



Valentine's Day

The Valentine's Day is all about giving cards, gifts and expressing love for the loved ones. But this day should be considered a reunion of love for the world community to say no against war.

TJ Avery, Louisiana

Round the world on 14 February, flowers, gifts, sweets and beautiful things are exchanged between loved and dear ones. Although the truth behind the Valentine legend is murky, the story certainly has its appeal as a heroic and romantic one.

According to one legend, St. Valentine actually sent the first Valentine greetings himself while he was in prison and in love with a young girl who may have been his jailor's daughter. Before his death, probably around 270 AD, he wrote a letter which he signed "from your Valentine". This was a simple expression but it has its place in the minds of people.

Pope Galesium declared February 14 as Saint Valentine's Day around 498 AD. It was widely believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of the bird matching season, which added to the idea that it should be a day of romance.

Whatever may be the appeal of the day in relation to its background, we love to observe it with a difference. We like to establish fraternity, brotherhood, fellow feeling among the citizens, irrespective of any differences in colour, race and religion. We like to exchange our greetings with love, respect and affection. On this day, we like to develop understanding by forgetting all differences.

Let us give a different meaning to this day in our country forgetting its historical background and the legend, known or unknown. We should try to establish a new society full of fraternity and unity based on love and affection.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath, Dhaka

Once again the time to highlight love has come as the Valentine's Day is back. Even a few years ago people hardly had any idea about the day. But now the situation has changed. The Valentine's Day is turning out to be a kind of national festival because of its universal appeal, though I strongly believe that every day is a Valentine's Day for true lovers. True lovers don't need a February 14 to feel for the beloved. They are in love throughout the year. They exchange gifts throughout the year. Their love is not subject to celebration of any particular day. But again this day might add steam to their passions!

Now, the Valentine's Day is believed to be a day of love—love of any kind. Love for one's parents, or one's brothers or sisters. For this reason, the day becomes more meaningful. Of course, people love their dear ones always, but this day may just help them to express their love in a mood of celebration.

Wajahat Anwar, Dept. of English, Dhaka College

Whether love is structured, dreaming of two hearts sinking in each other; there are whispers, gurgles and bangs, no matter who is right and who is wrong.

Its message is universal.

Nasir Uddin Roney

Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chittagong

Politics of confrontation

There is no doubt that politics of violence and disorder in Bangladesh is a matter of profound concern to all citizens. That the spectre of political violence has reared its ugly head is doubly worrying. Such developments require a thoughtful and considered response, that is the test of leadership and the measure of wisdom. But the response of the wise and loyal opposition is hartal!

Dawn-to-dusk, 60 hours, 36 hours, 3 days -- hartal without consideration, hartal without end. This campaign disturbs, disrupts and destroys lives and livelihoods. It gives free reign to political thugs and terrorists on the one hand, and to a brutal police force on the other. Between the Awami League and the BNP, the ordinary people of Bangladesh are caught in a cycle of endless misery.

These events reveal the paucity of intellect and ability at the top of the Awami League leadership. At a time of crisis, as Bangladesh looks for leadership from the opposition as well as from the government, their only response is hartal. They have learned nothing in 34 years. Nor have they learned, despite numerous foreign trips at the taxpayers' expense, how politics is conducted in other countries for the benefit of the nation. Where is the media campaign, the campaign of non-violent protest, the attempt to engage the country in debate, the dialogue with government to arrange for a proper investigation, the reasoned arguments in the public forum, the constructive proposals to improve security, the evidence to identify the killers? Rather we have violent protests, widespread destruction of property, mindless damage to the economy through unremitting hartal.

There was hope once, for a better future. Whilst in power, Sheikh Hasina held out the promise of an end to hartal as a political weapon. Having executed a bitter campaign of hartal during the preceding BNP government, she sought to blunt a similar BNP response against her own government. Bangladesh now knows the value of her promise. Can she ever be trusted again?

The truth is that hartal does not hurt the government. It hurts the people, and it hurts the country. It saps our strength, disarms our friends and pleases our enemies. It is akin to burning our shared house down if they can't have their own way.

This campaign is a bankrupt tactic of a bankrupt opposition. It must be stopped before it bankrupts the nation.

Raqui Shamsad

London

Dismal show

Orchestrated sporadic killings, violence and chaos seem to continue. Election tempo, political issues need to be created.

The nation found no clue for any wrongdoing committed by the enemies of the people so far. Be it the killing of innocents, politicians or intellectuals, be it arson, loot, shutdown, mugging on the streets or from the national treasury.

It appears all wrongdoers have strong affiliations with the powerful.

