anica Quasem, On e-mail

After the initial shock of seeing Zidane head butting the Italian player, I tried to figure out how could anyone in his position as the captain and in a game that was poised in a cliffhanger, could do what he did? He was tired. He was angry, he was not thinking right, he is human after all, etc are the reasons given in his defence. Maybe. But I believe, Materazzi must have said something outrageous and derogatory that caused such a reaction. Things that come to mind: could it be that Materazzi was trying to make amends for his team, as he had earlier caused a foul, which allowed France to take the lead through Zidane converting the penalty? How? Because he knows Zidane's somewhat hot headed nature. Maybe he thought that Zidane would do something foolish if he insulted him. How right he was! Zidane fell into the trap.

What could Materazzi have said to Zidane that would anger him so much as to head butt him? A racial slur? A religious insult? An abuse directed at his mother/sister? It must have been something serious. We await Zidane's explanation to his country and to the football mad world. But, has anyone asked Materazzi yet what he said to Zidane? Of course not. He is lying low and is shown to be the aggrieved party by the media! Whereas he is the original culprit- the person who was the cause of the whole fiasco.

Zidane and France lost everything. What has Materazzi lost? Nothing! In fact, he is a hero in his country now, and will remain so unless FIFA ensures that justice is done. Zidane has already apologised. Any comment from Materazzi?

There is a technical problem too. FIFA does not recognise the TV shots as a basis of any refereeing decision. In this case the referee was in another part of the field and did not see the incident. Neither did the linesmen. Two officials outside the ground did. Although the offence was genuine, it does NOT fall under the purview of FIFA rules. As such the red card was illegal. The television initially showed the whole incident with the referee in another part of the field. Then seizing the chance to defame and disgrace an Arab player, edited the shot. What it kept showing repeatedly was the head butt and immediately the red card by the referee as if the referee was there and had seen it all before showing the red card.

The World cup has become dirtier than politics. What a shame!

Javed Helali, Pflugerville, TX, 78660, USA

This is with respect to Zidane's world cup exit. I feel in some cases the media is not covering enough and I realised it after talking to a few friends and family members.

Few stats you would like to know.

1. Zidane is a Muslim of Kabyle Algerian decent both an Algerian and French national.
2. When young, an Algerian coach refused to take him in his side claiming he was too slow.
3. He is known to be a player with a cool temperament but he has had two incidents behind him before this match one was stamping a Saudi defender in 1998 and another in 2000 of head butting a defender while playing for Juventus (two of the few incidents) so the bottom line is he is not a cool customer as much we would like him to be.
4. In the world cup incident BBC and several other news agencies hired criminal lip reading expert Jessica Rees along with an Italian translator and after a lot of difficulty they came to the conclusion that Materazzi had provoked Zidane by saying "You are the son of a dirty terrorist whore". Other lip readers and analysts came to the conclusion that Materazzi told Zidane "Death to you and your family." Co-incidentally Zidane's mother was very ill on the day of the World cup final. Whereas, some other sources have said that as Materazzi was pulling Zidane's shirt, Zidane told him, "I'd give you my shirt after the game", and Materazzi said, "I'd rather have the shirt of your wife".
5. Materazzi, on the other hand, specifically claimed on the media that he did NOT call Zidane a terrorist and that he did not even know what an Islamic terrorist was and that the only terrorist in his life was his young daughter. He did admit that he had insulted Zidane but did not mention any family member like mother or sister and that they were very sacred to him. He also said it was just another thing you said in the pitch and let it pass off, and that his motive was not to infuriate Zidane.

If Materazzi did not pass racial slur or if it could not be proven then everything is fine, but what if Zidane comes out and says what Materazzi said, and what if that was a racial slur. Can FIFA take such a big decision of taking away the World Cup from Italy- just as they have mentioned in their rules or are they too scared?

Mohammed Shadman, On e-mail

# Mumbai bombing!

Bombing by terrorists linked to Al Qaeda of India's greatest city Mumbai has shown the dastardly nature of religious fascists who are terrorising the world in the name of religion. Mumbai bombing is basically designed to provoke a backlash by the Hindu majority against the Muslim minority. By putting the Muslim minority into danger, these religious fascists have shown their contempt for fellow Muslims. In the same way, they are slaughtering the Shiites majority in Iraq in a bid to provoke a Shiite backlash against the minority Sunnis and they might just have succeeded as the Shiites are retaliating the Sunni bombings of their mosques and shrines.

