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LuckyMr. Bush

After the lucky election victory over Al Gore in the 2000 elections, the only lucky thing that happened to Mr. Bush Jr is the attack on the WTC and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. That gave him the blank cheque to mould international politics his own way. Before February 2003 the Americans who could not even place Iraq on the world map now see body bags arriving from there regularly. Apart from the thriving arms factories in Texas, all other forms of business struggled, and millions left jobless. Still Bush Jr. enjoyed plenty of support from the Americans.

Now that the Democrats have come up with a strong contender in Kerry can we see the Republicans faltering. Like father like son, One term and you're done.

Md Sarram Hossain  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Democracy in Burma

The Secretary General of the United Nations is moving to put pressure on the Burmese military ruler through a call for immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, by an engagement in 'substantive dialogue' with her party, National League for Democracy, and the other political parties of Burma.

Many political groups including Rohingyas of Arakan have welcomed his valuable call on the issue.

So, I would like to draw the attention of the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to join with the call of the UNSG.

Md Sadek  
Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh is cheap!

I was surprised reading Dr. Fakhruddin's article "Bangladesh is Cheap" in the August 13 issue of The Daily Star. It was not just a surprise but also disappointment and sadness. Dr. Fakhruddin generally writes well and on important topics. But in this article, he praises an economy in which he can find so much for so little. Unfortunately, he fails to mention how expensive it is for the people who make this "cheap" life possible and do so for near starvation wages.

Anyone coming to Bangladesh from North America or Western Europe will find Bangladesh to be cheap. Bangladesh's per capita GDP is only about \$ 450 and 50% of the population live on less than \$ 2 dollars per day and 30% less than \$ 1 dollar per day. (One half of the world's population of 6 billion live on less than \$ 2 dollars per day)

Average people of Bangladesh do not find life cheap or easy and this is one reason hundreds of thousands of people flock to Dhaka to drive rickshaws, to work as day labourers or work in garment factories. Also, millions of desperate people have gone to other countries to work as common labourers selling their meagre land holdings just to survive or to better their economic condition. Life for these people is not easy either in Bangladesh or the countries where they are migrant workers.

I know that Dr. Fakhruddin knows at least one well known and highly respected economist in Dhaka. He should ask him if life for the average citizen is cheap or expensive.

This letter is not a criticism Dr. Fakhruddin. Average people look at the rest of the world from their own vantage point and believe what they see and what happens to them is important, even if no one else does.

Naz Shafinaz  
Encino, California

Attack on Ahmadiyya community

The indifference of government towards the religious bigots is becoming a cause of grave concern. The repeated attacks on the religious minority has not drawn much attention from the high ups of the government, worse still, in some cases a partner of the coalition is involved in it.

I found the news coverage of the recent attack on the central Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Mosque at Bakshibazar in Dhaka rather disturbing. The use of the word

'Sunnis' attacking the 'Ahmadiyya' gave me the weird feeling that I am living in some sectarian violence torn place like Gujarat or Baghdad. If the bigots are not reined in, Dhaka can well become that kind of a city.

Their demand of declaring of the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim by the state is equally ridiculous. What difference will it make? The Almighty will decide who is a Muslim and who is not. His decision is the only thing that should matter to a Muslim.

The political game initiated by this issue is distasteful and unwarranted.

Joy, Dhaka

Rein them in

This refers to the worrying news that the mullahs of Khatme Nabuwwat and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) have announced that they will forcibly occupy the Ahmadiyya mosque situated at Bakshi Bazaar and remove the sign of 'Ahmadiyya Mosque'.

Article 41 of the Constitution of Bangladesh declares 'Every citizen has the right to profess, practise and propagate any religion and that every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions'.

It is also against the tenets of Islam, which guarantees freedom of religion.

In chapter 2:257 of the Holy Quran it is stated that 'There should be no compulsion in matters of religion'.

The civilised world should take note of these atrocities committed against this community in Bangladesh. The home and religious affairs ministers must find the will to prevent any such attack on the Ahmadiyya mosques in Bangladesh which might result in bloodshed.

