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PHOTO: INTERNET

Letter from my mother

Is it a mistake to be born? When I was a child, my mother always used her artistic talent to design patterns on fabric and clothes. She was always wearing beautiful fabrics: silk, tissue, satin, brocade, and chiffon. The cloth, the pattern, the scissors and the sewing machine. But now my mother doesn't use the sewing machine. When I was only eighteen, my mother collapsed with one arm and leg paralysed. She also lost her speech. I went abroad again to attend Graduate School at the university. My mother did not get married because she wanted to. She married because in the Indian culture the parents wanted her to get married. My mother doesn't sing to me anymore, "The sky is blue, the air is silent, and there's a summer dance in the wind." My mother cannot speak clearly anymore. My mother cannot hold a needle and make decorations or embroidery with the bright sequins. My mother doesn't wear the magnificent clothes and she cannot feel the wonderful texture of the fabrics. She stays in the estate, at her father's home. My mother doesn't talk. My mother doesn't design clothes. She doesn't sew anymore. I wrote letters to my mother. But she cannot write back to me. So I asked grandmother to tell her to try to write with her left hand. My mother wrote a letter to me. It had ten sentences. The handwriting was broken like the handwriting of a child. She wrote "I miss you, sometimes I sit on your bed and I cry. I'm trying to plant vegetables in a garden. I'm so glad you graduated."

If the people in eastern society believed in overcoming stress and visiting a counsellor or a psychologist, I think people would have peace and mental health.
Estelle Mahnuma, One-mail

New Palestinian leader

Yasser Arafat, 75, a true leader of the people, dreamt of an independent Palestinian state since he was a young man, but was unable to turn his dream into reality. He was not just doing his job as president but as a Palestinian victim struggling for freedom of his people. But on November 11 we saw the end of an era -- the death of Mr. Arafat, who was also known as Abu Ammar.

Now we need to look forward to a new Palestinian leadership. And I think Mahmoud Abbas is the man who must be elected President of Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Abbas who has strong views on the rights of Palestinians is not weaker than Yasser Arafat. He is a man known and regarded as one of the founders of the PLO. And if he becomes the leader, the eyes of Palestinians and Israelis will be on him, and his dealings. But at first he has to win the hearts and minds of the Palestinians.

Mr. Abbas who is also known as Abu Mazen is considered an exponent of peace in the region. He is also respected by militant groups like Hamas, which is powerful in Gaza.

As a leader he will have to negotiate with Israelis and take part in discussions with the Israeli government, which will bring peace to the region. But it will be a tough job.

Tahsin Hyder

Maple Leaf International School, Dhanmondi, Dhaka



PHOTO: AP

crimes committed, shouldn't they be trusted to make the right choice in the election?

The constitution of the United States has fared well for more than 200 years and has weathered a civil war, World War II, the great depression, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and the demise of socialism. With all its checks and balances, I believe it will stand the test of time and we won't have to wait 50 years to make the constitution right.
Dominic Quiah, One-mail

ZIA services

I am sorry that at the cost of being termed cynical, I will continue my war of words with all that I find wrong. The toilets at ZIA are dirty (a terrible understatement). They are filthy, disgusting and not fit for a roadside toilet, let alone an international airport. I don't understand what this galaxy of airforce officers are doing at CAAB. The present state of ZIA doesn't need anyone to look after. It's like our cricket team. Come what may I stay.

(as it is). Whether it's the toilets (the very mention is nauseating), the baggage section, the pathetic immigration, the customs, name any and the picture is one of total apathy. The CAAB officials frequently go abroad. Don't they see the other airports in the world? Or they in their eternal smugness shrug off anything to do with Bangladesh for which they are being maintained by the poor tax payers. Irony, irony that is the name of Bangladesh.

Who will rescue us? For heaven's sake and for once these guys should wake up from their deep slumber and do what is required to project a good image of a country.

Ahmad Kamal
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Holiday culture

It was indeed a very important aspect discussed in the editorial column of DS, 18 November 2004

under the heading "The holiday standstill - Emergency services shouldn't be allowed to slacken". I am a regular reader of DS since a long time now, and whenever I am on an official trip abroad, I rely on the online edition of DS for my country's news. But I was surprised to see that November 13 edition was followed by November 18 edition, which is a clear gap of 4 days in the online edition. Among many other emergency services, the press is also one.

If DS can bypass its online duties and responsibilities of keeping us informed in spite of being in the media industry, which is one of the emergency services, then how could it expect "to be part of the global work culture" and speak of better "work ethics"?