But the fanatics tend to forget that India is a truly secular democracy where previous bombings by the fanatics have failed to provoke the majority

Hindus who are mature enough to understand Al Qaeda's game. Also, Indian Muslims are far better off than Muslims in many autocratic countries. Indian democracy has shown enough resilience to overcome such attacks. If the terrorists want to bring an end to India's economic growth, they are also badly mistaken. The day after the bombing, Mumbai's stock exchange registered a healthy growth of 3%. Investors know such attacks cannot put any dent on the economy of such a vast country like India. India is not only the world's largest democracy; it is also becoming an economic superpower. Indian economy is growing at a blistering rate of 7.5%, only second to China's 10%. Such bombings cannot stem India's economic spiral.

Mumbai bombing should bring home the fact that in this fight against terrorism, all

democracies are together. In Canada, such terrorist attacks were pre-empted by the arrests of 17 suspects. India must increase its vigilance and try to arrest the terrorists before they strike. This would be a difficult task, but not impossible for a modern country like India. War against fanatics must be relentless and such advanced countries like the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain -- all of who are facing the same religious fascists threats -- should join with India to hunt down terrorists around the globe. India must also increase its vigilance in such key cities like Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore and Kolkata. As Thomas Jefferson so correctly observed: "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."

Mahmood Elahi  
Ottawa, Canada



## Shazneen murder case

Like any other individual of this country I appreciate the High Court verdict on Shazneen murder case, which has confirmed the capital punishment of five main convicts. I have been following the proceedings of the trial from the very outset and I think in such cases exemplary punishment for the culprits will contribute considerably to reduce the rate of this sort of crimes. This unbelievably barbaric act illustrated the fact that no one is safe in a society where the prevalence of crime is ominously widespread. Anyone anywhere can become a miserable victim of violence and crime. I hope the convicts' appeal to the Supreme Court will prove ineffective as well. No one can deny the fact that it is absolutely crucial for this society to ensure the punishment of those responsible for such

## From 'tata' to 'bye-bye'?

Tata's offer is hanging between "the devil and the deep blue sea", thanks to our political culture, which allows politics to play the vital role in economics and investment decisions. This is a clear signal to prospective investors and international financial institutions that in investment field Bangladesh leads the world in indecision! Of course our tradition for procrastination is already well known all over.

Natural gas is the crux of the issue, since Tata proposes to produce thin sheets. Over 85 percent of this has to be exported, using our scarce natural gas at cheap price to process imported Indian iron ore! Nobody seems to bother about the wrong product mix. In the technical sub committee I asked Tata why they did not plan to produce longs (billets), which can be re-rolled in

ness of steel demands, had proposed that Tata manufacture flats (thin sheets) with cheap gas from Bangladesh for export, in fact subsidising Tata's export income. This is the real crux of the issue, which seems to have been missed by many, deliberately or out of ignorance. An ill motivated, or ill-conceived idea is now unfortunately mired in confusion. Will the authorities identify the culprit of this wrong product mix concept?

S.A. Mansoor  
Director (Engineering), Partex Group

## Procrastination on Tata

Thanks to our Government's indecision (to put it mildly!), Tata has now decided to shelve its massive investment plan in Bangladesh. If that had gone ahead, it would have given the people of Bangladesh a power plant

election coming," does not bode well for Tata or any other would-be investor. The government should have taken the decision based on the enormous good this would have brought to Bangladesh and not on the perceived negative effect on their party's chances in the upcoming election.

