

India-Pakistan war

Despite sabre rattling, India is hardly in a position to go for war against Pakistan. Despite having a much stronger military muscle, India is basically an extremely poor nation, which does not have the economic and political means to carry out any attack without hurting itself badly.

In fact, India might play into the hands of the extremists who are determined to drag both India and Pakistan in a catastrophic war for their own ends. If by their acts of terrorism, the extremists can provoke India to attack Pakistan and this lead to a nuclear exchange, both militarily crushed Pakistan and economically and politically devastated India might cease to exist as viable political units. The whole subcontinent might become a larger Somalia where various warlords might replace modern centralised governments.

As for India's insistence that Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, it may be pointed out that Pakistan has failed to stem terrorism within its own borders and many Pakistanis and foreigners inside Pakistan are regular victims of terrorism. The same applies to India, which has failed to protect its own people from mayhem in Gujarat.

Both India and Pakistan may be reminded that those who live in glass houses don't have the luxury to throw stones at each other.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Our war is for peace

It is simply foolish on the part of the international community to ask India and Pakistan to resume "dialogue". The Indians and the Pakistanis have extreme and 'poles-apart' views on Kashmir. So how can we discuss the matter on a common table? We say Kashi-

mir is ours and they claim the land too! In this sort of situation no negotiations are possible. This is why all our declarations, treaties and summits have failed; Simla, Lahore and Agra being the clear examples.

In this sort of time, the only solution is a complete war. It will be for the welfare of the people only. The entire India and especially the state, Jammu and Kashmir have been suffering because of the terrorism hiked by Pakistan. As our Home Minister says, "War is on for the last 15 years or so, we only have to reply. If we do not reply now, more lives will be taken. We need an end to this problem soon or we'll have to face worse things ahead."

We want the welfare of the Kashmiri people and it can only be possible if Kashmir remains, as it is, a part of India. Pakistan's economic condition is miserable. It is not also a functioning democracy. So, how can it ensure the welfare and the proper human rights for the people?

I would humbly ask other countries to wait and watch and not intervene in this case. Our war will be directed towards peace and we in reality are a peace-loving nation. We are also fighting terrorism like the USA!

Farhan Ali
An Indian, on e-mail

War between India and Pakistan imminent?

Tension between two nuclear arm capable neighbours-- India and Pakistan is running high. About one million troops are nose-to-nose already at the frontier, and waiting in high alert for executive order.

After a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 that killed 14 including the attackers, India started its troop mobilisation along the frontier claiming the attackers to be backed

by Pakistan. Situation deteriorated for a suspected Pakistan-based Islamic militants raid recently in an army camp in the Indian controlled Kashmir that killed 34 people - mostly soldiers' family members.

Tensions rose further after Pakistan tested a medium-range nuclear-capable missile last week in a defiant show of strength, and the Indians maintained their own belligerent stance, "We have waited for far too long and our wait is nearing its end," Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Indian Prime Minister, told journalists.

To ease tension between these two long time foes, the United States, Britain and Europe are working closely to calm the tension of a fourth war; they fought three already! If negotiation fails and or slows down as it happened in the case of Middle East; do we expect the unexpected to happen any time after September? War between India and Pakistan!

In the event that war breaks out between two nuclear arm capable stubborn nations, there may be a serious effect in Bangladesh-- both economic and security points of views as well as environmental hazards due to use of nuclear weapons.

From security point of view, our sea, land and air must be under constant surveillance for an early response. There have been recent reports about intruding our Bangladesh air space by two Indian fighter jets and two helicopters. Protest has been sent from BDR about the incidents, but our ministerial level must react quickly against this, and any further illegal entry.

Sahed Ali
Vancouver, Canada

Violation of our airspace

The news about four Indian military aircraft entering our airspace shows in how vulnerable position we are. We are so weak that anyone can toy with us. Our trade and economy and defence are in a very bad condition. We have become hostage to the hands of



Weaving a war together

other country. The corruption and terrorism and dirty politics have worsened the situation.

We have to face this situation unitedly by using our resources carefully. We can sign an oil and gas deal with Malaysia, Iran, Saudi Arabia who have been our good friends. Our political leaders must understand that fighting within ourselves will make us easier to be conquered.

Reaz Mohiuddin
Outer Circular Road, Dhaka

"Manavzamin and freedom of press"

I was surprised to see two letters on May 25 ("Manavzamin and freedom of press). We have to obey the court's decision. Sometimes it may favour someone and sometimes not. But we have to trust our court.

