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PHOTO: AFP

Militants are militants...

My attention has been drawn to a news- item under the heading "Islamic Militants no threat" says, our Home Minister Altaf Hossain published in your esteemed daily on 24th August. To me the statement made is rather insensitive and naive giving out wrong signals to the otherwise free and democratic Bangladeshi society. Although our readers would recall that making wrong kind of statements is not new with our venerable Home Minister. Most of our law makers have been making remarks which are arrogant , naive and often depressing. Remember our Shipping Minister proudly announcing that he and he alone was capable of delivering the goods when dead bodies were floating on the rivers.

And now this. My first reaction to his remark was "Why should there be any Militant whether it is Islamic, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist. Militants are militants and should be dealt with severely" I have often wondered why is it that all over the world including the Muslim majority countries talk of Islamic or Muslim militants only and not the Hindu or Christian militants. The reason is simple. Militants also exist elsewhere in the world but then they have not been allowed to cast a negative influence on the socio-economic order of the countries. It is now a tested fact globally that politics and religion or politics of religion do not go hand in hand. No one knows it better than Bangladesh. Where else has Islam been so much used and abused like that in Bangladesh. I for one certainly do not wish to see a repetition of a similar experience.

On the other hand these are difficult times. We do not wish to nurture or encourage any individual or organisation which may have the slightest possibilities of giving rise to situations like the Ball carnage or the recent bombing of the UN Offices in Baghdad. We must realize that no nation today can survive in isolation. The world has become a global village and we do have other matters to deal with than being

complacent and or encourage religious fundamentalists.
Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Safe driving

I feeling very sad after visiting a friend, a doctor from London, lying in a hospital in Dhaka with a broken jaw and a cracked skull. His microbus was hit head on by a truck from the opposite direction between Bogra and Sherpur. Two occupants, including the driver died on the spot but Allah spared him, maybe for the help he rendered to so many people or for the work he undertook in his native village, to be completed. He waited all these years before he retired as GP in UK only to come home and start rebuilding his area.

I know the gradual bend on the northern highway where the accident took place. I too had been driving through this bend and about ten such bends, on similar missions. The authority who maintains these world class roads of the north are acting rather insensitively. These horrifying accidents can easily be averted if they just pay a little attention to its safety and maintain it. It does not cost much to apply common sense and some sincerity. Neither the ministry nor the policy makers do have any time for this.

And no attempts have been made so far to train the drivers properly. They are driving on the high ways without proper training and no instruction or information on the aspects of driving heavy vehicles are available. And there is another point that is very disturbing - the fundamentals of safe driving are rarely appreciated, even by some of the literate car owners.
Rezaur Rahman
Dhaka

RAJUK should return people's 16 crore taka

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipokkhho (RAJUK) made a plan for Dhaka city at a cost of 16 crore taka. Unfortunately most of the buildings of Dhaka city were not and, still, are not being built according to codes. It

is hard to find any building which kept four feet distance from its neighbours (the houses around).

Moreover, many buildings are made where it should not be. Roads in front of most of the markets have turned into a parking place. Water bodies, playgrounds and parks have been occupied by some vested quarters.

I think this practice should be stopped.
Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Department of Pharmacy, The University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka

15 August again

Everybody respects Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. But during the Awami League regime some of their party men exploited his name and for that reason, his name does not evoke universal adoration. Another August 15 has passed without being observed at the national level. But because of a few opportunist politicians, we should not forget the contribution of Bangabandhu.

It was him who stirred our countrymen in freeing our motherland from the Pakistani exploitation and inhuman oppression. He shook up the whole nation and went to the prison many times for our country. However, opinions and ideals vary with different people and parties but his contribution is undeniable. So, his death anniversary on August 15 should be observed with due respect and announced as a national mourning day.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Water crisis

I thank you profusely for offering us such a timely editorial (August 22) that on the one hand, not only expresses Bangladeshi concern, but also exposes to what extent, on water issue, New Delhi can become insensitive towards the legitimate rights of her neighbor.

Indeed, in my opinion, should India go ahead with her plan, it would be tantamount to declaring an informal war against the 140 million people of Bangladesh.

To be precise, this Indian decision not only violates the prevalent

Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of water sharing, but also all the existing norms and principles of international and human rights law, as embodied in the charters of the United Nations.

