

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Israel and Palestine

In modern times no revolution can succeed unless it has built-in principles of compassion, rights to self-expression and commitment to non-violence. This is a tall order, more so because most revolutions have a built-in theory of violence. It is that theory that ensures their self-destruction.

Recently, the Israeli cabinet decided to assassinate top Palestinian leaders. The assassination of Palestinian spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin Ahmed is the outcome of the decision. This killing sparked condemnation all over the world. Accordingly, both the ruling alliance and opposition political parties of Bangladesh strongly condemned the killing. Following the statement of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan we also "oppose any extra-judicial killing of civilians". As a follower of a non-violent way of thinking, I want an independent Palestine with Al-Sharif Al-Quds as its capital.

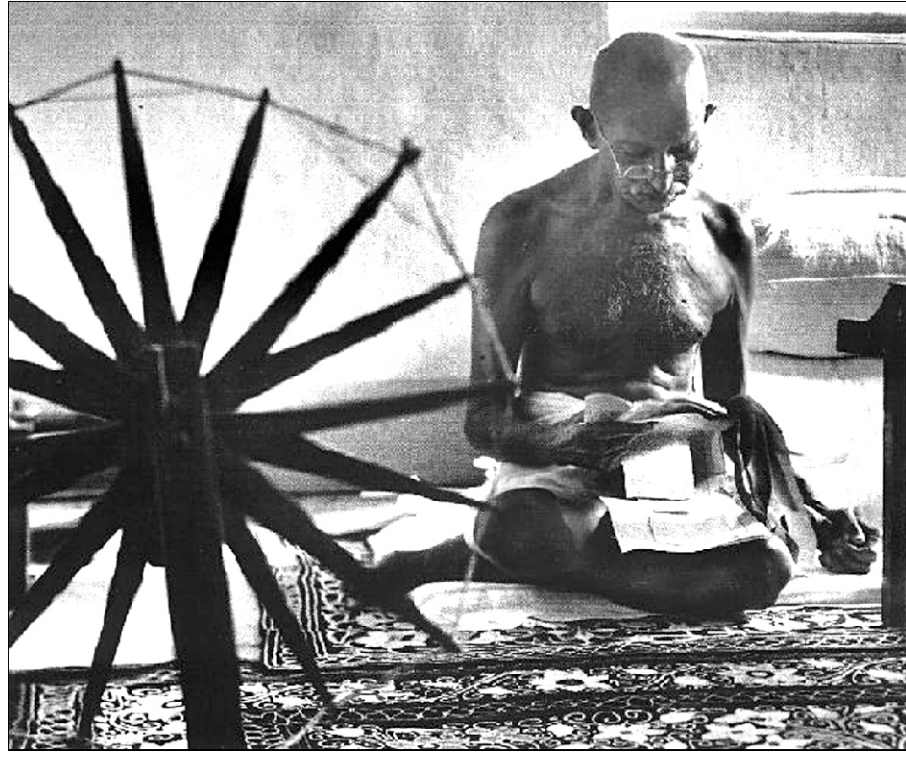
Israel held Hamas responsible for suicide attacks inside its territory. The latest in the series of suicide attacks occurred during the middle of March 2004. The Hamas attackers executed a double suicide bombing at an Israeli seaport. According to Israel, the killing of Yassin was revenge killing. Now, after the assassination of Yassin, the Hamas threatens to kill the Israeli prime minister. Israel fears revenge attacks. Ismail Hanieh, a top Yassin aide, said the Hamas would continue carrying out attacks on Israel. Hanieh said, "Sheikh Yassin's death is not going to harm or affect the movement. It's going to give us encouragement to go ahead with our programme to achieve our goal".

One of the relevant arguments that

emerge in this context is "revenge attack". Who is attacking first? Who is taking revenge? Is it Hamas who attacks first by propagating the ideas to crush Israel? Or, is it Israel that is taking revenge by killing innocent Palestinians? Why some big powers had supported the creation of the Jewish state? Can the religious texts of Jews, Christianity and Islam help us to understand the root causes of intolerance in the birthplace of these holy religions? The explanations and interpretations of Israelis

are far from "real". The extremists inside Israel and Palestine use the language of violence, which might not be the path of solution. Both the parties should follow the path of non-violence. Palestine and Israel should recognise each other. They must follow the ideology of pluralism and the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