Journalists also have some responsibility to the society. They will write whatever they want is right for the country to know. But that does not mean they should harass or write something unjust and lie to the readers. If they do, then court will get them down.

I think, court did the right thing and also whoever sued Manavzamin did the right thing by

suing rather than destroying the property of Manavzamin, which is the trend in the country.

If court makes a decision, it is not the fault of BNP. I don't understand why can't the people go beyond AL or BNP.

Saane Abrar
Dallas, USA

Bali Summit

I love this. The fourth (!) meeting of the preparatory committee for a summit, which is nothing more than a free ticket and gabfest anyway, is being held in Bali!

I'm in the wrong business. Farhan Quddus in his letter (May 25) was only half-right. I should have been a

meter reader, a customs peon or one of these globetrotting guys running from one seminar to another paid for by the government or some schmucks in the UN telling everyone to give peace a chance, empower women, cure AIDS, end poverty and save the whales.

MA
Dhaka

Sheikh Hasina comes home

The prodigal daughter has come home from her extended trip and made the usual meaningless remarks. She is met by the usual sycophantic leaders and hangers-on. Democratic politics Bangladesh style.

Do you remember the heady optimism the first time she came home? How did that little ditty go? I only remember "Sheikh Hasina ashe Zia-ar godi kapche".

Thor
Dhaka

"Govt responsible for monk murder"

Our Leader of the Opposition is back. She claims the government is responsible for the murder of the Buddhist monk. She also asked the government to arrest his killers. Correct me, if I am wrong, but is Sheikh Hasina asking the government to arrest itself? Ah, what paradox!

In a nutshell, Awami League guaranteed its defeat in the present parliament by neglecting the law and order situation and Sheikh Hasina's weird, if not total nonsensical, comments. BNP on the other hand moving towards its defeat in the next parliament election by avoiding the law and order situation and nominating criminals for the DCC elections.

Both BNP and Awami League do something about the law and order situation, will you?

AA
California, USA

"Situation moves from absurd to the comical"

Dear Mr. Editor thank you for yet another well thought-out editorial (May 25) covering the killings of Ward Commissioners and their request i.e. those of the living ones, for police protection. Indeed the government's resolve to curb the deteriorating law and order situation has now become comical. What an irony when some of the high profiled and controversial crimes of some of the most ruthless, immoral and unethical nature have already taken place under the very "protection and sponsorship" of our police forces, I wonder what protection can any one ever expect from such an outfit.

Let me point out that BDR bail out and the so-called combating operation to seek out listed terrorists would surely fail. Sure enough it has failed and the entire operations appear to be both comical and farcical. Dealing with our police force is a no-win situation. One look at the report in your very daily covering the arrests made in Naraynganj of some alleged terrorist etc followed by the concerned OC's statement to a visiting on location reporter, tells it all.

I was visiting some relations in Purana Paltan. On my way back I came across two truckloads of well-equipped BDR personnel patrolling around the Jonaki Cinema. I asked myself as to whatever these people were doing here with no clue whatsoever about the "creed colour and whereabouts" of any of the terrorist they are entrusted to help haul up with assistance of the police. The government's move appears to be absurd. If the police did not know the whereabouts of the branded criminals can BDR be of any assistance whatsoever?

S Chowdhury
Dhaka

"Disabled but not helpless"

In my opinion, Md. Badrul Ahsan's article "The Cripple" portrays only the emotional and negative aspects of a disabled person's life--in fact a disabled woman. It also shows the negative attitude most of our people have of our women and the disabled. A lack of proper education, poverty and unemployment of our society, are the major causes of neglect of disabled people in our society. However, attitudes must change, as disabled people though dependent on others are not totally confined to the bed or the wheelchair.

The wheelchair is a mobility aid for those with a physical disability to become mobile and be able to get around, it certainly is not used to stay confined in one place. A person using a wheelchair and other assistive devices can lead an active life full of hobbies, professions etc. As Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs) stated in her letter, in the developed world, such as UK, disabled women are receiving higher education, employment and in some cases get married. So being a disabled doesn't mean that the person has to lead the rest of his/her life in frustration and isolation.

The majority of the people think that the life of a woman is incomplete unless she becomes a wife or a mother. However, there are many examples of unmarried women who have become successful in other aspects of life, instead of having a family. Despite the limitations of our society, disabled women in our country are trying to get away from the confinement caused by a disability, and play a role in society. In fact there are young disabled women who are studying, and are employed in organizations or manage their own businesses here in Bangladesh. Though they may be small in number they are inspiring other disabled women to accept the consequences and live a meaningful active life instead of being emotional and hopeless.