I call on the government to act firmly and decisively against the bigots.

Salim Ullah Kahlon  
Dhaka

Maldives on the brink?

In God's kingdom, paradise is thought to be a place of peace and tranquillity, where eternal bliss prevails. Man on earth has often attempted to fashion something in its likeness. He has failed in his endeavour. When he imagined this likeness to the heavenly abode, only too soon did he realise that it is no more than hallucination. The situation becomes lethal when man's naked greediness takes the lead role in designing the arrangement to satiate his own ego suppressing and surpassing all others. Your editorial (august 19,2004) makes obvious that, that which is enchanting, heavenly and idyllic from a distance (though not physically) is one hot hell of a place inside.

The high economic growth which allows for nearly US\$ 2,000 per capita income with less than equal distribution among a quarter million population is a poor indicator of human development and overall progress of the country. Denial of human rights and curtailment of democratic social order is largely practised. Punitive measures have been announced to ensure total control on socio-political activities across the islands. The inhabitants are under continuous surveillance. What a man or a woman feels and thinks is predetermined. Death may occur on account of suffocation as there is no freedom of expression. The storm is brewing, and the whole atmosphere is on the threshold of social change.

Farida Shaikh  
One-e-mail

Dr Azad's death

We are reading the Internet news with interest prior to and after the death of Dr Azad in Munich. It is very sad to note that so much of confusion and controversy emerged during his lifetime and even after death. I remember I saw a news item that Dr Azad went to Germany for treatment. Apparently, that was not the case. He was invited by Pen International in Munich for research work. According to my analysis of the news events available in the Internet, some clarification will be helpful.

What kind of contract Dr Azad had with Pen International? Usually if a fellow dies during his or her active duty as a fellow in foreign land, the sponsor

A gory political scene

To the naked eye, Saturday's grenade attack on the AL rally looks a lot like an attempt to keep the Awami League out of Bangladesh politics. It also appears that the attack was planned to kill the organisation's top leaders, including Sk. Hasina. The government should not allow people to guess which of their rivals was behind the move since that is not at all hard to guess.

This is an act that demands that the AL and Hasina must cease their political activities in Bangladesh. The AL or Sk. Hasina may not be perfect. Still, they are one of the major partners of our democracy, and the party had led us in 1971 to independence. For the sake of our democracy and the advantages we have in the

world as a moderate Muslim country, we must eliminate the threats coming from the forces of intolerance.

Sirajul Islam  
Social sciences researcher and consultant  
Shyamoli, Dhaka

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Considering the recent incidents, it can be said easily that the government not only inspire the bigots but also patronise them to eliminate the main opposition. The latest attack on the AL rally proves that point beyond any doubt.

A few days back when Ahsan Ullah master was assassinated in a public meeting, the government instantly claimed that he was killed by his own party men. How could the government say so without any investigation? People

don't expect such kind of remarks from a democratic government.

How will it defend the killing of 18 people at an AL rally at the Bangabandhu Avenue?

Kushal  
Dhaka College, Dhaka

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I do not find any words to condemn or express my rage at the monstrous, terrible, and dreadful act. If one looks back to the major bombing incidents since March 16 -- there were attacks on an Udichi function in Jessore followed by the Ahmadiyya Mosque at Khulna, CPB rally in Dhaka, Ramna Park incident on Pahela Baishakh, a church in Gopalganj, AL targets at various places, mazars and cinema houses ---one may find a common thread, which clearly



points to the quarters who might have perpetrated the crimes.

What is the government going to do this time around?

