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PHOTO: AFP

## Where is the glory ?

February is the month of pride as well as mourning for the Bengalee nation, when our forefathers gave us something glorious. We needed an independent country, whose dream led them to fight in the battlefield. But currently looking at the situation and image of our country, I don't know how should I define this feeling. Should I call this depression, or regret, or just a pity? Let's not argue about what made up this situation, that's not the concern of my writing. The concern is, this situation has occurred, and who are the sufferers?

It is us, only us, the ordinary people, whose lives are constantly threatened with continuous bombing incidents.

I am too ordinary a person to solve all the problems of my country, but I know the bottom line of this solution. And that is nothing but simple unity. Standing united for saving our prestige, dreaming united for a healthy nation, and thereby working united for the betterment of the people, saving their interests, that's it.

On behalf of the Bangladeshi people, all I can request to the people in charge of our fate is, please think of making our national life better. Just a few functions, festivals or fairs can't produce the desired results.

Sadia Mahboob, Faculty of Pharmacy, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

## Whom shall we trust ?

Whom shall we trust ? the government version of the political and religious situation in Bangladesh or the one given by the local as well as the world media? We were told by the government high-ups in the foreign office and elsewhere that Eliza Grisworld's article in the New York Time Magazine of January 23, 2005 ( The Next Islamist Revolution? ) is "one sided, baseless and politically motivated". Is it so? Do the people at the helm of affairs take it for granted that the whole world would just shut their eyes over Bangladesh even after a series of political killings over the past few years ? It is very sad that even less than 1% religious bigots are now dictating terms over 99% progressive people of Bangladesh and that we have an establishment presiding over all these. I don't know if Bangladesh will ever get a talented diplomat and politician of international stature like the late SAMS Kibria; but what I know is that pithy remarks of well-dressed government functionaries can hardly contribute to boosting our national image.

Hats off to Mohammad Mustafa; an epitome of service above self. May Allah in his infinite mercy bless him.

S. A. Mansoor  
Gulshan, Dhaka

attack had claimed the most invaluable life of a wise man, dedicated and devoted to the welfare of the country, SAMS Kibria, along with four other citizens.

The foreign diplomats including the members of the European Ambassadors' Union have severely condemned the heinous attack on the leaders of the main opposition Awami League. They reinforced the fact that the attack is similar to the one that took place on August 21 on an attempt to kill Sheikh Hasina, and the government's inability to dig out the TRUTH and punish the criminals has enhanced the same deadly assault on the political leaders belonging to the AL.

The country has witnessed the cruel murders of quite a few great political personalities in just a few months, the point raises the sensible question in the sensible minds: how much blood do we need? At this ominous juncture, we urge the government not to remain indifferent to such unheard of incidents in our country and strongly demand a very fast and just in-depth probe to bring out the criminals to public focus. No crossfire solution would suffice, rather it would push the whole issue into the quagmire of doubts. Taking a close look at history, we can

assess the bare fact that evil, whatever its size or strength is, does succumb to its ultimate failure.

In addition, we strongly believe that we don't need any Interpol or foreign investigating team to do the needful, our police and other law enforcement agencies are good enough to solve the issue.

Rafiqul Islam Rime  
Agrabad, Chittagong

"First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me. --- Rev. Martin Niemoller, 1945" Mr. Kibria's death is not a partisan issue. Political killings of this sort have to be stopped in the bud if we don't want to fall further into the dark abyss we seem to be slipping into.

The government has to make an independent investigation into the matter and bring the parties responsible to justice.

K Siddique  
Uttara, Dhaka

### ACC

People with a negative mindset were very much skeptic about ACC's proper functioning. Those who believed that in spite of having political inclination, people can still deliver something and pinned hope on its formation are in trouble now.

Those who were skeptic are now laughing and we are upset as our hopes are crumbling each passing day. A big mess is made and it appears that its functionaries are in full spirit to clash with each other, rather than doing something before their double retirement.

For every failure, we blame the government but don't you agree that if people rise to their heels and use their sense, yet lots can be done? Unfortunately, we are running short of them.

