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Bangla Bhai rules!



PHOTO: STAR

Bangla Bhai, chief of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, is dogmatically carrying out a campaign to wipe out their political rivals. We are astounded to know that the man is being supported by the law enforcers since he began operating. This is no doubt unconstitutional. The targeted outlaws are also trying to counter attack, which eventually will lead to a free-for-all brawl in the northern region.

Moreover, it is evident that Bangla Bhai wants to cash in on religious sentiments. It is not clear why the man has not been arrested so far, despite directives from the very top.

Nasir Uddin Roney
Dept of Anthropology, University Of Chittagong

I am distressed, shocked, perplexed by the news of the outrageous activities of Bangla Bhai.

No matter who these people are that they are killing, no matter what their political affiliations are, no matter how evil these people may be, Bangla Bhai has no right whatsoever to take the law in his own hands, not to speak of the brutal killing of these so called outlaws.

The government needs to come forward with some answers: are they governing at all? When a political party comes to power it takes the responsibility of the welfare of every single citizen, good or bad. The party in power is responsible for the law and order situation. Criminals recently murdered an elected member of parliament, Bangla Bhai and his men are enforcing their own laws. Killings, murders, kidnappings, corruption have become the norm of the day. Where is the government? It can't get away by putting the

blame on the Awami League or any other party or foreign agents. They are in charge, they have to answer to these heinous crimes; at the end of the day they have to own the success of failure. They asked people to vote for them, to trust them. People have done so. They rejected the incumbent party to bring them back to power with the hope that they learnt their lessons from the first five-year rule. They voted for the BNP with the hope that it would deliver what it promised. Have they forgotten those promises?

Don't play foul with people's patience. Today or tomorrow they will wake up and will eradicate politics of deception, corruption, lies and impotency. Still there is time. BNP, take charge!

Shahid H Khandker
Toronto, Canada

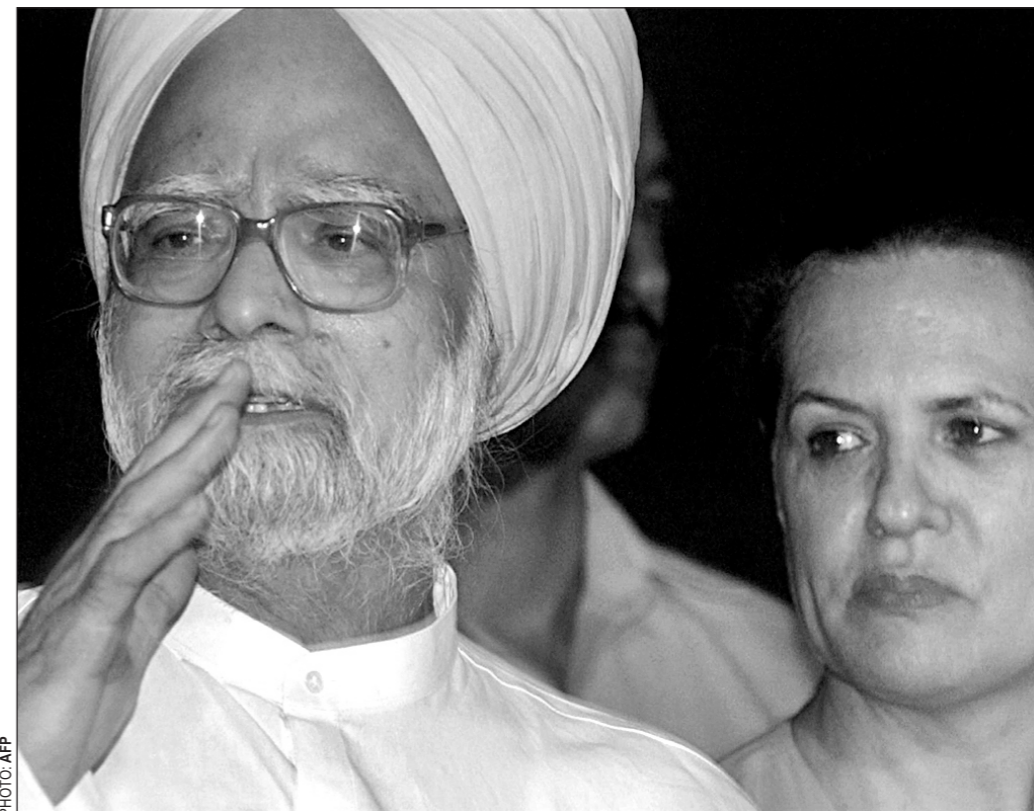


PHOTO: AFP

Sonia creates history

The way Ms. Sonia Gandhi handled the political situation during the last few days, following her historic victory, sadly reminds us of what the political leaders in Bangladesh (and frankly, in many other countries) lack: nobility and grace.