Therefore, to preserve her national interest, as a sovereign nation, to deter Indian decision, in whatever means necessary, Bangladesh preserves her right to intervene internationally, and it must be made clear through Bangladesh

Ice cream Parlours

City correspondents article on the subject in Daily Star of August 24, refers to the current lot of ice cream outlets. The trend setters however were there as far back as mid nineteen fifties.

Baby ice cream outlet at the northwest corner of the intersection of *Pollasey* Road and *Azimpur* Road was our favourite haunt when we were students of Engineering College in the mid fifties. It started off as an outlet but late set up an open-air ice cream parlour. Today a mosque is situated probably on that very spot. I still remember spending quality 'Adda' time there usually after receiving our scholarship payments.

A few years later Igloo opened up its ice cream parlour right opposite the Secretariat at *Tophkhona* Road. I had been there a few times, but the busy road and traffic did not seemed to me as an interesting location. As an ice cream aficionado and with diabetes I had no option but to give up my favourite sweet! Sadly I miss my favourite sweets: ice cream, chocolates, cakes and pastries. I still remember a wonderful weekend in Amsterdam in early 70s where I look nothing but these sweets for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks!

Could some reader give a few pointers to sugar free ice cream and confectionery outlets if any?
SA Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka



media that it is India, which ultimately bears the responsibility for the consequences. That is to say, for Bangladeshis, patience has run out, as time and again, while dealing with Dhaka, it appears that rationality and respect to international law, are what New Delhi government lack.

Shibly Azad
Columbia University, NYC, USA

Cars, foreign tours, ACs

Rejaul Karim Byron reports in The Daily Star (DS August 23) that our General Economic Division of the Planning Commission has finalised the project for implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Cars, foreign tours and ACs (CFA) included in the budgeted amount of Tk 77.38 crore. Mr. Byron also reports that the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) is critical of the (luxurious) items and concluded that these are simply wastage of the loan received from the donors.

The PERC reportedly noted that "there are already four similar projects being implemented by the Planning Commission" and "undertaking several technical projects for the same purpose creates unwanted duplication and wastage of (loan) public fund". While the Planning Commission has huge number of cars and ACs."

We fail to understand the contention and the logic of the PERC because we strongly believe that in order to do a job even for an hour we are to exert ourselves so much in the warm weather that we need AC rooms while in the office and an AC car when we travel to see the condition of the poor. Critics fail to understand that the work of the PRSP is not an ordinary job for it entails project preparation for about 50 per cent of the population in a cool atmosphere, cozy office and transport and necessary frequent international tours.

Otherwise no work of any worth will be achieved for sure. We the readers of the Daily Star appreciate the unquestionable need for brand new ACs, comfortable cars, and frequent tours to distant cities, in business class if not first class, for the success of this most needed project.
Syed Waliullah
Dhaka

established Brahminism in India and Muslims were both migrants to India.

Since the Aryans established Brahminism, they have never been spoken as outsiders while the Muslims have never been accepted as insiders even when the objective of both the Aryans and the Muslims was to settle in India.

I am referring to the above to comment on Mr. Kuldeep Nayyar's article on Two Nation Theory in your paper on August 11 and letters in this column on it.

Articles such as the one by Mr. Nayyar gives the wrong impression about the Muslims and somewhere between the lines, there always seems to be this underlying impression that the two nation theory is a bad one and Muslims are to blame for this. In my mind, however, there is a very simple interpretation to this theory. The British usurped power not from the Hindus but the Muslims. They concluded that the Hindus were unhappy with the Muslim rule and by playing on this sentiment they ruled India. We all are aware of divide and rule policy. And the British government gave all the benefits like education, jobs, etc. deliberately to the Hindus. When the Hindus had enough of British patronage and learnt their tricks, they demanded independence. The British then indulged with the Muslims to fight the move of the Hindus under the Congress and in 1905 they introduced some pro-Muslim acts. These acts actually paved the ground for the two-nation theory. The Muslims, for their very survival, had but to act upon it and create Pakistan.

