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# Adventure or misadventure?

My attention is drawn to the news item about the Everest expedition by the first ever Bangladeshi team. We, Bangladeshis, do have a special weakness for this 'first ever' cliché. This time we are after the Everest.

Mountaineering is not a child's play. It needs years of training to make one physically and mentally fit for the adventure. Even the amateurs undergo a long period of training in the specially built training centres, which simulate the cliffs and the likes before going for the real thing. Moreover, the snow covered Everest will always be a formidable adversary. To the best of my knowledge, no facility for training exists in Bangladesh. It would be very unfortunate if someone was watching 'vertical limit' or 'MI-II' and thought, hey, I am going to be the first ever Bangladeshi mountaineer and get to the Everest in the shortest possible time. It will be more unfortunate if it is more of a media and sponsorship stunt. It seems the team has done some homework. But has it gone through the rigorous and ruthless training sessions required for such an expedition?

We are seeing enough mishaps and tragedies. We don't want to see any more.

Saif  
Dhaka

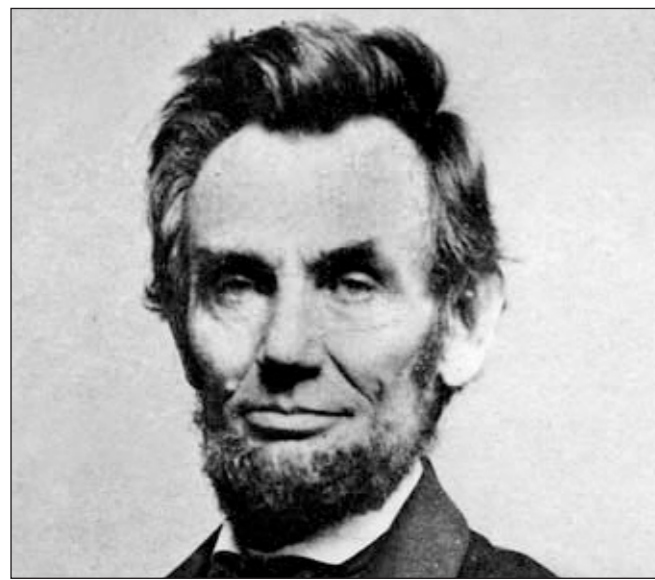
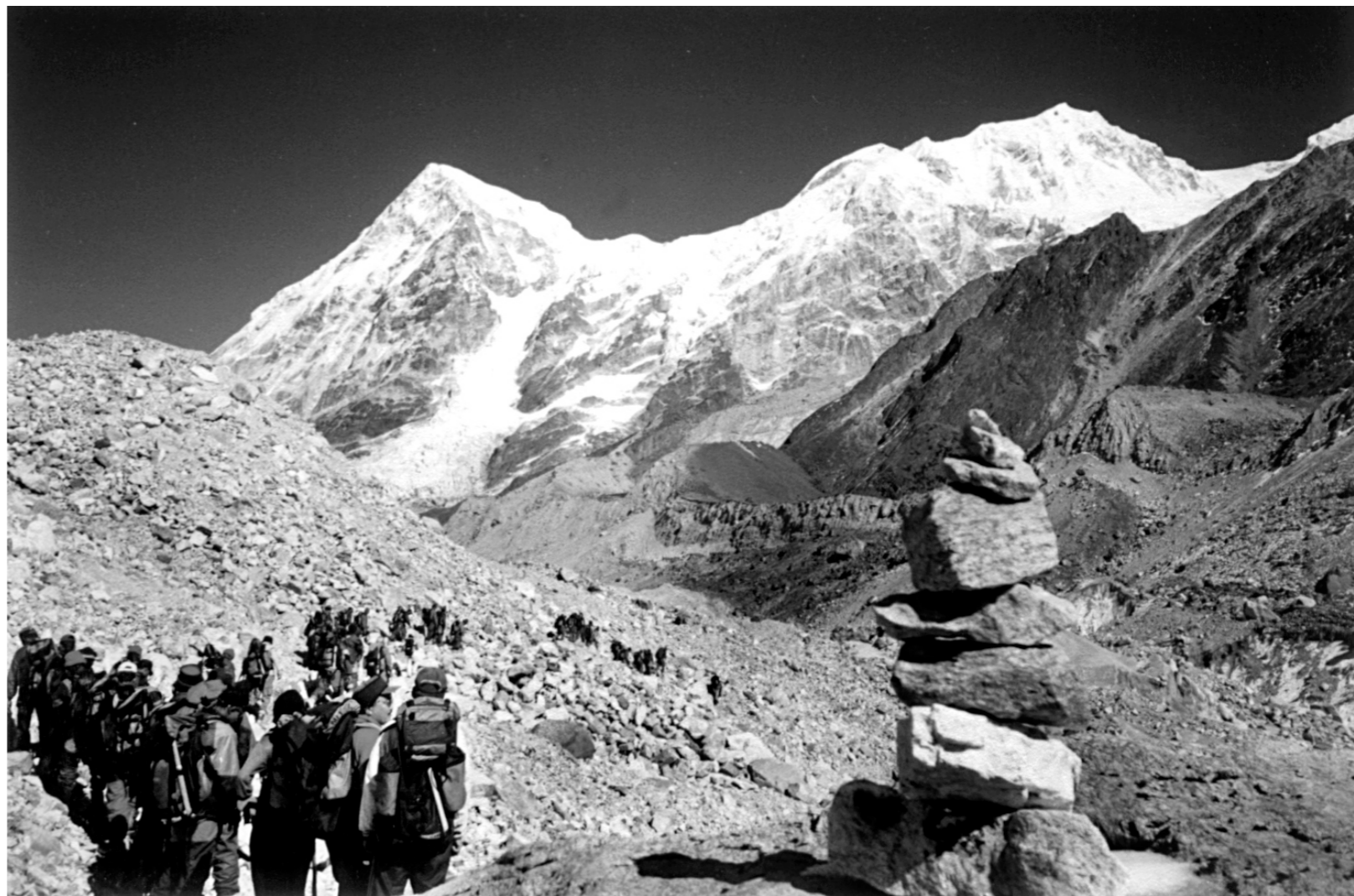


