

AL and Bangladesh

Is it that our opposition leaders don't have issues worthy of creating uproar in Bangladesh that they are at work in destroying the image of the nation? As their misdeeds are being disclosed by the former President justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and as a number of their stalwarts are being rounded up they are in a mood to destroy the image of our beloved country.

During his meeting with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, AL acting President Abdus Samad Azad mentioned about some Taliban linking with the ruling coalition.

But he forgot that with the help of the so-called fundamentalist components AL created a mess in the country during the BNP regime of 1991-96. These Jamat people were good when they worked with AL. But now they have become Taliban agents, which need to be annihilated, as they are working with BNP. If the AL leadership does not understand the sentiment of people in general they have to face worse than being defeated in the election.

Arif
BUET

Weird politicians

What a weird bunch of politicians we have! There is probably no other country in the world where the politicians make such careless remarks against their opponents and complaint to the foreigners, as the Awami Leaders have done to the British PM. During the visit of the former US President Bill Clinton, they did the same thing.

For their own interest they can do anything. It is heard that Amir Hussain Amu even cried in front of Blair for his defeat to a widow, according to him who (Ellen Bhutto) is also a member of Taliban.

Klanto
Jhalakati

The Lord "Shaheb"

It has been nearly 55 years since the English *Shahebs* have left. But, somehow, we are yet to shed our servile attitude towards the "Colonial Era Bosses".

Case in point, the acting Awami League President's recent meeting with Tony Blair. It is really disheartening to see the depths the AL has sunk to express its dislike for BNP. How the mighty have fallen!

Anwar Babar
Dallas, Texas, USA

A tip for the Awami League

The learned Awami League leaders perhaps do not know that in Afghanistan the Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the major components of the Northern Alliance who fought hand in hand with the USA to root out Taliban forces from that country.

Borhanuddin Rabbani, who was the President of Afghanistan being supported by the Northern Alliance during the main phase of the American "War on Terrorism", is the supreme leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami of Afghanistan.

All the Jamaat-e-Islami parties in different countries of the world are well connected with one another and follow the same principles. This is the cause behind why Jamaat-e-Islami of Bangladesh has taken a low-toned stand against the latest American policy in Afghanistan.

The complaint to the British Prime Minister that the present Bangladesh government has two ministers (belonging to the Jamaat-e-Islami party of Bangladesh) who have Taliban links will not be plausible to them (the virtual masters). Awami League will have to device new allegations to be made to our 'foreign masters' to portray the present government and the country communal in the eyes of the

Extend the hand of friendship



There is no doubt that President Musharraf wants to avoid a war with India. So, let New Delhi not invite international condemnation and mutual destruction by imposing a war on Pakistan. International pressure and our 'diplomatic agenda' are doing much of the job for India.

So, why hurry with war-like gestures? If there is still some difference in our approach to and assessment of terrorism as a condemnable phenomenon then its roots go back to January 1986, when Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, openly argued that "there was a thin line between terrorism and freedom movement". He referred to the West's description of Nelson Mandela, who was then serving a long prison sentence in Rodin Island, as an arch-terrorist.

So, it is better that New Delhi soon changes its posture and pronouncements and adopt a more flexible and friendly attitude. The adage is "Don't hurt your foe when he seeks peace".

A war will bring us neither glory nor territory, but only truckloads of dead-bodies and an opportunity for India's "Coffin Chor" (thief) Defence Minister to plunder more money.

Ravi Karishna
Manama, Bahrain

world community.

If they can be successful in this drive then that will serve enormously to the national interest! BNP played the same role while it was in the Opposition. So cheer up Awami League! We must make the world believe that ours is a communal country, we must not let the world forget that ours is the most corrupt and abjectly poor country. So let's tighten our loin clothes and shout to our crescendo.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

What's wrong with Hasina?

Reading the past couple of day's national dailies one could easily come to this conclusion that, our honourable (?) ex-Prime Minister has lost her sanity.

There is no doubt that she is still sour from her humiliating defeat in the last parliamentary election but that does not give her the right to go around the world crucifying our country's image. In a time like this when every sane person in the world is trying to steer away from anything that is even remotely close to the word 'Taliban', our ex-Prime Minister is out on a world-wide campaign to accuse our government of being pro-Taliban.

My question to the ex-Prime Minister is "Have you lost your mind? Expatriates has problems of their own, if you can't solve them just don't create new ones by labeling the country of being pro-Taliban."