Dr. Arun Kumar Goswami
Bangabandhu University College,
Gopalganj



The champion of peace

Political culture

Bangladesh is a democratic state. In a democratic state every citizen may participate in politics. This is his right. The political parties maintain a particular party ideology. The members of the respective political parties try to uphold their party ideology. But now-a-days this legacy is not abided by. Very often they change their party. Not only this, there are some people who always like to stay in the politics of the ruling party by any means to satisfy their evil motives. As soon as a new government takes over, these people go into hiding. After some time they come out, make contact with some influential members of the ruling party, carefully study the political situation and very shrewdly, tactfully, and skillfully cast the bait before the ruling party for their enrolment in it. Curiously enough, these self-seekers are ceremonially garlanded in the open stage by the leaders of the ruling party and they are allowed to join the party with a view to increasing the number of its supporters. This sort of practice has almost become a culture in our politics. Thus, the political leaders patronise and harbour the criminals and *mastans* for party and personal interests. This is our experience. But unfortunately, the political leaders do not try to understand that "The leopard cannot change its spots". On getting the licence, these people start afresh their evil activities with a new visor as members of the ruling party.

Some influential members of

the ruling party become their godfathers and help them in carrying out their evil activities detrimental to society and the party itself. These self-seekers start shouting at the top of their voice rending the air "Romiz Bhai (imaginary name of the head of the ruling party) you go ahead, we are with you. *Amar neta, tomar neta* (my leader, your leader); *amar bhai, tomar bhai* (My brother, your brother) *ramiz bhai, ramiz bhai*. But only a few days back these people chanted slogans like "Rahim Bhai (imaginary name of the head of the previous ruling party) you go ahead. We are with you." But as ill luck would have it, Ramiz Bhai and Rahim Bhai never try to understand the motives of these self-seekers and the renegades, though the common people do not like this sort of foul play in politics. The political leaders do not try to study the psychology of the people. The common people expect that if the political leaders do not allow these self-seekers to join their parties, then a serene atmosphere may prevail in the political arena.

Md. Hefazuddin
Rtd. Joint Secretary, Banasree
Project, East Rampura, Dhaka

Fun magazine

Once in a brief interview to a Bengali fun-magazine, the editor was asked what his future plan then was. He said that his plan was to bring out a fun magazine from the DS, like the one he was talking to.

We took his pledge seriously (though people aren't always serious about such interviews) and have been waiting for its publication. We're pretty satisfied with The Rising Star. But still we would like to have a magazine for fun only, which will hopefully be pushing us to maniacal laughter!

Ahmad Raiyan
Khilgaon Govt. High School, Dhaka

April 30

When Abdul Jalil, the secretary general of the Awami League, declared that the last day of the government would be 30th April, people did not pay much attention to it. Our politicians have a tradition of speaking things not carrying much sense. However, when he was found repeating his prophecy and the opposition leader was seen endorsing it, it was not limited to a mere political stunt. Unfortunately, the political history of our country is full of unexpected events and some people fear that the 30 April ultimatum may have links with some unprecedented things.

Although democracy has its own method of changing a government, a movement for ousting the government (even if it is a democratically elected one) is not rare in the country. However, giving a deadline for it and sticking to it so confidently is something new.

The question that is hovering in the minds of the countrymen is how the Awami League will achieve its target of ousting the government within only one month? I

have tried to analyse some solution scenarios in the following paragraphs.

The most democratic means of ousting the government will be through an impeachment move in parliament against the ruling coalition. However, it does not seem that the Awami League has any such plan. The ruling coalition has an overwhelming majority in parliament and such a move will yield no results.

The opposition will probably call for lengthy hartals and arrange more violent agitation. However, it is very unlikely that the government will resign or will be overthrown by a few days of hartals or a few militant rallies. The Awami League observed such programmes during 1992-96 from a stronger position as the Jamaat was with them at that time, but failed to make the government resign before completion of its term. This time the ruling party seems to be more mature in tackling violent agitation. Thus this method is unlikely to produce the desired results for the opposition.

The food corners of the Botanical Garden have already lost their reputation. City dwellers hardly go there.

The law enforcers can ensure the security of the visitors. Most importantly, the authorities should leave no stone unturned in order to attract more visitors.

Md. Alamgir Hossain
Department of Psychology, University of Dhaka

Politics of ultimatum

The major opposition Awami League (AL) has set an ultimatum for the elected alliance government to resign, or it will oust the government by this date. The decision was made in an AL executive committee meeting recently.