PHOTO: INTERNET

## Definition of democracy

In our country, the definition by Abraham Lincoln of democracy has a slightly distorted meaning. Instead of "Democracy is of the people, by the people and for the people", it should be "of the powerful, by the powerful and for the powerful."

If you have power you have the licence to do everything to maintain your position. Set a deadline for the fall of the government, harass people, arrest them without having a warrant, last but not the least, call a hartal. Do the ruling and the opposition party ever think what the public want? Have they ever listened to the commoners for whom they are in power? Public opinion only matters when it comes to vote. Otherwise, public opinion is "trash" to the parties. Do any of our parties have the time to think what the public want? They are busy thinking how to be in power or how to get it back. Is it proper to define our country as democratic when public opinion has no value?

Our political parties should take out time to listen to what the general public have to say before it's too late. Our chosen parties should listen, instead of expressing their own views.

Humaira Malik  
Economics Department, BRAC University

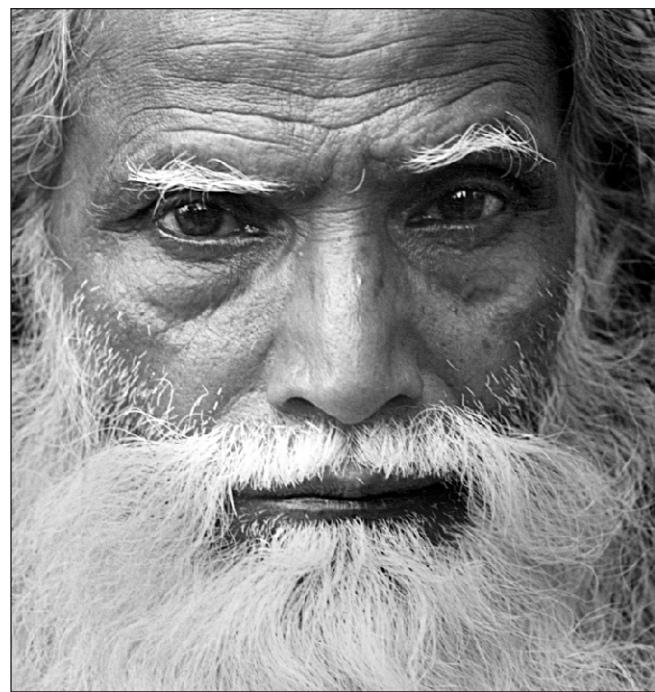


PHOTO: STEVE ZAKIR HOSSAIN

## Elderly men and women

Old people often find themselves in a difficult situation. Particularly, the middle class people who spent most of their earnings, time and energy for their children get into serious trouble. In our country, it is often seen that old parents of middle or lower middle class families, specifically who are dependent on their children financially, become the victims of negligence. Their grown up sons and daughters become too engrossed in life and work and spare little time and attention for their old parents.

