

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

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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 taxpavers' 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, dismays our friends and pleases our enemies. It is akin to burning our shared house down if they can't have their own

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

Raquib Shamsad

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 ntellectuals 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, antireligion or anti-national values for the other countries) but supportive of western ideals and

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

Hartal

A lot has been said regarding the

ments. By this time hartal has snatched the lives of hundreds of people and the list seems to be increasing with the passing of every hartal. People are afraid to go out and perform their daily tasks because there is always this risk that some hoodlums are ready to halt the general public's struggle of daily life, even if they have to burn people alive in broad daylight.

Hartal is nothing but a destructive political practice. The Awami League and Sheikh Hasina should at least for once bring the country and its people into consideration and move away from the path of this upsetting political programme. Surprisingly, it was Hasina who once made a promise to the countrymen that she would never ever call a hartal if she went back to opposition. However, she certainly has forgotten this promise which truly questions her commitment towards the country and its

Obaidur Rahman

old age. The maids are basically illiterate and so poor that they can hardly contest for their rights and we have preferred to keep our eves shut because this is a luxury that we cannot part with, so much for our

The trouble with hypocrisy is that at some point of time it returns the favour to the same people who embrace it and it is now happening in our society. The other day I saw delight drain out of my nephew's face, a holder of Masters in Management Studies, when he got a conditional offer letter from a leading conglomerate of the country. They offered him a job but demanded his original educational transcripts for three years. In other words, the suitable candidates are not allowed to leave their employment until they complete their three years' bondage.

He has turned down the offer to say in short as it takes away his freedom for three long years during which he is likely to miss many other deceptions himself. To devalue the credentials of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, Dr. Bashar points out that "the main reason these two ladies find themselves at the top of the political ladder are Bangladesh's obsession with family names." Very true, vet, hardly unique in the world. The main reason Mr. George W. Bush, a self-described "black sheep of the family," finds himself as America's Chief Executive and the world's "monarch," is also the family name! In fact, when former alcoholic George W. Bush, who never had a serious job until he was in his forties, ran for the governorship of Texas in 1994, many Texans voted for him thinking that they were voting for the former President, George Herbert

Bangla Bhai and his bunch of religious zealots are a nuisance in the Rajshahi area of Bangladesh. But, they are not going to be able to form a Taliban-like government in Bangladesh. They are no serious threat to Bangladesh; certainly not

endorsing the prejudicial anti-Bangladesh views of Ms. Eliza Griswold.

This is unfortunate, because Dr. Shabbir A. Bashar is respectable. articulate and an excellent writer. He should be using his enormous talent to promote the interests of Bangladesh abroad, rather than undermining them.

Jameel Musa New York, US

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,

"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

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

instability in Nepal and its own political ailment. We should stand together in a brotherly manner to face the reality, instead of blaming others for lack of security or unstable political situation.

The whole situation resembles the Humpy Dumpty rhymes. Humpty Dumpty is an egg shaped character sitting on a thin vulnerable wall speaking to Alice . He was accusing Alice of not knowing different words and was very proud of his posture on that thin wall.

He never thought what might happen to him. His narcissism put an end to his journey. The lesson we can learn from this rhyme is that one must not be talking of danger and insecurity while himself living in a vulnerable insecure society.

We must practise what we

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impact of hartal on our daily life and the society that we all live in. Once again spell after spell of hartal is being thrust upon us and helplessly we wonder when we would be able to free us from this "curse" of Bangladeshi politics. If the situation is viewed from the economic point of view, then we can see that this hartal has cost our country millions of dollars and halted its development process. And this "artificial disturbance" to our economy has kept us far behind in this highly competitive world. It is certainly embarrassing for all of us as hartal single-handedly crippled the country's economy and brought our country a bad name from all around

And apart from the negative impact on the economy, all are aware of the hartal's contribution to the instability that is caused by it in the socio-economic establishGopibag, 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

important and interesting challenges of life.

