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**Of guided missiles and misguided army**

"A few bad apples" from a poorly trained military police unit with their isolated 'not so human' actions are bringing bad name to America, the country regarded as the apex of civilised development and the beacon of freedom and democracy - this is the message Mr. Bush is desperately trying to convey to the rest of the world including the Arab world.

The presence of military dogs, prolonged isolation, sleep and sensory deprivation; forced public

inflicting 'freedom' to a despot run Iraq, which floats on a sea of oil has always been questioned by how much blood for a gallon of oil? The present situation suggests that indeed "Freedom is the new F-word" as pointed out by Beth Lisick.

From My Lai in Vietnam to the jails in Iraq, the 'methods' of treating the 'suspected enemies' have been the same. A "few bad apples" theory will again save the large chunk of the army and two or three scapegoats will bear the burnt of court marshal. Uncle Sam will free another oil rich or strategically important state from a barbaric

office but not our responsibility to serve the nation."

On the other hand, in Bangladesh we see a different culture. The leaders of the two major political parties are not concerned about the welfare of the people. Most politicians want to maintain their position and are least worried about the welfare of people. The major parties are busy trying to undermine each other. As a result, a real democracy has not been practised in our country.

So, I would like to suggest to our politicians that they follow the examples of Vajpayee to practise

labours, low income group people determined the outcome of the elections. The achievements of the NDA government in the IT, software, auto and health sectors have been spectacular. Chandrababu Naidu is an idol not only in India but also in the whole world for his tremendous achievement in IT, software sector. Hyderabad has been turned into one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in India. He lost, and lost miserably in spite of such an achievement. Now all these achievements in IT, software, automobiles, and huge foreign reserves etc. etc. are definitely glamorous, but mainly beneficial, high beneficial, to a limited number of people, hardly 2 million (around 4% of the total population) in Andhra. "INDIA SHINING" is hardly for 5-6% of the total population of India. What about the rest?

Mr. Nayar is trying to project that Muslim opposition was a factor behind the NDA's defeat. This is absolutely wrong. In this election, willingly or unwillingly, or out of fear, a large number of Muslims (minimum 25%) cast their votes in favour of the NDA. So Muslim voters definitely were not a factor in NDA's defeat. Some quarters are trying to project that this election is a victory for secularism against the NDA's Hindu nationalism. Absolutely wrong! This election has clearly indicated that basic issues like drinking water, job, proper price for agricultural products, electricity, road communication, education etc. for the common people were ignored by the NDA government. Indians in general now don't want to listen to secularism; they don't want to understand Hindu nationalism; they don't want to understand "INDIA SHINING" or such big propaganda. They want food, shelter, housing, drinking water and education.

The humiliating defeat, particularly of Chandrababu Naidu, really reflects the sharp reaction of the common people to the so-called glamorous success of the NDA.

**MA Shahjahan**  
Purana Pallan, Dhaka

**The new Indian PM**

My attention was drawn to DS editorial (May 24) "Manmohan in straddle". While I agree with most of the points made in the editorial, I guess the positive spin given could be rather premature, at least in the context of Bangladesh-India relations. The rich attributes given to Dr. Singh are well deserved. His credentials are unimpeachable. He will also give heart to the jittery investors, particularly overseas ones, as he is the architect of Indian economic reform.

The choice of Dr. Singh, who is a Sikh, would help in healing of hatred between the Sikhs and the Hindus in general and with the Gandhi family in particular, that began when Mrs. Indira Gandhi ordered the sacrifice of the Golden Temple and was later assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard. It erupted in riots between India's Hindu and Sikh communities. Mr. Singh now becomes the PM because another Gandhi has declined the position, a fact that is bound to sink positively in the minds of the Sikhs.

However, there are many negatives in the incumbency of Mr. Manmohan Singh that the editor has not spoken about nor hinted at. Mr. Singh is not a politician and therefore lacks the political skills that in the short and long term may be more important qualities than those of an economist and a reformist with impeccable credentials. Mr. Singh, without the political stature, would be running a government with

diverse coalition partners including the likes of Lalu Yadav and leftist groups who want the government to scrap most of the reformist agenda. Thus at a time when India needs a strong leader, Mr. Singh at best can give India a leadership whose emphasis would be on compromise rather than bold, unwavering decisions that the BJP was capable of taking, decisions that has made India shine though ironically helping kick BJP out of office.

