

The Daily Star

Founder-Editor : Late S. M. Ali
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Probe into Jatrabari Incident: Two Questions

The government has formed a three-member probe body to look into the incident at Jatrabari during the hartal of November 8 in which three BNP leaders, including two MPs, were injured. The investigation has been initiated at the behest of the Home Minister himself. We welcome this development and hope that truth will come out and appropriate actions will be taken on the basis of it.

We have two questions regarding this. First, how neutral is the probe, headed by a DIG, likely to be when his big boss, the minister himself, on the floor of the parliament, has expressed grave doubts about the authenticity of the injury claim? If the investigation reveals that the claim of the opposition politicians is correct then the Home Minister will look rather foolish having already suggested that the incident was stage managed. Now, is it credible that a DIG will write a report which will contradict the Home Minister's publicly-proclaimed position? He must either be suicidal or have written off his career, if he does so. If the minister was genuinely interested in the truth then he should have waited for the probe body to finish its work before making public his views. In other words the probe body can already be said to have lost its credibility courtesy the minister himself.

The second question is, does the minister really want us to believe that Khoka was carrying a bag of blood on his person and waiting to jump in the line of a passing bullet to injure himself so that he could take out from his pocket the bag of blood and pour it over his head — and all this for some media coverage? Didn't Khoka run the risk of receiving the pellets in his eyes which would have blinded him or even killed him, as was the case of the unfortunate housewife?

On the other hand, he could easily have been spotted by thousands of onlookers and, especially, the press photographers — and there are as many pro-government ones as anti-government ones — virtually destroying his credibility as a politician.

The point we would like to make here is that **ministers rightly enjoy a very high status in our society, as they do in every other. We must realise that once we adorn these high and exalted positions we cannot behave or say things we have been used to as opposition politicians. A lot of weight goes behind the public position of a minister. Their statements are records of history. Therefore, we humbly urge that our ministers become far more circumspect about what they say in public.**

Please don't destroy the value of words.

Friday Mailbox

Who's punishing whom?

Sir, Even after 42-hour hartal, the opposition was still not satisfied. They called another dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting the government attack on their party leaders. By attacking the opposition, the government has no doubt shown its deplorable side. But by declaring another hartal, the opposition has punished the people and not the government.

Don't our so-called people-friendly politicians realise that their programmes and protest affect only the people and not their opponents? How long the people of this country will continue to be the scapegoats of politics?

And as for the government, before giving order to attack the opposition with vengeance, just pause for a moment to recall that you too were once the opposition and you have been elected to power for five years -- not forever.

Serina Sara
Banani, Dhaka.

Better late than never

Sir, At last the government has decided to give consent to people's view and build the NAM conference centre at Chandrima Udyan instead of Osmany Udyan. I sincerely congratulate the government. They have established that the government does often, if not always, care about the people who have elected them to power.

Well, it's never too late to take a right decision.

Abdur Rahman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Sir, We appreciate that the government has finally decided to let the 11,000 trees of this polluted city of Dhaka to survive and build the NAM summit centre at Chandrima Udyan. Even though many of us don't understand the justification of holding the NAM conference, as it has lost much of its importance now, but we still congratulate the government for not to fell the trees.

With 'thanks', I have only one thing to say to the government -- better late than never.

Sharif Rahman
House#34, Road# 21
Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

The Shaheed Minar

Sir, I have read the comment made about the contribution of Novera Ahmed regarding the Central Shaheed Minar with mixed reaction. Those who know about late Hamidur Rahman will all feel disturbed and shocked about the move taken by some persons to glorify Novera Ahmed for a job which she did not do (The DS, 24th October). The Shaheed Minar embodies the sentiment of the historic Language Movement and the glorious Liberation War.

Such an attempt to magnify the performance of otherwise an illustrious sculptress may not also do justice to her reputation and attainment. For many years, she was in almost oblivion and it was a noble effort from some good people to bring her back. And the generous move of our Prime Minister, during her stay in Paris, to ask her to come back to Bangladesh to receive Ekuhshey Padak would be impeded to a great extent. It is also apprehended, if such controversy is allowed to continue, it will also not bring benefit to Novera Ahmed.

I fully agree with the letter written by Jahanara Hussain published on October 27th, 1999. I had an occasion to know Hamidur

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