One shouldn't forget that most of these cries or apparent protests are only a ploy to undermine or sidetrack the real issues. Dominant are the vices, so virtues have gone on hibernation.

If the nation wants to defeat the perpetrators and emerge as victor, a new chain of command and a new line of strategy need to be drawn up. Constrained or suppressed minds should appear from their hibernation to guide and have control over those perpetrators.

Who is going to take the lead? If you really want justice and an end to this sort of carnage, you should help mobilise the public opinion in real spirit.

MM Haque

Jeddah, KSA

Western outlook

I am neither a PhD nor a journalist -- to be able to write a nice column or compose an article for or against some burning issues that are circulated through the local and foreign media. But still I have something to say.

Granting of asylum or any status of the kind to persons like Taslima Nasreen is nothing novel or new. The West does offer all these kinds of gratification for a few in whom they see some potential to carry out activities that are anti-state, anti-religion or anti-national values (for the other countries) but supportive of western ideals and values.

Ms. Griswold is the latest western journalist to find things going awfully wrong in Bangladesh. It is sad that she has found some local takers of her theory of Islamic revolution.

AF Rahman

On e-mail

Hartal

A lot has been said regarding the

instability in Nepal and security deterioration in Bangladesh are the reason behind the sudden postponement, we are told.

But if we closely analyse the political climate of South Asia, there is nothing unusual where ups and downs happen all the time. Saarc was initiated to bring peoples together, so that poor indigenous South Asians could have more interaction between them. Every member country of Saarc has

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Helping Tsunami victims

It was wonderful to see the Bollywood actors and the Indian cricketers taking part in the Tsunami relief fund raising match "The Hope". Two teams (Kapil Dev XI and Amir Khan XI) did an excellent job in collecting money to do charity with it. They raised approximately four lakh and twenty thousand rupees in Indian currency and donated it to the Tsunami victims.

Last week, the Asian XI took the field of MCG against the Rest of the world XI in a Tsunami relief match and then the Kiwis set up a three match ODI series to go 2-1 ahead against the World XI. It was such a pleasure to see so much charity being done to help the Tsunami victims out.

I hope the BCB too will organise a match to help those homeless victims. As for the efforts so far made by the people to raise funds to donate money, I can only say "Hats off!"

Mohammed Fahim Hara
Universal Tutorial, New Eskaton Road, Dhaka

Killers at large

When the coalition government was formed in 2001 with the collaborators of 1971, it was the general political assessment that the country had taken an awesome political twist, humiliating the freedom fighters and their achievements. Since then the country has witnessed an ever worsening law and order situation, which has created panic. Before and after the election, the property of Hindus was vandalised and their lives were made vulnerable to sudden and unexpected death threats from unknown and known quarters.

Now the situation has changed, and the history of the three-year-old regime records the biggest arms haul, the death threat to the former prime minister, the bombings in public places like cinema halls, the bomb blast in a CPB meeting, the rise of one Bangla Bhai who has not been arrested, despite the orders of the PM, the attack on the British High Commissioner on his home soil, the gruesome grenade attack (a new trend in terrorist attacks) on an AL rally at Bangabandhu Avenue which killed an important leader of the party, and lastly, the fatal grenade attack on the former finance minister. Rab is moving from heaven to earth to track down the criminals and has kept them on the run, but could not sense the plot against this respected politician!

It need not be said that politics in the country is volatile and, the government and the opposition parties have failed to play their due roles. Some people resent that nothing better can be expected from the government which is in league with the collaborators and conspirators against our liberation war. We must also realise that the opposition parties never played their expected role. They are against the government in every aspect, whatever the matter is.

It seems they are always in some bargaining with the government, overlooking the interests of the people.

Mahfuzul Haque
Department of English, University of Dhaka

"Humpty Dumpty" filibusters

We grew up learning rhymes in kindergarten. But most of us never really understood the implications of those jabberwocky rhymes. The recent postponement of the Saarc summit reminds me of something rather interesting. The summit which was supposed to be held in Dhaka for two days upholding the motto of regional peace and stability couldn't go through because of the filibustering decision taken by a member state. The current political

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PHOTO: AFP

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Gopibag, Dhaka

Exploitation!

Article 34.1 of the Constitution of The People's Republic of Bangladesh prohibits all forms of forced labour and contravention of the provision is an offence punishable in accordance with the law. In reality, there is a growing trend of forced labour in spite of the constitutional provision. The most common of all is the employment of housemaids.

Most households offer them a meagre wage and even those wages are not paid in full to retain the employment of maids. Most of them have no option but to return to their employment from their leave with a false dream that one day they can return to their villages with just enough fund to perhaps buy a rickshaw or something for their near ones who can support them in their

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