I sympathize with Mr. Nayyar for lamenting against the B.J.P. However, my own reading of history compels me to believe that those who think like Mr. Nayyar are small in number. The two-nation theory will obliterate from the minds of people in South Asia only when the Hindus get their anti-Muslim sentiment out of their system. Fat chance of that for what has happened in Gujarat and the recent utterances of Mr. Vajpai in favour of Hindu extremism only proves that the communal character of South Asia has more to do with the Hindus and much less with the Muslims and the Hindus do not seem to be making even a faint move in the direction for any possible reconciliation.
Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Dr. Stiglitz, LDCs and Cancun

Dr. Joseph E Stiglitz currently paid a four-day visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of BIISS (Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies). His statements about the LDCs (Least Developed Countries) portray the true picture of their present condition. His advice to the LDCs to create unity among themselves is very timely for facing the emerging challenge. LDCs should take a common position to demand in the fifth ministerial meeting the duty and quota free access to the market of the developed world. All the ministers of 14 member countries of WTO will meet in Cancun, Mexico from 10 to 14 September. Ministers of 49 LDCs are going to place their unanimous demand through "Dhaka Declaration". The 16-point Dhaka Declaration includes 13 demands. The significant demands are: quota and duty free access in the market of developed countries, assuring free mobility of the unskilled and semi skilled labourers of LDCs to the developed countries, increasing technical assistance, decreasing agricultural subsidy of the developed countries, changing anti-dumping policy

etc.

Dr. Stiglitz said the success of the LDCs in WTO negotiation in Cancun would depend on their unity and negotiating capabilities.

Stiglitz , a former chief economist and Vice President of World Bank (WB) won Noble Prize in 2001. Stiglitz suggested LDCs to follow the strategy "you give up something, I give up something, on the equal value, should be based on the issue of the tariff and non tariff negotiation."

Top five rich countries of the world are involved in 82 per cent of export. On the other, hand 49 LDCs contribute only 0.4 per cent of world export. The European Union gives subsidy of \$2 per day for each cow whereas a citizen of LDC hardly earns \$ 1 a day. When the LDCs cannot ensure food for all citizens, USA is giving subsidy of \$ 4 billion to 25 thousand farmers.

The Economist criticised the developed countries for maintaining double standard to have their interest served. The renowned journal said the LDCs should be aware of the common tactics of rich nations of creating division

among the LDCs. It supported the mobility of labourer as the mobility of capital.

The second trade ministers meeting held in Dhaka from May 31 to June 2, 2003, concluded with Dhaka Declaration. The demand in the Dhaka Declaration has similarity with the suggestion made by Stiglitz. He criticized the US agri subsidy which would be doubled in the next 10 years. He suggested the LDCs to protest this policy together so that the developed countries change their subsidy policy.

He identified 'corruption' as a major enemy deterring development of LDCs. He also suggested Bangladesh not to sell the natural gas. If we export it now we have to import after 15 or 20 years. So to ensure the successful negotiation with developed countries LDCs should unite and elect efficient and experienced person to negotiate at WTO to maximise advantage for the LDCs.

Ummee Saila
Dhaka

School of Business (IUB)

Runaway DCC roads and corruption

In the last thirty-two years of its existence, everything wrong, corrupt and evil has come to be accepted as normal behaviours in this country. Look around and see, we hardly question the wealth accumulated by the ministers and MPs. We do not question how a businessman get so rich that he can buy 65 lakh taka worth flashy car for his teenager son or for himself. Did you question how some top govt officials pay US\$ 20,000 to 30,000 a year for the studies of their under graduate children overseas? You know the answer as good as I do, where the money come from.

Isn't it incredible that DCC spent Tk 210 Crore in last 3 years to pay even false bills? You have to appreciate the ingenuity and boldness of the DCC Mayors and officials, past and present, in masterminding such fine surgical operations.

Khondker habib
South Bishil, Mirpur, Dhaka

Israel and the USA are sailing on the same boat

It is no longer a secret. The intellectuals and the politically conscious people all over the world know it well by now that the September 11 attacks on Twin Towers and Pentagon, USA were the outcome of frustration bate and anger of the freedom fighters against the US government for blindly supporting Israel which has been occupying the land of the Palestinians and carrying out atrocities, oppression on the Palestinians for over last fifty years.

Don't we under line the simple reason as to why the UN Headquarters in Baghdad has been blown off and many people have been killed and wounded? It is not for the amity of the Iraqi people for the Americans which the US President proudly claimed before invading and occupying Iraq on the pretext of eliminating alleged (Actually non-existent

weapons of mass destruction, toppling President Saddam Hossain from power and establishing democracy in Iraq. But to show, demonstrate and to prove to the world the apathy, enmity and the hatred of the Iraqi people against the US occupation and colonialism of Iraq.

