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Message of the human chain

Such tactics more effective than hartals

HE formation of a human chain from Gazipur to Narayanganj via Dhaka city on Wednesday exemplified a commendable method of political demonstration. It was innovative, democratic, peaceful, and yet marked by a powerful exposition of the opposition's demands. We have always supported a form of opposition articulation away from hartal and other high-voltage agitational programmes that is peaceable but firm. All the more so, because we are passing through a deep crisis triggered by political confrontation and violence.

What is to be noted here is that the opposition has put forward its demands and grievances through the human chain more effectively than it would have by adopting a more belligerent tactic. The trend must be maintained in future. The government response to the programme has also been rather discreet. There was no attempt by the police to thwart the move, and the result was a peaceful political demonstration. No chaos or pandemonium followed, and people were greatly relieved. This is a very positive development meriting replication in future.

The government could have exercised either of the two options in its approach to a political demonstration of such magnitude. First, it could ignore the massive programme which, we believe, would not bring any good either to politics or the ruling party. The opposition represents a huge seqment of public opinion and ignoring them amounts to losing a valuable opportunity of addressing problems articulated by a large constituency. That is not in keeping with the needs of a democracy struggling to consolidate itself. The other option is to respond to the public sentiments voiced so as to bring a turn-around in the situation.

Of course the demand that the government resign is not consistent with democratic norms, and, as such, it better be set aside. But the great validity and justifiability of concerns pertaining to law and order, corruption, spiralling prices and misgovernance need to be taken into cognizance, if only because these are burning issues that need to be urgently tackled for the greater public good.

The message of the human chain is loud and clear. It has expressed concern over governance and lack of security of life and property. The government should not ignore all this, like an ostrich burying its head in the sands.

FDI growth success

Build it into momentum

E are starving for good news. There is a sense of gloom, but it is heartening, even cheering to note that Bangladesh has achieved the highest growth in foreign direct investment (FDI) among the South Asian countries in 2003. According to the World Investment Report 2004 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad), FDI received in Bangladesh last year amounted to \$121 million, up from \$52 million. This is no mean achievement considering that there were adversities domestically, and that the FDI inflows worldwide had plummeted by 17.6 percent from the previous level. South Asia as a whole fared better, Bangladesh even exceeding India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Apparently, she has come out of the FDI jinx.

The investments have been in the telecommunications, energy and manufacturing sectors. That FDI is going into infrastructural sector is good news, because it is the poor infrastructure that has been impeding the growth of foreign direct investment. But given the potential, the investment rate should be even higher. In any case, we have a long way to go before being favoured with relocation of 'sunset industries'.

Time for the closer to close

candidate who tapped into the anger of the Democratic base.

Anger at the direction in which Bush was taking the country. Anger at Bush's hijacking of the 2000 election. Anger at the media for letting Bush get away with his deceptions. Anger at the Democratic establishment for having been outfought and outfoxed by the Republicans for the best part of the past four decades. The mood of the Democratic

base was: we can be just as mean and tough as the Republicans -we're mad as hell and we're not

protect the country? If he runs such a lousy campaign, who knows what kind of a presidency he is going to run?

Now Kerry has forty days to turn things around and the indications are good that he has finally hit his stride. His speech at NYU was a masterpiece. He did a great job of enumerating the blunders Bush has made in Iraq and the war on terror and of how a Kerry presidency would be different: "The first and most fundamental

mistake was the president's failure to tell the truth to the American

They told us we could rely on exiles like Ahmad Chalabi to build political legitimacy. They were rong

They told us we would quickly restore an Iraqi civil service to run the country and a police force and army to secure it. They were wrong

In Iraq, this administration has consistently overpromised and underperformed. This policy has been plagued by a lack of planning, an absence of candour, arrogance, and outright incompetence. And the president has held

that he is a strong and unflinching leader in the war on terror and that he has the character and the steadfastness to keep the US safe

This is why it is not enough for

Kerry to point out Bush's many

failures -- he has to point out

Bush has turned the election

into a referendum on the question

of who is more of a man -- him or

Kerry -- and to win, Kerry has to

convince the American public that

Fortunately for Kerry, this is not

I mean, come on. This is the

President who couldn't even face

the 9/11 commission without Dick

Cheney there to hold his hand.

holds press conferences because

he can't handle tough questions.

