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## Opposition's grand rally and mass arrests



A great controversy has arisen among the political parties as to the reform of the caretaker government and the Election Commission. As a result, the opposition chalks out many programmes to press home its demands, while the ruling coalition feels it necessary to resist them. As part of that plan the government ordered the law enforcers to arrest the opposition activists before the grand rally staged by the opposition parties. This is only creating chaos which will never help the process of holding a peaceful election. Therefore, the opposition's grand rally and the ruling party's mass arrests appears to be part of a political process that cannot bring any good to society.

They have made our parliament inactive. We would request the political parties not to embark on the path of destruction.

**M Alauddin Ansary**  
Zahurul Haque Hall, DU

### Mining nightmare...

The vast stretch of area in North Bengal extending from Peerganj, Jamalganj and Phulbari have hidden fortunes below the surface and if that could be exploited applying state-of-the-art modern technology, it could change the face of the nation. There could be permanent sources of earning for the downtrodden people in the area including the moga-affected Rangpur region. But then what is the appropriate technology? A recent report published in your daily gave an account of massive plundering of national resources and corruption of serious dimension in Barapukuria underground coal mining implemented under suppliers' credit. Underground mining in Bangladesh with poor roof support and big aquifer beneath the surface above the coal zone can never be economic. Your report has rightly pointed out that Barapukuria coal mining was never technically feasible or commercially viable. Still to create the opportunity of money siphoning the planning process was deliberately manipulated during the previous term of the BNP. Chinese technology is rarely safe and almost every other day there are mining disasters in China. Still the lopsided Chinese suppliers' credit was given the go-ahead. Barapukuria project was not viable even if it could be made fully operational on time. Protracted delay and repeated problems and finally permanent sealing of a major shaft with machineries inside have made it a huge white elephant—a curse for the nation. If honest and sincere investigation could ever be made it can be established how national interest was sacrificed to create illegal money earning opportunity for a selected few. If mining is to be done at all it has to be open pit. Whether the AEC proposal is good or bad is a different issue and a matter of judgement. But the Barapukuria scandal calls for an independent inquiry.

I wonder why our left leaning political parties or even the Awami

League led 14-party alliance are not realising the truth of the matter.  
**Saleque Sufi**  
Melbourne

### Police brutality

The whole nation and rest of the world watched how merciless and brutal the police force could be in a democratic country like Bangladesh. It surpassed the record of all previous governments including Ayub-Yahya regime. There is no instance in the civilised world that the lawmakers are severely assaulted by the cops. This government thinks they will be in power forever...there is no sympathy or regret over these incidents from the administration...instead they joked about a lady activist whose kameez was ripped off by the police...

The BNP leaders and their razakar partners are the most hated and most despicable characters in the country now.

**Mir Rashid**  
Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada

### Experience at embassy

A few weeks ago I went to the Bangladesh embassy at Stockholm to attest some papers and my photos for opening a foreign account at Janata Bank in Bangladesh. I got the papers attested by the first secretary, but she refused to attest my photos. She said that they do not attest photos. I was thinking it may be a part of our government policy, so I did not mind. I came back and posted my papers with photos to the Janata Bank. Then I got a phone call from my brother and he said that my account could not be opened without attestation of photos, because my passport is now seven years old and recent photos do not match with the passport's. He also said that the bank officer showed him attested photos of Bangladeshi people living in different countries. Then I understood that embassy officials do attest photos and it is not forbidden.

I called the official concerned once again and wanted to know

why she did not attest photos as other embassies do, then she said that I was not known to her. She said, "People have different names, if you have any complaint against me then you can lodge it with the Bangladesh government."

What can people like me do?  
**Rana**  
One-mail

### Overseas employment and attracting investors

I was very happy to learn from the media that Malaysia has again opened their doors for workers from Bangladesh. However it is disturbing and worrying to note that the poor worker will need to spend about Tk 1 lakh to get this job. This indeed is a large sum and the worker will need one or two years to repay or get back their investment. Employers who need workers must pay the return airfare. The only charges which can be levied on the workers are the passport fees, medical examination fees and processing and agents commission which should not be more than Tk 10,000. Therefore I sincerely feel the total cost to a worker should be around Tk 25,000 to get a job in Malaysia.