MA, On e-mail

Bliss of solitude



Solitude is one of the greatest blessings. What is solitude? A person who is spending time alone is not necessarily lonely, anti-social or isolated. Solitary people are great artists, writers, scientists, mostly gifted and talented. It is all right to say hello to people but we cannot be friends with everyone. A person can only have a few good friends who are pleasant and trustworthy. It takes a long time to build trust. If we know too many people, we become overly extroverted, it can cause more problems than we can imagine. Because we cannot spend time with too many people. A person who claims to know a lot of people and seeks popularity is not as happy as one who spends more time in solitude. Such people are not actually free. They are insecure and they want popularity and they "want to be" or are "wannabes" who forget that originality and creativity are the best qualities that a person can have. Relatives and too many people waste a lot of time, enemies increase, wolves come in sheep's clothing. It is alright to share ideas or hobbies with one or two friends. I also agree with Neeman Sobhan "I love solitude. Being alone never bothers me. Solitude is not isolation or unhappiness." I can be Neil Diamond's Solitary Man, Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper, a heroic figure in Tolkien or Odysseus, St. Augustine, or the imitation of Christ, a writer or I can understand Gabrielle G. Marquez's measurement of time when he talks about One Hundred Years of Solitude. In solitude, a person can discover the deepest mysteries, spirituality, nature, God, and hundreds of ideas.

In solitude, our thoughts are flowing and we can create wonderful books, works of art, magnificent gardens, inventions, and many other things as vast as the night sky covered with the sparkling jewels of stars.

Estelle Mahnuma  
MA English, US

comes forward to meet the expenses of sending the dead body to his or her near and dear ones. In this case the Pen International seems to be inactive. The reasons are best known to them.

The death of Dr Azad has been to a certain degree politicised, which is not very unusual if you analyse the events leading to his death. There must be some hard facts of his sudden death in Munich. There are standard

procedures to determine that. I only hope the results of that procedures will be revealed in due course to his family members, who are the ones to be consoled first.

Anonymous  
One-e-mail

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There is an uncertainty about bringing Dr. Azad's body from Munich on Friday. Uncertainty because it involves

a lot of money (about 3 lakh) to carry the body to Bangladesh. Who will give the money? Hardly is it possible for a university teacher's family to manage such a huge amount at a time. So naturally we have noticed some delay in starting the process. Last night, I heard from Channel I news that the DU Teachers Association has contributed the whole amount.

The foreign minister once said our intellectuals are responsible for the negative image of the country. Will the image of the country brighten when the Germans are watching that the dead body of Dr. Azad is lying at a mortuary?

Kamaluddin Ahmed  
Shyamoli, Dhaka

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Living with different brands of local 'godfathers', i.e., 'Bangla Bhai' and continuous bomb blasts in mass gatherings may lead people to deny the possibility of murder of Humayun Azad, because that could only add to our existing helplessness.

It is more frightening to accept the possibility that those people planned the killing in Germany after failing to kill him in Dhaka. However, the death of Humayun Azad in Munich has satisfied the desire of the killers.

Nasrin Straj Annie  
Independent Anthropologist and Media worker,  
Sub-editor: www.meghbarta.org

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I think the Dhaka University Syndicate has taken a good decision. They turned down the request of Dr. Azad's family to bury his dead body beside the university mosque.

Almohit, One-e-mail  
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From a news report in The Daily Star of 17th August, 2004, I have come to know that the bereaved family members of Professor Dr. Humayun Azad have put forward a demand to the DU authorities to bury the dead body of the professor beside the grave of our national poet Kazi Nazrul.

This demand is completely incoherent with the life and thoughts of Dr Humayun Azad.

Khairul Hasan, Surrey, UK

Jinnah's speech

My attention is drawn to Mr AZM Abdul Ali's letter (DS Aug 18, 2004) where he seeks further information on what Mr. M.A. Jinnah may have said in the broadcast alluded to by Kuldeep Nayar. The following may be helpful to the reader as a basis for further investigation.

While the intended broadcast was stalled by reasons best known to people who are probably long dead, Jinnah's thoughts on religion in his state were bluntly articulated in his maiden speech to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in Karachi on 11 August 1947. Among other things, Pakistan's leader made it clear that "you are free to go to your mosques and to your temples" because the religion of a Pakistani was "of no

concern of the state". He further hoped that in time Pakistan would develop to be a modern polity where "a Hindu will cease to be a Hindu and a Muslim to be a Muslim, not in a religious sense but in his relationship to the state". It is worth mentioning that the presiding officer of that historic session was the noted Bengali lawyer Jogendra Nath Mondal.