Nafees Alam
Dallas, Texas, USA

Use more jute bags

The BTV news bulletin in evening of December 12 showed one of our urea factories, where the product was being packed in paper/synthetic bags.

A colleague sitting by my side offered an explanation that since urea is hygroscopic (like sugar and salt), the packing has to be airtight; hence jute bags cannot be used.

My query about the possibility of using synthetic-lined jute bags evoked a vague response—either that would cost higher, or there might be lack of facilities to produce such weatherproof jute bags locally.

With ecological issues at this point, it is the time to focus on such topics like natural fibres. Could you provide some information from authentic sources about the issue raised above?

A Mawaz
Dhaka

Orderly disorder

Intelligent he is who acts spontaneously, observing and sensing the situation.

Stride to live in this part of the world is also a kind of performing a religious activity.

If it had not been so, Allah would not urge the mankind to go for searching a livelihood right after the prayers end in the mosques.

The Khatib Moulana Obaidul Haque could have prayed for safety and wellbeing of the whole Muslim world instead of branding any culture or any country or any President as some terrorist in the Eid congregation on December 17.

"Bangladesh: Love it or leave it" the opinion is accurate and obviously it is a threat to Moulana Obaidul Hoque.

He should leave Bangladesh and go to the Gaza Strip or to Chechnya to serve his *Jehadi Josh* ("Fighting phobia", December 25). That piece of writing was so touchy that I longed to know who wrote it and found that the writer lives in Kansas, USA. Somebody, who is an immigrant (assumed) in the USA loves Bangladesh and the other (Khatib) being permanent Bangladeshi

Faezul Huq replies to accusations

Thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity for certain clarifications to issues raised by Mr. Shawkat Hosain and Mr. Alam, pertaining to my role during 1971.

May I take this last opportunity Sir, to reply to the recent letter written by Mr. Shawkat Hosain, who, if he doesn't feel satisfied, may still continue to correspond with me at my local address or through the e-mail supplied for his convenience.

Before I proceed to reply to his queries, I would like to say that I do not need any further apology from him. He has already appeared to be quite apologetic when he mentioned that he was about to send in the letter of apology which I had asked for, and my purpose I think, has been served. I do not have or had any personal enmity with Mr. Hosain or Mr. Alam (who sound the same person to me) and as such let us not drag the matter in that direction any further.

I have tried my best to reply to all his ten questions and would expect a fair assessment of the situation.

(1) Yes I contested in the 1970 general elections and won, to be elected as the youngest member of the then National Assembly.

(2) No, I could not participate in our War of Independence as a freedom fighter. (3) I had all the sincere intentions of going over to Mujibnagar but certain misunderstanding cropped up initially (due to the publication of a so-called statement by me) and some of my friends, relations and well-wishers advised me to get in touch with the leaders in Mujibnagar first and then move. Further, family commitments (like looking after a sick mother) and without any other male member to take over the responsibilities at that moment, delayed my departure on at least two occasions. By the time we (myself and late Abdul Halim Choudhury Jewel, who was my childhood friend and a great freedom fighter-patriot of our country) worked out a plan, it was probably too late in October 1971, and Jewel was already dead. My contact through the French Consulate in Dhaka was just an additional effort to supplement my attempts to cross over safely. Mr. Hosain should appreciate that not all the Awami League MPs crossed over in 1971 and almost 110 MNAs and MPs were present in and around Dhaka till the 16th day of December 1971. Even our revered poet Shamshur Rahman was in Dhaka during all those 9 months. Does it mean that he did not support our cause then?

(4) I did not require or ask for the protective custody. It was thrust on me by the government of Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed.

(5) I have never said or asserted that my losses were due to looting or otherwise. What I wanted to say was that due to my sudden detention without any cogent reason at that time, and with my ill petition being refused on 17 occasions without any charges whatsoever, I had to instruct my family reluctantly, to dispose off our Sadarghat School Supply building. It was for a throw away price of only Taka 3(three) lakh because an adverse 'Bayena-nama' had already been signed in May 1971 when we were refused operation of our bank accounts, as those were frozen by the Pakistani authorities. The drawing of a simile with the collaborating Biharis by Mr. Hosain in this regard is simply uncalled for.