Mohsin Siddique
Washington DC, USA

After the dramatic election results in India, everyone thought that Sonia Gandhi would be the next prime minister.

But last Tuesday she declined the post. I think it was the right decision for her. By taking the decision she has created an example in politics. For this decision, the BJP is now totally defeated, because most of the BJP members were going too far on the issue of Sonia's origin. Sonia's decision will not only increase her acceptability to the Indian people as a true leader, but also to the whole world.

Rokonuzzaman Sohel
On e-mail

We are not only perplexed but also appalled at Sonia's decision to jettison premiership. Typically, by discarding the party proposal she proved that she is politically urbane and pragmatic. Actually, she is the victim of BJP's xenophobia. Shrusma Swaraj, Uma Bharti, Narendra Modi and co have lowered the prestige of Indian democracy. They maligned Sonia Gandhi scurrilously. It is ambiguous to me why Mr. Vajpayee keeps mum while the rank and file of the BJP oppose Sonia as PM of India, which is undemocratic. Sonia has been the citizen of India since 1983, and she has every right to be prime minister as declared by the Supreme

Court of India.

It is evident that BJP members are politically narrow minded and parochial. They should keep in mind that though they are advanced in IT and space technology, they are not politically civilised. Narendra Modi, the butcher of Gujarat, cannot call Sonia a Jersey cow and Rahul a hybrid calf. Shrusma Swaraj cannot threaten to shave her head, if Sonia were to become prime minister. They lack political decorum and decency.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, DU

Sonia Gandhi created history twice within the span of a mere week, first by leading the Congress to victory in the general election against all odds; and second, by declining the post of prime minister something unthinkable in the politics of this region. The return on such moral investment is invisible and invincible.

The good will thus created is charged, and the dividend would be seen in the near future, when she bounces back, undisputed and unopposed. She beat Vajpayee, the outgoing PM, in his own game—he was good enough to give up like a true gentleman with humility.

These examples would set precedents in the Saarc region in changing political cultures. The masses had been under duress these decades for third class leadership, barring some rare exceptions.

The least that Dhaka could do is to imitate some of the virtues.

A Mawaz
Dhaka

Mobile phones for government officials

A recent decision by the government to equip senior officials with mobile phones has created a sort of muffled curiosity among the people. The question necessarily surfaces—who among the civil servants actually need an official mobile phone, and why? If it is only for the purpose of maintaining an administrative hot line amongst the top few, we have no comments, but if it is intended for improving the quality of public service, we applaud, with reservations. A telephone saves time and paper work, it causes both the desk-based and field service dispensers to promptly respond to public need, it is the swiftest medium to receive and send directions in emergency. Conceptually, therefore, a mobile link should go a long way in providing better service to the people with speed and efficiency, but, sadly though, our long experience and the age-old rust and creaks in our administration cog-wheel constrain us to be sceptical of its success.

Telephones in offices are more ornamental pieces than articles of utility. They also signify status—rows of highbred colourful sets make one gawk at their possessor and hold breath in sheer admiration. Nowadays, even the junior supervisors have telephones. To be true, the purpose for which official telephones are approved is seldom carried out. You hardly get a reply from the telephone or electronic complaint desks, you do not know whom to contact in the WASA bill section or the passport office, you usually get no reply from railway reservation or enquiry counters and when you are fortunate with a yell from the other end, you get nowhere because of the respondent's total ignorance. You get all sort of deluding reply from the airlines offices, banks, post offices, municipalities and even hospitals. If you have to talk to a senior member of the office hierarchy, receive the first rebuff from his personal staff. He will refuse to throw the line on one plea or the other and if you happen to succeed finally, the cold and pointless mumbles of the big boss will soon make you vow not to talk to his likes in future. Fact is, even in the 21st century we are decades away from developing a telephone culture in offices that would definitely reduce dependence on irritating correspondence and file work much to the relief of the common people. Here, the office phone is essentially a facility meant for private purpose.

Mobile phones are no cure for the existing pattern of things. But efforts to introduce modern devices have to continue.

Keeping in view the public interest and needs, it is very necessary to select the right officials who are to be provided with mobile sets.

Mohammed Nawazish
Retired civil servant
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

World's largest democracy

Polls were held in India a few days ago. We, the Bangladeshis, kept an eye on the political developments and were eager to know who would be the new prime minister of India. Though the media had projected a BJP victory, the Congress was the surprise winner. We have observed that Mr. Vajpayee quit his position immediately after the results were announced. He did not talk about rigging.