Many old people live in utter misery. Although the old people who are rich can live apart without depending on their offspring, they too suffer from a sense of insecurity owing to lack of company. The condition of childless old people is even worse. That's why, the government should build up old homes where distressed old people can seek not only shelter but also get sufficient economic support. And wealthy people must also come forward to help the old.

Rubab Abdullah  
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

## New US ploy

It does not take much imagination to understand why all of a sudden the US administration has decided to allow Baathist generals into the New Iraqi army. To many, it may look like a virtue of showing flexibility, but in fact the aim is to contain the growing Shiite influence and resistance in an attempt to create a balance of power.

When Hoshiyar Zebari, the Iraqi Foreign Minister and a veteran Kurdish leader, said that the lack of consistency in the policy of the US will be seen by Iraqis as a weakness, he was either misinformed or had no idea how the political chess game is played.

The end losers will be Iraqis, of course.

Syeda Akhtar (RN)  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Studying abroad

English is the most effective international language for people all over the world. Even the developing countries now realise the importance of studying English as a language. Now-a-days it is a common event in developing countries that a lot of people move to developed countries like Australia, Canada, the UK or the US for higher studies. That happens because the developing countries have less to offer to the students. In these countries, session jam is a regular phenomenon and a university student cannot complete her/his education in time. So, the students do not want to waste their valuable time. In the developed countries, no one is familiar with the word 'session jam', because in those countries students can easily complete their education within a stipulated period of time.

In the less developed countries, students also face lots of other problems. Sometimes they do not get enough books for their courses. The students very often face library problem. The same thing is true about access to computer. The poor countries cannot provide a computer for every student.

Accommodation is another issue. In the poor countries, the students who come from far very often face problems with food and shelter, as there are a limited number of seats in hostels of the universities.

The universities in the developed world have hostels attached to the campus for the students coming from far and near. In these countries, students can also choose any subject for their post-graduation, but in the developing countries subject selection depends on the marks obtained in the secondary and higher secondary examinations.

English as an international language has a great impact on employment as well. Without knowing English nobody can really move forward. For higher education and a good job knowing English well enough is a very important factor. So, for prosperity and success people want to study English—the international language.

Hasna Hasan  
Lecturer, Department of English,  
Leading University, Dhaka

## Tk one lakh for a death!

The garment factory owners should remember that all accidents are not unexpected. When you, the garment factory owners, wilfully avoid measures for which most of the accidents and deaths occurred, you cannot simply shift your responsibility on the 'unexpected' circumstances. When you keep the doors locked, keep inadequate or no escape passage for emergency exit, do not properly maintain electrical circuits and wiring, install

unauthorised additional loads on the electrical lines, then accidents are not unexpected but inevitable, for which you, the owners, are squarely responsible. When you take an order, you calculate everything, all costs and involvement, timing and arrangements for getting your raw materials, clearing from ports through customs, fabricating, packing and finally shipment, all events accurately on time and money scales.

You are so meticulous in your business affairs and you don't let these things slip into fate or 'unexpected-ness', but only in the case of workers, at whose sweat and tears you mint money, you seem to be forgetting all your management skills, because you can escape with paying merely Tk 1 lakh for each death! Shabash.

Muhammad Ali  
On e-mail

## Strange and ominous signs

In a strange country, police supports jungle rule. DS reports that a police officer ordered police stations to support the outlaws (I prefer to call the JMJB activists as outlaws, as they are operating in violation of the law of the land) wherever they go to catch outlaws. I vehemently protest this irresponsible statement. But this is perhaps not unusual in a country where Jahanara Imam and other intellectuals, who are esteemed not only for their knowledge and wisdom but also for their unflinching faith in the rule of law, were implicated in a government sponsored seditious case for staging a mock-trial of the known killers of 1971.