AL General Secretary Mr. Abdul Jalil told the nation and the international media including the BBC that only Allah could help the

bringing out the leaders and activists from the deep frustration that they were in as a result of the 2001 election debacle. He gave the ultimatum, acted as a fortune-teller and the media helped to establish its seriousness.

It may be true as it has yielded some success in generating some hope of toppling the government among AL activists and attracting the political 'extras' to join hands with the Awami League in the 'oust government' movement. Mysteriously, the 'Third Force' initiative of former president B Chowdhury coincided with the announcement of the deadline. Is there anything to be surmised from it?

I have a highly optimistic colleague who thinks that nothing will happen. After a relatively warmer month of April, on the first day of May, Abdul Jalil will respond to the questions of journalists by saying, "Did I say April 2004?"

Imtiaz Ahmed, One-mail

Bank rates

What has the finance minister done? Recently, he made it mandatory for banks to reduce the interest rates on deposits. Some bank-officers were even fined for offering higher rates! But, the interest rates on loans, given out by the banks, are dependent on so-called "bank-customer relationship" which is a vague term. So, nobody on the bankers' side is liable to be reprimanded for charging exorbitantly on financing. Now, the banks are having a heyday by paying interest at lesser rates (using the Bangladesh Bank circular as an excuse) and charging interest on escalating levels. A perfect example of this is a leading foreign bank in Bangladesh -- the highest rate (the average rate will, of course, be even lower) they have on offer on deposits is 7%, whereas they put up banners for consumer-loan scheme at 14.5%!

CNR, Chittagong

Botanical Garden

The Botanical Garden is one of the most visited recreation centres in Dhaka city. Various kinds of trees, hillocks, jungles and lakes have made the place very attractive for people from all walks of life. It is frustrating that some unrestrained young men are disturbing the visitors. Hawkers carry cold drinks here. Visitors, especially young ones, buy these drinks. Now the problem is, if anyone buys cold drinks, the sellers charge more than double the original price. If anyone refuses, the hawkers insult them. The authorities are aware of these incidents but have not taken any action so far. How long this anarchy will go on?

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present government to survive after April 30.

Perhaps the AL logic is as follows: the people of Bangladesh have nothing to do since they were very wrong in voting for the BNP on October 1, 2002 general elections. As the mass people went astray, they are to digest what the AL prescribes and does for the nation. The party working for the liberation of the nation has got every right to halt progress by calling hartals. The above logic of the AL might work if there was no party capable of running the country at all. But there are some parties including the BNP to do that. This capability of the party cannot be digested, let alone be assimilated by the AL.

Most of the people would agree that the alliance running the country is not doing well. But the AL was not doing this job better anyway! So the people are not ready to pull down the government yet. The claim of the AL of having more support for them cannot and need not be tested just now.

Therefore, if the AL cannot wait for capturing the throne any longer, the party would be treated as greedy for power and not very eager to serve the nation.

MAS Molla, BAAS, Dhaka

IBA admission and transparency

This is in reply to Ms. Tanya Khan's letter with the same title published in The Daily Star on March 24, 2004. Though I will refrain, more out of a sense of courtesy than an apprehension of inappropriateness, from mentioning any idioms pertaining to the taste of grapes I am disheartened at the tone and the implications of the letter.

It is not surprising that people/organisations abroad are constantly calling us corrupt. We ourselves are tossing around similar accusations carelessly with some degree of malice, some degree of resentment. An apt emulation of the clichéd political stunt of labelling an election 'rigged' every time a loss is handed to a political party of Bangladesh, Ms. Khan's hints at bribery and absence of transparency is uncalled for and may even be insinuated as being a consequence of the bitterness of failure.

With very relaxed requirements for appearing at the initial written test, IBA provides an opportunity to scores of people to become successful managers of the future. With the same view, exorbitantly high, world-standard GMAT scores have not been made mandatory for applicants.