M M HAQUE  
Jeddah, K.S.A

improve as a result of this relationship, as Mr. Chowdhury hopes. However, one must examine the political situation in Thailand a little more closely. I refer you to the article in the magazine The New Republic: The author worked for the magazine

aged to tame and contain the insurgency. Muslim extremism is growing and proliferating throughout the country, even in the north. With several other similar actions, he is moving Thailand towards a non-liberal, autocratic regime, one that

no initiative for improving the environment. Day by day the environment is deteriorating in spite of a scientist being the minister for science. There is no outlet in the ministry through which it can collect views and opinions of researchers

end interview with him along with his photograph so that we can know this selfless fellow citizen better.

It will be in the fitness of things if he is formally recognised and rewarded. A most appropriate and pragmatic step could be with a job by one of the organisations located at WASA Bahban. A live interview by ATN will also be appreciated, which is located right there.

In these days of political conflict, hartals and killings, this wonderful and praise worthy act of one human being above and beyond his daily life is indeed a ray of sunshine. Such acts of selfless bravery need to be publicised and made known all over the country.

Hats off to Mohammad Mustafa; an epitome of service above self. May Allah in his infinite mercy bless him.

S. A. Mansoor  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Oscar Night

This is a response to the letter by Muftah Wali on 26 January. Yes, finally there is someone who thought about not being able to watch the Oscars live while the whole world can see it. We are paying a good sum of money every month to the cable operators, but what is the use if movie lovers like us cannot watch the greatest award show live. In 1999, I was able to watch the Oscars live as we used to get the Indian Star Movies channel where every year they telecast the show live. But after that the cable operators switched to the Hong Kong Star Movies channel and we can't see the Oscars live now. It is about time we the viewers and the cable operators became aware of this and I request the authorities to kindly look into this matter.

At least show us the Oscars through some channel which shows it LIVE (on the 28 Feb. 2005) even if it means broadcasting that channel only for a day. I am sure there are many people who will agree with my point of view. And I hope this year we might be able to watch the OSCARS LIVE!!!!

Farhan Khan, Dhanmondi



PHOTO: AFP

### Playing with fire?

The government should look around and take lessons from civil war affected countries. Mr. Kibria's murder can take Bangladesh to a very explosive situation, unless the "real" culprits are caught and punished. If some criminal groups are being patronised to eliminate only opposition politicians, I would say that the Bangladesh government is taking the country to an unchartered area with severe consequences. Grenade attacks against opposition leaders and progressive forces have not been taken seriously and, therefore, nothing has been done except discrediting opposition for staging those grenade attacks themselves. It makes me wonder how low the government can go and the price it is prepared to pay?

If the government can handle this, my humble suggestion would be: get immediate help from the international community! It is high time to swallow the pride!

Dev, Boston University

### Thai PM

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury is clearly very excited about the re-election of Thaksin Shinawatra. Mr. Chowdhury's optimism stems from the fact that Thailand, under Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party, has shown great interest in developing an economic partnership with Bangladesh. Indeed, trade, health care, and education could all

The Economist in Thailand for a number of years. (If the link does not work, it is well worth it to create a free, non-paying account. It may be deleted right after you register and read the article, a process which should take less than 15 minutes).

To summarise the article, the Thai prime minister has engaged in illiberal schemes that have undermined the democratic foundations of the Thai government. When the US launched its war on terrorism, Thaksin followed suit and began to consolidate power and to aggressively quell the southern Muslim insurgency. He effectively destroyed the federalism that man-

will strengthen extremist fundamentalist Muslim opposition - as it is doing now - and undermine the future of Thailand.

Mr. Chowdhury, to his credit, acknowledges this, but altogether too briefly. For Mr. Chowdhury to say that the southern Muslims exhibit a "total lack of confidence" in the Thai prime minister is an understatement. We rightly should remain aware of what goes on politically there. Thaksin could be sowing the seeds of great political disruption, which, in turn, could adversely affect Bangladesh's relationship with Thailand.

A citizen, On e-mail

for gradual improvement. We have no channel to let the ministry know our problems.

In these circumstances, I think BAS can bring these two vital parts across the table for exchanging their views. If you think that such a conference should be arranged, then I have a request, that is, you must give young scientists from different research organisations an opportunity to speak about their problems, a possible mechanism for solution of these problems along with the senior, experienced and retired scientists to get the views of the young generation.