Overlooking the plight of the underprivileged and putting them in bondage has given the opportunity to corporations, large and small, to hold the new generation of educated youth at ransom. It is about time someone took up the issue for a constitutional challenge. I wish I were a constitutional

Khandaker R Zaman

"See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil"

In defending Ms. Eliza Griswold's anti-Bangladesh article in The New York Times Magazine (January 23), Dr. Shabbir A. Bashar (DS, February 2) falls prey to some of the same exaggerations, half truths and

the support of the Evangelical Christians, America has a fundamentalist Christian President, George W. Bush. Polls show that even the pro-American British public thinks that President Bush is a threat to the world! So far, President Bush has attacked two Muslim countries that did not attack America (Afghanistan and Iraq), killed, according to British estimates, over 100,000 Iraqi civilians and is planning on attacking two more Muslim countries (Syria and Iran). Yet, Ms. Eliza Griswold and Dr. Bashar think that Bangla Bhai and his goons are a real threat to the world!

to the world. On the other hand, with

While attempting to score debating points over your columnist Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed for his article, "The New York Times Slanders Bangladesh Again!" (DS, January 31), Dr. Bashar ends up

overlooking the interests of the Mahfuzul Haque Department of English, University of Dhaka



Next US president

Her aides affectionately call her "The Warrior Princess". Her colleagues also call her "anti Kissinger", meaning that she does not need to show off her influence or present herself as a master global strategist like Henry Kissinger. She may not be a strategic genius but no one doubts her power. Over the years Rice has won the support of a series of powerful men....of course, of the president himself. George Bush has appointed her as the head of the state department. And why not.she had been his closet ally.

Though she was the national security advisor, but without question she played a critical, if largely hidden, role in the overall direction of the president's foreign policy. Her job was to translate Bush's strategic instincts into an intellectual framework, usually in the form of major presidential speeches, particularly those on Iraq.

During her days in university she became fascinated by the study of power. Her mentor was the soviet specialist Joseph Korbel, the father of future secretary of state Ms. Albright. An able student, Rice was vaulted ahead into various prestigious fellowship in academe and government. After graduating from the University of Denver at 19 and getting a masters degree at Notre Dame, she taught at Stanford and worked at the Pentagon for the then chairman of the joint chiefs. When the Middle East blew up in the winter of 2002, top US government officials wanted to exile Palestinian leader Arafat. It fell to Rice to bridge the gap by suggesting that the US call for new leadership in the Palestinian authority. Rice and Powel worked closely to produce a UN resolution on weapon inspection in Iraq. The document was littered with traps designed to bring the inspection

process to a quick end and trigger a war. It took eight weeks but the final paper passed the Security Council 15-0. It's not that Rice believed the war could be avoided. But she made sure America had the international support if war came. And in 2005 she has replaced her first boss to take over the state department. On 4 November Bush got the

consent of US people to hold office for four more years. Republicans retain power. Though this result transmitted a wave of shock omnidirectionally.....and many came down heavily on the state Ohio blaming it for "Failing" the world, but to be impartial, did the US people had a better choice? Bush terrorised their thoughts by reminding them of the memories of 9/11, releasing those documents, conversions over telephones...and as his last trump card inviting Osama Bin Laden to issue a fresh

chances, whatsoever, John Kerry had must have been demolished by that Laden speech. US people voted for Bush and set a new record. The holy smoke of the anti terrorist campaign is likely to persist for a long, long time. And after the 9/11 the US administration has forced the people to believe that they are vulnerable to terrorism. To fight this holy war, American people will always look for some one as terrorising still patriot like Bush. And democrats simply don't have that unique combination. So none should blame Ohio or any other state if they vote for the Republican four years from now. Is there any one more qualified and close to that quality other than Condi Rice?

threat in the wake of election. Any

Her father encouraged her to believe that she could be the president one day, though at the time most of the blacks were not