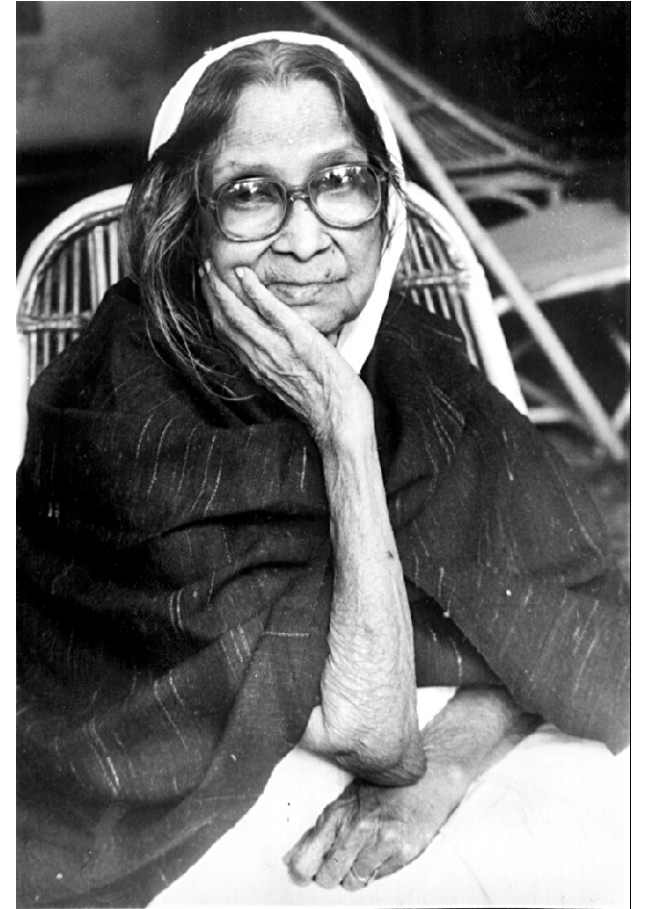
Almost a staggering 40 -- 50% of selected candidates from the written exams are eliminated in the viva-voce stage. This combination of objective and subjective evaluation ensures the best possible intake for the IBA.

Ms. Khan, since you are involved in selection, you will have some degree of understanding and experience of short-listing, selection and recruiting processes. Those who are screened out by you in the process do they come up and accuse your system of being corrupt? Do they express doubt in your capabilities?

Or is it vice versa?

For the benefit of the readers, I want to mention that, in a similar situation a few years back, the daughter of the (then) Director of IBA was eliminated in the viva stage and made to complete her Bachelors degree from a leading private university of the country. No special favours were offered.

History in jeopardy



A poet politicised

The government has a plan to alter the name of *Sufia Kamal Public Library*. To recognise the contribution of Begum *Sufia Kamal*, a frontline poet of Bangladesh, the previous Awami League government named the public library after her. But the abrupt plan of the government has perplexed all of us. If the name of the library is changed, history will be distorted. Begum *Sufia Kamal* has a great contribution in our Bangla literature. She was not a political figure, but a poet and writer. We should not politicise the legendary figures of the soil. In our country, naming and renaming are related with regime change. We should immortalise the luminaries through presentation of authentic history. If the public institutions are named after the prominent persons of the country, the posterity will be benefited immensely.

I implore the authorities to undo the decision to perpetuate the bright image of our dear motherland.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, Dhaka University

It is the strict and unyielding adherence to such principles that culminate in the rich intake and richer yet output of the Institute. Hence the seal of excellence by all concerned quarters.

Every year, scores of highly successful professionals, managers and executives from the best of multinational, trans-national and local companies amongst others, try out for the country's best MBA programme at IBA. Unfortunately, not all of them make it.

Yet IBA is fortunate that not all unsuccessful applicants cry 'treason' every year. Some of them try again in the years to come. Why?

Because there is no alternative, no substitute to quality.

Adnan, Gulshan, Dhaka

About the SSC exams

*** This year we have witnessed smooth and fair holding of SSC examinations in and outside

Dhaka. In every board, the government and the education minister took bold steps to ensure fair holding of the examinations. The previous government had totally failed in this area. So I must admire the government for this reform in education system, which is timely indeed. But at the same time, I want to say that education is becoming very tough for the coming generation. It is becoming more and more complicated. Now-a-days, a student of 15 years of age will have to gather knowledge in almost 11 subjects and students of lower classes such as class 5/6 have to read more than 10 books at least!! What I want to say is that they have ample time to gather knowledge on various subjects gradually. But at the moment, from the very beginning of their lives, they'll have to read so many books which are quite unnecessary. In the developed countries, students don't need to read so many books like our students.