In the late 1980s' and early 1990s, when Malaysia had first opened its doors for workers from Bangladesh, some half a million workers had landed up in Malaysia. In the late 1990s it was found that several hundred thousand had been sent illegally or with false papers. Instead of deporting them, the Malaysian government gave them the opportunity to legalise their status and in 1997 the Bangladesh Mission in Kuala Lumpur had to issue over one lakh passports to get these workers legalised. On enquiry it was found out that these workers were brought to Malaysia on false papers and none of them had any passports on them. Very few passports were recovered. Most of these workers had paid large sums of money to get to Malaysia.

It is rumoured that the recruiting agents are collecting money to send workers to Malaysia. I sin-

cerely hope this time there will be no fraud committed and repeat of what had happened earlier.

Malaysian entrepreneurs were keen to invest in Bangladesh and many big groups had registered with the Board of Investment. But very few have really come in to invest in Bangladesh. As High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Malaysia, I had gone around to various Business Chambers and Rotary Clubs and spoke on the investment policies of our country to encourage investors. I remember on one such occasion, after I spoke, at question time one of the members said that Prime Minister Mahathir had asked some of the business group to try and invest in Bangladesh, especially in labour intensive industries. He had visited Dhaka along with some other potential investors and did not find a congenial atmosphere to invest. In fact, he categorically said that the drive from the airport to the hotel had put them off. There was no law and rule of traffic and if that was the state of the traffic, they wondered how the other aspects of life would be.

I would have thought that Indian business houses would have found Bangladesh a good place to invest, especially in consumer industries whereby, besides marketing the product in Bangladesh, these products could have been re-exported to their eastern states, in which case the pressure for transit facilities would have been less. In fact, I also tried to encourage some investors, of course not one of the Indian Giants, but failed to get them interested as they felt insecure.

The recent problem with the RMG was worrying. Some quarters tried to blame our neighbouring country. None of these demonstrators were from there. These were local workers with their legitimate demands.

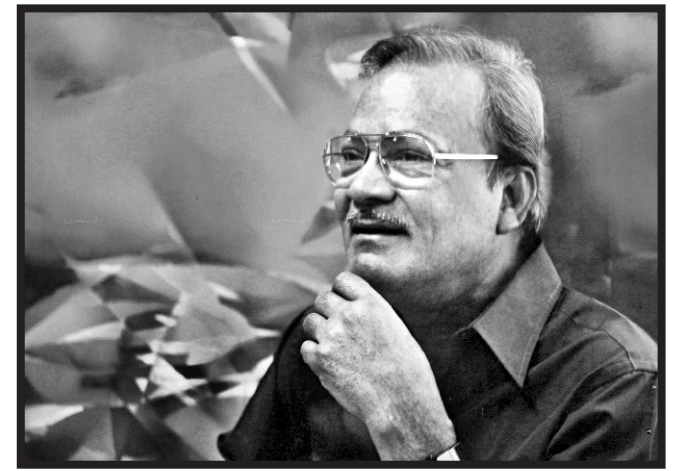
India is a big country, fast growing, but certainly has poverty and large unemployment and although India thinks for India, and rightly so, trying to destroy our RMG industries will not necessarily benefit them. RMG buyers could always choose to go elsewhere, after all there are other places where this

## Zakiganj border

Having studied in my village school up to class-vi and then at the Karimganj Govt High School up to matriculation in 1949, and then in Chittagong/Dhaka, I am aware of how the present border in the eastern part of Zakiganj thana was established with the whole Surma river becoming a part of India as an international boundary. This was because the river Surma was part of the neighbouring district Cachar during the British period. But what the Radcliff Award did was that it sliced out a portion of the richest sub-division with the headquarters at Karimganj and gave it to the neighbouring Cachar district of the then Assam/India. The most unjust thing was while creating a new boundary along the river Kushiara between the main portion of Sylhet they gave away this part of truncated Sylhet to India thus to give a corridor to Tripura. They conveniently forgot to mention midstream of the Surma to be the new boundary, instead of the whole river as was in the past. But at the same time Radcliff and the British government did not forget the international convention and made the new boundary of river Kushiara as the midstream to make it safe for India. While Congress leaders, particularly Mr. Nehru, were very alert about everything, our representatives were not that sharp. I know that lawyer Haimidul Haque Choudhury was our chief co-ordinator but he was ignorant of the said fact like most of the people in Bengal did not know much about the details of Sylhet. Thus there was a lapse in demarcation of the midstream of the Surma from the point of bifurcation of the Barak River near Alamshid and down the river Surma up to Moricha village, under Zakiganj upazila, where the river Surma wholly entered into Bangladesh territory. Since it is internationally recognised that the midstream of a border river shall be the actual demarcation line between two states, it would be very easy to settle all unnecessary disputes / clashes if India graciously agree to correct the mistake Radcliff and the then British government committed in 1947.