(6) Why I was detained is quite clear to me now as a 'blue-print' con-

citizen hates Bengali culture and sends Bush to bush.

How conflicting the encounter is!

Nur Hosain
Dhaka

"Muslim or not"
This is in response to Mr. Ahmad Jamal's letter (January 4). I find his letter quite intriguing. I humbly disagree with the premise of his reasoning that the harmful effects of

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spiracy operated throughout that period and I don't want to waste any further time on that. I have never said that I needed the recommendations of two British MPs or the Amnesty International, in order to get released. Where did you get that Mr. Hosain? Why are you unnecessarily trying to put certain words in my mouth, which I have not uttered? The Prime Minister (who was the chief executive and the supreme leader also) was the only person who mattered in all-important things at that point of time. Since I was not allowed the normal course of law, it was his office with late Mr. Rafiqullah Choudhury as the Secretary to the Prime Minister, who processed my case.

(7) I did not go to Lyallpur of my own. Along with others (like late journalist Mr. Najmul (or Nizamul) Huq of PPI, Dhaka, who was picked up by the Al-Badr killers later, after he returned; Late Syed Moazzam Huq of BSS and Mr. Hafizul Islam, who was with some bank at that time and later became the Managing Director of A.B. Bank Limited



were all flown along with a dozen other prominent persons whom I did not know personally. None of us knew our destination, nor did we know as to why we were being taken like that. It was all revealed later.

(8) I was set free on the 19th of September 1971 and reached Dhaka a day later via Karachi. I was free to a limited extent, because my movement was restricted to Dhaka city only.

(9) Our Tikatally house was surrounded on the afternoon of 31st March 1971 and the whole neighbourhood was taken aback. People thought that I would be taken away or killed. The local army unit which had surrounded our house on some mischievous report, searched each and every nook and corner of the house to find out the 'miscreants' as they said, and left in disgust after the routine curfew was re-imposed that afternoon. But they told me in clear terms to stay inside and be prepared for interrogation the next day at 8 o'clock at the old Gonobhabon (opposite the Ramna Park). The next day, that is on the 1st of April, I was taken and kept till 2 p.m. and interrogated by five army officers. Later they said they were releasing me with strict restrictions

It seems your writers may fail to pray once in a while but they certainly like to demand the use of *hijab*, the meaning of which they don't know. The man from the land of saraf is indeed a strange being.

Ashraf
USA

A simple request to the US supporters
I have a small request to those who always speaks in favour of the US. My request is they should stop claiming that US and its allies saved the Muslims in Kosovo and Bosnia. What they did really was far from saving the Muslims from atrocity.

When the Bosnian Muslims fought back, the West put an arms embargo on them. This arms embargo left the Bosnian Muslims with no means to protect themselves, which made it easy for the Serbs in Muslims cleansing in Bosnia. By the time West intervened, the Serbs had already committed enough crimes. Another point should be added how the West barred Bosnia from joining OIC. In case of Kosovo, West intervened not because they wanted to help the Kosovo Albanians, but to stop them from becoming independent. They did it solely to help Serbia as they knew Serbia alone couldn't stop the Kosovo freedom fighters. I am not against those who speak in support of US, but it is extremely disturbing when one whitewashes the US role in Bosnia and Kosovo.

SMAH
Dhaka

"Why they were forgiven?"
Responding to Zaki's letter ("Why were they forgiven?", December 25), I ask the Awami League as a citizen to respond his argument, to create the right public opinion.

Why does not AL respect the decisions of Sheikh Mujib? Is it not hypocrisy? Why on earth the next generation should suffer? Those who do not accept Bangladesh are always free to leave.

How long will this Razakar issue be kept pending?

AMA
Dhaka

Don't distort history
Recently there was a report in your daily about a discussion meeting

chaired by a BNP lawmaker where the speakers stated their views on our Liberation War. Most of the speakers in the meeting reportedly said that the people of our country fought the war and any political party or an individual cannot claim the victory alone. Further they expressed that the "claimants are distorting the history of Liberation War."

Yes, it is true that an individual alone cannot fight a liberation war. Mahatma Gandhi did not go to the front. Bin Laden did not hijack the planes and bombed the Twin Towers. It was his hero who did it. Now who is the hero of that incident? Of course Osama Bin Laden and not his followers. Chairman Arafat never goes into the Israeli territory to bomb the Israeli army, it is his people who go and risk lives for Palestine. There are many heroes in the world history who did not go to the front, it was their people who fought the wars, gave lives and endured sufferings for freedom. And it's the same in the case of Bangladesh, the people of this soil—of course excluding Razakars, Al-badrs, Al-shams and few Bangalees who still believe in Pakistan—responded to the call and joined Bangabandhu after March 7, fought back and liberated our country from the Pakistani occupation.

