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PHOTO: AFP

## What is 'genocide'?

For the last few months a recurring question has been haunting me--what is the definition of genocide or massacre? The question popped up in my mind in the backdrop of the US attack on Iraq, which I can neither dispel from my mind nor can I reach a decision. We, along with the world, know that the US government has been on a human shooting spree in Iraq since last year. The number of homicides committed by the

US forces crossed one lakh (one hundred thousand) a few months back. It seems from their activities that they are practising target or enjoying shooting of game birds though killing of so many birds indiscriminately often incurs world-wide criticism nowadays by the so called civilised quarters who are surprisingly not moved by the killing of countless human beings. The whole world is now tight-lipped like the typical Bengali

shy bride sans delivering some stereotyped statements. The proud and brazen faced US government is killing people without showing any respect to the world in the name of killing insurgents or terrorists. If creating panic and killing people indiscriminately and forcibly is terrorism, then the US is the greatest terrorist in the present world.

But I am greatly surprised at the role of The Daily Star, a highly esteemed daily claiming

to be committed to the people's right to know as it has never dubbed it as genocide or massacre, though it has already been more than genocide or massacre. Why doesn't The Daily Star then dub it genocide or massacre? I'm waiting for the moment when The Daily Star will write, "STOP GENOCIDE IN IRAQ."

Md. Munibur Rahman  
Lecturer in English, Sristy College, Tangail

### Standard of education

Thanks to Neeman Sobhan for the article the hijacking of 'V'. She cleverly detected some articulation and spelling problems of English language practised by fairly a large number of people in our country. Now-a-days, unfortunately, a large number of university graduates in our country cannot speak properly not only English but also the vernacular language. This phenomenon is common in different Bangladesh based satellite TV channels. Some of them have horrible Bengali pronunciation. Without question, in the last few decades the standard of our

so fortunate in Bangladesh! It takes years to get a telephone connection if you do not wish to make "informal payments". Make those informal payments, and you can have your telephone within days. Once you have a line though, your problems do not end there. You can then be at the mercy of the telephone linemen who can disable your line at will. You can make all the complaints and cry yourself hoarse; nothing will happen--unless you are ready to pay the linemen. Try filing a complaint at 9880067. That's another story.

Worse still, honest telephone subscribers have their lines frequently disabled by linemen who control those boxes on street

criminal offence to manipulate telephone equipment to disable (rather than enable) telephone lines of customers? Why is not a single errand linemen punished so far? I am aware of several houses in Gulshan and Baridhara who pay regular monthly 'fees' to linemen to ensure that their telephone lines remain in order. Is it so difficult to stop this extortion?  
Jalaluddin Rumi, Gulshan

### BTTB mobile service

I strongly oppose BTTB's mobile project as their land phone maintenance is not good. There are some mobile companies in

To maintain the running business properly is better than starting a new project.  
Boris, Gulshan

### RAB--a lethal weapon

After a horrible spell of severe social disorder and crime, the country's law and order has been restored when the government was compelled to form an elite force that is known as RAB-- Rapid Action Battalion to fight terrorism, ensure security of important installations and annihilate the criminals with iron hands. The RAB was formed on the day of Independence, 26 March 2004, and officially started operating from 26 June, 2004 by establishing seven divisional headquarters all over Bangladesh, teaming personnel from Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR and Police.

In the span of several months the country starts to find the positive effects of their activities. We have enjoyed the holy Eid festival with great joy, businessmen were out of fear and people of all ages came out even at night without any risk of getting mugged. Performance of the RAB is very appreciable and they deserve much more. Their success includes catching listed criminals, recovering huge number of firearms and ammunition, tracing the hideouts of criminals and so on. As the RAB intensifies its operations many suspects are on the run.

I do contradict one issue that is coming up in the newspaper everyday--blaming the RAB for the death of criminals. One group demands justice for the criminals. Why? What makes them so enthusiastic about saving these criminals from this onslaught? Does this offensive move of the RAB agonise them? It is understandable that a certain group is in fear and now shouting on the plea of human rights violation! When a person is killed by criminals, nobody talks about human rights violation, rather everybody shouts loudly at the government and blame insufficient security provided by the law enforcers, but when a criminal is caught and killed in crossfire during operations for the purpose of eradicating crimes from the country, they do protest the death of the criminal. It sounds crazy, doesn't it?

