

No Taliban, no Al Qaida in Bangladesh?



Don't deny but dig out

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mr. Shamser Mobin Chowdhury was quick to respond to the New York-based Time magazine report on the arriving of several Al Qaida and Taliban fighters to Bangladesh. He argued that the article is 'fictitious, baseless and imaginative'.

As a *bideshi* having to be in Bangladesh with my family, I feel concerned about the New York Time article. I surely hope that Mr. Shamser Mobin Chowdhury is right about his sayings.

It is not the first magazine and not the first time that such article on the subject has been reported. It seems that the only thing the government of Bangladesh does about is denying it instead of investigating it first.

The Indonesian Government kept on denying the presence of terrorists on its land until last week when the Bali bombing took place. Many innocent people died and this bombing is already affecting, in a negative way, the Indonesian economy. Bangladesh please learn the lesson before it is too late. Investigate the credibility of this article and if necessary protect the few foreigners who live here. Also protect your own country, your own people and your reputation.
G.E.M., Dhaka

A necessary move!

I was a bit surprised by your appreciation, although qualified with a mild caution, of the army deployment (Editorial, "A necessary move", October 19). It almost sounded like an endorsement.

This seems to be a perception picked up by some of your readers. At one level, the level of immediate personal benefit, I am also glad that the army is nabbing criminals without party affiliations, but at another level, I am deeply disturbed by the ethics, legality, and the precedence set here. Your editorial also failed in noting the basic fact: the deployment of the army is an unambiguous admission of the present government's failure to ensure law and order, and in some cases, where minorities and political opponents were presumably targeted, to uphold basic human rights.

Blaming the police is also rather naive when the current lawlessness is a complex product of long years of misgovernance, including those by past military and elected governments, but amplified and encouraged most rampantly and sweepingly during the rule of the present government. The matter is most ironic because the present government came to power on the promise of cleaning things up.

I wish the deployment all success, but I worry: The army will sniff out the bad fruits, and that at best temporarily, but what of the deep roots that have been nurtured and nourished by political and business elite of all governments, and rather lustily by the present government? How can we trust the physician to cure us when he himself is the source of the infection?
K. Ashraf
Honolulu

Army deployment: A welcome decision

This is really a good news for the mass that finally the present government has taken a bold step to restore law and order in our country. I wonder why Sheikh Hasina is questioning about the HR violation. The people who are arrested by the army are criminals and they didn't show any HR respect to others then why should army now show HR to them?

We are with the army. If they really violates HR then we, the people of Bangladesh will judge it, not Sheikh Hasina.
A citizen, Dhaka

The deployment of army to improve the law and order situation is a timely step and should be effective as long as they are given free access to check crimes. We hope the army will play an impartial role and track down the culprits thereby restoring peace and order in the society.

This is a bold step and it would have been prudent had the decision been taken earlier. We wish the army all the success and hope it will

keep up the good job by gaining people's confidence.
Shahriar
Stockholm, Sweden

The government has engaged the army to improve the law and order situation. Begum Zia has really done a commendable job and for that matter she deserves thanks from her peace-loving countrymen. This simply signifies her commitment to restore peace in the country. Available evidence suggests that the army is nabbing terrorists irrespective of their party affiliations. This is a unique example in the history of Bangladesh. All along the ruling party terrorists have been spared from any lawful action. This is the first time that a large number of ruling party terrorists are brought to court.

I request the opposition leader to ask her conscience whether her criticisms do have any rational basis. It appears that she always want trouble in the country so that she can get political mileage. Please be sensitive to the cause of the nation and give up nasty politics. You should also give up your wishful thinking of dethroning the government. Wait for another four years. The peace-loving people will decide whether she should be dethroned or not.

I again congratulate the Prime Minister for her timely, sincere and honest action to improve law and order situation in our beloved country.
Reazul Mahmud
Al-Ain, UAE

After army, what next?

We all have heaved a sigh of relief on news that army has been deployed to bring law and order in Bangladesh. We all welcome this move. Army has ruthlessly gone after the listed criminals. Notably most of them are from the ruling party. It is obvious that the Prime Minister and her cabinet have played the last card. Previous government had also brought the army into the streets of Dhaka to set the traffic jams and road chaos in order. After the army withdrew from the streets the situation went back to square one. One may wonder, what will happen this time.