Anis, Sabujbagh, Dhaka

Slaying of Hamas chief

The cold blooded and premeditated slaying of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (Hamas chief Killed in Israel Air strike, The Daily Star, March 23, 2004) shows the depravity and moral bankruptcy of the Israeli politicians. Equally disgusting is the celebratory mood shown by Zionists in being able to kill a blind, deaf and paraplegic elderly man confined to his wheelchair since the age of 12. The frail appearance of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin failed to conceal the magnitude of his enormous courage and charisma. Despite previous assassination attempts, he refused to go into hiding or even alter his daily routine of praying five times a day at the neighbourhood mosque, making him an easy target for his Zionist murderers. Nevertheless, such valour can only come from a man who has whole heartily embraced the teachings of religion. To Palestinians, Sheikh Yassin symbolised their struggle against Israelis usurping their land. To Muslims elsewhere, he was the personification of uncompromising honesty, fortitude, and a dedicated follower of Islam. What troubles me is the apathy shown in the Muslim world. If one, for instance, is mildly critical of Israel - rightly or wrongly - all Jews are up in arms like a pack of wolves. For example, they successfully pressured the Liberal Democratic Party in

Britain to sack Jenny Tonge, the spokeswoman for International Development, from her position after she merely expressed her opinion that suicide bombers in the occupied territories acted out of a form of political hopelessness. Conversely, when Muslims are massacred in various parts of the world, our leaders carry on as if it is life as usual. After Sheikh Yassin's massacre, no Israeli embassies were shut down, no peace initiatives were pulled off the table, nor were there any penalties prescribed for Sharon's government.

No wonder that the Zionists and their supporters have embarked on a campaign to disparage our religion. They do not worry about a fallout, because there will be none.

This time, however, we must not let the Zionists get away with murder. It is time for us to band together and declare the slaughter of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as an affront, not to a person or a country, but to Muslims all over the world.

Nipun Rahman
Washington, USA

Break the fangs

Again the Zionists have stunned the whole world by their planned killing of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Sharon -- the butcher of Sabra and Shatila -- led his team of murderers against this high profile personality in the Middle Eastern politics. As

such, Sharon behaved like a damn villain and leader of a murderous gang. After the devastation, his security chief Shaol Mofaj gloated like a professional killer. Shame for the world as it cannot control a thug and ruffian like Sharon, who himself has committed this unbelievable crime of killing a lame and wheelchair old man, who is the symbol of protestation of an oppressed people. Shame for the USA, as it supplied the Apache helicopters to the Zionist regime from which the missiles hit Ahmed Yassin. Now the time has come for the USA to stop abetting its so-called ally in the Middle East. The whole world should boycott the Zionists for their state-sponsored terrorism and try Sharon and his fellow thugs in the International Criminal Court so that nobody dares to do something like that in future.

Farhana
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

The plight of Muslims

The spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was killed by an Israeli helicopter strike. The Israelis rejoiced by commenting on how "he had it coming" and how Yassin was behind the deaths of "thousands" of Israelis. These are rather ironic remarks coming from people whose hands are stained with

the blood of thousands of Palestinians.

For us, Muslims, this is another great blow. Muslims are dying every day in the Middle East, yet the Arab countries squabble amongst themselves and other Islamic countries are being torn apart by civil war and similar problems. These events were all devised by the Americans and Israelis, and have sadly been successful in keeping us divided and weak.

Al Islam
Sunbeams Senior School

Cycle of blood

Sk. Ahmed Yassin hailed as a patriot by the Palestinians lies in a pool of blood along with seven of his closest companions. The missile hit its target with devastating and deadly accuracy unleashing a reign of terror. It was a political gamble and a calculated risk taken by the Sharon government in opening what the analysts are saying "GATES OF HELL". This extreme provocative and illegal act on the part of Sharon government will only escalate the process of armed resistance and according to some analysts unite the al-Qaeda network. And in the process more innocent lives will be lost.

Sk. Ahmed Yassin was a charismatic leader. He was a refugee and grew up in Gaza.

He was crippled at a young age and was nearly blind. He was the spiritual leader of Hamas and commanded popu-



lar respect also in the Muslim world. What is the political strategy of Israel? This unspeakable act will make Arafat stronger. Whatever maybe the reason, Israel should have followed the political process which they did way back in 1989 when they put Sk.

Yassin on trial. Now they have deviated from democratic norms and cannot claim themselves to be the only model of democracy in the Middle East.

Ms. Rice has appealed for a state of calm. It is both laughable and hypocritical considering the legacy of Bush. The

hard-line policy of both Sharon and Bush had exposed their own citizens to danger and death.

A new force of reconciliation, promoting new concept and strategy of peace can only be possible if the citizens of the world forgetting caste, creed

and religion rise up to the tyranny of a few who are sucking away the life and blood of those who provide them the right to rule.

Syeda Akhtar
Gulshan 1, Dhaka