Why don't we create awareness among the people of the ability of the disabled instead of showing only the negative aspects? Together we can create an accessible environment for the differently abled and let them be included in social activities.

Sharmin Rahman
Dhaka

I think I am beginning to enjoy having the good Reverend in country.

helpless"

blind British Home Secretary, just as long as our one doesn't come with the same political ideas as Mr. Blunkett's.

Thor
Dhaka

"Talk and let others be listened to"

I am deeply saddened by the debilitating sense of insecurity that plagues Mr. Ashfaq Chowdhury. I am also very surprised that given the weak economic, social and

But this supposition could also be misleading particularly in a country like ours. I am not sure if the above schools have been certified by any agency, as in the U.K institutions receive Charter Mark award for excellence. We do not have any performance measurement criteria for the English medium schools.

It is good that they are following British standards, but whatever they have adopted in the course, is it a full copying of the British system or tailored to our context. Whatever is there, there should be exchange of

start raising the fees to the extent of thirty per cent from the previous year and the parents who would like to provide good education at any cost find themselves trapped in it. My intention was to draw attention on this 'unjustified' increase in tuition fees every year to some authority who can monitor in general to co-ordinate activities of English medium schools.

Regarding the syllabus, I did not mean the government should interfere in the 'O' level or 'A' level syllabus but to have general over-

view of the kind of syllabus taught in the lower classes where most of the books are published in the neighbouring countries containing chapters on Jesus Christ (AW) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in history books, which are contrary to our culture and religious beliefs. This requires serious consideration on the part of parents not to let our young minds exposed to wrong information at an early age. In fact the schools may consider following the syllabus of Cambridge University in social sciences even in lower classes as well.

An aggrieved parent
Dhaka

One question

How many dead bodies could have brought the Prime Minister to the bank of the Meghna?

Shahadat Chowdhry
Sylhet

National shame

The death of four hundred people in the recent launch capsize is a national shame. Neither the launch owner nor the government could give the exact figure of victims. The families and relatives of the victims did not get the bodies of their lost ones because of mishandling by the authorities. It only shows the failure of the government in fulfilling its responsibilities towards the people whose interests they are supposed to uphold.

In fact, there is no control or checks from the government's side to ensure whether the vessels are fit or whether they have trained manpower. And they do not have insurance policies that ensure compensation for the passengers.

Muhammad Kamal
Dhaka

Undiplomatic Foreign Minister

I was appalled to learn from press report that during the last Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) held in Botswana on May 16 and 17, 2002, Foreign Minister Mr. M. Morshed Khan opposed the re-entry of Pakistan into the Commonwealth till restoration of its democracy.

The Foreign Minister should have been silent on this matter as it involved a fellow Muslim country. Pakistan being a brotherly Muslim country has always supported the candidature of Bangladesh in different forums like UN, OIC, SAARC etc. Pakistan had gone out of its way in helping Bangladesh get the Test cricket status.

M M Haque
On e-mail

Helping the helping hands

In our country maidservants are easily available and they are very cheap to hire as well.

I always wonder about our servants at home, don't they deserve any kind of love and respect from us, at least from the point of view that they are human beings? They work in most houses 7 days a week, 30 days a month, they are sometimes 365 days in a year. Out of that don't they deserve any sort of love and care from their boss! They are the subjects of our anger very often, as if they are the people who cannot make mistakes and therefore should be abused and punished, physically or verbally.

Our servants (they should be called our helpers) are not machines. They need to be recharged to work again. Unless they get love from their employer and rest for their health, they can't work properly. To get more work from them as we all want, we need to be little bit flexible towards them so that, they are happy and we are happy therefore both the sides stay in peace.

Shahrin Hussain Tania
Old D.O.H.S, Dhaka

political infrastructure of our nation, he chooses defence as the only issue to lose sleep over.

Mr. Chowdhury, a patriot is not necessarily one brandishing the sword. And having lived in Bangladesh for over 25 years I am fully cognisant of the real dangers that face our nation. So please do not try to pass off your paranoia as justifiable concern and your political myopia as some "real understanding" of Bangladesh issues. Numerous issues plague our nation and it is not necessarily seditious to prioritise them differently. Mr Biggles is not being unpatriotic when he suggests that we strengthen our non-military resources. And neither are you for deeming defence as a priority for Bangladesh. Just because someone chooses to focus on an issue that is not on your list of priorities does not imply that he or she loves Bangladesh any less.