Tata, in its revised proposal, offered a very good gas price. It also proposed 10% equity to the Government of Bangladesh. Some "so called" experts in Bangladesh ridiculed Tata's proposed gas price of \$2-\$4/MSCF incorrectly, stating that the world market price is \$5-\$10/MSCF. If they have bothered to do some research they would have noted that investors are building their plants in countries in the Middle East, South America, North Africa etc. where the gas price varies anywhere from \$0.50 to \$1.8/MSCF. Yes, the gas price in North America is at present close to \$6/MSCF, however, investors are not rushing

feedstock will not bring in any cash flow. A 15-20 year gas supply guarantee is an industry norm. Another excuse from the government was that, "we do not have the expertise to enter into and conclude contract negotiations that quickly". Have we really tried? Do we not have that expertise within our 140 million population? If not, did we really seek outside help, including among non-resident Bangladeshis? Another excuse was, "we need to discuss with the Opposition". Fair point, however, why did we not initiate that earlier? If we genuinely believed that it was a good offer, shouldn't we have been proactive rather than procrastinate? If this investment did go ahead, would this not bring more FDI? Isn't that the goal of the Bol and Government of Bangladesh? If this was a 'good offer' why was it let go?

In a country where there is gas but an acute shortage of power that is hampering economic develop-

the country their victory is assured. I hope that it is not too late to reverse Tata decision. Tata's plants will not only effectively monetise our natural gas; it will directly and indirectly improve quality of lives of Bangladeshis.

M Islam, Houston, Texas, USA

## Selling gas

Thanks to Eram Mahboob and The Daily Star for discussion of a subject that is related so deeply with our national interest. The author of the July 11 article titled "Selling gas" has raised a few significant points yet to be recognised. I strongly agree with his recommendation for creating public awareness over the need to protect natural resources, its fair use and prices. As he recalled, "Geologists say that where there's gas, there's oil" and basing on this rich theory we shall argue that there is little valid reason why we should allow any multinational organisation to control such reserves for long periods like two decades.

Large investments may benefit thousands of local population but it is not appropriate to drive millions into harassment that would occur from higher energy prices due to lack of gas, such as transportation, household use and so on. Rather, the gas available can reduce demand for higher priced oil. If possible we should think about enhancing agricultural production using resources available.

Tahsin Hyder, Dhaka

## Stop terrorism

In recent days we feel outraged to see the dreadful terrorist attacks in different parts of the world. The latest was in India where bombs were blasted in several railway stations in Mumbai taking a huge toll of life and property. This kind of act is really loathsome and inhuman. Though there was lots of talk against terrorism, it just didn't stop. The threat of terrorist attacks is making us more and more disgusted day by day. It is the high time to prevent it and extirpate the roots of terrorism. The world community will have to show proper resolve to improve this gruesome situation, but they should also be conscious about the innocent people. Steps should be taken urgently.

Shoaib M. Siddiqui  
Elephant Road, Dhaka

## CYCLING IN JAPAN

Cycling is a very chummy word to us. But do we cycle often? Well, not in Bangladesh, but it is absolute must in Japan. From dawn to mid of the night wherever or whenever your eyes will rotate, a tiny kid or a man in his old age will surely come into your vision riding a cycle.

Why do the Japanese cycle. Apart from cars, cycle is another means used by almost all people. Otherwise also Japanese are very adept in cycling. Cycling becomes an indivisible part of a child as soon as he attains the age of 3. Irrespective of class, from a mechanic to an affluent and opulent tycoon, all are accustomed to cycling from sunrise to midnight. Whereas, in Bangladesh, despite innumerable limitations, it is very unusual to see people biking unless he or she is compelled.

Cycling is much more convenient than driving a car; it creates less pollution and traffic; it is another way of saving fuel and gas. And Japanese people deem it waste of money on themselves when they can use it to help their country thrive. And in Bangladesh, people are pondering more about themselves than about their country. It's also healthy to bike. For example, the average longevity in Japan is at least 90 and many people are surpassing 100 while in Bangladesh people hardly make it to 70 years. Bangladeshis should use cycle to make the country a better place to live. The city dwellers can use cycles to cover short distances so that they don't have to sit in traffic hours after hours in hot weather inhaling the mephitic smoke produced by the vehicles. Also by this traffic could be reduced. Pollution is damaging the environment and causing global warming. That's one of the reasons why the temperature of Bangladesh is rising every year. So, to surmount all these problems we should use bicycles and by doing this we can make our country a clean, modest, and tourism friendly country. But of course we have to consider certain questions. For instance, where do we bike or, is it secure to bike at all?