This is the President who spent

would put it -- "quien es mas

he is the true tough guy in the race.

Bush's failings as well.

difficult

in these dangerous times. The interesting part of this tactic is that Bush is running on the platform of being a strong leader in the abstract because his actual record of leadership in the war on terror has been pretty weak. It's an astonishing gambit: don't judge me by my actual record -- judge me according to my supposed character. The person I am is more important that the things I do.

easy to slice and dice Bush up into little pieces

The three debates which are scheduled to begin at the end of this month are do or die for Kerry. He has to make the case for a Kerry presidency in clear and direct terms that will resonate with the public

He has to appear presidential He has to give a performance that will counter the Republican depiction of him as a flip-flopper with no beliefs or positions who is not strong enough to fight the war on terror or to keep the US safe. Most importantly, he will have to show that he is just as tough or tougher than Bush.

The public is ready to jettison Bush. They just need to be able to see a future president up there when they look at Kerry. This is his big chance

I suspect that Kerry has to score a knock-out punch in the debates. Remember, in a championship fight, if it ends in a draw, the champion keeps his crown. To defeat an incumbent vou have to do so decisively

Kerry managed to score a knock-out punch in his 1996 Senate race against Bill Weld. He made up a ten-point deficit in the final weeks of the campaign and it was his stellar performance in the last of the debates which finally won over the undecided voters.

The word on Kerry has always been that he's a good closer. He looked down and out until a week before the first of the Democratic primaries, but then rallied to close strongly and surge past Howard Dean to take the nomination. He might just be able to do it again in November

It's time for the closer to close.

September 11, 2001 in hiding. Zafar Sobhan is an Assistant Editor of The If the election is going to be Daily Star fought on the question of -- as my one time students in the Bronx

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STRAIGHT TALK

going to take it any more! And it seemed as though Kerry had learned this and had co-opted

Dean's anti-Bush message But until this week Kerry had been running a woeful campaign. Lousy media operation. Lousy message operation. People were confused as to where he stood with respect to Iraq. He was unable to Now Kerry finally seems to articulate what he would do differently from the President. He was doing a poor job of pointing out the incumbent's many missteps and mistakes.

Since effectively wrapping up Most seriously, he appeared to the nomination in the middle of the summer. Kerry has been running a have no strategy to deal with the lacklustre campaign, failing to barrage of bad press and publicity articulate a coherent position on that dogged his campaign through the Iraq war, and seemingly flum-August and most of September, moxed by the barrage of negative and people were beginning to lose respect for him due to his failure to It seemed when he captured fight back against the Republicans' the nomination that Kerry had scurrilous attacks on his character. learned the lesson of the prima-If he can't even protect himself, the Howard Dean caught fire thinking went, how well will he

people He failed to tell the truth about the rationale for going to war. And he failed to tell the truth about the

burden this war would impose on our soldiers and our citizens. The president now admits to

miscalculations in Iraq. That is one of the greatest understatements in recent American history. His were not the equivalent of accounting errors. They were colossal failures of judgment -- and judgment is what

we look for in a president. The administration told us we'd be greeted as liberators. They were wrong

They told us not to worry about looting or the sorry state of Iraq's infrastructure. They were wrong.

They told us we had enough troops to provide security and stability, defeat the insurgents, quard the borders, and secure the arms depots. They were wrong

no one accountable, including himself. Now that's what I'm talking about! This is the message that the

American people need to hear and that Kerry has struggled to articulate for so long. But at long last he seems to have found the words to connect with the American public. Bush's campaign strategy has been interesting and leaves many openings for a smart operator to

attack. He knows that he can't really run on his domestic record, so he is running on his record on the war on terror. Unfortunately for This is the President who barely Bush, his record on the war on terror is not much to write home about either

The decision the Bush team had made is to run what -- for want of a better word -- I am going to have to describe as a metaphysical campaign. Bush is running on the notion

macho?" then it should be pretty

Love is not an equation

MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

OMEO took his own life when he found that Juliet was dead. But little did he know that Juliet had only drunk a potion that kept her in a state of trance. When she woke up from that trance, she saw that her beloved had already taken his life.

