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# Saturday evening massacre



Hell broke loose at the Awami League's rally in front of the party's central office on the afternoon of August 21,2004. The entire country was numbed with horror and shock, the carnage which resulted from the grenade attack is nightmarish, 19 people died and at least 300 people have been injured, many of them are in critical condition. Our deep sympathy for the families of those who lost their lives and those who are injured and we thank the Al-Mighty Allah for the fact that Sheikh Hasina remained unhurt.

We are very frightened and are feeling very helpless not knowing who were behind this heinous act, trying to destabilise our country. It is clear that a third party is involved, the motive of which is to create disorder and confusion. This incident will invariably be a setback to the development of the country. The most apparent question now is, who are they and why are they doing this? Recently, bomb attacks have become a regular event, but the government has failed to catch a single criminal so far. It is a discredit for the government; it's about time the government undertook more constructive and focused steps. If need be, international help must be sought.

**Nur Jahan**  
Chittagong

Words cannot express the extreme anguish and grief that the country is going through at the moment. A series of bomb blasts occurred in the last couple of years in different places---Dhaka, Sylhet and Khulna, to name a few---and the targets are diversified as well---journalists, political leaders & foreign diplomats. Not even one of the investigations into these bloody attacks was complete.

The recent grenade attack on a procession of the main opposition political party Awami League(AL) shows us again how desperate and inhumane the terrorists have become. To add to it, one must say that due to the "fizzling out" of the investigations into other terrorist attacks in our country, these forces are becoming stronger as no one has been punished yet for the dastardly attacks. We condemn the assassination attempt on former PM Sheikh Hasina and demand a proper and impartial investigation into these dastardly attacks, and if necessary, an international one. There is no doubt that the forces opposed to democracy and secularism are launching these terrible attacks, one after another, and the government has not done enough to tackle them. We hope that these assassins will be brought to justice and also that the forces of intolerance and extremism will be defeated.

**Aranya Syed**  
Dhaka,

We vehemently protest the heinous grenade attacks on the opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, who had a narrow escape, and some senior leaders and workers who gathered in a public meeting called by the party on 21 August. It left at least 18 people dead and more than 300 injured. A few days back bombs were exploded in some cinema halls in Sylhet. Some unidentified criminals are blasting bombs or grenades, one after another, in some crowded places but the law enforcing agencies are yet to find any clue of these terrorist activities. After any attack or loss of lives, condolence and condemnation from all quarters pour in and commitments of arresting the culprits or meting out exemplary punishment are heard. Now the question is, where are we heading for? What the hell are our intelligent agencies doing ? The responsibility of resolving these chain incidents rests with the ruling party. They have to be accountable to the commoners who are now passing their days amid great uncertainty.

We demand a very high- powered probe body to unravel the truth of the mysterious incidents.

**Al-Amin Mahmud**  
Lecturer of Sociology, SUST, Sylhet

What we witnessed on Saturday afternoon is as ugly as any US led attack on the Iraqis or Israeli savage attacks on the people of Palestine. People lying here and there with blown away limbs were repulsive sights. Why this heinous attack? What are the bombers trying to prove? What an evil patch of years we are having, where political leaders as well as common people are being killed regularly. Life must not go on like this, these should be stopped before the country becomes another Afghanistan. So many people lost their lives and those lives were priceless. Who would take the responsibility of those shattered and bereaved families? Death does come and none can deny this inevitable truth, but no one expects to die like this.

I condemn the heinous attack on the political leaders as well as innocent civilians and earnestly request the government to nab those criminals, who might lead the country towards civil war, and punish them before it is too late.