A scientific officer at BAEC  
Dhaka

### A peaceful programme

After seeing their posters all over Dhaka, I decided to go to Baitul Mukarram and watch their activity as an outsider. I was simply amazed. I have never seen a demonstration like this. At first there was nobody. Then suddenly when a leader chanted loudly about 200 people gathered at the spot within seconds and organised themselves in 3 to 4 human layers to protect their leaders.

Also when they were stopped by the police they took no violent actions. They simply sat down gave a speech and ended the programme. There was no violence. It was organised by a small group which works for Islam in a peaceful way.

Mirza Abbas  
Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur  
Dhaka

### To BAS authorities...

I am a young scientific officer of the largest research organisation in the country. Recently, I read the proceedings of the conference on "International co-operation in science and technology for developing countries" organised by Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS) with the co-sponsorship of "the international centre for theoretical physics".

I strongly feel that such a conference on "Improvement of Research Environment in Bangladesh" or something like that should be arranged at the earliest convenience. Because recently our Science and ICT minister at a seminar on mathematics organised in Sylhet, admitted that there is no suitable environment for research in the laboratories in our country. None can realise more than us how true that is. Another truth is that there is

### A tolerant country

I'm very proud to be a Bangladeshi! As our country is known as a moderate one, time has come to show the world how moderate we are. It will be a problem for us if people like Bangla Bhai become symbols of our society. So the government should have captured this rogue a long time ago. However, "Better late than never". The home ministry should take effective steps to catch Bangla Bhai as soon as possible to save our country from being a "victim". And the most important thing is, wherever we go, whatever we do, we should always keep in mind that ours is a small country with a huge population, so it will be a hazard if any foreigners want to sell the "Democracy tablet" to us. We should always have the sense of responsibility when we voice an opinion on Bangladesh, because Bangladesh neither belongs to the Awami League, nor to the BNP. It belongs to the 13 crore people and this is the only truth. So we should never do anything that hurts the image of Bangladesh, as well as all the Bangladeshis, living here and abroad.

Anyway, it's a wonder to me that the NYT reporter did not write anything when thousands of innocent Muslims were killed in Gujarat. Does she believe that fanatics grow in Bangladesh only?

Cantara Wali Ruhi,  
BBA, Dept of Mgmt, DU

### Brave heart

Your special correspondent's front page news item (DS: Feb 09) is indeed a moving and praise worthy write-up on the uncommon bravery and fellow feeling shown by a very common man! It will be nice if your correspondent can publish a week-

### Where is humanity?

Are we human beings? Can we claim this with our heart being tormented by scenes of brutal news about the poor people, who work in our homes just to earn their livelihood. We witness many monstrous incidents in our country. People are killing people for no reason, friends are killing friends. We see dishonesty and crime all over Bangladesh.

It was not like this even 10 years ago. People are getting ruthless and selfish. Torturing maidservants is one of the most popular(!) part-time jobs for some people. Our maidservants depend on us and in a way we are dependent on them. That does not mean we will give them ill-treatment. Beating and torturing our maidservants is a heinous crime and we should be ashamed of ourselves.

Are we still living in the medieval age?

Muftah Wali  
Department of English  
Jahangirnagar University

### Rab

I'm not an expert on crime and the government response to it. But still I can realise the importance and necessity of Rab. Those intellectuals(?) who are opposing Rab and saying that Rab is killing innocent young men, capturing good boys such as Munna (as a concerned citizen from Bashabo wrote) and taking him to custody instead of real terrorist Munna, are simply not

realising the truth. As far as I know, Rab has not yet killed/harassed anyone in this way. At first Rab makes a list of the well known terrorists who have made peoples' lives hellish and then they go to action. Rab is an elite force and there are many intelligent members of it. So it sounds ridiculous to me that Rab will deliberately catch wrong people.

The concerned(?) citizen wrote very naively about Tsunami and criticised Ms. Cantara Ruhi. You made up a funny story about Rab. For your information, Tsunami is a natural disaster. You can't bring it about whenever you want. Still I can't understand what similarity you found between two totally differ-

ent things like Tsunami and Rab. Rab is a man made force.