It is very sad indeed that "we seem to have forgotten that certain things must be in place at all times" and what is more unfortunate is to see our own DS is not excluded from this.
Kaushik Biswas
Barjani, Dhaka

City Beautification Cell

The formation of Dhaka City Beautification Cell (DCBC) is very spectacular and inspiring, particularly for the fact that it is comprised of a wide array of government, public, and private organisations. It is a directive from the Prime Minister's Office and being executed by the Corporate Bangladesh under the supervision of the Dhaka City Corporation. Apparently (Nov. 1, 2004 news) it is an effective project having a plan and schedule (even with deadlines) for the Beautification of Dhaka City's prime routes on the occasion of SAARC summit.

We hope that the DCBC activities would continue, even in a reasonably smaller scale, beyond the occasion of SAARC summit, and beyond the city's prime routes.

It is really an inspiring example of performing the corporate social

responsibility and interaction between the government and corporate structures in a positive and beautiful environment (the result is always positive and beautiful) to make our country beautiful without government expenditure outflow. My salutation to all those involved in this project.
Qazi Habib
Huntington Beach, CA (US)

Bush wins

The recent American election created a new legacy despite Bush's unpopularity over the 'War on Terror' and 'Iraq War'. Ordinary people would wonder as to how such an 'ostracised' leader achieved such a confident victory? However, Bush emerged as a better communicator and delivered leadership talks those American people were long to hear. Both Bush and Kerry delivered best of their speeches, which are presumably good information. But then, it is Bush who could succeed in establishing deep, human emotional connection with fellow Americans through his leadership talks. Despite Kerry's edge in presidential debates, it is evident that there was some kind of magic that led to a Bush win. What was it? We have to keep in mind the strong religious motivation behind this election. One would contemplate that it is the Republicans got more of their people to the polls than the Democrats did. One of the reasons being the support of the Evangelical Christians, the largest group of population with a single but strong set of religious beliefs in the US. Evidently, Bush identified this group and reinforced their religious beliefs in God as favour of the Democrats who talked in favour of abortion, gay marriage, world being ruled by non-Christians and the like. The common citizens are not supposed to know as to how the leaders intend to run their country; on the contrary it is the leaders who should make all out efforts to motivate people that they are the best at their respective credentials. Democrats adopted decentralised campaign techniques targeting the small group of people with exactly the message that would appeal to each group but it did not work out that way. Surprisingly, it is the Republicans, who targeted the largest group on pinpoint agenda, ultimately won the election. At the backdrop of election manifestos, there are complex issues of leadership, religious motivation, ethical issues such as gay marriage, abortion and the like.

Evidently, Bush capitalised on these core yet delicate issues and came out with flying colours.
Mahbub, Melbourne, Australia

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Death of Arafat

Since we have all respect and regards for Hazrat Musa (RH), we sincerely wish the Jews follow the Scripture and Commandments. Then there cannot be such "beastly" moves like the ones being made by Israel against the people of Palestine.

Clouds do not stay long. Muscle or muscle-flexing shall not fetch/breed any positive results. Example: Soviet Union.
Q Zaman
Rampura, Dhaka

River dredging

After Eid-ul-Fitr, the Ministry of Water Resources and Flood Control, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Planning Commission (PC) should take up seriously the task of excavation and dredging of the navigable river-beds across the country.

In the early sixties, the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission of Pakistan Mr. MM Ahmed and Chairman of East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (EPWAPDA) Mr. DK Power together put emphasis on maintaining the navigable status of the major rivers which were between the range of 12-18 feet navigable draught.

It is a tragedy that in Independent Bangladesh the persons who were entrusted to harness the mighty rivers of our country failed to achieve the target.

Golam Ashraf
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Rapid Action Battalion

I am a Bangladeshi living in London, England. For many years I hoped that the government would take the initiative to introduce crime busting troops who would work honestly and effectively. For the first time in many years, I am proud of the work being carried out by the Rapid Action Battalion. However, I do not understand why some political parties and general public are trying to discredit their work. They should try to understand that the RAB is working for the wellbeing of Bangladesh and its people. I believe if something is going to be good for the country and its people, it should be embraced by the opposition parties and the general public.
Mohamed K Pasha
London

RAB stories

A notorious criminal is arrested by the RAB. Upon interrogation, he

reveals the whereabouts of arms and ammunition hidden by his gang. The RAB goes to recover the weapon cache in the middle of the night with the criminal showing them the way. As soon as they reach the secret hideout, accomplices of the criminal open fire on the RAB. RAB members fire back. In the "crossfire" the criminal is killed. All the accomplices manage to escape. None of the RAB members get hurt. A few weapons are recovered.