On the Bangladesh-India relations, a government under Mr. Singh, its well meaning potentials highlighted in the editorial notwithstanding, the change is not a good one for Bangladesh. The "handsome" compliments given to the new Indian prime minister Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina were good initiatives but then the hopes the editor placed on Mr. Singh for rendering a friendly ear on the "notorious" river linking project could be well and truly misplaced. The Indian system operates quite differently and professionally. The river linking project was conjured by the previous government not at the political level but at the professional one. Those professionals are still there and they will behave the same way as they did under the BJP. The point must not be forgotten that the Congress had conjured another absurd project called the Barbed Wire Fence in the 1980s to keep Bangladesh under pressure. The same Congress is therefore unlikely to back out of the river linking project due to our sweet talk on the friendly ears of Mr. Singh.

Under Mr. Singh, the Indian government will be weaker and for us, more difficult. The strength of the Indian government is not our concern, but Bangladesh-India bilateral relations are. For the latter to improve, the need for us is to have an India policy that we don't at the moment where there has to be a quid pro quo, where the scrapping of the water linking project, trade imbalance, etc. has to be matched against India's requests for road transit, sale of gas, etc.

**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka

**Issuance of second class certificate under pick-up method**

The NU allowed pick-up facility to the improvement examinees of 1996 and 1997 who were regular examinees of 1993, 1994 and 1995 as per the Academic Council's decision in the 34th meeting held on 03.04.2002 and the 44th meeting held on 15.09.2002. The examinees of 1993, 1995, 1996 and 1997 belong to the same syllabus of Traditional Honours under Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong Universities. If the improvement examinees of 1996 and 1997, who were regular examinees of 1993, 1995 and 1996, could be allowed pick-up benefit, there can be no reason to deprive the improvement examinees of 1995, who were regular examinees of 1993 and of 1994.

In my write-ups published in English and Bangla dailies my intention has always been to draw the attention of the concerned authorities to consider the cases of all the deprived examinees of 1994 and 1995. I hope they will look into the matter.

**M Sadeq**  
Chairman, Department of Management, Tejaagon College, Farmgate, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

**I'm delighted**

As a secular minded Indian I am delighted that the NDA has finally been shown the door. I have always felt that the alliance had been a wolf in sheep's clothing. They have tried to project an image of tolerance but are inherently radical in their views. Mr. Vajpayee was the tolerant face of this alliance and the only good aspect of the party.

As part of the Muslim minority, I fear people like Narendra Modi, Tagodia and Bal Thakarey. I fear that their radical thoughts will spread and infect society. I fear for the well being and safety of my land and could never condone a party that allowed their colleagues with blood on their hands get away scot-free.

I have wonderful memories of a childhood where we celebrated Diwali with our friends and they would in turn be part of our Eid festivities. I would hate to see that threatened. No doubt that the NDA was successful with its economic policies but I would like to be alive to enjoy the benefit. So needless to say, it's imperative for minorities that a secular party rule India.

**Sadia Moyeen**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

**Role model: Sonia Gandhi**

Any sort of appreciation regarding Sonia Gandhi is insufficient. What she showed the worldly people will go down in history in golden letters. When the politicians are addicted to power, it is not easy

to put aside the offer of becoming prime minister of a country.

After defeating the BJP in the Indian election, she refused to take over as prime minister. What a sacrifice!

**Kabir**  
On e-mail

**Indian election**

India is home to the biggest democracy in the world, and their democratic politeness is evident from the recent parliamentary election. The Hindu nationalist party BJP suffered a major setback, though it left no stone unturned to avoid defeat. Their religious fundamentalism could not keep them afloat. Their effort to tie a knot with Pakistan could not produce the desired results. The BJP, from the very beginning, wanted to manipulate the foreign origin of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi but, experts believe, the play has boomeranged. People were overwhelmingly charmed by the charisma of Sonia Gandhi-- her sober appearance, solemn personality did the magic.

The Congress won the election, and the BJP resigned without making any hue and cry, or making any allegations of rigging.

The BJP moved away from the path as people ousted it from power. The political parties in Bangladesh have to learn from this exercise. They must not talk about rigging every time a party is defeated.

**Mahfuzul Haque**  
Department of English, University of Dhaka



**A neglected day**

I was very sad to note the lack of attention to the important international day (22 May 2004) for Biological Diversity.

If we, human beings hold life in esteem, then bio-diversity is the rainbow of life itself and it is beautiful!

All forms of life on earth depends on biological diversity for the basic goods and ecological services. The theme for this year was bio-diversity: Food, Water and Health for all. What could have been more significant for Bangladesh? The importance of bio-diversity to ensure food security, adequate water supply and protection of medicinal plants for health must be realised.