So called Bangla Bhai, the notorious outlaw, has established a jungle rule over a vast area, and according to reports in various national news media, including DS, is running a parallel state, within the sovereign state of Bangladesh. It is strange that our home ministry encourages such activities, when the JMJB openly declares that their goal is to implement their hidden agenda. The JMJB leader further said, "Police do not protect us, we do not need their help." All these words are not only contradictory to the police statement, but also have serious implications. Today, these outlaws can declare that they do not need police help, tomorrow they will challenge police or even other agencies to keep up their operations.

I wonder, how the government, that does not even tolerate a peaceful no confidence human chain, can tolerate such a parallel state within itself. Does the party in power understand that if it continues to support these unlawful activities, sooner or later broad masses of people will consider this support an act against the nation to destroy the country that was established after so much of sacrifice?

It seems the defeated evil forces of 1971 are out to fulfil their lost dream. I notice an ominous signal in the events.

MA, Dhaka

## Emergence of 'Bangla Bhai'

I am appalled by the emergence of the Taliban style group leader called Bangla Bhai. And the directive of the home ministry to support his actions is condemnable. Bangladeshis have always been moderate and secular, but this government is creating another image of Bangladesh. We do not want such a state where women are forced to wear burkha and men are forced to grow a beard.

We are moderate Muslims and we want to get rid of the individuals

who thrive in the name of Islam but are actually demeaning its ideals. We want to go back to our peaceful ways.

Jamshyd Osman, On e-mail

## Politicians' concern

If anyone needed any proof about the real motives of some of our politicians, it came on May 5, with the headline "AL to join JS next month to save membership" (DS). All that time we have been requesting Hasina to go and do her politics in parliament, she didn't listen. Instead, the AL spent hell of a lot of time creating panic with imaginary deadlines. Now, however, facing the expiry date of JS membership, the AL chief is not only ready herself, but has also instructed her party lawmakers to join parliament.

When it comes to their benefits, their wages, their rewards; our politicians will do anything and everything. And when it comes to the people of this poor country, they rather burn our buses, houses, shut down our businesses and mass-arrest our innocent citizens for no reason.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the real colour of these people. And believe me, these people should NOT be getting the sort of rewards and benefits this poor country is providing them; especially when they don't do the work for which they get paid. Now, some readers might like to have a shot at me, saying that I am being too harsh on the AL. That is also another of our major problems. We always measure things on the AL-BNP scale. Please come out of the box, people. It is not about the AL and the BNP, it is about you, your children, your country. You need to understand that Bangladesh could and should be able to function as a country without the BNP and the AL. But presently it can't. A country's purpose is NOT to serve any political party, but a political party's purpose is to serve a country. You need to get your priorities right. We have somehow

allowed them to hold this country hostage to their wicked policies and demands. That should not happen. Bangladesh comes first; the AL and the BNP come second. Any individual, any party, any organisation, any business, or absolutely anything that advances its own interests at the expense of "your country" must be severely dealt with.

To be able to go to work without participating in any hartal; to go to a shop and come home safely without being unlawfully arrested by police (in your own country?), or shot dead by thugs; is not too much to ask for, is it? After all, you spilled blood for this country.

Azad Miah  
Oldham, UK

## Converting the Mongoloids

Very recently, the authorities in China ordered a crackdown on public worshipping. The decision was taken due to a massive growth of underground Christian worship places. Millions of Chinese have converted to Christianity. Since officially China does not have a state religion and most of the Chinese have very little concept about organised religion, they are an easy target for Christian missionaries. In fact, a survey showed that a large number of poor people in China are converting not because they are convinced about the message of Trinity, but because of the glamour and the promise of a better life in the West.

A similar situation exists in Korea and Japan. After Japan's defeat in WW-II, a large number of Japanese were forced to convert to Christianity by Americans. Many Koreans were forced to do the same during and after the Korean War.

On top of all this, the self-proclaimed crusader, the fanatic preacher Franklin Graham recently declared, "We need to convert the Mongoloid people by any means, so that they can declare war on Islam in

the East." A recent article published in a Catholic newspaper showed that thousands of missionaries are working in Korea alone. These converted people are then sending thousands of missionaries to other countries. A recent BBC article said Korean Christians are planning to send 12,000 missionaries to all over Asia, funded by Americans. They are now targeting Muslim countries in the Middle East and South-east Asia. The news is indeed alarming since after 9/11, these fanatics have added vicious anti-Muslim propaganda as part of their message, which was until recently quite subtle.