This is the same, monotonous story people have been reading in newspapers time and again since the RAB started operating in Bangladesh. More than 40 criminals have so far been killed by the RAB in these more or less identical "crossfires". However, the point of my writing this letter is not to complain about these killings. After all, the RAB is killing people who are mostly listed criminals and murderers themselves.

And in a country where innocent people cannot get justice and politically connected criminals cannot be brought to justice, the RAB is probably doing us all a favour. What I am complaining about is the complete lack of imagination and intelligence the RAB has shown in sticking to a singular story line.
GSwarwar, US

Vulnerability of Muslims

Mr. Barua's letter of November 12th pointing the difference between editorial and news is also presumptuous to me. Does he seriously think either of us is unaware of the difference? To the feeling of strangeness, I have to add a sarcastic laughter.

Mr. Barua should read the coverage in the weekly Time issue (11th November) to understand what I am saying about the Muslim context of the killings. If 80 odd people killed are all Muslims, would not calling their deaths by saying that they were just Thais be a misrepresentation of facts? How does calling those deaths by the Muslim name make it communal? I have no doubt that the DS editorial was written keeping in view the importance of an editorial; not forgetting it.

In Gujarat riots last year, the provincial government openly participated in killing Muslims in thousands. The BJP during its tenure, openly advocated the supremacy of Hindus in India by their officially acknowledged policy of Hindutva. The Muslims have silently borne the atrocities that are committed on them as yearly rituals because the system has silently condoned the crimes against Muslims. Mr. Barua, by questioning the DS editorial, is representing that face of the communal elements.
Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

"Fundamentalism wins in the US"

I can understand why one could be disappointed by the US presidential election of 2004. Implying that majority of the voters are stupid and are not capable of making the right choice, on the other hand, is not right and void of understanding of the principles of democracy at best. To get the facts right the IQ survey of red and blue states the writer is talking about is an Internet hoax. There are no reliable studies of IQ comparisons of the states. Computing SAT and ACT tests average can estimate IQ of states. Based on the study done in 2003, the picture of IQ is far different from the hoax Mr. Shahjahan Ahmed is talking about. New York, California and Pennsylvania the three states with the lion's share of Senator Kerry's electoral votes are in 21, 26 and 31 positions respectively. Eight of the presidents, including Washington and Lincoln, did not have any formal education and could be considered by some to be uncultured and unsophisticated yet they were the two most impor-

tant presidents of the country. The thought that educated, the cultured and the sophisticated should choose the chief executive of the country instead of the majority of the population would make the forefathers of the country turn upside down in their grave. Isn't that the reason why they fled from England in the first place; so that the royalty, who considered themselves to be educated, cultured and sophisticated could not decide for them? This is a country where juries randomly selected from the general population choose the faith of a person and not a judge. If ordinary people are capable of deciding if one should be put to death or not for