Man always wanted to be a woman's first love and woman liked to be a man's last romance. he said. The upshot is that man and woman do not approach love do not lead to Rome in love. Some from the same perspective and end up in marriage, but others drop love, as a result, varies between on the road, tired, sick, lost, conthem not just in nature, but also in degree. If love is compared to the

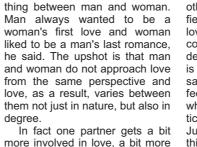
more involved in love, a bit more flames, then either the fire must come to the wood or the wood attached and interested to maintain the relationship. It is believed must be thrown in the fire. In many

other regions of the brain. The fierce energy of love, which drives lovers crazy, and compels them to court each other round the clock, defving all hurdles and difficulties. is the result of this influence. The same influence also produces the feeling of elation-even mania, which is the core feeling of romantic love. When Romeo thought that Juliet was dead, it was perhaps this mania which led him to an impulse, which forced him to take

And no two persons will be at the same level of love before, during, or after their courtship. The level fluctuates from time to time, adjusting to their emotional weather. which is controlled by fidelity, care. patience, tolerance, physical attraction, sexual behaviour, economic means, mental dimensions, and people around them.

When Prince Albert died in 1861, it is believed that Queen Victoria was completely devastated. She did not appear in public to build a fitting monument for her. It took 20,000 workers and 1000 elephants nearly 20 years to complete this monument -- the Taj Mahal. Deposed by his son, Shah Jahan was imprisoned in the Red Fort of Agra, and spent lonely hours staring across the Jamuna River at the monument to his beloved queen. He was eventually buried beside her in the Taj Mahal.

Love is an inequality that gives the illusion of an equation. People fall in love, but two hearts are seldom at equilibrium. Love is biochemical in the end, the composition of the brain, hormones, neurotransmitters, etc., which controls desire and emotion. It is the same thing that leaves one heart aching and another exalted, one heart bleeding and another



his own life. Juliet came under the



A sometime sheep farmer named Samuel Butler, who became a noted English novelist, suggested that to

glance, then from a look, and then from a touch. Slowly it takes over the body and soul, bringing restless days and sleepless nights. anxious for togetherness and desperate for union. But all roads

fused, or dead.

for a Kerry presidency in a noholds-barred speech at NYU that socked it to President Bush for his errant leadership in Iraq and the It was the kind of two-fisted

rhetorical assault that the Democratic faithful have been pleading with Kerry to unleash for

ZAFAR SOBHAN

T'S about time. With forty days

left to the US presidential

election, John Kerry finally

appears to have found his voice.

This week he finally made the case

Since the Republican conven-

tion at the end of August, Kerry has

been on the receiving end of a

serious pummeling by the Bush

campaign, its surrogates in the

media, and "independent" groups,

that has seen his poll numbers

have got the message that to win

this election he is going to have to

take it to Bush as strongly as Bush

early because he was the one

has been hitting him.

attacks against him.

ries.

war on terror.

months.

plummet

The challenge now is to maintain the momentum of the upward trend. The BOI which has been the target of considerable criticism in the past for not doing enough to garner FDI may have reasons to feel redeemed. They have our kudos, but they can't afford to rest their oars just yet, because we are still stuck with millions, somewhat ironically in a neighbourhood of billions.

Most important of all, the culture of confrontational politics will have to be discontinued to signal political stability; the high cost of doing business curtailed; and above all, the law and order situation will have to be vastly improved to instill a sense of security in the investors and businessmen. Unless confidence is restored to the law enforcement, justice and financial systems, we cannot get the amount of investment we need to break out of the LDC cycle. In all the areas, we are basically competing with other FDI destinations. To top it all, we have to contend with the expiry of the multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) which poses a double challenge to us, to borrow the UNDP chief Lissner's words -- of sustaining the readymade garments sector and retaining our position as a competitive FDI destination.

In despair, she stabbed herself with a dagger and did away with her own life. The immortal tragedy of Romeo and Juliet tells us that they could not have lived without each other. But does it tell us how much was the love between them? Did he love her more, or did she love him more? Or, can we say that they loved one another equally? For those of you who do not know,

Romeo met Juliet at the feast of the Capulets where he had come to ind another woman named Rosaline, who disdained him and never requited his love. That is when he saw an exceedingly beautiful girl named Juliet, who could teach the torches to burn bright. It was love at first sight, which picked up all the pieces of Romeo's broken heart and put it

together with magic touch. People fall in love all the time, men and women, who feel attracted to each other, their hearts melting like cheese under the broiler. It starts with the urge from a live was like to love. There is all reason against it but there is all healthy instinct for it. People die for love and they also live for it. People kill for love and they also save lives for it. People walk in the air when in love and wallow in despair, when they get hurt. People build Taj Mahal for love and they also destroy Troy for it. All these happen because love is not an equation. It comes in flows and ebbs but rarely in steady streams.

cases love starts with infatuation, one person feeling excessively attracted by another, and that person becomes desperate to express his feelings like a festering boil waiting to break. Even if love starts in two hearts at the same time, it is always one heart that takes the first step, writes the first note, makes the first phone call, or gives the first wink. This is when it becomes like a bargain. The weaker of the two is the first to give

Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that if you loved, then you should be loved, because all love was mathematically just as much as the two sides of an algebraic equation. But then Oscar Wilde was convinced that love was not the same

that many parts of the brain get involved when someone falls in love. but two regions play a more dominant role. The Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA) shows heightened activity in passionate lovers and the Caudate Nucleus plays a key role in the brain's motivation and reward system. The brain scans reveal that women tend to show more activity in areas that process attention, emotion, and memory recall. Men, by contrast, are more active in areas associated with the integration of visual stimuli and physical arousal.

Indeed, love is just an altered state of mind under the influence of chemicals named dopamine and others, which are produced in the VTA region and then distributed to

same impulse when she found that Romeo was dead.

Kahlil Gibran claimed that the greatest pain that arose from love was loving someone you could never have. But then Romeo overcame the grief of being ignored by Rosaline when he met Juliet, though little did he know that the joy of that love was going to become a tragedy soon! Little did he know that he would hold that love in his hand and see it slip through his fingers, that he would not be able to unite with his beloved although both of them literally died to reciprocate their

undying love for one another. The product of love, therefore, varies from person to person, and it flows like water from top to down.

for three years. She never stopped mourning her beloved prince, wearing black until her death in 1901. There are more famous love stories, which are examples of how two people suffered equally in love, yet cherished each other in life and death. During the battle of Actium, Antony heard the false report that Cleopatra was dead, and he took his life by falling on his sword. With no hope left, Cleopatra committed suicide by inducing a poisonous asp to bite her.

In 1612, a teenage girl named Ariumand Banu married 15-vearold Shah Jahan -- she would be renamed Mumtaz Mahal and bear Shah Jahan 14 children. When she died the grieving emperor resolved

beatific, but rarely does it leave both hearts equally satisfied. Man and woman fall in love as much as they also fall out of it. Love is as much an obsession as it can be an obfuscation. It is a passion that works like a magic potion for those who are fortunate. For others it is a poison that kills slowly.

A sometime sheep farmer named Samuel Butler, who became a noted English novelist, suggested that to live was like to love. There is all reason against it but there is all healthy instinct for it. he said. People die for love and they also live for it. People kill for love and they also save lives for it. People walk in the air when in love and wallow in despair, when they get hurt. People build Taj Mahal for ove and they also destroy Troy for it. All these happen because love is not an equation. It comes in flows and ebbs but rarely in steady

streams. Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

Punishing the Simonas

NAEEM MOHAIEMEN

IAO Naeem, Difficult days. My friend Simona was taken by the war. I was with her in Kosovo, I was with her in Iraq. I can't sleep anymore. Now the war has invaded my personal life. My stories and memories. I can't understand. Simona is really loved by all the people, she has worked in Iraq since 1990. Who did it?"

The words were in a letter from my friend Maddalena Spada. An Italian NGO worker who has worked all over the world, she is presently working with migrants in Morocco. The last time I saw her was when she marched with half a million people in the March 2003 anti-war rally in New York. With so many people on the streets, everyone felt exuberant. We played music on the streets and Maddalena and her friends danced while holding peace signs. All

across the crowd were rainbow

flags with "Pace" (Peace), an Italian innovation Maddalena had first introduced me to in Florence. "You Italians come up with all the good signs," I told her, smiling. Everyone was confident, we would stop the war with our protests.

A few days later, Maddalena made her presentations to the UN for her New York project, and then she was off to Morocco. She hasn't been back in New York since then. Although our e-mails shared personal stories, and commiserated over the futility of the Iraq war, we always tried to cheer each other up. But our optimistic spirit was evaporating. The war was still going on Iragis were dying, the GI death toll had crossed 1,000 and hostages were now the rule of the day. Matt Taibi recently wrote in Alternet "Protests can now be ignored because our media has learned how to dismiss them, because our

police know how to contain them

As Iraq spirals further into madness, the lunatics are taking over the asylum. Italy was the scene of some of the strongest anti-war demonstrations. After London, the largest anti-war protests were in Rome, dwarfing even New York's protests. The Italians' reward has been to be kidnapped while carrying out humanitarian work.

OPINION

and because our leaders now know that once a protest is peacefully held and concluded, the protesters simply go home and sit on their asses until the next protest or the next election." The evidence supports Taibi -- we still come out and protest, but the war machine seems totally unfazed by our actions

In the middle of this blue funk came the news that Iraqi insurgents had kidnapped Maddalena's friends. A day after her e-mail, her husband Paolo sent us a formal appeal. He filled in the blanks about Simona Torretta and Simona Pari -- details I

vaguely remembered from Maddalena's stories in New York. The two Simonas work for an Italian NGO "A Bridge to Baghdad" (www.unponteper.it), that has helped the Iragi people since the first Gulf War. Ironically, while the sanctions were strangling Iraq, the Italian NGO was one of the few that defied the US and worked in Baghdad

Simona Torretta was in Baghdad since 1994, working with schools, hospitals and universities. All this went on while the embargo was in full force and the world media was busy elsewhere. In 1999, Maddalena also joined them

for a project fostering collaboration between Italians and Iragi elementary schools. One day, while visiting a school, an Iragi teacher told Maddalena: "[Simona] was here with us also under the bombs. We will never forget that." One of the Italians' most painful memories of that time was working in the hospitals, watching doctors with no medicine, trying to save dying patients. On New Year's eve 2000, Simona and Maddalena organized a demonstration with banners that

said "Stop the Embargo." Maddalena eventually left Iraq to continue her work in Sierra Leone. After a brief period working in New York, she started a new project in Morocco. Meanwhile the two Simonas stayed on in Iraq. Although most aid workers have evacuated the country, they felt safe because the local Iragis all knew and liked them. Their abrupt kidnapping by mask-wearing militants shocked the local community. Paolo raised the questions that were on many minds:

"Why did the Islamic guerrillas kidnap three women? Why did the kidnappers not have AK-47s but electrified sticks and guns with "silenziatore" (silencers)? Why did they enter the building with a list of to many warnings, the US occupanames of the people to kidnap? tion has turned into a bloody mess Why are there no demands from and a recruiting ground for fanatics the kidnappers?"

As Iraq spirals further into madness, the lunatics are taking over the asylum. Italy was the scene of some of the strongest anti-war demonstrations. After London, the largest anti-war protests were in Rome, dwarfing even New York's protests. The Italians' reward has been to be kidnapped while carrying out humanitarian work. Two months ado, another group of militants kidnapped Indian truck drivers. By taking poor migrants hostage, and using them to punish the US occupation, the insurgents showed their brutal streak of inhumanity. During the Vietnam War, anti-war activists saw the Vietcong as a people's liberation army because they stood up to the US

army. But in the present crisis,

there are no good sides, reflective

of our tangled global politics. True

and terrorists. But in opposing the occupation, we cannot find anything to support among the insurgents. Especially for those of us from Muslim-majority nations, Muqtada Al Sadr or Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi are no heroic guerilla figures. Sadly, the Italian hostages are even less safe than the Indian truck Their European backdrivers. ground makes it more likely that fanatics will see them as members

of the "evil empire." Activists everywhere, especially from Muslim nations, must speak up now against the ongoing cycle of kidnapping. There are many ways to oppose Empire, but this cannot be one of them

Naeem Mohaiemen is Editor of the progressive Muslim website Shobak.Org