It is ridiculous to hear that a certain group of people is openly criticising the existence of this elite force. Surprisingly, when the country's law and order has just started to settle down they are raising voice against it. Doesn't it show that a group wants our country to be in dire straits! The government's decision to form such a force is definitely producing positive results and people can live in peace without much worry.

As long as these criminals are alive and sent through formal procedures, it is the political game that saves them because most of them are backed up by political godfathers. What the RAB should do is to find the roots of these "enthusiasts" and start catching them. It is necessary to collect information about their figurehead

## Wasted hours

Every morning I have to come to office after crossing few roads of Dhanmondi residential area. I am surprised to see hundreds of women sitting on footpath and wasting their time in gossiping during waiting period at the gates of the schools of their children. Some of them being entrepreneurs are utilising this opportunity dealing in various attractive items including cloths, snacks etc. I have a suggestion to make. If a school or a group of schools provide a room for arranging a training for these woman during their idle time on the footpath, we may get a large number of trained housewives who could positively contribute to their family. Say, for example, if they are given training in various domestic works such as cooking, stitching, nursing first aid etc, we may get a good number of trained women.

Gossiping in an indecent environment and thus wasting time which can otherwise be suitably and profitably utilised is not desirable. That is my message to the waiting mothers and school authorities.

Mohammed Alauddin  
Green Road, Dhaka-1205



PHOTO: AFP

education has deteriorated beyond measure. The education system in our country is now like a ship that has run aground and is sinking. Our job is to refloat it and put it back on an even keel. We all need to put our fervent efforts to achieve a high standard of education as well as proficiency in English language.  
Debashish Chowdhury  
Senior Teacher  
Chittagong Grammar School  
Chittagong

### Woes of telephone subscribers

Around the world you can get a telephone installed in your house by simply making a phone call to the telephone company. Alas, we are not

corners. What goes on in the exchanges is difficult to imagine. Subscribers certainly would like to know what type of security is applied to prevent the scope of tampering by wily staff. Telephone linemen and their compatriots in various exchanges Gulshan Telephone exchange, in particular have a habit of frequently putting telephone lines out of order. Management, in various positions in BTTB, are quite aware of this practice but turn a blind eye to this illicit activity of their staff. Before Eid holidays, more phones went out of order so that these linemen could supplement their meagre pay with generous tips from relieved customers. How long do we have to tolerate this nuisance? Is it not a

Bangladesh and the network is not so satisfactory because the sound is not clear in some lines provided by the mobile companies. BTTB should not spend too much on it, forgetting its own business of land phone.

It is still difficult to deal with BTTB. Our telephone has been out of order for such a long time and there is no sign that it will be repaired in the near future. They ask for payment to buy new cables, manpower bonus to arrange the working hands and so on.

I write this letter and hope the government will push and improve the BTTB's service and support for its customers in land phone. Change your image in public and create a new look for all, at least in telephone and communications.

and take action accordingly; otherwise this good work will soon go in vain. We are happy and pleased that the actions of the RAB have helped eradicate criminals from the society. My personal suggestion is "work according to your plan, don't get derailed from your objective". However, the government should use this lethal weapon more carefully and skilfully.  
Shafiqat Rana Sayed  
Dept. of Economics and social science  
Brac University

### WB's role

The World Bank speaks in a way as if it is the lone custodian of decency, honesty, transparency...etc. It has admonished different governments for flouting law, introducing corrupt practices etc.

Now the paragon of virtue has become desperate to have immunity against law. Where is the so called civil society which shouted at the top of its voice for giving immunity to the army for Operation Clean Heart, for the crossfire of RAB (which for the first time in Bangladesh has given the criminals the feeling that political immunity is about to end). Where is ethics, morality now? They better not have a fight with the WB--in some projects sponsored by the WB they have a good chance of becoming consultants or advisors.  
Saif, Dhaka

### A superb film

A few days back I watched the movie "Shayamol Chaya" directed by Humayun Ahmed. The film is a fantastic one. The theme, motif, plot construction and characterisation of the film are really sublime. The film underlined the spirit and significance of our Liberation War of 1971. It was very much meticulous while I was watching the movie. If we assess the aesthetic quality of the film, we can say that this is a top-notch movie. Mr Humayun Ahmed applied his eclectic and iconoclastic notion in this film.