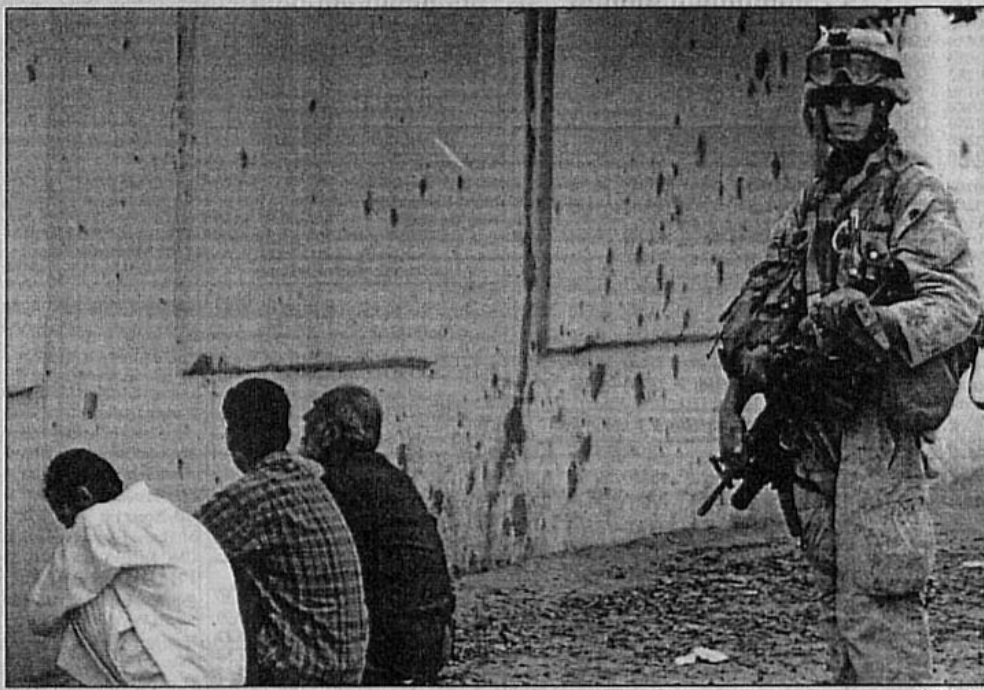


PHOTO: AFP

US actions

I am horrified at the flagrant violence of human rights in Iraq. I have been bleeding inside to see how in the name of so called liberation of Iraqi people Bush and his cohorts are unleashing a reign of terror in this beleaguered country. I was appalled when Bush without a wee bit of remorse castigated Iraqi freedom fighters in most vitriolic terms. When he meets his friend Blair, he recounts the

valour and greatness of the two nations and goes on telling how they are ridding this world of rogues and tyrants. To them fighting for motherland is terrorism, or else by what account the militants of Fallujah or Mosul can be dubbed as terrorists?

The world is muted because of the awesome power the US can apply to quell any dissent.

About Arabs, they are just

shadow of their heroic past replete with prowess and valour. Moreover, they have distanced themselves from Islamic teachings, which advocate universal Muslim brotherhood.

Americans often defend their action as a logical consequence to 9/11. But was the US policy towards the Muslim countries any different before that day?

Manna
One-mail

Bloodbath in Fallujah

Yet another Ramadan passes with the Muslims suffering further onslaught at the hands of the colonialist Americans. In fact, this is the second Ramadan Iraq is under occupation, and bloodshed is everywhere. Recent conservative estimates by the 'New York Times' dated 19th October, suggests up to 208 Iraqis dying a week. And there is only one thing for sure, the slaughter of the Muslims in Iraq is set to escalate alarmingly as the countdown to an all out attack against the Muslims of Fallujah has gained momentum.

The British government has sent 850 Black Watch troops to the area coined as the "Triangle of Death", an area south of Baghdad to free up the US army so that it can prepare its attack against Fallujah.

It's now obvious: the United States will continue to use Abu Musab al-Zarqawi dead, alive, or fictional as a pretext to bomb Fallujah and punish its citizens for the crime of resisting the US occupation, even though an US military intelligence report issued last week revealed that al-Zarqawi is not nor has he ever been in Fallujah. Allawi has demanded that the Fallujah leaders hand over Zarqawi or the town will face major offensive. How would they turn over Zarqawi when they don't even know where he is?

We as a Muslim community must show, that our support is with the Muslims of Iraq, who are being brutally killed.
Musab Ibn Umair, East West University, Dhaka

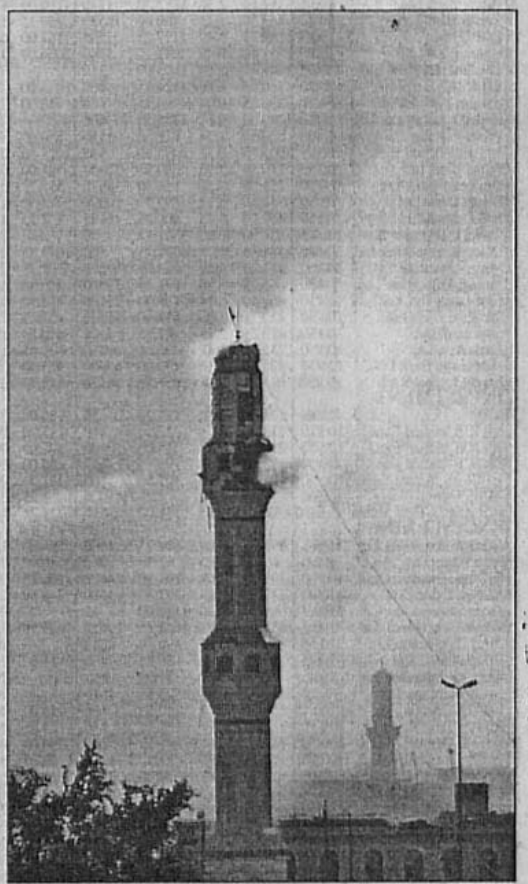


PHOTO: AFP