Would the criminals who have gone underground will be back in business? One can easily assess what grave crisis the nation will be ushered into if the situation goes back to square one. I pray it does not happen but the army will have to go back to barracks. That's the rule in democracy.

Reading reports in different dailies it appears that the army operation has brought confusion inside the ruling party. The opposition parties are also keeping their fingers crossed. We, the silent majority, are curiously watching the situation. What next?
Ziauddin Ahmed

England

It's the result of the complete deterioration of law and order, and the inability and failure of the civil administration headed by politicians, that the government has decided to deploy the armed forces to arrest the breakdown of civilised life of our ordinary civilian people. This step is obviously the last resort, and definitely not the best option. It is of course a shame for all of us that this step had to be taken.

Now since the armed forces are at work, the job should be done properly, without fear or favour. As a matter of fact, the civil administration, specifically the police, did their job with ample fear and lots of favour to the politicians and their cohorts. Already there have been pressure for releasing the criminals that have been rounded up. The army must not brook any nonsense and must not buckle under pressure, and must do the job correctly. They should guard themselves from the temptation of over-doing things or being heavy-handed. This is a human frailty they must guard against.

Already, according to reports, there have been instances of happenings that should not have occurred, like two people dying in custody. This is sad. There should not be any excesses. On our part, we the people must also do our mite by giving them support and cooperation as best as we can for our own self-interest. Of course, the general politicians, the hoodlums and the vested interests will be against this use of the armed forces; but the government should ignore them. If the armed forces can bring back the law and order so deary year, it will be a job well done, and will earn our heartfelt thanks and our beloved country will have a chance to develop and get rid of the poverty and corruption besieging our poor and Godforsaken country.
Sayeed A. Chaudhury
Gulshan, Dhaka

Why make it public?

Crimes and lawlessness are increasing alarmingly in our country. The government has formed a high-powered cabinet committee to recommend ways of fighting crimes. But is this the best way of fighting crimes i.e. by publishing it in the newspapers and broadcasting in the electronic media that the army, BDR and police are going on for a drive to catch the criminals? Do the high-powered committee think that all the key criminals are idiots and they will wait for the army, BDR and police to come and arrest them?

As the concerned citizens, we don't want to know when and how the Army, BDR and Police will crack down on crimes. We only want to live in a crimeless environment. This crackdown on crime should be implemented in a very secret and sudden manner. If you disclose the plan all the criminals will go for hibernation or leave the country. This is the main reason why all the major crackdown plans are a failure.
Engr. A.M.F. Khan
Dhaka

What is the use of police?

I came to know from your esteemed daily that many people have been arrested during the countrywide massive launch to crack down on the criminals and two people have died so far during interrogation by the army. The government's say is that the deployment of army and their authority to arrest the criminals is because of the failure of the police to curb crimes. General people have lost confidence in police long ago. But the fact is that while the army has arrested a large number of people including some listed criminals, the police cannot even find out the criminal hideouts, let alone arrest them. This incident reflects that the police administration has

totally failed to discharge its duty. And more importantly it is a matter of shame that the concerned ministry has lost its authority on the police administration.

The army has also been deployed previously on other purposes to help the police such as to control the traffic or during EID period to prevent the incidents of snatching/hijacking. It has been observed that if the army is deployed to control the traffic, the army can do it meaningfully even in the crowded areas of Dhaka city but the police cannot even control the rickshawpullers properly!

If army is to deploy to control the traffic or to crack down on crimes which are the duty of the police then what is use of having a police force?
Islam
Tangail

Failed government

In the name democracy our so-called past and present democratic governments has proven bad for the people. They are simply taking the advantages of the illiterate general people.

Now seeing the deployment of Army, it is proven that the present government has totally failed to combat criminal activities.
Fuad
Dhaka

"Fuel-less electricity generator"

While these columns of The Daily Star is a place for expressing opinions to readers, there is a better place for expressing opinions on scientific facts and ideas-- a scientific journal. Of course, the opinions are reviewed by experts before publishing.