But that is not the situation here in Bangladesh. Our politicians should learn from the Indian polls.

Abdul Malek
DU, Dhaka

Indian election

Despite the BJP's recent debacle in the election, Prime Minister AB Vajpayee stoically accepted the results and resigned within hours of the defeat. Indian is an example of

democracy. It is robust, alive and kicking. Once again, the Indians rejected the religion mongers and showed their decent, tolerant and pluralistic mindset.

No claims of vote rigging or other allegations are raised by the defeated party, rather they simply accepted the results. If it were in Bangladesh, the oft-repeated allegations of rigging would be given vent to by the defeated party, to denigrate even the most fair election. They maintain the self-concocted adage "if we win, election is fair otherwise not".

Md Aminul Islam
SS Hall, DU

Shun communalism

The seeds of communalism sown by the BJP government have already spoiled harmony between Hindus and Muslims in India.

Could the new PM of India overcome this dilemma? In this context,

resolution of all other outstanding problems between the two communities.

We don't want to see degradation of humanity due to the controversial policy of politics.

Umme Muslims
Consultant, World Bank Project
Azampur Estate, Dhaka

Politics, Pakistan style

Enjoyed Mr. Naqvi's brilliant analysis of the political history of Pakistan (DS May 15). It reinforces my perception formed during the four years of posting in Rawalpindi as a civil servant (before '71), and a couple of decades as an "East Pakistani".

In the feudal society dominated by zamindars and the army, the middle class could not develop and prosper in Pakistan. The latter acts as a balancing catalyst in politics, but there still appears (from the days of the Raj) an illusion for something

out much interference from political blizzards.

The apocalyptic change in India is a good time to mend fences by the two countries (the huge defence budgets eat up the major share of the development funds supposed to be used for poverty alleviation). The very definition of 'neighbour' is perverted by official stands.

It is also time for Bangladeshi political leaders to review their rigid stands in the changing political modes of the decade. Make Saarc a fortress against foreign machinations, as this rich region can easily stand on its own feet, and meet any challenger face to face.

A Husnain
Dhaka

Tarnished DU image

'DU student held for mugging' (18.5.2004, DS) and 'Two students held on charge of abduction' (19.5.2004, DS) - these two new items on successive days really

out of them. Unfortunately, some of these would be nobles are active participants of antisocial activities. In most cases they are linked to some political party. We have talked a lot about student politics. But what about teacher politics? How will a student respect a teacher when he is a lackey of a particular party?

Study should be the first and foremost responsibility of a student. And imparting proper education should be the focus of the teacher. The 'lost glory' of DU cannot be salvaged in a fortnight. A concerted approach by the teachers and the students is surely the key.

Saif
Dhaka

A 'faux pas'

In his regular column published in the DS of 17 May, Brig. Gen. M. Abdul Hafiz (ret.) made an autopsy of the recent abortive moves of the Awami League. It has been captioned 'The AL's faux pas'. The phrase 'faux pas' is derived from French, which means false step, and the second word is spelt with a single 's', not double.

Sabrina Sharmin
On e-mail

EU expansion

The Europeans have once again proved their grandeur by extending their organisation, EU to help one another. Europe has always been a continent of elevated culture, colourful and eventful history—specially ancient classic Greek and Roman civilisations, and later English and French upliftment. Renaissance that took place in Italy and later spread all over Europe radically changed the world. The people of the world learnt the lessons of life then. And we still have something to learn from them.

The EU expansion obviously declares their unity to fight economic debacles, to resist the internal feuds etc. The EU first came out with the objective of economic development. They have got an inter-changeable currency. The Europeans are becoming one—obliterating the boundaries.

The nations of other continents should follow this and write a charter of unity. The organisations such as Saarc and the Arab League should feel committed by this. Saarc has, in recent years, been ineffective due mainly to Indo-Pak conflicts. The countries in the Saarc region are very poor. Saarc should eliminate the disputes and expand its network. The Arab countries must rethink their relationship among themselves.

One question may arise why there should be regional organisations whereas there is already an international organisation, the UNO,

Drug menace

I am the father of a drug addict boy. My son was very good as a student (managed to get all A in his O-level) before he got addicted to Phensidyl. I have already admitted my son twice to a rehab centre, but it seems he gets into addiction again after a certain period of time. That is why I am planning to migrate to Canada by closing all my businesses here. I am a renowned businessman in society and I have never felt so helpless in my life. By the grace of Allah, I can avail the opportunity to leave this country but I feel really sad whenever I think that there are so many parents in the country who have no such option.

I know there are many reasons behind drug addiction, but in case of my son the only problem is that he gets Phensidyl very easily in Dhaka. I do not see any hope that the government would take strict action against it.