The setting and costume used in the film were apposite. Religious harmony and tolerance are needed for social stability and survival. Mr Ahmed tried his best to juxtapose the two different types of characters in this film. My special thanks to Mr Ahmed for this quality output in our film domain.  
Molla Mohammad Shaheen  
Dept. of English  
Dhaka University

### "Ohio has failed the world"

This is in reply to Bashir Siddiqui's letter on Fri. December 10, 2004. Of course I am aware of the fact that, according to my own argument, other red states should be blamed for 'failing the world' as well, but that's not the point. It's called stylistic writing, and you took the title in a very literal sense. I'm not 'blaming' Ohio perse, because in reality all the blame cannot fall on them, but because the race was in reality determined by the winner of Ohio is a great part of the reason why I chose 'Ohio has failed the world' as my title. Other reasons being 'Ohio has failed the world' is an attractive title. It's a shocker, it grabs your attention. Depending on your point of view and the way you like to read opinion pieces, my title maybe factually incorrect, but that's exactly why it was published as an editorial/opinion piece. It wasn't a research paper. It's my opinion. It's my view. I wasn't documenting an event like a normal newspaper article. You have read too much into the title. You regarded it as an article that you would find in the

international section perhaps, where opinion/biases are nowhere to be found.  
Zaid Ali, On e-mail

### Save the young generation

Obscenity leads the nation towards destruction. No doubt it is very dangerous. Film producers are engaged in displaying the female anatomy. They are demolishing our young generation. The youths are easily swallowing various kinds of obscene films. The films follow more or less the same pattern: scantily dressed women are seen making obscene gestures. It is not clear why the censor board is allowing this kind of sleazy stuff to be filmed.

They are pushing the young members of society towards moral degradation. The nation will have to pay a high price for such activities.  
MKadir, Dhaka

### Crossfire

'Crossfire' has become a much talked about subject. Let's follow a

## Caretaker government debate

Your footnote to Justice Latifur Rahman's rejoinder (A rejoinder to Mr. Kibria, The Daily Star, December 2, 2004) gives me an opportunity to write a few lines about 'this vital national issue'. Some questions have been weighing heavily on my mind since the days Justice Latifur Rahman took over as the chief of the caretaker government in 2001. The following are my questions:

1. What considerations made Justice Latifur Rahman pick up a bureaucrat, a railway engineer, as a member of his team of advisers? Apart from being a relative by marriage (BBC informed us about it on the very evening he was chosen as an adviser) what else was the credentials of this little known bureaucrat?
2. Justice Latifur Rahman was very proud of his 'homework' before he took over as the chief of the caretaker government. How come his 'homework' failed to provide him two new names so that he had to pick up two persons who had already served as advisers with previous caretaker governments? Was there such a dearth of neutral and capable persons in the country?
3. How come his 'homework' didn't provide him any information about the fact that the civil servant he chose as his Principal Secretary had a brother who was actively involved in BNP politics?
4. What was the compulsion which made Justice Latifur Rahman transfer thirteen permanent secretaries, including the foreign secretary, overnight at one go? Did he ever

consider that this move sent a clear signal to a large number of neutral voters, who had not by that time made up their minds to vote for either of the two big parties. This abrupt action told these, till then non-decided voters, that the ruling Awami League was surely hatching some nefarious plans against the country necessitating such mass hasty transfer. Obviously, this tilted those neutral voters against the Awami League.

There are some more questions. But I would be very happy to know the answers to the above ones.

Finally, I would say that the system of Caretaker Government, though applauded everywhere, as a good concept, needs some clear guidelines regarding some DOs and DON'Ts by them, instead of leaving everything on one or two broad clauses of the Constitution. Here, I would refer to a letter written, though in different context, by one of Justice Latifur Rahman's ex-advisers, Mr M Hafizuddin Khan, in the Daily Star ('System of appointment to Constitutional posts: need for a review' The Daily Star, Sunday January 6, 2002) where he blamed the framers of our original constitution for being rather vague about appointments to constitutional posts. I fully agree with Mr Khan that certain things need to be clarified in clear unequivocal terms. So that none can twist the meanings of such broad clauses in their favour. Nothing should be treated as sacrosanct while this 'vital national issue' is debated.  
AZM Abdul Ali, Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

grateful to the squad. These are short term effective therapies. Short term therapy should be continued and long term measures should be devised to sustain the good results.