In my letter published on October 14, I did not have the intention of clarifying established scientific laws and facts. I simply wanted to caution young students of science; they will certainly consult their textbooks and

have no scope to say "I meant this or that". Statements like "if water is used as a fuel,....." and the subsequent discussion, (Islam from Tangail, October 18) should not be published in a responsible newspaper. Similarly, to understand the reasons for the limited efficiency of heat engine, one has to go beyond the discussion made by Mahfuzur Rahman (October 16).

I now have some advice for Mr. Nazmul Huda, who advised the Professors to re-read their text books (October 18). If you are the scientist with the idea of fuel-less electricity generator, then please try to recollect the scientific norms that you might have been taught by your teachers. If you have a new idea or a scientific theory, obtained as a gift from Allah, and a thesis prepared on this, you should also know how to publish it in international journals. If you need financial support to test your theory or invention as you claim, you should also know that our government has a system of financing such innovative research. You should just apply to the Ministry of Science and Technology in the right manner. You should also know how to proceed to get your invention patented. It is not the right way to let somebody publish an advertisement in a daily, appealing to the Prime Minister for financial support. My colleague Professor Rabbani has invited you to put your ideas to scientists of the country in a proper way. I wonder if you have done that.

The Bangladesh Chemical Society is going to hold its annual conference in January 2003, and a large number of scientists from many countries will be attending it. Incidentally, the theme of the conference is related to environment, and you have a golden opportunity of placing your ideas about an environment-friendly electricity generator to an international community of scientists.

May I now request the editor to use some discretion in publishing adver-

Newton's Laws of Motions etc.

This issue of 'fuel-less electricity generator' issue can be resolved, if the Minister of Science and Information Technology Dr. A. Moeen Khan, together with Mr. Karar Mahmudul Hasan, Secretary of the said Ministry, allocates a special fund to the Chairman, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and officially invite Mr. Nazmul Huda to prove his invention, amongst the company of amiable and qualified, scientific government officials, like Dr. C. S. Karim, Dr. Nayyum Chowdhury, Dr. Obaidul Awal and Dr. Kamal Ahmed who are Members and Directors of BAEC and its affiliated research institutes.
Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

The questions Mr. Huda asked the professors are very elementary. For the last few days, there were many who quoted about the impossibility of the perpetual machine. To understand why such machines do not work in practice, one must have some knowledge of physics.
Mazharul Hannan
Physics Teacher, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

"Mahathir's memory"

Mr. Baqui in his letter (October 18) forgets that we Bangladeshis are responsible for the hardships we face when travelling to Malaysia or any economically strong country.

There are thousands of illegal Bangladesh workers in Malaysia. Even our own newspapers report the crimes committed by them. These Bangladeshis have most likely travelled with fake documents and supplied false reasons for their travel. We have had athletes run off during the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. We have used foreign training programs to send illegal immigrants abroad.

I do not blame other countries for the restrictions they have imposed

unhygienic.

In many countries "vending machines" are used to dispense tea and coffee by big companies. The machines are installed at big department stores, railway stations, airports, shopping centres etc. In Bangladesh "coffee" is sold at some department stores/shops at a high price of Tk. 10/- per in very small cup.

Our large tea trading companies like James Finlay, Ispahani, National Tea, HRC Group and Shaw Wallace etc should come forward and start marketing tea through "vending machines" from different points. I am sure this will help people to get a decent cup of tea at a reasonable price of say Tk. 5/- per cup. It is likely many small shopkeepers will be interested to take up tea vending machines for earning extra money. However the monthly rent of the machines should be kept at a minimum level to encourage the operators of these machines.

I. Haq
Dhaka

"Are we really patriotic?"

I realise that without the patriotism that people have today, America would have no "backbone" to stand on. What really bugs me, though, is that it has to take a national disaster to create this patriotism. Before, people who were as patriotic as now were made fun of for being so, but now, it is just the opposite--if you're not patriotic you're penalised.

I have become patriotic to my country not because of what happened, but because we made it through. To me, all this "love for your country" seems fake and that yet again history will repeat itself and that love will fade away...
Nasim
Texas, USA

Reflection on Bangladesh cricket

Is the standard of Bangladesh cricket improving, declining or standstill? This is a question that may be hovering around in the minds of the cricket lovers.