Of course, those who followed Mr. Jinnah as head of state had little tolerance for that kind of modernism. But none went as far as the dictator General Ziaul Haque who had his henchmen literally expunge the "offending" remarks from the

Let history speak

It was a pleasure reading Dr. Anwar Hossain's "Let history resolve an unnecessary debate" (DS August 17th). I don't think anyone has written on this issue that has raised so much controversy with such simplicity and yet in such a rational manner. I just wish the followers of our two main political parties would read this piece and reflect upon it to realise how much damage they are causing not just to themselves but to the nation.

In the manner the controversy

however more inclined to recommend to the protagonists to let history be the teller of truth in this case and at the same time to consider that without the unflinching support of the 75 million people of Bangladesh of the time, Bangladesh could never have emerged, no matter how much credit we are interested to give to either Bangabandhu or Ziaur Rahman and the rest.

Shahjahan Ahmed, Dhanmondi RA  
Separation of Judiciary

Please refer to the lead news published in your daily of 18 August under the caption "Separation of

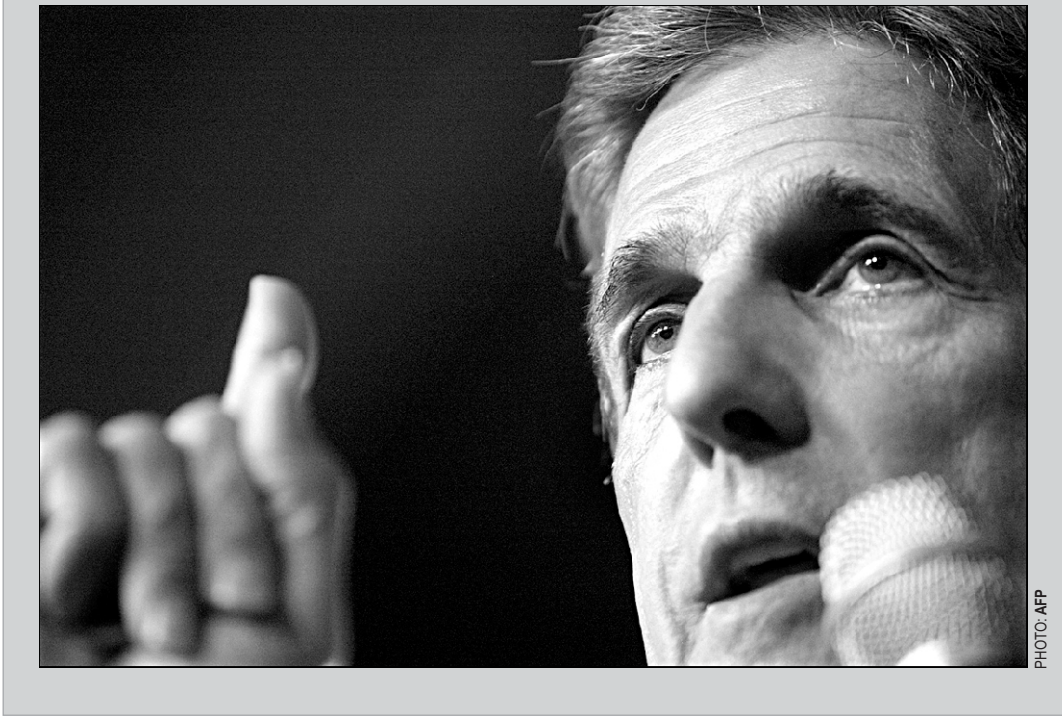
Senator Kerry

I read with interest your editorial on the swift boat veterans and Senator Kerry. However, you failed to mention a point that strikes me as important. The veterans challenged as untrue a previous statement by Sen. Kerry about his service: "In fact, I remember spending Christmas Day of 1968 five miles across the Cambodian border being shot at by our South Vietnamese Allies who were drunk and celebrating Christmas. The absurdity of almost being killed by our own allies in a country in which President Nixon claimed there were no American troops was very real." Letter to Editor by Sen. Kerry, Oct 14, 1979, Boston Herald. Sen. Kerry made a similar claim on the Senate floor saying the memory of being in Cambodia on Christmas while the president lied was "seared" in his memory.