It was Bangabandhu who started the fire, defied the Pakistani rule, and called our people to unite and to fight. Again it is the people who fought the war. The whole nation paid the price, our mothers and sisters lost their chastity, our boys their lives and a new country "Bangladesh" was born. During that period there was only one party called the Awami League led by its leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who can be claimed as the man who made the whole thing happen. Today's BNP supporters also worked under the banner of Awami League.

Shafiqul Islam
Dhaka

Simi's death'
Simi's death has proved the extent to which our male counterpart is suffering from superiority complex. The male of this country cannot accept the fact that female could be talented or independent. Simi's death has very much proved this fact.

There are numerous examples of male superiority complex in our country. We hope our Prime Minis-

ter, Opposition Leader, and the women's rights activists strive to prevent more Simi's from meeting the same fate.

Dr. Lailun Nahar
Dhaka

SAARC cumulation issue
It's very easy to predict what the government's decision on the SAARC cumulation issue will be.

Simply add the number of BTMA members who are MPs or ran for Parliament in October and deduct from that those of the BGMEA.

You'll find for the former.

MA, on e-mail

Let BNP go to the extra mile

report (DS, 4th December) confirms that the liberals of the government party are in favour of initiating necessary actions to create an atmosphere, a climate of confidence to ensure the joining of the AL members in the Parliament. It is true that the coalitions have two third majorities, but without an opposition a democratic society is incomplete and truncated. The voice of the 40 per cent of our voters must not be ignored. The greatest parliamentarian of the last century stated soberly, "in Victory magnanimity".

Shahabuddin Mahtab
Dhaka

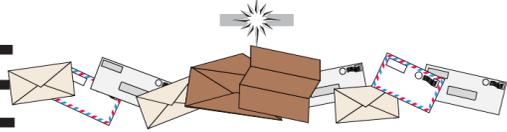
Active politics by teachers
Some outgoing members of DUTA have criticised the PM for her com-

ments on teachers' politics in the university (December 31). These freethinkers have harped on the usual freedom of expression.

But that is not the issue. The issue is the active participation of the university teachers in national politics, inside and outside the campus. This is not the norm in other countries. Teaching is a profession that needs absolute dedication, and direct and active involvement of the teachers and the students in national politics is neither necessary nor desirable. Moreover, different lobbies reveal partiality in criticism, and they are not at all neutral in supporting or criticising any political party as well. This is obvious from a study of the records of last several years.

Of course politicisation in this country is an issue. To draw the boundary line, may be open public debates on the issue can be arranged. The primary responsibility is on the political leaders, despite the plea that one party was neutralising the activities of the predecessor. We have to get out of this vicious cycle. Political chase has become a profitable pastime!

Abd
Dhaka



New York, USA

Bangladeshis not fit to be Muslims?
As a person of Middle Eastern descent, I am surprised at the lengthy debate on Islamic issues that your paper has been carrying on for so long. To be honest, the Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have little or no knowledge of the roots of Arabic

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Kibria has a point, but could do lot better



must stop there, Mr. Kibria? Why you and your AL colleagues dodge the truth that the Ordinance was the only recourse the caretaker government had to conduct a free and fair election? Do you have the moral courage to own up the truth that during their last days in government AL relaxed licensing for guns and issued hundreds if not thousands such licences. It is a no secret to who those licences were issued. How about the last-minute transfers of civil servants not only

at the Secretariat but also at electoral constituencies? What about the terror in public life that topped factors that handed down humiliating defeat to AL? Who knows better than Mr. Kibria that donors closed doors and foreign investors stayed away because of that terror?

I have had much admiration for you, Mr. Kibria, not so much for your self-hyped first-class academic credentials, but for your firm resolve as Finance Minister against loan defaulters and your commitment to bring discipline and due process in managing our money and finance. Petty politicking does not do justice to your excellent credentials and experiences. You can do lot better than character assassination of President Shahabuddin who, in your own words, has been "lionised...for so long". Is it not possible that there may be at