If statistics is taken as yardstick, then one can say there is hardly any improvement. Because Bangladesh scored almost identical run in the just concluded three ODIs against South Africa. Their batting showed sporadic spark, which lasted too short and thereby failed to provide any semblance of international level. Bowling too was inconsistent and therefore secured same marks as batting. The department of fielding (excepting two catches in the first ODI) gets the lowest mark in the scoring sheet.

However, if certain things are addressed then I think it will add to improve the performance. For instance, for maintaining better team composition, at least two left handed batsman, preferably one as an opener, will bring variety and depth in batting. Similarly, one left arm seamer (we have one but we need in regularity) and an orthodox left arm spinner may be useful. When a team has to defend a small score then attacking field setting is the answer. Fielding placement had been erred on many occasions and one can see absence of a second slip in the 3rd ODI cost possibility of early breakthroughs.

Yes, our batsmen do have some prominent technical flaw. Like, while ducking a short delivery the bat is held upward instead of dropping it. This was repeatedly done by most of the batsman. The commentators, while arguing the strategy of Bangladesh captain not to put close in fielders, remarked that experience

Teen party

I found Ms Riki's comment funny. She was talking about deployment of the army and suddenly she showed her concern about teenagers who will go for parties at night.

I am a permanent resident of Gulshan and a student of a foreign university. Last year in front of our house in Gulshan I observed a tragic car crash which claimed the lives of two young boys and one lost his leg forever. In fact, all these 'bright' young men were drunk and coming from a 'party'. These kinds of 'parties' are against our cultural values. Pare

should not permit their child to go out at midnight if he/she is below 18 years old. Police officials should take step against this kind of 'parties', which are against our cultural



Getting wild is not wise and national values.

As a young Bangladeshi I am requesting my fellow Bangladeshi brothers and sisters not to go against your

national, cultural and religious values in sake of 'western pop culture'
Mr. X, Bangladesh

tisements and letters in The Daily Star, in order to maintain its standard?
M.M. Rahman
Professor of Chemistry, DU

I am deeply concerned regarding the subject "Fuel-less electricity generator" as outlined by Mr. Nazmul Huda. Several eminent scientific personalities are locked in this controversy whether to proceed with Mr. Huda's plan for developing this kind of generator!

Most of the scientific principles were established, after much research, experiments and publications. But, there are also *eureka* like Archimedes' principle, and

on Bangladeshis. I blame our own government for not taking steps to improve the situation for Bangladeshis who are truly going abroad to study, on a vacation and to do business.
Rashed Chowdhury
Ons-id-mail

Tea - our national drink

Tea is regarded as our national drink and is very popular. It is refreshing and invigorating. But the cost of a cup of tea at a decent restaurant is at least Tk. 20/- per cup. This is very high indeed. At a roadside shop the price is about Tk.5/- per cup but is

"Operation Clean Heart"

I am a senior citizen who has lived through the regimes of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Sk. Mujibur Rahman, Kh. Mushatque Ahmed, Ziaur Rahman, Abdus Sattar, Hussain Mohd. Ershad, Khaleda Zia, Sk. Hasina and Khaleda Zia (once more) to see the army being called out to restore crumbling law and order situation. I am sad to report that each time such operations have failed. And as may be seen from the list, the consequences have been rather grave as well in many cases.

The army always seems like a magic lamp when the capacity to govern comes to an end. Do people seriously believe that in two weeks the entire criminal system which involves the very people who have ordered the army in will vanish permanently and these people will give up toll collection, drug trading, extortion, etc and set up small general stores because the army took to the streets?

It's sickening to see the puny souls of the middle-class cheer at the army when the first whimper will come out of their mouth at the first rude word they hear from an army man.

Going by history I claim that the situation will not improve because army governance is not a substitute for good governance. If the army was so good, how come the situation never improved under Zia and Ershad's martial law?

Sheikh Hasina is even more comical. Her father tried two brands of the same bread, the army and Rakkhi bahini and he became more unpopular each time they took to the streets. And in the end, a section of the army lost patience with them and we know what happened.