However, in spite of all this omission it was heartening to read your coverage on the outstanding endeavour made by a professor of Crop Botany Department of Mymensingh Agriculture University towards producing sapling of KIGELIA a rare medicinal tree. The odd pair of this tree, now 88 years old, still stand on the campus of Rangpur College. Experiment with the fluid extracted from the bark and roots of Kigelia shows curative quality for skin cancer called Melanoma.

Nearly 30 years ago, Bangladesh National Herbarium announced 182 species of medicinal plants. Six years back another research work under the sponsorship of Bangla Academy analysed the chemical constituents and uses of 449 medicinal species. More recently, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies identified 295 medicinal plants from Chanda Beel, a wetland of only 25 Sq. kilometre!

These studies no doubt establish the utmost importance of this natural source as the primary basis for human resource development. We must take stock of our medicinal wealth. It is necessary to examine as to how and what has been done in protecting this knowledge of traditional medicine and establishing linkages with the modern pharmaceutical industries within the country. Can we be so foolish as not to realise that the so called poor country is really a rich kingdom of bio-diversity?

**Farida Shaikh, BAPA/Dhaka, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Lalmatia, Dhaka**

nakedness and being photographed while naked, enforced masturbation and feigned homosexual acts in front of an audience that included mocking young women soldiers...all are part of a well devised "Stress and duress" interrogation techniques. This is systematically adopted in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo and many other undisclosed 'prisons' with the ringing endorsement from the military high ups including Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers.

The 'noble' American intention of

despot, to the celestial blessing of democracy.  
**Saif, Dhaka**

**May we learn something from it!**

The election in India took place recently. We can see that the Congress is now in the driver's seat. In fact, it has already formed government. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) showed respect for the opinion of people. Vajpayee resigned from his position even before the count was over and said, "We have given up

real democracy in our country.  
**Dulchi Fatema**  
Mirpur, Dhaka

**Indian elections: Kuldip's analysis**

Mr. Kuldip Nayar is a very well renowned journalist in this part of the world but I am very surprised by his analysis of the just concluded Indian election results. I am referring his article, published in DS on May 14, 2004.

From the results, it is very clear that the basic issues of the vast majority of ordinary voters i.e. firms

**Shahjalal Shrine blast**

In the recent blast three people were reported dead and more than 70 injured, including the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Mr Anwar Chowdhury. This incident has provoked debates, discussions and condemnations in the political arena exposing the height of political naivety of Bangladeshi politicians and reassured us that the popular method of politics is nothing but the tool of exploiting public sentiment, while the main issues and truths remain outside the scope of discussions.

The opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina, took no time in condemning the act and blaming Jamaat-e-Islami for it, trying to demean the Jamaat and the government. Later on, this took the shape of blaming the government for the law and order situation and ended with a call for hartal in Sylhet on 27 May.

The four party alliance, on the other hand, took the chance to harp once again on the 'conspiracy theory' and said that it was an act by the 'defeated forces' to create instability in the