I know that under the banner of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, you people are working very hard to make Dhaka a drug free city. I earnestly request you to continue your operations. It will be great if you can identify the different places where this Phensidyl trading is going on. You can directly go there in good numbers and face the drug dealers. I know what I am suggesting may require going against the law, but what else we can do when the lawmakers are the main law-breakers in the country?

Please take action, please help guardians like us who are on the verge of committing suicide or leaving this country!

A helpless citizen, Bangladesh



the conflict-resolution of Hazrat Muhammad (SM) can be an example to mitigate this type of difficulties. If the new PM initiates such a meeting between two (Hindu and Muslim) religious leaders and the politicians of different parties, they might find some solution to the Babri mosque problem. They may work out some formula for peaceful

like the House of Lords!

The reason why the war in 1971 was lost is not so difficult for political analysts to fathom (although Jinnah could not conjecture the later state of affairs). Today General Musharraf has a difficult assignment before him to bring into effect a smooth transitory mechanism for Pakistan to settle down to a normal life with-

out me. As a student of a neighbouring university, I have a good many numbers of friends in DU and I still have a kind of fascination and respect for it.

Not everyone get the ticket of the highest seat of education. These are supposed to be the best products of the nation. A future Dr. Md. Shahidullah is supposed to come

Where is the end to prisoner abuse?

The world has already witnessed the horrendous prisoner-abuse pictures of American soldiers in Abu Gharib prison. A female American soldier (Specialist Sabrina Harman), smiling and giving a thumbs-up as she poses over the body of an Iraqi detainee, is the latest shocking picture to emerge from the prisoner abuse scandal. In a second picture, Specialist Charles Graner is also seen smiling with a raised thumb as he leans over the same corpse. The enquiry reports confirmed that the detainee embraced death with countless bruises all over his body, mercilessly tortured by the prison personnel. Furthermore, the smile on the prison guards' face reflects the savage and barbaric mindset of the so-called 'custodians of prisoners' who did not leave even a dead body in peace.

Are we surprised? The answer is negative. The attitude and methods of atrocities have crossed all human limits. This is not an isolated incident in 'Abu Gharib'; rather it is part of systematic abuses carried out in all prisons/detention centres under US led forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba and the like. Iraq is the oldest civilisation in the Middle East but its long drawn tradition and culture is once again the prey to the cruel hawks. The methods of atrocities in Iraq are manifold; to exemplify, on 19 May 2004, US helicopter gun-ships killed around 40 persons near Iraq-Syria border when innocent people were celebrating the wedding in a traditional way. After experiencing these terrible incidents against humanity, whom do we call the 'evil-doers'? Today, undoubtedly 'Abu Gharib' stands as the testimony to imperial hegemony. The court martial of accused soldiers under exclusively coalition control is only 'eye-wash' to the whole world. While the Iraqis are abused/tortured/killed in coalition custody; the world would also like to see that the accused US soldiers are tried with participation of Iraqis in open courts.

Such transparency would only mark the start of a protracted 'damage-control' measure.

Mahbub, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

believed to have been fitted with an artificial leg. Yet, as viewers of the video tape are aware, none of the men seem to have any artificial limbs.

The Russian analyst continues to point out that the victim is exceptionally still throughout the video clip and does not resist his execution, even whilst he is being decapitated; additionally, his audible screams seem to be out of sync with the beheading. What's more astounding is the gruesome but clinical observation that during the decapitation, very little blood is ejected from the neck artery. The head is held high, but no blood is seen dripping from it. One surgeon and forensic expert has stated that cutting the neck, a vital part of the blood circulatory system, would result in at least a foot long geyser of blood dispersed in the surrounding environment. There is no evidence of any of that in the video clip.

What is clear is that the coalition authorities have used this video footage as evidence of the savagery of the enemy, and as an example of the nature of the people the coalition is fighting. It cannot be ignored that this claim comes at a time when the coalition is facing unprecedented criticism for its own barbarism in the treatment of captured civilians. However, the lack of any independent analysis of the video in the western media has meant that its questionable content has been presented as absolute fact, and has had the effect of numbing some of the furor against the actions of coalition atrocities in Iraq at least within the western audiences.

Imaad Al-Islam
On e-mail

Indian Congress

The oldest Indian party, the National Congress, has come to power by defeating the Hindu Nationalist BJP. Hats off to the voters. The BJP, RSS and Gujarat's Narendra Modi government were responsible for the genocide which shook the foundation of Indian secularism.

My question is, will the Congress-led coalition be able to bring Narendra Modi to justice for the Gujarat carnage?

Md. Zillur Rahaman
Gandaria, Dhaka