If things improve I will write a letter saying I was wrong. Will all the readers happy at the sight of army now also write in when the army departs but the scene remains the same?
Masih-ul Zubair
Maghbazar, Dhaka

The Army has been on the streets for only a couple of days now. From the newspapers it would appear that they have been quite successful. I do have some issues with this though.

For one, all these people who have been arrested would have to be charged and tried in the court. What reason do we have to think that all the influential ones won't simply just get off on bail or receive lenient sentences? If the politically controlled police can't be trusted to arrest politically protected criminals (interesting point in itself) how can the politically controlled and bullied judiciary have any better luck sentencing these people? Maybe by the time these cases would come to trial the fuss would have died down?

Secondly am I to believe, as reported in your paper, that the PM actually signed off on a list of suspects to be arrested? You mean to tell me that the PM had in her hands a list of criminals and had done nothing about it until now? What did you have to do to get on this list? More importantly what did you have to do to get off this list? Because as implied by the report, there were suspects who were kept off it.

I had several friends complaining about arrogant and abusive army patrols. For proof of that just read the headlines of this week-end papers. The relatives of a suspect were beaten up, two more died under interrogation, how is this any better than our usual police tactics?

What recourse do we have when an officer at a check post behaves badly? Is there a telephone number to report abuses or excesses at? When an officer is being rude, it may not be the best time to ask him his name, rank and serial number. Shouldn't these check posts have an easily visible sign, which could be referred to when making a complaint?

The army more than any other institution has the most to lose by a negative public perception. There must be means for recourse in such cases.
Emile
Dhaka

While at the first glance deploying army to fight criminals seems to be ok (to make its existence *halal*), a second thought will make you ponder; what force can exactly curb crime? How did the army

Still the Oxford of East!

In my recent and very first visit to the Dhaka University all my misconceptions about the place were cleared in totality. I found the students to be much more civilised, friendly and modern compared to the "mixed bunch" of students studying at the various English medium schools and private univer-



sities. I wonder why the media always focus on the negative side of Dhaka University and never the positive aspects!

I must admit that I was a bit weary and ready to duck from bullets before I entered the varsity campus where I was greeted by not only the best of minds but the best behaved students around. Thank you mom for sending me to your former varsity. I stand proud to belong to your breed.
Syed Raiyan Abu Zafar
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

is the name of the game, which Bangladesh is learning. Every team, at the initial stage, went through the same thing and through trial and error they have reached at this level. Forcing to play real serious cricket instead of picnic cricket is what the feat achieved by Bangladesh in the just concluded 3 ODIs. And that gives inspiration to march ahead and to bring down the heavy weights of world cricket into the ground.
Abul Moqsud
Arab Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka

The shoe on the other foot

I am saddened by the TIME report which implied that Bangladesh was a destination for some Taleban force.

Whether it is true, half-true, or false, the fact is that significant harm has been done to our image. This comes right after the Bert Linter article. Amidst this tragedy, what was tragicomic was the Foreign Minister's vehement denials and the understandable charge of the TIME author being biased, unknowledgeable, ungrateful for hospitality etc. That was from just one single article in one single American publication. I wonder if the Americans feel the same way when our intellectuals labour day in and day out, in every publication, to write sanctimonious essays about how America is racist, anti-Muslim, threatening, materialistic, and stupid.
ES, Missouri, USA



Armed magic! investigate or determine who is a criminal? What is the police doing then? I just do not find any way to rationalise this action.

I boast to all my international friends, Bangladesh police is so effective that we never have had any 'unsolved mystery' that even the US has, with its state, local police and FBI etc. If you do not believe me, just show me one case where police failed to 'identify the criminal'. There is the catch, I did not say 'brought to justice', I said 'identify the criminal'. When my friends here stare at me with disbelief, I add the fact that (a) the police always has to release the criminal after a certain phone call, or (b) the police may have a bad apple in the barrel.

The criminals in our country are so transparent that we do not have to be a police to find them out. If we are really after the criminal, we should just stop 'influential' abuse of the police. If we are really after making the army *halal*, we can send them to the border area where BSF is regularly killing or kidnapping innocent villagers amidst the haven of the smugglers.
Aman Haque
Urbana-Champaign, USA