It appears that the US President George Bush is following in the foot steps of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The US President George Bush is blaming the Iraqi freedom fighters for creating impediments and obstacles in the way of American colonialisation of Iraq and terming them as terrorists.

Earlier the USA called the former USSR as an evil empire. After the demise of the USSR the people thought peace, economic emancipation, human rights, freedom and democracy would prevail in the world. But the policy of double standard, treachery and dictorial role of the USA have plunged the world into darkness. What a fun the USA now called Iraq-North Korea and Iran an axis of evil, occupies Afghanistan and Iraq supplying Israel with heavy arms and ammunition to oppress and suppress the Palestinians and threatening Syria and Iraq of grave consequences if they the Iraqis and the Palestinians.

There would not be any peace on this earth unless and until Israel withdraws from occupied Palestine and the USA withdraws from the occupied Iraq.

The US beating of drums for road map of Palestine statehood and establishment of democracy in Iraq would remain impracticable and unworkable unless and until Israel and the USA withdraw their from Israel and Iraq respectively failing which there would be more massacre, suicide bomb attack and bloodshed all over the world.

O H Kabir
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Preserve tradition of pottery from extinction

From the very beginning of our Banglee culture, pottery has represented our identity and life-style. The artisans' works include making clay-pots, earthen ware, toys of clay and different idols of gods and goddesses have been the tradition of our culture. But it is now regrettable that in recent times, especially in the last decade potters have been in distress. Because of these unavoidable factors like clay, lack of capital, unsatisfactory selling of clay pots, lack of fuel wood for burning raw pots, their plight is in peril.

Earthenware and fashionable things of clay are being rapidly supplanted by aluminum, plastic, steel and other alternative materials. Even toys for children are being made with wood and cloth. Besides, so cold prestigious people never tend to buy earthenware thinking their image and status. But it is admitted everywhere that cooking pot of clay is more conducive to health



than pot of silver or other materials. Cooking rice of clay-pots help to cure gastric problem. And pitchers keep water cool in hot days. Another cause for not selling clayware is its brittleness. In spite of being more cheaper than other aluminum or plastic made pots, clay-pots are not being sold available. Thus potters have to survive with a negligible earning.

To observe the present condition of potters I visited Vaagandanga village in Faridpur, my home district on spot. A potter named Paras Chandra Pal (in picture) told with rage, after liberation war many potter families had left the country away. The reason behind their leaving home allegedly are precarious future

politically molestation & feeling of dire insecurity. He also informed that to bring money as a loan for capital from banks, they have to pay bribe to bank officials. NGOs often help them by providing loan with low interest. Potters are also concerned at the rising price of fuel wood and clay. Above all, their hard labour to pottery is not undeniable at all. Many of them grudgingly rush to adopt another occupations leaving pottery gradually.

Hence, government and connoisseur of pottery both should come forward to alleviate their poverty and evaluate their artistic work precisely. The commoner can also play a role merely considering the question of precisely. The commoner can also play a role merely considering the question of preservation of our Banglee tradition.
Palash Podder
Dept. of Sociology, DU

This is not the way to freedom



PHOTO: AFP

I am outraged by the recent suicide bombings by the Muslims in Baghdad, Bali, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Karachi, Delhi, New York and couple of cities in Saudi Arabia. It is about time that we realise, if we, the Muslims, want to be heard and understood then bombing the innocents will not take us anywhere.

No matter how much so-called injustice is being done by the West to the Muslims, we need to resolve that peacefully. It is saddening to see that a UN office is being bombed and an important high UN official from Brazil is killed along with lot of Iraqi citizens.

Whether we like it or not, these suicide bombers in most cases are brainwashed by

fanatic religious leaders. The war on Iraq was not justified, but that does not justify the killings of the innocents by the al Qaeda. No matter what, suicide bombings on innocents has to stop. This is not only alienating the Muslims from the European countries, who opposed the war, but also undermining our religion. Suicide bombings will not provide freedom to Palestine.

If we are looking for examples, let's look at Gandhi, Mandela or Martin Luther King. Two of them gave their lives and the other spent almost half of his life in jail.

M. Hassan
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