I appeal to the Indian government to agree to this solution and ensure that the people of Bangladesh and India along both sides of the border river Surma live in peace.

**Altaf Ahmed Choudhury, Ballah, Zakiganj**



## Nitun Kundu

How do we evaluate a multifaceted man who just has gone to the other world? The fallback position possibly is what he left behind. If we consider the name of Nitun Kundu, his solid works speak a thousand times more than words can express. A student of drawing and painting of the College of Arts and Craft, the present day College of Fine Arts of Dhaka University, Nitun passed out standing first class first in 1959.

Entrepreneurship was in his vein. IFOTOB caught the imagination of the people of Bangladesh for a new fashion design of furniture, it was nothing but his indigenous creative faculty. His inspiration behind the creation of "Shabash Bangladesh" on the Rajshahi University premises directly came from his participation in the historic Liberation War of Bangladesh. Through this piece of sculpture Nitun wanted to enliven the spirit of the Liberation War and the unknown heroes. It was great to see that the National Colour draped his body and he was given state funeral towards his eternal journey at the Central Shaheed Minar. It was a commendable gesture displayed by the BNP alliance government.

The late Nitun Kundu is best remembered in the Metropolitan Dhaka landscape for his Saarc Fountain at the intersection of the Airport Road in front of Sonargaon Hotel. Saarc was formally launched in Dhaka in 1985, and the seventh summit was due to be held in Bangladesh in 1992. The then foreign minister ASM Mustafizur Rahman persuaded the former foreign secretary Faruq A. Choudhury to become the Honorary Chairman of the Summit Preparatory Committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The committee deliberated to give some uniqueness to the Summit. The Chairman led the Chief Coordinator QAMA Rahim [Director-General Saarc desk] and relevant coordinators of the Preparatory Committee for a meeting with the then Mayor Mirza Abbas at his Laksmbazar office. The Mayor listened to other ministries at the brainstorming session but leaned heavily on the foreign ministry. In his view diplomats live abroad for a long time to see many legends and landmarks and summits. Several proposals were made and a number of options were up on the table. Finally, the Mayor went along with the idea of a Saarc Fountain proposed by the Foreign Ministry Committee. The Chief Architect at the PWD was assigned to come up with the layout and design of the Fountain. I was the Coordinator of the City Beautification, Cultural Events and Media in the Preparatory Committee and was asked to go around the new part of the city to suggest a number of locations for the proposed Fountain. Considering the fact that the Kings, Presidents and the Prime Ministers of the Saarc countries would be lodged at the Hotel Sheraton for which the hotel was renovated and they would use the Airport Road during arrival and departure, it was decided that the Fountain would be built on the Airport Road. Faruq Choudhury knew the creative genius of Nitun well and thought that it was only Nitun Kundu who could translate the dream into reality.

If you ever pass by Saarc Fountain, you pause to remember Nitun.  
**M. Shafiqullah**  
Coordinator of City Beautification,  
Cultural Events and Media, Saarc Summit, 1993.

industry exists. The industry does import huge quantity of fabric and related things from Indiaa benefit which it does not want to lose.

We need to have a good working relationship with our neighbour and must refrain from making statements which will strain our relationship.

**Wajid Ali Khan Panni**  
Former Deputy Foreign Minister  
and High Commissioner

### Hidden Diamond

It's with honour that I refer to your country Bangladesh - as the hidden 'Diamond of Asia'. I have many reasons for making this strong statement.

I am an Australian mother of two married to a Bangladeshi. I have had the pleasure of visiting Bangladesh two times in 2001 and 2004. I eagerly await my next trip there.

For so long, Bangladesh has only been referred to or known to the western world as one of the world's poorest countries beset with natural disasters and economic and social problems, to list a few.

I feel that change is coming if it hasn't already, amongst the perceptions and attitudes of foreigners towards Bangladesh and all things Bangladeshi. I refer to Bangladesh as the hidden diamond of Asia because once the western world discovers the untapped tourism and economic potential in Bangladesh, the country will become the 'Dubai or Malaysia' of the future. Bangladesh has an incredibly rich culture, history and physical and social environment that can be developed to move the country forward like its Asian counterparts, for example, India, China, Thailand and Malaysia. Many people would laugh at this idea but all it takes is the use of education to change the mindset and beliefs of the Bangladeshis themselves (in Bangladesh and overseas) to believe in the potential of their country and to propel it forward to reveal its true glory.