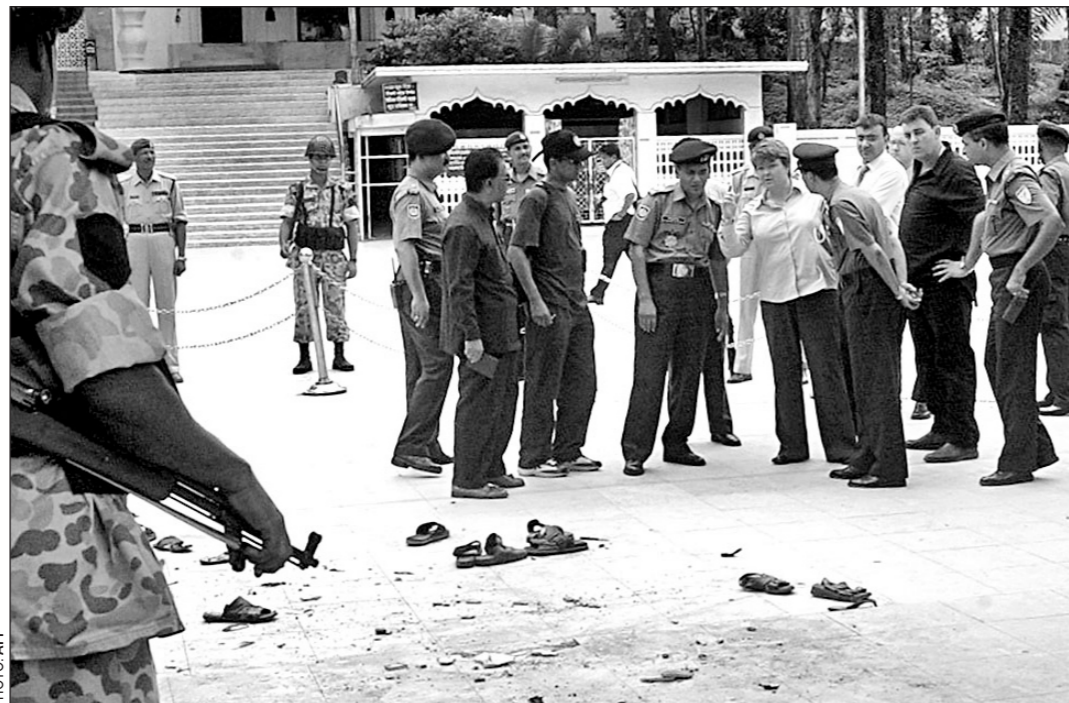


PHOTO: AFP

country. Sure enough, this was followed by arrests of nine opposition activists.

Foreign security personnel who came to Bangladesh to investigate the matter did not take much time to relate the

incident with the 'miscreants' of Iraq independence. Many other public figures started blaming international terrorism for this. This led a few newspapers to put the miscreants responsible for the blast and the 'Iraq inde-

pendence fighters' in the same line.

Most of the newspapers were not able to present a coherent view of the matter. They clearly realised that this was a heinous act and condemned it very

forcefully. But they could not give a presentable view of why the incident took place. Failure to appreciate that Bangladesh is part of the globe and is inevitably affected by all that happens across it is the reason behind such shallow explanations. This is why we see our politicians blaming each other to exploit public opinion and the journalists simply mentioning that it was done by international terrorists and such acts should be condemned.

Let us face the truth. Neither the politicians nor the news agencies are worried about the dead and those injured in the incident.

**M Naufal Zamir**  
Barrister, London

Anwar Chowdhury, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, has been attacked in his motherland. We are shocked and stunned to know that a high profile diplomat like Mr. Chowdhury was attacked in broad daylight.

Anwar Chowdhury is the first Asian and the first Muslim in British foreign service selected

for such an honourable job. We are all proud of him. I take a special pride for him as we are both from Jagannathpur of Sunamganj district. But at the same time I feel humiliated that he has been attacked in Sylhet. I strongly condemn this heinous and cowardly act of terrorism.

I have found that the Shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal has become a safe heaven for the criminals. In less than eighteen months, three incidents of bomb throwing occurred in this holy place which killed ten people. But the government seem to be unmoved by these incidents as not a single offender has been caught or punished, and it is still not clear who are behind these acts. I think such lapse in the activities of the law enforcers has encouraged the culprits to create jungle rule in this holy land.

I am afraid as Mr. Chowdhury is of Bangladeshi origin, the government was not very serious about his security, at least before the attack. I express my deep sympathy to the victims and their families. I pray for the

earliest recovery of Mr. Chowdhury and other injured persons and hope that the culprits will be nabbed and punished very soon.

**Shams Noman**  
On e-mail

It is really a great shame for us that a foreign dignitary like the UK High Commissioner in Bangladesh was made the target of a deadly bomb attack. The fact that the High Commissioner is of Bangladeshi origin and was targeted while coming out from the shrine after Jumma prayers makes it all the more shameful for us. As a common citizen of the country, I really do not understand who could commit such a shameful act and what could possibly be the reason for targeting a well-respected individual like the Bangladeshi-born High Commissioner. There are reasons to believe that like many of the other bomb blasts in the last few years, this one will also remain unresolved. Chances are that the real culprits will go undetected and the real motive behind the heinous

act will remain unknown. From our experience of the failure of the concerned authorities to bring the culprits to justice, we can assume that the latest incident, despite its severity, will meet the same fate as the previous ones. We, the common people of the country, have a lot to be concerned about. The nation seems to be drifting away from the path of tolerance, rationality and common sense. Law and order is deteriorating every day, corruption is growing in every sphere of society, a privileged few are accumulating money and influence at the expense of the common mass. A peaceful and a decent life are becoming elusive for the ordinary citizens of the country. We had a lot of hopes and aspirations as a young nation. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the ordinary people are losing the hope for a better future.

Nothing could be more painful than a lost hope.

**K M Zubair Sadeque**  
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