Seared it may have been, but it was also false. Nixon was not president then, Kerry was 50 miles from the border, and none of his crewmates remember being in Cambodia.

Thus in at least one instance, Kerry was wrong, and the veterans correct. It makes it more likely that they are correct in other instances.

John H Lederer  
Oregon, Wisconsin, USA



historical records maintained by the Pakistan Parliament Secretariat. Furthermore, the self-styled "Mard-e-Momin" (Man of Faith) also removed the excerpt of Jinnah's August 11 speech from the premises of the Pakistan Supreme Court building. Similar doctored took place in school textbooks across Pakistan where entire sentences of Jinnah's speeches were removed. The legacy of a Western educated, Saville Row suited, secular Shia Muslim Mohammad Ali Jinnah was too dangerous for the designs of petty tyrants whose famed Islamic Republic officially considers a woman worth half a man and a Ahmadiyya Muslim a non-entity.

Esam Sohail  
Kansas City, MO

Maldives story

As a citizen of Maldives, I think it's my responsibility to give my opinion on the article that was published in The Daily Star, especially about the incidents happening in my country.

I would like to inform that Mr. Munnawar was dismissed from attorney general's post because of corruption, and misuse of power to get a resort for one of his brothers, and because of public complaints about his illegal activities.

Most of the information you have given so far is one-sided and not accurate in many ways. The articles are based on information that has been released to the world press by well-known criminals of Maldives.

Hussain, Dhaka

surrounding Bangabandhu and Ziaur Rahman has been played out belies as much history as common sense. When the Pakistan army cracked down on the fateful night of 25th March 1971, the people did not wait for any one to tell them what to do; they just spontaneously rose against the barbarism that was unleashed by the murderous Pakistan army and helped realise the dream for Bangladesh which was dreamt just not by Bangabandhu but by many other illustrious leaders like Maulana Bhashani, Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy etc. Likewise, even though General Zia announced the declaration of independence, he alone did not lead the fight against the Pakistan army. There were many other brave soldiers like him who just did not happen to be near any radio station to make an announcement like the one General Zia made.

There is a book whose title I still remember but whose author's name I cannot now recollect. The book's title is "People's War". This is a rather short book written on successful revolutions of the last century. In this book, our war of liberation has been mentioned as one of the best examples of a successful people's war where people's war has been defined as one that originates among a people and has the potential of succeeding without external assistance or interference.

Dr. Hossain believes Bangladesh had a brain in Bangabandhu, a soul in Bhashani, an organiser in Tajuddin and a wielder of the sword in Zia. I am

Judiciary: Supreme Court chides Govt" etc.

To begin with I wish to congratulate The Daily Star for diligently following a story which is of utmost significance in the socio-political life of Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, recognition and helping to build up an Independent Judiciary away from the influence of the Executive is a must for the development of the institution of Democracy. In Bangladesh it has become twice more urgent with the growing tendency of the magisterial courts and the lower courts having to "falter" in many cases under the direct influence of governmental agencies.

The government's long inaction and unprecedented "lame" excuses seeking more time are therefore completely unacceptable. As far as I know, the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs on whose shoulders lies the main brunt of the responsibility in this regard is simply dragging its feet. Besides, to the best of my knowledge its office is located on the fourth or some such floor which has never been "submerged under water during the recent devastating floods". To me the excuse at best appears to be childish and totally baseless.

Shamsher Chowdhury  
One-mail

History rewritten