**Badal Hasib**  
Asad Avenue, Dhaka

Television news on Monday as well as The Daily Star of Tuesday reported that so far detectives have found no "clues" about the grenade attack on the Awami League meeting. I found this strange. Weren't the unexploded grenades themselves clues? I also found it strange that the army team detonated the unexploded grenades at the site of the attack. I am not an expert on this matter, but couldn't some way be found to disable the unexploded grenades and hand them over to the police as evidence or clues? The other grenades found in Dhaka Central Jail and the Railway Hawker's Market premises have presumably not been detonated. Hopefully, these are available for investigation into the attack. Newspapers and TV both reported that (and viewers saw on TV) that the grenades were marked "ARGES" along with numbers (presumably arms codes). I found it surprising that neither print nor TV journalists offered us further information about them. One TV reporter said that the grenades were of Chinese origin and are used in the armed forces of a number of countries in the subcontinent. However, a simple internet search reveals that ARGES is the acronym of Armaturen Gesellschaft m. b. h., an Austrian company. ARGES, in fact, manufactures a number of types of grenades. The company's website shows pictures of their grenades that are exactly the same as the pictures of the unexploded grenades in Bangabandhu Avenue and in Dhaka Central Jail. The company's website has, among other things, the following description of itself and its products:

"ARGES can look back to a very long tradition in manufacturing hand grenades and components and is the leading company for producing cost-effective hand grenades with pre-formed fragments. ARGES fragmentation hand grenades show excellent fragment distribution and fragment density by using pre-formed fragments.

The fragment distribution and fragment density on 21 August at Bangabandhu Avenue lived up to its manufacturer's promises, judging from the number of casualties. Two hundred injured and eighteen killed in other words, more than two entire companies (one-fourth of a battalion) of innocent civilians were put out of commission.

**A Reader, One-mail**

## Is the PM in control?

Over the last three years, the nation has seen that immediately after a political assassination or bomb blast, the PM met her kitchen cabinet and made eye-catching statements as if she was in control. In fact, it has been proved that she has not been in control since the British High Commissioner was attacked and a lawmaker was gunned down. Indeed, these were not petty incidents. The government has failed to protect the VIPs. Her kitchen cabinet and she met again on Sunday after Saturday's carnage.

But will the government be able to do anything? Past records do not make us optimistic.

**Moazzem Hossain, Brisbane**

## What an anarchy...

After such a barbarous and heinous bomb attack on the innocent people and the government's failure to protect the civilians and apprehend the culprits, does the government have any credibility or legitimacy to stay in power?

I believe this is the direct result of the government's impotence and continual reluctance to resolve the previous bombings. A civilised society cannot survive this way and I believe the government, if it has the minimum respect for democracy and accountability, should resign immediately before another bombing takes place.

**Mir Rashid, Vancouver, Canada**

## Kudos to the alliance!

Surely they deserve praise (!). They have

ensured (!) so much safety (!) for our public life that there will be hardly any city left without bomb attacks.

The country is now a playground of the radicals. They have unleashed violence throughout the country. Series of bomb attacks and subsequent threats have ostensibly proved the fact that law and order is dysfunctional. Successive failures of the government to rein these perpetrators in have also aggravated the situation. The gruesome casualties at the AL meeting have instilled panic among the common people. May Allah help us.

**Ehsan, Noyatola, Dhaka**

## Image of the country

This refers to your post editorial "Image of the country" published on 21 August. To begin with, let me say that your commentary is reasonable and sensible. Image, or no image, the fact remains that this government has failed in dealing with the media right from the beginning.

It must, however, be admitted that not all is in order with our media. At times some of our leading dailies (in terms of circulation) are certainly guilty of indulging in publishing exaggerated news and views almost reaching the level of "gossip". Besides with hardly any exception, the dailies are partisan in one form or the other.

However, as rightly pointed out by you, for the role played by the entire media in reporting and upholding the real image of the recent devastating floods it certainly deserves our commendation for a job well done. On the other hand, the way the government is going about the matter,

with or without the media, our image is being continually tarnished.

**Shamsher Chowdhury, Dhaka**

## Kundan Lal Saigal

Your cultural correspondent's write-up on Kundan Lal Saigal was eminently readable as it narrated some interesting insights into the great singer's life.

Saigal's love for Urdu poetry and his obsession with 'Mirza Ghalib' is indeed noteworthy. Of late, many prominent researchers and scholars have opined that Ghalib's prose and poetry are a beacon of legacy which shines like a bright star on the Indian literary firmament.

Though born in the Punjab, Saigal was nurtured and trained in Bengal.

He joined Calcutta's New Theatre, one of the pioneering film-making studios of undivided India, founded by the enterprising and industrious BN Sircar.