Bangal Chele

information about the course and about the teaching staff. The people should be informed. One easy way is to have web page. The schools in consortium may publish on an yearly basis school profile, competencies of the teaching staff indicating their experience, rules for admission and fees for admission etc so that parents are better informed.

Just to comment on the fees charged by these schools, it is understood that the market will determine the fees. But given the fact that our market is imperfect and the guardians having very little choice left, the fees should be determined by some objective rational criteria.

We do not want the government to interfere in these matters, but there should be some forum or interest group that will keep pressure for quality and price?

M M Haque
On e-mail

Police and corruption

This refers to Mr Nazmur Rahman's letter (May 12)

A SI of police like Nazmur Rahman owns a mobile phone, smokes Benson & Hedges and rides x4 motor-bike. What is his salary? Can he afford such expenses with the salary? And what about his family maintenance?

Bangladesh is a corrupt country and the police force occupies the top position of the corruption list. Police must stop taking money from the criminals. And not mobile phones, please supply them walkie-talkie.

Sohel Bin Seraj
Mymensingh

Police and friend

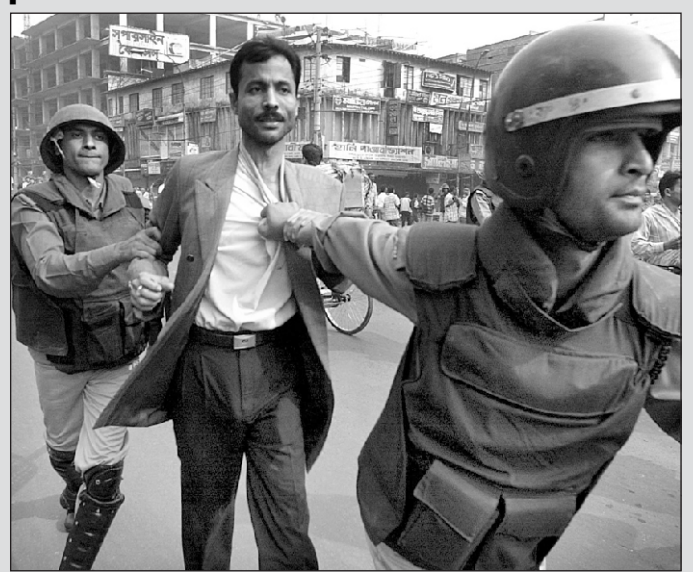
USA

English medium schools

This is in response to the letter of Mr. Ali and Mr. Yamen Hoque regarding English medium schools. Both the readers agree that these schools 'milk away' money from parents and fees of some established schools are 'ridiculous'. Regarding the fees structures, parallel has been drawn on demand and supply of English Medium Schools in the market. But actually this theory does not apply in this case for the reason that once the institution is established as good school and create a good will, they

The Rev. Mrs. Robinson has made an excellent point, although I don't believe that the recent spate of politically correct speech is healthy at all. Politically correct speech is liberalism-gone haywire, which ends up in censorship. I like being able to say offensive things without the Editor being the arbiter of what is correct or not.

However she makes an excellent point regarding the facilities for disabled people in Bangladesh. It will be a great day for us when we have our own David Blunkett, the



Police and friend

USA

English medium schools

This is in response to the letter of Mr. Ali and Mr. Yamen Hoque regarding English medium schools. Both the readers agree that these schools 'milk away' money from parents and fees of some established schools are 'ridiculous'. Regarding the fees structures, parallel has been drawn on demand and supply of English Medium Schools in the market. But actually this theory does not apply in this case for the reason that once the institution is established as good school and create a good will, they

English medium schools

This is in response to the letter of Mr. Ali and Mr. Yamen Hoque regarding English medium schools. Both the readers agree that these schools 'milk away' money from parents and fees of some established schools are 'ridiculous'. Regarding the fees structures, parallel has been drawn on demand and supply of English Medium Schools in the market. But actually this theory does not apply in this case for the reason that once the institution is established as good school and create a good will, they

"Fascism: defeated, not dead"



I think Mr MB Naqvi makes in his article a mistake that can be seen in much contemplation about fascism.

When he writes that: "The supreme value for any fascism, no matter where, is not man, qua man: it is some collectively...." I can to a certain height agree but when he states "there has to be a group to hate with its largely imaginary faults" he narrows fascism to racism. Of course Hitler used the Jews, the gypsies and the homosexuals to rally the population behind him and Le Pen is doing the same in regard to the Arabs (and is also done by Bush to a certain extent, Rice has said that the new enemies were terrorism and Islam or words that have the same meaning).