Tsunami kills innocents, Rab kills listed criminals.  
Ruhul Quddus, Dhaka

### Curriculum of English medium schools

Recently I have felt that the English medium schools (EMS) are putting a lot of pressure on the pupils of the junior section. Lessons are most of the time imparted in an unsystematic manner, showing no regard for learning in the true sense. Sometimes, the curriculum designed is such that it encourages learning by

rote.

Even in reputed schools it is noticed that teachers do not adapt materials from the books to facilitate effective learning. Also most of the time the books chosen do not promote activity-based learning, as it is in the developed countries like the US and the UK. For example, one day I saw a student of Class 2 of a reputed EMS memorising the definition of circle from a geometry book written ages ago. Firstly, the definition was in a stilted language, abounding in technical words. Secondly, the pupil found the definition difficult to memorise as she could not pronounce most of the words. Thirdly, she was learning the definition in a parrot-fashion without understanding the underlying concepts. Within some-time she had the definition almost memorised but when I asked her the concept of the circle and showed her a diagram she gave a blank look. It was all because she was never explained the concept along with a diagram drawn on the blackboard by the teacher, as it was in our days. The pupil was only made to copy the definition content of the book at length in an exercise copy. Later she was told to memorise those for exam purposes.

To conclude I would say that under the adopted system, the pupil does not get the chance to develop his potential.

Wasif Rahman, On e-mail

### Strange things

I've lived most of my life in Saudi Arabia. I'm sixteen and I've just come back here with my family. I've been noticing a lot of weird things on the news lately. Recently on Channel 1 they showed the footage for the first day of the 60-hour hartal. The scene was of a group of angry females all fuming. The second a vehicle came near them they proceeded to throw huge stones through the windshield and make the vehicle crash into a rickshaw. Then they pulled the driver out and started to pummel him. One of them even said: "Agun laga". It seems the equality of sexes has reached such a point that women have started to jack cars.

Another scene showed a 50-up women being stuffed into a police van. Bangladesh is probably the only country where such incidents occur!

Tareq, On e-mail

## River linking project

Recently it has been widely reported in the media that India is going to implement the river linking project. It's a very grave issue for Bangladesh. Because, Bangladesh is a lower riparian of the common rivers shared by India. So, if India implements the river linking project, Bangladesh will be greatly affected in physical landscape. Almost every river of Bangladesh will lose its natural flow of water.

As a result, most of the cultivable land will turn into desert and obviously biodiversity will be threatened. Besides, the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, will be greatly damaged for lack of sweet

water. Because, mangrove forests depend on the rotation flow of salt and sweet water. Moreover, the environmentalists of both the countries have already opined that the north eastern states of India will also be affected due to the implementation of the river linking project.

India is a friendly neighbouring country. The people of Bangladesh are always grateful to India for its great assistance in the war of liberation. So, we want to see again the same friendly gesture from India through abandoning the river linking project.

Iqbal  
Dept of Geography Env.  
University of Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: INTERNET

### How about a Bangladeshi idol?

Recently, a satellite TV show "Indian Idol" has been capturing the hearts of many Bangladeshi viewers. It is about getting India's best singer (who can prove to be a good performer as well). It started with almost one thousand contestants participating in it. Judges (namely Sonu Nigam, Anu Malik, Farah Khan) eliminated many contestants in their own hometown and took others to Mumbai for further competition. This process went on till there were only twenty-seven participants left. Nine of them performed every week and six of them were eliminated with the help of the local Indians' votes. This went on till nine out of eleven chosen fit for the gala rounds and then to find out the two other finalist the judges made their return (most of the times, the judges are not satisfied with the public's decision.). They chose eight of the already-eliminated eighteen and gave them a last chance and two of them were taken to the finals, thanks to the public once again, so, they got the final eleven. They were, Amit Sana, Amit Tandon, Aditi Paul, Prajukta Shakrie, Ravinder Ravi, Abhijeet Sawath, Mukesh Panchohi, Rahul Vaidya, Vishal Rathori, Harish Mayal and Rahul Sexena. Each of them performs every Thursday and one of them returns home on Friday due to getting the lowest number of votes.

Currently five of the brilliant eleven contestants have been eliminated and the Indians would have an Idol in less than five weeks.

After writing all this, I am now thinking it would be nice to have a "Bangladesh Idol".

Mohammed Fahim Hara  
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