As India is one of the world's fastest growing economies, countries like Bangladesh will naturally take a spot on the world stage in the

next 10 to 15 years. I urge all Bangladeshis to look at the economic and recent educational statistics to see that Bangladesh is truly on its way to showing its real worth in the international arena.

I would like to acknowledge and applaud many of the ex-pat Bangladeshis abroad who are making big names for themselves in all fields of discipline such as education and business. Regardless of their career or monetary status, they are known to be the hardest workers. I make special mention of my role model Tommy Miah, who has put Bangladesh on the world map for his cooking and business endeavours in the United Kingdom. There are so many other Bangladeshis that I would like to mention.

Though I understand that the majority of Bangladeshi students aspire to move overseas, I urge them to think of the great potential of their own country.

As a foreigner living in Australia, the Bangladeshi people in general inspire me as people who work hard for their dreams, take pride in their strong family values and religious and cultural heritage. The western world could learn much from your people and way of life.

**Fiona Chowdhury**  
One-mail

### Indian managers

I would like to thank Mr. Munim Chowdhury for his article on the invasion of the low quality Indian managers into our job market, published on Sept. 14. It is quite deplorable that some unethical Bangladeshi companies are bringing in people into a country where the job market is still very small. This is a very serious issue and the authorities should look into this without any delay.

Bangladesh is being invaded by these low quality Indian managers when thousands of good professionals are being produced in the country. Mr. Chowdhury has mentioned about the high quality Bangladeshi managers who are working all over the world. I personally know of people holding senior positions in companies like BAT, Nestle, Unilever, Citibank N.A.

Standard Chartered Bank, AES in countries like UK, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Vietnam etc. These worthy sons of our soil have achieved these overseas postings with their high level of managerial abilities, and needless to mention, against all the odds of our image.

We should always welcome world class managers in our market from other countries as this helps us to learn and develop our business and managerial skills. But this should be based on real needs only. Unfortunately, the people that are being brought (trafficked actually, as they are working illegally) into the country from India, and also from some other countries by some local companies have limited qualities in the areas they are

supposed to work. Only quality they have is the ability to fool some employers with their smooth talking. It is a shame for us that even after 35 years of our independence some business owners have not been able to put faith on our own people. They are not only being unpatriotic, but also engaging themselves in unlawful activities.

It is time our foreign ministry, home ministry and Bol looked into this matter seriously. Our civil society and the media need to raise their voices as well.

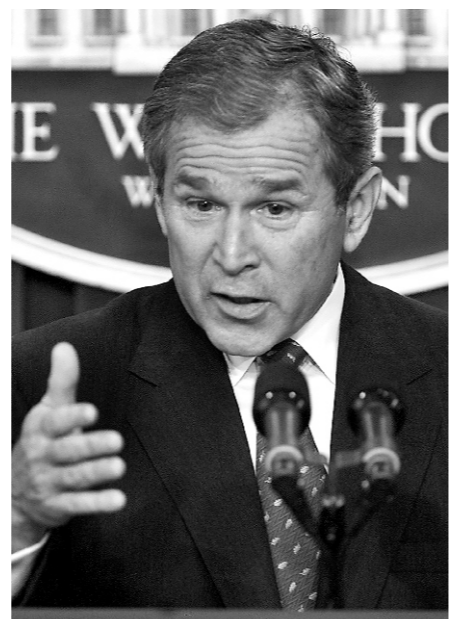
**Masumul Haque**  
49, Lake Circus  
Kalabagan, Dhaka

## Iran and Bush



The Iranian president has given a nuclear plan that has made Mr. Bush angry. And the world's most powerful nation America is planning to wipe out one more Muslim country from the world map like Iraq & Afghanistan. The brutality of the US govt. is now quite manifest. Bush & his allies are collecting information about the Muslim countries and trying their best to break their technological backbone. The Bush administration is once more getting ready to grab more land in the Middle East.

The Muslim countries must take a united stand against the US plan.  
**Rajiul Hasan**  
Sydney



## MOBILE PHONE

Change is the order of the day. Everything changes in course of time. What is new today will grow old tomorrow. In the same way we notice changes in the field of telecommunication. Mobile phone is the most exciting invention of modern science. It is an important medium of communication and correspondence, which helps communication with people in the shortest possible time. The use of mobile phone is easy and convenient. Especially, service holders; executives; doctors and working class people are being benefited from mobile phone.

However, it should not be used too much as it can have negative impact on health as experts are convinced now.

**Tahasin Ahmed**  
Sabujbagh, Dhaka