Most of the general population welcome the 'crossfire' phenomenon.  
SNM, On e-mail

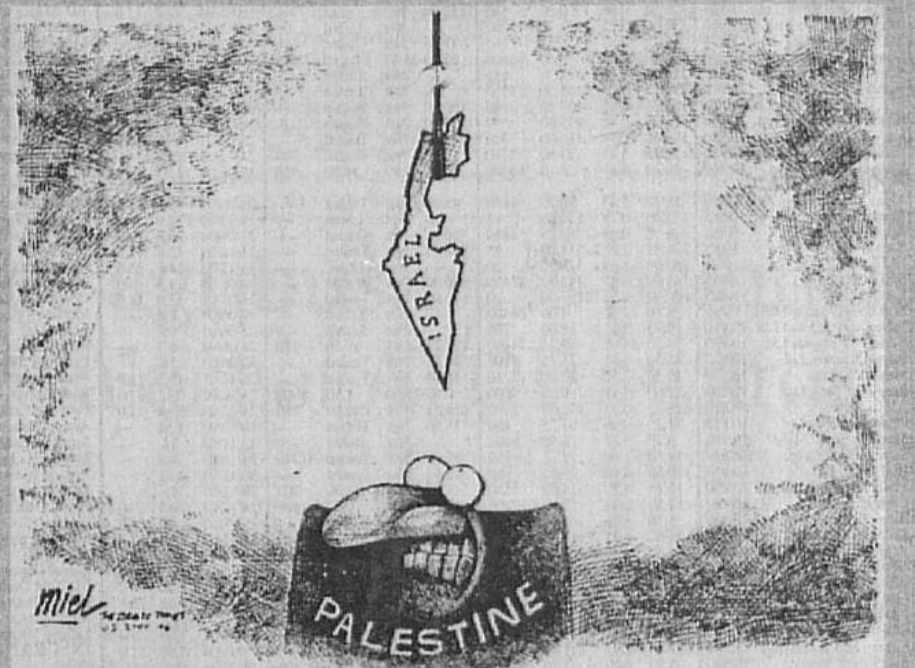
### Film Festival

Mr. Wajabat Anwar of the Department of English at Dhaka College feels that it was a shame that Rituparno Ghosh's film 'Chokher Bali' could not be screened because of the lack of proper projectors in Bangladesh. Bangladesh does have proper projectors to screen international quality films at Star Cineplex, Bashundhara City. Star Cineplex uses 35 mm xenon Christie projectors with xenon lamps and cinemscope lenses. Star Cineplex was scheduled to screen 'Chokher Bali' on Friday, December 3, but it had been pulled out from the festival. Many keenly waiting viewers left disappointed.  
Mirka Kristina Rahman,  
Bashundhara, Dhaka

## Palestine situation

A pall of gloom looms large all over the world due to the sad demise of the great Palestinian leader and the great freedom fighter Yasser Arafat. Yasser Arafat left no stone unturned for a peaceful solution of the Palestinian crisis. But US President George Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon boycotted and castigated Yasser Arafat and put him in inhuman captivity in Ramallah for long three years and at last Yasser Arafat breathed his last in a hospital in Paris. His life long dream for an independent Palestinian state remained unfulfilled. Now when the Palestinians with a heavy heart have begun preparing for an election to choose a successor to Yasser Arafat the US President George Bush says "It is an opportunity to revive the moribund Palestine peace process. I believe we have got a great chance to establish a Palestinian state. I would like to see it done in four years. Is not the position of George Bush self-contradictory? Has not George Bush in his roadmap for peace envisaged the establishment of the independent state of Palestine by the year 2005? So why this new tactics and bluff?

Not only that, even after the passing away of Yasser Arafat Israeli forces continue to carry out killings of the Palestinians and destruction of their house indiscriminately with US supplied arms, ammunition and bulldozers.



We very much doubt the secret plans and programmes of US President George Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. We all desire a peaceful, just and honourable solution to the problem which remains unresolved due to the chicanery of the US and Israel for over half a century. We therefore strongly feel that it is

imperative to hold the forthcoming January 2005 Palestinian election under the supervision of the United Nations and also posting of UN peace keeping forces in Palestine for the sake of security of life and property, peace and justice of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and tyranny.  
O.H. Kabir, Dhaka-1203