Saigal shot to fame for his unmatched singing prowess and was acclaimed as the Golden Voice. His co-star in many films, Kannan Devi, was considered as the nightingale. They formed a formidable combination.

Saigal owes his brilliance to the music composed for him by Rai Chand Boral and Pankaj Kumar Mullick.

The lyrics in films like "Dushman", "Zindagi" and "Meri Bahen" became all-India hits and are even cherished today by musical buffs.

Saigal also acted in PC Barua's Hindi version masterpiece "Devdas" wherein he gave a magnificent performance.

Towards the fag end of his life (he

died at a premature age) Saigal migrated to Bombay. In the by-gone days every aspiring singer used to ape Saigal and the nearest that almost duplicated the great singer was CH Atma, who unfortunately had a short span of life too.

**Robert Kader, Chittagong**

## August 15

Bangabandhu's contribution to Bangladesh and Bangalee nation is unquestionable, though, now-a-days, he is drawn to the controversy that he earnestly opposed the war of independence in 1971. We become flabbergasted when, after 33 years of independence, a defiled and trumped-up allegation is labelled against such a great leader. Being a part of common citizenry, it is always a tremendous shake-up to our sentiments. His unflagging endeavour and courage inspired all to fight against the occupation army. His clarion call of March 7 is still the source of inspiration to the nation. But his death was a tragic one.

The verdict on his murder was given during the Awami League tenure, though it is yet to be executed.

The Awami League government declared August 15 as the 'National Mourning day'. As a nation, we are really unfortunate because we cannot keep the matters of our national leaders away from political meddling or influence-peddling

**A B M Shafiqul Islam,**  
Dept of English, Jahangirnagar University.

We all are shell-shocked at the gruesome grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21. The culprits used sophisticated grenades in their bid to assassinate Sheikh Hasina, the chief of the AL, and liquidate her party. First of all, I sympathise with the victims and their families. I was appalled at the horrific pictures. I did not see the barbaric episode of 1971, but this attack could revive the memories of the savage attacks by the Pakistani forces. I am very pessimistic that Bangladesh, my dear motherland, is going to be ruined due to political unrest. Bangladesh is yet to recover from floods. Really, our country has been plagued by retaliatory politics. I am sure a vested group is desperate to destabilise our country. Some fanatics are behind this attack. They are unleashing a reign of terror in our country with political immunity. But why is the government indifferent? The govt should keep in mind that it may boomerang on them. They should not pamper the religious zealots for political gains. The bomb attacks are very frequent in Bangladesh but the criminals go scot-free. The statement, "We are looking for satroo" by our state minister for home affairs cannot soothe us.

I urge the government to wake up from the deep slumber and break the fangs of the terrorist groups. The victims should be compensated duly and the real culprits must be brought to book without any delay to stabilise the country and minimise the worries of people. Please do not push our country to a civil war.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept of English, Dhaka University

I read with great anger and anguish the news of grenade attack on Sk. Hasina. It is not an attack against a political party, it is an attack on the democratic institution, a conspiracy against Bangladesh.

I don't know who were behind the attack. The Awami League is saying the government was behind it. The BNP will possibly come with some conspiracy theory. The bottom line is that the government must take responsibility of this attack. It's their job to ensure safety and security of all, including the opposition leaders. If there is any conspiracy, it is their job to protect the people from such conspiracies.

We want to know what the BNP has to say about this incident.

**Shahid H Khandker**  
Toronto, Canada

The news is very disturbing. The immediate consequence of the grenade attacks was that at least 19 people died, as reported in the news media. Look at the fate of the common people, floods -- poor and common people are the sufferers, bomb and grenade attacks -- common people are dying. You can give many more examples regarding sufferings of the common people of Bangladesh. But they are the ones still putting up their selfless efforts to keep Bangladesh going. The common people are gradually being pushed back to the wall.

I am not talking from any political point of view but from my strong feelings about the fallout of political anarchy and natural calamities. Living thousands of miles away, I will feel comfortable if the government ensures free and fair investigation into the grenade attack on the AL political rally and reveals the truth.