Tasmia Nower, Seisan Intl. School, Tokyo, Japan



brutal transgressions. I am intently looking forward to the execution of the death sentences of the culprits. As a citizen I want the miscreants to be executed as soon as the law permits it. I hope in the afterlife, Shazneen's soul will find blissful tranquility and peace in her eternal abode. I condemn the tragedy that befell her life.

Kh. Asef Safa Kabir  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Bangladesh? If it was so Tata's planned output of 3 million tons should be totally consumed locally in around ten years after plant operation (say 2018). Tata's reply, and it is officially recorded in the minutes (if it has not since been doctored) is that the GOB representative proposed sheet production on which basis the project was drawn up.

The real culprit is this person or persons who, without any aware-

representing approximately 40% of current production, a fertiliser plant that would have taken the country closer to self sufficiency and a steel plant that would have reduced our expenditure on imports all utilising our own natural gas. Understandably Tata, for that matter any other investor, wanted a timely decision. Unfortunately the Government of Bangladesh did not provide that. Statement like, "we think this is a good proposal, but we have a general

in to build plants where it requires substantial amount of gas and when the end product can be imported much cheaper. A lot of natural gas based plants are being shutdown in North America and the investors are moving to locations where the gas price is lower. Tata also wanted gas supply guarantee. That is not an unusual demand. Any investor would like a guarantee of feedstock before it invested huge (or any) amount of money. A plant without

ment and quality of life, where there is shortage of fertilisers that the farmers desperately need and deserve and a steel plant that would reduce imports. Tata's plan was godsend. However, as usual, those people who have been given the power to change lives of ordinary Bangladeshis for the better, once again failed them. Our political leaders do not seem to comprehend that if ordinary people feel that they (our beloved leaders) are doing well for

# Crisis in the education sector



Following some successes in 'Andolans' by different groups over their accumulated grievances early in the year, the teachers and employees of all levels of schools joined in phases the election year feast of strikes, marches and fast unto death and even the threat of self-immolations to realise their demands. The participants in the first phase, non-government primary school teachers, received some response to their demands for which the government provided funds in the recently passed budget. However the latter groups of strikers from the non-government secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges are now faced with a government stand that since the budget has already been passed for next year, it cannot find another 750 crore taka to meet their main demand of 100 percent basic salary support from government sources.

While the impasse continues with closure of schools, and

teachers and employees on the street, the students, their parents and the nation watch a sad spectacle of the most important nation-building sector in chaos and under seize. It is tragic that such restlessness and dislocations are occurring at a time when gradual improvements in high school education are taking place as reflected in SSC results and the students in general are moving out from politics to pay more attention to their studies. The timing and magnitude of such disruptions may condemn us as a nation destined to perpetual instability and fighting by one group or another.

But a closer analysis would show that our problems are basically systemic, reflecting our 'Andolan' dominated policies of resolving disputes and problems. The demands and response system in our governance is dominated by our inaction till the grievances and problems are accumulated and the sufferers join the streets and

make the operation of their sector no longer viable. Our policy makers wait till 'Andolans' become politically costly for them, while the parties suffer and the nation loses.

One-way maybe to temporarily deal with the problem and minimize the sufferings is for BNP and the AL to develop and pledge a common position on the grievances of striking teachers and staff. But the long term solution to these kind of grievances from various sectors is first to radically change our pro 'Andolan' decision making process to pro-dialogue and compromise solutions and secondly devise a system of grievance resolution more appropriate to stability and continuity in the essential sectors of society.

Dr. A. T. Rafiqur Rahman  
Professor, City University of New York, USA

The ongoing strike of the schoolteachers of the non-government primary schools reflects the dismal state of our education sector. The govern-

ment bigwigs are never tired of talking about the importance of education, the nobility of the teaching profession and so on. However they cannot expect the teachers of primary schools to carry on their responsibilities on a meagre salary, which is even below the subsistence level. With the price of the essentials soaring higher and higher, a teacher of a non-government school can hardly make both ends meet.

It is really unfortunate that the teachers are forced to take to the streets, locking the doors of their classrooms, which is their proper place. Certainly, it is the greater interest of the future of the country, which will suffer because of the current imbroglio. As a developing nation we cannot afford to leave the education sector in such a limbo.

We hope that the concerned authority will accept the demands of the teachers immediately.

Zabed Wali, Chittagong