But that is not yet fascism. Italy under Mussolini and Portugal under Salazar were not very racist and had a system in which people were forced in groups e.g. groups that comprised employers and employees in one union while the party reigned from above. In Japan I think society was also hardly racist by lack of enough foreigners to act as motor for the propaganda of the fascist idea.

Also in my society (Holland) the "poldermodel" can be seen as a result that the fascist ideas from the war entered the minds of leading politicians (from the right as well as from the left). The word fascism is derived from fasces, a bunch of twigs, with in the middle an axe that the lictors carried in Rome when they advanced the consuls and caesars. It is the symbol of their power over life and death.

That is what we see in many parts of the world, a society lead by leaders (often combined with nationalist ideas) in which the population is more or less organised under their leadership in groups that have hardly any contact with each other. "Welfare and rights of the human individual are subordinated to the greatness or glory of that non-material collectivity" but the writer should add also the glory of the Leader.

But fascism does not begin by "identifying with the majority ethnic group" that is a means to reach the goal, a fascist society. It begins by the idea that everyone will be restricted by the bonds that are tied by the leader and his kin, by the elite, which maintains a strict hierarchy in any organisation in the state, be it the organisation of the own supporters but also the workers in the factory and the organisation of the educational institutions for example. The freedom of humans is reduced to nothing. That is the inhuman idea of fascists and that must not be secluded by the propaganda that fascism is in the first place a racist ideology. Colonialism was also partly based on racist ideas while the colonialist regimes were certainly not fascist in their home countries. In Holland the murdered politician Fortuyn had some racist undertones but he was not a fascist.

I indeed think that the Taliban and the Pakistan regime have many fascistic characteristics but do not confuse expansionist politics with the fascist system. The fascist system is in the first place a system to organise the own population along very strict lines.

So fascism is not dead at all it is even not defeated because people confuse fascism with racism-- and racism is also certainly not defeated and thus not dead at all.

Joost van Steenis
Holland

Minister Morshed Khan has acted in a most undiplomatic manner that definitely would annoy Pakistan and in future Pakistan will have its reservations supporting Bangladesh in any forum.

Khairul Masud
Eskaton, Dhaka

Let there be light

Thank you for the report on electricity chaos (May 23). I wish it came earlier. I am a resident of Old DOHS and have an office in Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani. The whole area witnessed a long hour of load shedding from 4 p.m. (May 20, Monday) afternoon till 8 in the morning (May 22, Wednesday). The entire commercial activity in Banani came to a standstill.

I came back to office to do some honest-to-goodness work after a one-and-a-half-day break, only to find that we were having load-shedding every other hour. In despair I called the Gulshan DESA office and was told by a condescending clerk that the power will be switched off on an hourly basis.

I am waiting in the heat and darkness for a solution to this misery.

Farhan Quddus
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Information Ministry not needed

Your full-page letter is a clear example of people's reaction on the channel ban that was hastily withdrawn later.

Aside from being a propaganda vehicle of the government with its incompetent Ministers, there is hardly anything of value of the Information Ministry. Therefore, if abolished I do not think there would be any problem. Rather it can be a constructive move to reduce the bloated size of the cabinet. As long as publicity is concerned, the government can do that with more competence and accountability if each ministry appoints a spokesman, assisted by a small cell, which can deal with journalists and reporters.

Ch M Ahmed, Dhaka

Police brutality

I do not have any particular views either in favour of or against Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

As far as I am concerned he is just an example of the politicisation of the civil service and I wouldn't be surprised if it turned out that he is corrupt as well, but then so are most of his peers. Or maybe he's actually a relatively honest man and by organising the Janatar Mancha saved Bangladesh from being destroyed by Messers Hasina and Khaleda Zia. I don't know and it's not relevant.

Why is Sheikh Hasina not campaigning on this issue more vocally? She should be in parliament questioning and harassing the government.

But then Sheikh Hasina doesn't really care now, does she?

Peter, Dhaka

World Cup and load shedding

What is DESA's plan about load shedding during the World Cup matches?

Dorji, Dhaka

Our guardians of morality

The recent effort, thankfully minimised, to censor the airwaves demonstrates the make believe world that our lawmakers live in. In today's real world, a country can no more ban a cable channel or Internet than prohibit the advent of spring or summer. Satellite technology, webcasts, and mirror sites make such stupid efforts obsolete. And they make self-righteous, self-appointed guardians of our morality look the fools they are. Pity.

ES
Missouri, USA