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World tribunal on Iraq



I extend my heartiest congratulations to the great minds, intellectuals and writers of international repute for holding the tribunal on Iraq, a unique gesture towards humanity by the people that are conscience-stricken. The "Jury of Conscience" famous writer Arundhati Roy, who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel "God of small things", read the script that harshly criticised and condemned Bush & Blair along with other allies for invasion of Iraq on a false pretext that it had weapons of mass destruction. It read: "An exhaustive investigation of those responsible for crimes of aggression and crimes against humanity in Iraq." WTI also demanded "an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the coalition forces in Iraq."

Roy also called upon the US to immediately close down its prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and demanded a review of all treaties signed with post-invasion Iraq, which she ruled out saying, "Should be considered null and void."

Furthermore, the WTI rightly criticised the United Nations for, as it said, having failed to properly manage the crisis. It also condemned the US firms, such as Halliburton, Carlyle, Boeing and Texaco.

One can easily comprehend the motive behind this illegal invasion that unleashed hell upon Iraq and its citizens-- it's the lure of the oil resources in the region and to have a "Post" in that particular sensitive area in the Middle East. One point that is more ominous that the US has been trying to add the tag "terrorist" on all the Muslims in the world-- it's a war against Muslims in general. The point is established through different actions that the US has been taking against them; for example, the recent revelation by the US-HR (human rights) group that alleged that the US government pushed scores of US born Muslim men to jail without any charge after 9/11. The innocent Muslims have been harassed and humiliated. In addition

to it, the heinous act of dishonouring The Holy Quran by the US & British soldiers proves the point.

Finally, the rise of the voice of conscience, the WTI, is a wonderful gesture from humans for humans. I salute the great minds behind the humane effort.

Rafiqul Islam Rime, Agrabad, Chittagong

Dr. Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State of the United States, can be considered as one of the most successful and celebrated politicians of this decade. Step by step, she is going through the stairs of her political career, which may end in its top floor-- the presidential suit. We know a lot about her, but do we know everything? Can the people of the United States and the world trust her? Maybe the answer is 'no.'

On August 6, 2001, in the Presidential Daily Brief (PDB), Mr. Bush was told that terrorists are planning to attack targets inside the United States by hijacking planes. The title of the PDB was, "Bin Laden determined to strike in US." What were the former National Security Adviser, Dr. Rice, and the President doing at that time? Maybe the 9/11 attack could have been prevented. Rice said, "No, al-Qaeda plan was turned over (by the Clinton Administration) to the new administration, but she told before the 9/11 commission that the information in PDB was "historical". What did she mean by the word "historical"?

Now, she stands beside President Bush, talks like President Bush, supports the Iraq War. As the US Secretary of State, she must look for new opportunities to discuss Iran's nuclear programmes. Who is her enemy? Irani administration, Irani people or peace? Many people believe she has the potential to become the president of the United States and will run for 2008 elections, but can she be trusted?

Tahsin Hyder
Maple Leaf International School, Dhaka

Ban student politics

Does our government really want the best for us? If so, why are students in public universities still affiliated with political parties? If we are to follow the ones who have been able to attain success in a very short time, we have to follow the footsteps of countries like India and Japan. None of the aforementioned nations have student politics. We are in desperate need of reform, and a ban of student political organisations is essential for assuring that Bangladesh performs according to its true potential. A myriad of "beautiful minds"

student politics, and later become the puppets of the major political parties. To the ruling and the opposition parties -- if you really want the best for us please make sure that students aren't allowed to take part in student politics. Right now, many of the youngsters of this promising nation are in despair, and would not hesitate to leave the country for a land with less violence. The political parties should make the issue of student politics a priority, and to approach it with profound



sincerity.
Ishtiaque Ahmed, On e-mail

After a long summer retreat and a short strike called by the leftist student organisations along with the Bangladesh Chhatra League, Dhaka University has been reopened, though the classes have not started fully. The problem that we are facing has a lot to do with student politics.

It should be banned forthwith so that we can pursue higher education peacefully.

Anis Rahman

Zahurul Haque Hall, DU



gets lost in the confusion of

SSC results

I was as usual reading the newspaper the other day, the day after SSC results of this year were published. It was full of news and reports on the topic. One article caught my attention. I found that the education board had published two lists. One containing ten schools of Dhaka Board which secured highest number of GPA-5s and the other one based on hundred percent pass rate. The second list made me curious. To find out more about it I went to the official website of the Board. And there I found the second list which is Tangail Cant. Board School (43), Bangladesh International School, Jeddah (50), and some other schools, including cadet colleges. It is evident that the reason behind the hundred percent success rate is the less number of students. The ten cadet colleges have the same advantage. Each of them has no more than 50-54 students who are taken care of for 24 hours a day for almost four years. If these student don't pass, who will? My opinion is there is no credit in having such pass rate with so few students. Let them show if they can achieve the same results with 700-1000 students. To control this huge number of students and to maintain the high standard is a big challenge. And credit goes to the institutions like Vigarunnesa Noon School and College (where the number of students appeared is 786, passed 775,98.60%) and Ideal School & College (where the number is 837, passed 831,99.28%).

I also wonder why some schools enrol so few students. The cadet colleges can at least enrol more students, as there is high demand among students all over Bangla-

desh to study there.

If they take more students the education sector will be benefited. And then we will see whether they can secure the hundred percent pass rate.

Nusrat Rashida
On e-mail

Friendship

The mystery and beauty of friendship has been the subject of songs and verses, as well as the more structured explorations of philosophers, since ancient times.

Friendship is free from all calculation and requires nothing in return beyond the opportunity to express itself.

All lives are bound to other living beings through the need to share the finite resources of a given environment. Interdependence and co-operation are facts of life. Networks of conscious co-operation, facilitated largely through language, are said to have played an especially prominent role in human survival to date. What distinguishes friendship among our myriad social relations is that it is "technically" not necessary. Yet it is a vital factor in the wellbeing of individuals and the smooth functioning of business, communities and even the conduct of international relations. While the elective nature of friendship may vary, friendship is still, compared to our other myriad human relations, centrally distinguished by choice. Friendship grows from the simple sense of liking a person, wanting to share their company and desiring their happiness.

Thuihla Mong Marma
Rajshahi University

A disease of our own making

I agree with what Azad Miah, Oldham, UK had expressed but I don't agree it is too late. A silent evolution is unfolding and the erudite have a crucial role to play. And frankly if I have to blame someone the most for the present situation as to what Mr. Azad described I can only blame the literate population of our country. They have built a fort surrounding their world, little realising that the

reaps the benefits of the educated world, the farmer is left alone with his till. No problem here but when we have to vote during the election the educated cousin may analyse the pros & cons to decide on his candidates. But the farmer may have to decide on his vote by the basis of the influence factor -- his local muscle men, fear or hunger.

Reaching out to the cousins in the village with real time education, health & economic factors will enable us to identify the right persons to vote for. And better



A DANGEROUS WORLD

The world seems far more dangerous these days. Blush (Bush and Blair) community and their selfish cum hostile policy towards the rest of the world are fully responsible for it. And they themselves are not out of this devastation New York, Madrid, and London, who knows what next? However, how is it possible to go forward with a mind full of consternation?

Md Abu Raihan Wadud
CUET, Chittagong

majority of the population have scant idea as to what will benefit them in the long run and will only respond to their immediate needs.

I also want to tell a story of two citizens of Bangladesh. In my case, one is highly educated, the other a non-educated farmer. They are cousins. While the literate brother

governance, law & order and a healthy nation can only be its logical consequence. The government alone does not have to do all that. We all have a role to play.

Sazzad Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka
Past and future

canteens of DU. We are unable to come out of the clutches of bad food suppliers.

Will the DU authorities look into the matter?
Bazlur Rahman
Mohsin Hall, Dhaka University

Correction

The Oxford English Dictionary defines these two words like this. booty (1) valuable stolen goods. booty (2) Plural (booties) North American informal a person's bottom. What a big difference in meaning? So it's clear booty (1) is plural in itself. The point of sending this to you is because recently I read a letter published in your paper using booties (1) as plural to mean valuable stolen goods.

Mahmud Hussain
Tower Hamlets College, UK

Saarc and Pakistan

Now and then I hear about this Saarc group and lately some writers have even suggested that Saarc countries do away with the visa requirement. Well to state the case of Pakistan and which means Pakistanis, we are very allergic to this Saarc group. Saarc is not allowed to discuss the Kashmir problem. Well Kashmir is at the heart of the problem between India and Pakistan. The issue of Kashmir has to be solved first. The Kashmiri people have to be given the freedom to decide their future. The government of Pakistan represents the thought and the wishes of the Pakistani people. So in case of Pakistan Saarc is dead on arrival in the country.

Some writers have suggested that Pakistan is a neighbour of Bangladesh and I don't understand what it means in this case. I can say that Iran is a neighbour of Pakistan, a railway line connects Iran with Pakistan. Trade between Iran and Pakistan is very low and it can be enhanced many times. Pakistan should explore the huge Central Asian market, which it has ignored for a long time.

It seems the champions of Saarc are now demanding a visa free entry and finally they will ask for a Saarc passport. It seems it

has no ending. Pakistanis should not go for it.
Masood Khan
Chicago, US

Two wrongs do not make a right!

I would like to express my outrage and dismay at the terrorist attacks in London. I would also urge Muslims to wake up to the reality of extremism. Condemning the attacks in London, and indeed any other terror attack, does not mean supporting US and British policy in the Middle East. The invasion of Iraq and the unjust foreign policies in the Middle East have made the world a dangerous place and fuelled the rise of extremism.

That does not make what happened in London a less heinous crime. Nothing can justify the killing of innocent non-combatants. The people who committed these acts are killers, they did not care who died in their attacks. I do not consider them to be Muslims, for they did not stop to ponder over the teachings of Islam. It was just indiscriminate slaughter. There is a right way and a wrong way to fight injustice. The people of Iraq are resisting the occupation of their lands. The people who bombed the underground railway and the buses in London may have invoked Iraq, but they are not friends of Iraqis. For their actions hurt the cause of Iraq and Islam.

There are millions of people in Britain and the United States who have opposed and are continuing to oppose the war. But the terrorist attacks will weaken their hand, and strengthen the warmongers. Is it any surprise that Tony Blair's approval rating has soared? Is it any surprise that the controversial anti-terror laws will now be passed comfortably?

There is no bravery in targeting unsuspecting office goers in Aldgate. That is cowardice. That is not what Islam is about. Sahara Islam, who died on one of those ill-fated London buses, was the cousin of a friend of mine. Just try to tell them that their sister was killed in retaliation of Iraq war!

Saeed Ahmed
Subidbazar, Sylhet

Arsenic-free potable water

It is well known that arsenic ions are toxic pollutants and carcinogens. It is a great problem for our country, as well as, some other countries like Mexico. Around the world, research is going on for making the water arsenic free and potable. It has also been proved that the use of the technique "electro coagulation" can remove more than 99% of arsenic from well-water and make it risk-free for drinking purpose. As a part of water research programme of Lamar University, Texas, we also found the effectiveness of this technique for the efficient removal of arsenic, not only in the laboratory, but also during the field studies at several water-wells of Mexico. Certainly, electro coagulation needs electricity and some scrap iron bars as electrodes. In this process, positive iron electrodes will be dissolved in water during the passage of electricity producing iron hydroxides and oxy hydroxides. This floc will adsorb arsenic ions from the water and make the water arsenic free. The floc should be filtered out and the amount of floc production is also minimal compared to other conventional methods. I think, the use of this electro coagulation technique would be appropriate for the redemption of arsenic problem of our country. Since load-shedding is also a

"natural" problem in our country, the use of alternative power sources, such as fuel-powered generators, solar cells, mechanical dynamos, etc., can be the other choices. In Mexico, people produce electricity manually by rotating dynamo using a mechanism similar to bicycles and use this power to run electro coagulation for getting potable water. Once the infrastructure is built with local, governmental or international funds, it will continue to run by the voluntary help of the local people, since this is a matter of "life and death". I request to the respective governmental or NGO authorities to seriously think about using of this technique for arsenic removal from water.

Dr. Jewel Gomes
Beaumont, Texas, USA

"Life after Blasts"

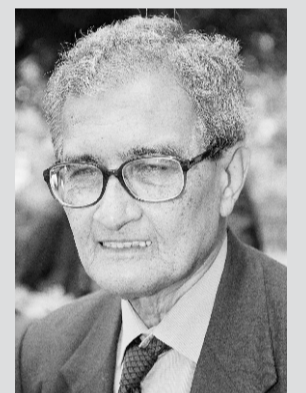
Whether it is a mere coincidence or my own firm stand against religious fanaticism, all my letters published in this daily have dealt with the disharmony created in the society, local and global alike, by the extremities of religious beliefs and practices. But today my simple equation of writing to you is to send out my heart felt appreciation to Mr. Inam Ahmed for his series reporting "Life after Blasts".

I must commend Mr. Ahmed's writing skills. He masters a magical vividness in making his readers imagine the scenario even without being ever there. After all that is what the success of a writer and writing is all about.

On a serious note, the grim sequences and consequences that are the outcome of misleading issues like "religious justice", "blood for blood and an eye for an eye" etc. are seriously disturbing and scary to common people like us. Do these "fighters for religion" ever realise how they are misguiding and misusing the Divine Message? Do they have families and are they worried about their lives? What naive questions! What shallow thinking! That is what a religious zealot would throw as an answer to my concerns and queries. But that is exactly what worries more and more people of the world who prefer no part in this foul play and want to foresee their successors live in peace, security and prosperity. Given the religious suffocation and orthodox environment in which I myself was forced to grow up, I know the driving force of these religious fanatics, the hope and desire of achieving heaven with all its 'indescribable' luxuries in the after-life make them loathe about this world and all its inhabitants who are not on the same line of thinking. What they fail to understand is that their solution is not a solution at all but only the opposite. Accommodative, considerate and open-minded coexistence is the only way out, the sooner everybody realises and accepts that the better for all.

Ayesha Hossain Shahnila
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Amartya Sen in BBC



It was very interesting listening to Amartya Sen in BBC Hardtalk this evening (2nd August). In the brief period of the interview, Amartya Sen not only presented statistical details of the history of three thousand years, but also introduced eye-openers to some social phenomena.

Particularly, I found his response to the question regarding the imposition of democracy by the western world (George W. Bush to be specific in the interviewer's question) on the non-western world very interesting. Amartya Sen began by finding fault in the question itself. He said that the western world does not own democracy in the first place. There is no question of imposing it on others. Long before America was discovered or even before the British ruled the world, democracy was practised in Buddhist Council in India in pre-Christian era. Also it was in ancient Greece where the electoral system was first put into effect. Obviously, the interviewer didn't have this background knowledge when she asked the question as she was quite taken aback by Professor Sen's answer. She responded by asking whether he would deny the fact that most western countries have democratic political process. Of course Amartya Sen agreed with that statement but at the same time he reminded us that the non-western countries can not be expected to be on the same par as the western countries as they were under colonial rule of western countries until very recently.

In the half an hour interview, Professor Sen touched various socio-political issues such as hunger and public action. His explanations were illustrative and thought provoking.

Asif Chowdhury
Brussels, Belgium

Current world affairs



As I am a housewife I have enough time to read papers daily, watch TV programmes which interest me most.

I am disturbed by current world affairs. There are so many questions that keep popping up in my mind. I read all the suggestions and scrutiny of intellectuals for getting an answer.

The continual blaming of Muslims always makes me a bit irritated. We need to have a just world order where nobody will be blamed for having a particular religious faith.

Maleka Parvin, Purana Paltan, Dhaka