**Anonymous**  
One-mail

We do not have any language to condemn this heinous attack. This is an attack on our nation, our sovereignty, our democratic institutions. It was a savage act of criminality against humanity, an act of those driven by beastly ideas. They are the enemies of the nation. They are the ones who

do not want our nation to flourish. They are the ones who are working to destroy our identity as a free and democratic country. They are our common enemies. Let us forget our petty political differences. Let us open a single and united front to defeat these evil forces. I would like to request our print and electronic media to launch a movement against the terrorists through their collective, concerted and common editorials and opinions to unite our countrymen, irrespective of their party or other affiliations. We saw in the past that on some vital national issues our dailies-- English or Bangla-- ran articles in their front pages. That should be done again. Leaders of the press should come forward to have a common platform. At the same time, we urge the leaders of the party in power to come forward and bring all our political parties to a single platform to fight this common enemy. We must eliminate them from our sacred soil. We must win!

**G Ahmed**  
Dhaka

It began at the Ramna Batamul. It slowly but surely spread unnoticed. The elements responsible for all these heinous attacks were emboldened by the indifference of the government and security agencies. If they can get away with attacking a foreign diplomat, why wouldn't they attack the leader of the opposition?

**Saif**  
Dhaka

I was shocked to read about the murderous grenade attack on the opposition rally. Such things used to happen only in Karachi, never in Dhaka! The government must get to the bottom of this immediately. If necessary, the police should arrest BNP and Jamaat party workers and interrogate them. Otherwise, this incident will become just another unexplained bomb attack, and simply accepted as part of our farcically 'democratic' political environment.

**Zeeshan Hasan**  
London School of Economics, London, UK

The bloodiest bomb attack on the opposition party was launched last Saturday. So many people have been killed and mutilated in the attack. It is very sad to see that protest against bomb attacks is replied with grenade attacks in our country. What was the driving force behind such a massacre? To destroy the existence of the opposition party? These questions will never be answered but such attacks only speak of our hatred and bloodthirsty attitude. Are we humans anymore?

**Nayeem Islam**  
The Aga Khan School, Uttara, Dhaka

The nation is extremely shocked with Saturday's attack on an opposition rally. Every sane human would shudder at the blood stained pictures of electronic and print media. I was simply flabbergasted! Now, we cannot blame anybody but ourselves. We are the people who have been indulging this monster since long and now it's turned its deadly fangs on our neck like a blood sucking vampire! If we still do not stand united against this monster, as a nation, our existence will be in jeopardy.

I hope the government will make an all out effort to unmask the perpetrators who were behind this heinous and dastardly act. May Allah save our beloved country!

**Mohammed Sohel Hara, Dilu Road, New Eskaton, Dhaka**

## Dark side of Israel

The Hebrew kingdom of Palestine which was established in 1000 BC broke into two states i.e, Israel and Judah in 950 BC due to internal feud among the Jews and law and order situation.

Then the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans in turn conquered and ruled the country. Thousands of Jews abandoned and left their homeland for far distant countries in quest of their fortune, livelihood and settlement.

In 638 AD, the Arab Muslims took control of Palestine peacefully from the Roman Christians. The Jews who lived in Palestine and foreign countries neither raised any objection and protest nor waged a war against the Arab Muslims.

In the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, the European Christian rulers waged innumerable wars, known as crusade, against the Arab Muslims but they failed miserably to conquer Palestine. It is very interesting and important to note that the Jews living in Palestine and foreign countries including Europe did not participate with the European Christians in wars against the Arab Muslims.



In 1516, Turkish Ottoman Muslims conquered Palestine from the Arab Muslims. During the First World War, the British conquered Palestine and several Arab countries from the Ottoman Turkish Muslims.

It is an open fact that the Jewish state of Israel was left abandoned and buried under the grave by the Jews themselves. There was no trace, no existence of the state of Israel for about 2,500 years in the history of the world.

What a surprise, treachery and shocking, all at a sudden, after the end of the world War II, the US in league with the UK dug out the ugly and rotten body of Israel from the grave and proclaimed the creation for the state of Israel within the state of Palestine. We wonder how long would Israel survive under the umbrella protection of a thousands miles away country the US as a puppet and sadist country?

**O. H. Kabir, Wari, Dhaka**