K Wasimuddin  
Chicago, USA

## Donor agencies and Bangladesh

As it appears from the news published in the local dailies, the donor agencies often advise and interfere in all of our country's affairs, including political affairs, as if they were advisers to the government. They want to make us feel that they are our saviours, without whose advice and assistance we cannot survive.

But the fact is that the donor agencies contributed only five per cent to our GDP in 2001-02 fiscal, which was further reduced to three per cent in 2002-03 fiscal, as learnt from the dialogue organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) recently in Dhaka. Accordingly, if we undertake some austerity measures, we can manage ourselves without any external assistance from the said donors a point reflected in the comments made by our finance minister recently.

Despite having learnt the fact, we are enduring donors' hegemony in our state affairs. Has the attitude developed from prolonged colonial rule, or is it something else?

Fakhrul Alam  
Siddeshwari, Dhaka

## No smoking, no

## Spitting in public

It is heartening to note that Tobacco (smoking in public) Ban is in the offing. Through this column, may I suggest that spitting in public be banned too. It is less damaging than smoking, but is extremely unpleasant. The health ministry may kindly look into this.

Abari  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Commentary on Jali's prediction

I appreciate the editor's commentary on 3rd, but believe that the situation demands even more criticism.

You have rightly put emphasis on a 'strong opposition'. I can't imagine what the ruling class would do if those noises are not around. At the same time, I would apprehend the destruction and nuisance that could be committed by the opposition, should there be no strong enforcement and vigilance. We cannot forget what happened in 1995. Perhaps this time around, had the government not fortified its defence, the whole episode could have ended with a different outcome.

Now, we should not limit ourselves to producing interesting reading materials only, but lessons should be noted and pragmatic proposals put forward.

This should not restrict the media to making daily analogies of things only, but it should educate people and help them understand the impairment in existing political institutions. Change of the system should be the main goal instead of focusing on Mr X or Mr Y. A greater thrust with positive focus towards the right direction can only alter the current hopeless situation.

It is my hope that the media will move towards a broader role to change the fundamentals of all evils that persist in our society today.

MM Haque, Jeddah, KSA

## Killing of MP

Unknown assailants killed AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master while he was presiding over a party programme in Tongi (BBC, 7 May). Mr. Ahsanullah was a popular and dedicated labour leader. His killing speaks volumes for the deterioration of law and order in the country. People, irrespective of political affiliation, are being killed every day.

Actions taken by the government to curb terrorism, killings and other anti-social activities have not produced any satisfactory results.

Malik Akram Hossain  
Hong Kong

## Terrorism in North-west

I thank your newspaper for taking the courageous step to unveil the shameful atrocities perpetrated by the miscreant named "Bangla Bhai" in the North-western region. Apparently, this character is confident enough to operate his illegal network under the nose of the law enforcement agencies. The question is how? How can a man from nowhere with no previous political and/or administrative experience try to undertake such responsibilities to clean up the outlawed "Sarbahara Party"? Who gave them the authority?

The MP from Bagmara-Mohanpur is said to be totally disgusted with the government's green light to these atrocities. Apparently, the state minister for home is not very worried about the sufferings of the people in Bagmara and surrounding areas. How long will the people suffer?

TS, On e-mail

## US marines

I want to thank Syeda Akhtar (RN) of Gulshan, Dhaka, (Those marines, 7-5-2004) for enlightening me with the facts about the US marines. From all those Hollywood movies, I had a quiet different views about the marines. In almost all of the movies, the US troops are portrayed as angels and their opponents are the most barbaric and sadistic force in the world. In 'Wind Talkers' the producer has exceeded all limits. Here it is shown that Japanese troops are trying to kill their own people and the great Americans are trying to save them, risking their own lives!

But the making of a marine is truly depicted in the Stanley Kubrick movie 'Full Metal Jacket'. Here the harsh ways of making a mindless killing machine is shown. At one stage of the harrowing training session, a disgruntled recruit killed his own trainer. Now leave the movies and come to the real world.

The Serbian troops reportedly raped their own family members after the war, as the misdeeds in the war made them sadistic psychos. I wonder what we will see when the US troops return home.

Joy, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP