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Stop mass arrests



PHOTO: AFP

It is indeed sad that we, the general people of Bangladesh, are facing a lot of problems due to political instability. The ruling as well as the opposition party is responsible for this. From our point of view we can say that the ruling party should show patience in dealing with opposition activities. But the government has failed in this respect. Thousands of opposition activists are being arrested and the situation is going from bad to worse. Among the victims, a big portion has no connection with politics.

The government should be a little more tolerant.

Mamun Ali Khan, CMA, ICMAB, Dhaka

It seems to me that the so called mass arrests in April and the new round of mass arrests are nothing more than a method for the police to cash in on an activity used by terrorists with so much success--kidnapping for ransom. Despite what the opposition says, I'm inclined to believe the police when they say that the

arrests are not politically motivated. It seems that they are motivated by money.

Those who are arrested are generally the poor who do not have a legal recourse or do not have adequate "contacts" to help them get out of their predicament. So the only option for them is to buy their way out of prison. And since there have been no charges filed against any of them or even proper records of their having been arrested, it's very easy for the police to simply let them out of their cages once payment has been made. Is it surprising? No! Their failure to arrest even one kidnapper of businessmen seems to me as an act of collusion and not one of incompetence. And it was only a matter of time before they created their own little earning regime from the scheme that they don't have to share with criminals.

No newspaper has yet reported on how many of those arrested since April are still in prison and how many have been charged with any crime.

Saif Ahmed, Mohammedpur, Dhaka

Third world?

From the text books since childhood we all know very well that ours is a poor, third world country. Hello everyone, is this a third world country you think? Whenever you step on the road you see Lexus, Pajero V6 and all other luxury cars competing to increase their numbers. Everywhere shopping malls having the varieties of imported branded products are available. All latest commodities of life are now in Bangladesh. We all are now eager to have Pizza Hut, maybe very soon McDonalds.

Is it a poor country? I am confused! People are even arranging Car Shows. The elite society just shuts their eyes while the poor are in front of them. Curiously, in Baridhara one side of the street is having those buildings competing with each other for more glamour and in another side slums are competing to lose everything. Is there any end to this cycle?

Farhan Hossain
On e-mail

Enemy of peace

Islam is a religion of peace and definitely Islam does not need any solicitor to save it. Because there is no question of Islam being an "unsafe" religion. And really, Islam does not give any damn to the misdeeds of ignorant fanatics. Because these people are few in number and fanatics are there in all religions, people need eyes to see before blaming Muslims.

Some extremist Muslims are causing casualties to the non-Muslims, and the Muslims are being tortured by non-Muslim fanatics as well in many regions around the world. None of the Muslim countries approve of extremism. Who does not know what happened in India in 1992? In Bangladesh, too, there are village "mullahs" who cause sufferings to vulnerable groups of people by issuing *fatwa*. Minority people were tortured in some places in our country. The culprits have to be punished.

The recent Hijab issue is another example of fanaticism. Let's talk about France, if hijab is banned then any kind of thing that bears sign of religion should be banned too, no matter which religion it presents. If the French government only bans

the hijab just because it bears the sign of a particular religion, won't it be expression of resentment and zeal against a particular religion "Islam"? Isn't it a sort of "extremism"? The Cross bears the sign of a particular religion, so why not ban that?

Cantara Wali Ruhi
Dept of English, JU

Intellectual poverty?

I speak of architecture as a part of the cultural whole and this must be read in that context. Have you ever wondered why historic preservation in architecture is a much-hyped academic and media cliché these days? Perhaps because it is sometimes seen as a cultural icon and an identity issue. This sensationalism also arises in part when there is a vacuum in modern design thinking. When a large part of the practice cannot innovate and give society a new icon and direction but finds it convenient and far easier to adopt off the shelf global models, the society suffers. It suffers from a lack of identity that arises from a failure to invent aesthetic and spatial inspirations and formulation of new icons. This inevitably leads to a distorted collage of borrowed aesthetics and displaced identity. The downside as said before, is a confused lack in character. The conventional motivation in dealing with this crisis is to go through a reinforcement of older icons, essentially backtracking in history. So it is no wonder that an impoverished intellect looks towards the past to reincarnate dead icons. The other attempt is to import icons from the global world, to use borrowed talents so to speak, in an effort to replace this vacuum. Either way, this is an indication of intellectual poverty. Today many of our societies look more towards the past than to the future and history becomes a major academic obsession, not to enrich the cultural treasure trove but to act impulsively in reaction to this apparent vacuum in the present. True freedom does not lie in winning a war, but in instilling the spirit, that drives society forward as a combined whole and breathes the magic of creativity and innovation that leads to progress. In every sphere of human activity this positive growth marks a culture of excellence. On the other hand, when stagnation

and back tracking rules, it wilts and dies in time. Now the question is, which way do we want to go?

Mujtaba Ahsan

Architectural Doctorate Programme, University of Hawai

A resilient state

I take umbrage at the remark, "Bangladesh is not a failed state but a fragile state" made by Ms. Christine Wallich, Country Director, the World Bank, at a recent meeting held in Dhaka. According to Webster's dictionary, the word fragile means

something easily broken and damaged; brittle; vulnerably delicate; lacking in substance; flimsy etc. Notwithstanding the daunting challenges that Bangladesh faces today, none of the above attributes apply to Bangladesh as a state. Perhaps the best example of Bangladesh's resilience (non-fragility) is the fact that the country has posted a five percent growth rate on an average over the past two decades and achieved significant human development, in spite of misconceived and incompetent advice from the World Bank. A further proof of the resilience is the modest political development the state has achieved, despite the acrimonious relationship between the two major parties in the country.

The real fragility of our successive governments (not state) lies in their failure in containing diplomats posted in this country.

Julfia Hasan

Harvard, Massachusetts

Peculiar grading system

This year in both SSC and HSC examinations, the number of students getting GPA-5 is much higher than previous years. The vital cause is addition of the grade of fourth subject. Interestingly, if a student gets A+ in all the subjects including 4th subject his/her grading crosses the 5.00 mark. But the authorities are considering it as 5.00 as they are not allowing the students to get over 5 out of 5.00. So a student getting over 5 and exactly 5 has no difference in validation. Grading out of 5 is not accepted internationally. Even all universities, both government and private, follow a grading system of 4.00. It is a big question why the education boards follow this peculiar system?

Istiaque Uddin (Rifat)

Dept. of EEE, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology

Those names!

I have noted with interest the letter on the above subject in your daily on 29 September, 2004. I think name giving as per the animal world goes to the idea of associating the strength or ferocity of the animal concerned. For instance, Cobra or Cheetah are synonymous with ferocity or strength. Hence the elite groups have been named after them to show their performance.

The idea is to call them by other names which symbolise power that unfortunately they lack. That's why we call them Cheetah or Cobra or Tiger, so that they feel elevated.

Doyen

Shantinagar, Dhaka

Flyover boon or bane?

There are 17 railway crossings in Dhaka city. The ill-fated city dwellers have witnessed the mockery of their time, money and energy in the name of the construction of the Mohakhali flyover, the usefulness of which is still doubtful. I wonder why the big mouthed decision makers of the communication ministry don't shift the railway station from Kamalapur to Tongi, as all the trains connecting all the rail destinations in this country go through the Tongi station. This would undoubtedly relieve this near-to-collapse city to great extent.

Also the cost of rearranging rail tracks and building a modern railway station outside the capital would definitely be far less than building 16 more flyovers in this densely populated city.

Shehzad Bin Shams

DOHS, Baridhara, Dhaka

Prejudice (brain drain)

We would like to express our views

What is wrong?

I could not quite understand the reason behind the protest against construction of a public toilet at the site of Martyred Intellectuals' Monument in Rayerbazar. There could be negotiations about choosing the exact location of the toilet, however, one must admit that the absence of proper public toilets in most of our sacred monuments does not stop the members of general public with a desperate call of nature from abusing the nooks and corners of the very monuments that we want to keep sacred.

It is time we appreciated the need for public toilets in all the public places that we would like to visit with our family members.

Khairul Hasan, Surrey, UK

on two letters that were published on the letter page. Both the letters are based on one-sided views and prejudice. On September 24, 2004, Nayeem Mano (USA) wrote about OM Ohidul Alam (Sept. 6, 2004), and his views on the migrant issue. Nayeem Mano mentioned some very important points that most people live very difficult lives in Bangladesh because of a handful of greedy rich people. We would like to add that nowadays people travel all over the world and there is a global or international culture. Just because people travel or live abroad does not necessarily mean that they are greedy. In fact, it happens to be the other way around. Since the 1980s, the people

after Bangladesh became independent, the pseudo-intellectuals who wanted power and money would not allow the talented Bangladeshis to fulfil their goals. Therefore, they all went abroad as they did not have a place in this society.

Suchitra Sufia, M. Shahi, M. Chaud

On e-mail

South Indians

My visit to Chennai has opened new windows for me. A not-so-frequent visitor to India my tours have been confined mostly to Kolkata and Delhi. My information about South India has been inconsequential.

stream India, the US and the other countries. I believe that the mindset in my country about India is based on wrong notions. I noticed similar changes in India too, esp. in the Northwest, during my visits there, earlier. But my Chennai visit makes me hopeful that the two neighbours should strive genuinely for amity and peaceful co-existence.

Sirajul Islam

Social sciences researcher and consultant Shamoly, Dhaka

Termination of life!

At last Rahela failed to combat with death. Miscrants raped her while she was returning home from work

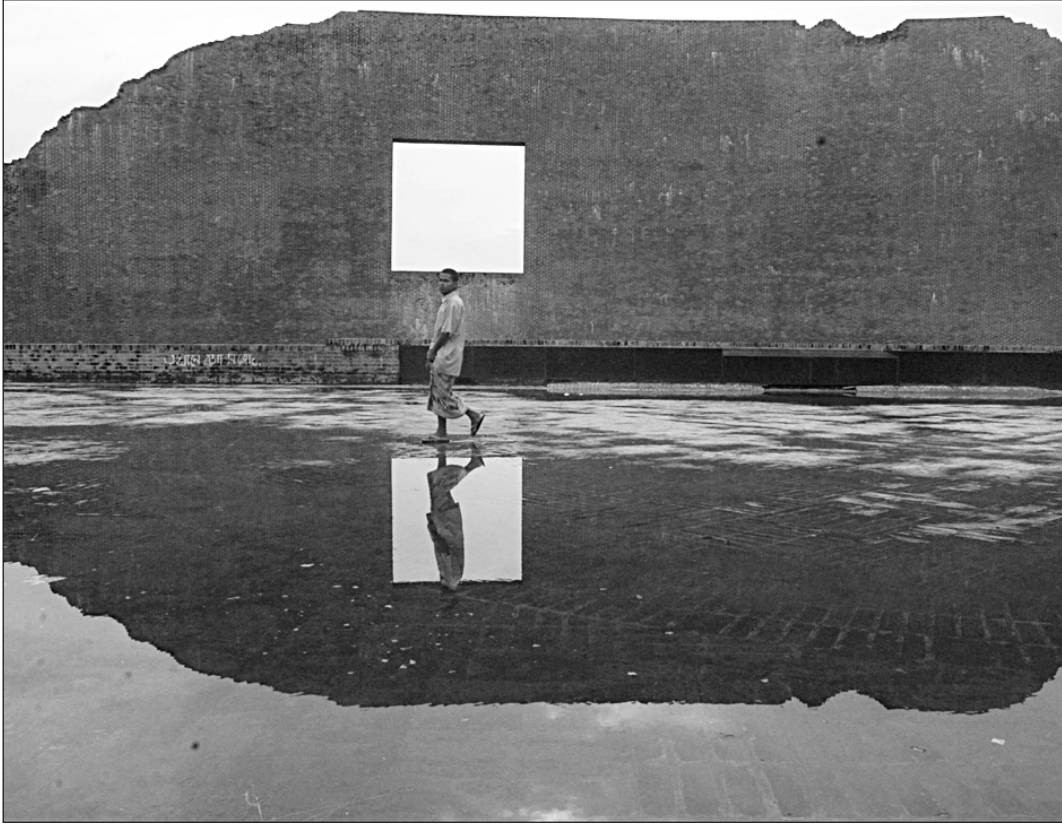


PHOTO: STAR

looking at these aspects of our nationhood get bogged down on sentiments, emotions and blatantly party lines and confuse themselves and those who write in these columns, the readers.

Pakistan broke precisely for reasons that broke India; the emerging Bengali bourgeoisie in Pakistan needed a separate state to further their socio economic goals. When we broke off, no one in Pakistan shed any tears for Pakistan's dismemberment. In fact, given the political polarisation of the time, the military-political leadership of Pakistan had concluded that East Pakistan was a liability and the genocide of Pakistan military was

Release all hostages

The season of hostage taking in Iraq has reached its peak; many have since been released others killed or still in captivity. While so much noise is made about the hostages in Iraqi hands, there is more media noise when the hostages are American, British or Italian. There is an obscene silence about at least 5,000 Iraqis held in terrible conditions by the occupation forces without the benefit of being charged or tried. In fact, the Iraqi detainees are being held illegally in their own land, while the hostages taken by Iraqi groups are soldiers of occupation or mercenaries.

When leaders of the West voice revulsion they are being crudely hypocritical; their guilt, their crime in maltreating Iraqis on mere suspicion are more culpable. They are the ones who need to atone and compensate.

Concerned, On e-mail

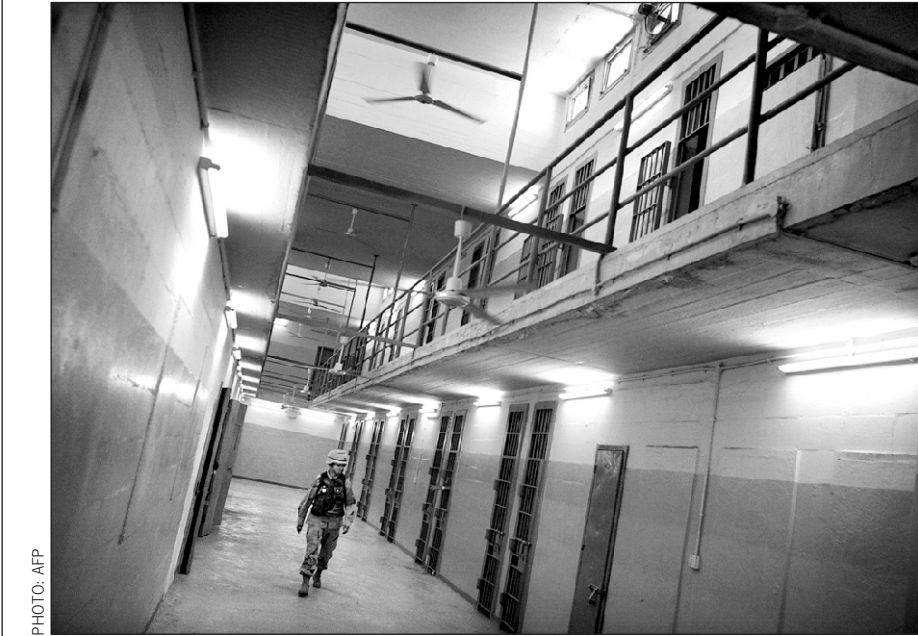


PHOTO: AFP

of Bangladesh have been travelling abroad. Moreover, we saw that the talented people were victims of manipulation by a handful of teachers at Dhaka University. There were professors such as Kabir Khan Amin and many others who were concerned about education. But nowadays we see some Dhaka University teachers teaching at private universities. People think that the Pakistanis tried to destroy the Bangladeshi intellectuals, just like the Nazis treated the German Jews. But

Also I had no interaction with the South Indian intelligentsia. These two objectives have been achieved, at least partially, during my recent visit to India that was solely posed for my treatment of CRF. I was pleasantly surprised when I interacted with the people I met in Chennai. They are really great. I appreciate their uncluttered, courageous views on the domestic situation in India, the non-prevalence of religious fanaticism there, the region's policy, social and economic, and its relations with main-

place. The miscrants not only raped her but also cut her throat and burnt her throwing acid. It proved once again that working women are insecure everywhere. She was admitted to hospital and suffered for a few more days before her death. Rahela was working in a garment factory of Savar EPZ. She did not get any help from her employer, even they did not visit her.

Rahela could identify the culprits. But she didn't live long enough to see her tormentors being punished (if they are punished at all!).

Minuara Begum
Gulshan, Dhaka

Christening Novo Theatre

Yet again another name drama has been staged. The recently inaugurated Novo Theatre which finally was named "Moulana Bhasani Novo Theatre" was renamed thrice. When the BNP in their previous term initiated it, they named it as Dhaka Novo Theatre. Coming into power, the Awami League changed the name into Bangabandhu Novo Theatre. After regaining the power in the 2001 election, the BNP reverted to their previous name. But this name also could not survive long. At last it has been named Moulana Bhasani Novo Theatre.

In Bangladesh a culture of giving name and changing it has been developed. From a tiny structure to a huge one, everything has to be named politically. As a result, with the change of regime these names cannot survive long.

I don't support this name game. If a man has a great role in something, only then it will be justified to name it after him. For this, I support the naming of Baidyanath Tola as Mujibnagar. But I cannot support the naming of Bangabandhu Bridge. It would be better if it were named after Sher-e-Bangla, because he was the first person who dreamt of it.

Mithun Das

Kabi Jasim Uddin Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka

Whither Bangladesh

I wish to respond to AZ's letter and certain points raised there, particularly on our history and our geopolitics (September 29th). People

Friends and people

Some years ago, a best-seller woman writer mentioned that "the world is full of people who mean no harm and cause a great deal of it".

Reading your thought-provoking writing on the opposite of what the famous communication expert Dale Carnegie had in mind, I was wondering why anyone does all the opposite things the expert suggested as a panacea to win friends and influence people?

In a country with a population of 130 million, more people live on a hand to mouth basis, where the livelihood provision for 24 hours is a rare commodity. In such a milieu it is only a short sighted policy that are adopted to manage the after effect of "highly irresponsible statement"(connected to April 2004) or "to foil the grand rally" (scheduled for October 3, 2004)

To the list of important questions you raise, allow me to add more. Is Bangladesh now a country where only short sighted policies are made at all levels (health/population/education/water & sanitation/financial sector or another) for the immediate benefit of the upper 20% or so of the population?

Is Bangladesh now (after 33 years) a country where one section of the people (powerful) "show a contempt for the rights and well-being of the general public" so similar to the oppression and suppression of the ordinary man by a section of "extraordinary beings" way back in 1971 and before.

Farida Shaikh

BAPA (Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon), Dhaka

