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# Terror attacks across Bangladesh

August 17 blasting of some 500 bombs simultaneously across Bangladesh was indeed unprecedented, rocking not only the country and its 63 out of 64 districts but also the hearts and minds of the people of Bangladesh living in and out of the country. Certainly, no one had ever expected this, although they may not pronounce it publicly. Given the gravity and magnitude of the terror attack and its political and economic impact upon the future and security of the country, I hoped that this would end the self-deceiving blame game between the BNP-Jamaat coalition government and the opposition Awami League (AL). I was wrong. Within hours of the blasts, leaders of the BNP, Jamaat and other Islamic parties blamed the AL for the blasts, while the AL accused the BNP of having a role in the attacks.

When will they unite on issues of common concern?  
**Khairul Chowdhury**  
York University

The whole nation has been dumfounded as it witnessed the horrific

sequel of bomb blasts that rocked Bangladesh on August 17. A huge number of bombs exploded in different places across the 63 districts. It was a horrific sight on the TV screen while they were broadcasting the news & highlighting the attacked places on the map appeared the whole map was perforated. It has exposed the vulnerability of the security system.

Now we can't but agree that there is indeed a strong presence of the religious extremists and that they are quite capable of creating dangerous threats to the sovereignty of Bangladesh.

**Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
Agrabad, Chittagong

Is Bangladesh on the brink of Talibanisation?

Despite Bangladesh's being pointed out by the international community as a breeding ground for Islamic terrorism ever since the coalition government came to power, the government has been in constant denial of any such linkages and have been found to have brushed aside such violence as nothing significant. The Economist in its

bomb explosions, making the people dumbfounded. No explanation can soothe away the tension and consternation the people of Bangladesh have been encased in ever since.

Extremism, fundamentalism, ultra-religiosity or bigotry, whatever word you choose to depict this barbarity, the cardinal fact is that this guild is against free-

government's reluctance to ban the terrorist groups under the guise of religious zealots makes one wonder whether Bangladesh takes these matters seriously.

My thoughts are with the victims of this unprecedented attack. The perpetrators should note that while they have taken advantage of the incompetence

ment of Rab to keep politically motivated criminal gangs under check. Begum Khaleda Zia needs to do much more and deal with this issue as a national leader. For one to be satisfied that this government means business, some heads have to roll right from the very top. It is inconceivable that in a country of 140 million people, the Prime

would not have done any better. Instead of childish outbursts, the country expects a person of Sheikh Hasina's political seniority to chalk out a detailed plan of action on how the opposition would have dealt with a dire situation such as this in the short term and in the long term. That way, the entire nation would gain and be resolute in their fight

convincing facts. National security is a concern, which binds the countrymen together irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It does not discriminate AL or BNP. Rather, the blame game allows scope for the real perpetrators to continue their heinous activities with greater force.

Most probably, the message of religion is getting misinter-

clusion.

**Md. Masum Billah**  
BRAC Head Office, Dhaka

A Canada based Islamic website published JMB's message to the Bangladesh government. This message stated that the Bangladesh government had already been warned twice and after this third warning JMB would take direct action against the government if it does not establish Islamic rule in the country. I presume that the recent bombings were the second warning from JMB. The website is full of news about Jihad and it is perceivable that this site published JMB news because of its stand.

The problem of the country is that two components of the ruling alliance are trying to prove that the bomb attacks were not the work of any Islamic organisation, rather the work of a neighbouring country. The neighbouring country, they claim, has created JMB to destabilise Bangladesh.

Well, bomb attack is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. There were bomb attacks during the AL rule. The ruling coalition and many people in Bangladesh believe that the AL has a soft attitude towards India and it preserves Indian interest in Bangladesh. Then was India responsible for the bomb attacks during the AL rule?

It seems to me that the two parties in the alliance are trying to create confusion and putting pressure on the government so that it cannot take action against the attackers. If the government bows down to such pressure, then the situation will worsen further. I am pretty sure that the BNP would not be benefited in the long run by politics of violence.

**Wasim Haider**  
Toronto, Canada



PHOTO: AFP

3rd edition of June 2005 ran a feature on Bangladesh titled "State of denial" in which worry has been expressed about the government's connivance with Islamic extremism.

Isn't it time the country swung into pre-emptive and preventive bouts of action to eliminate the menace?

**Adnan Hossain**  
On e-mail

Many times the government of Bangladesh has been warned of the gradual rise of extremism that is working as a camouflaged ideology of ultra-religiosity, but they have explained away the reality by terming the claim as baseless. But the irony of fate is that the threat has resulted in serial

dom of expression, democracy, free thought, women's empowerment and innovations. They still live by the Byzantine mentality and oppose what goes readily against modernity. They do not want to go through what Renaissance has taught us, but intend to confine people's creativity and intelligence through medieval treatment.

**Sulav Chowdhury**  
London

Following the killing of former finance minister in a grenade attack and their subsequent failure to identify the true source of the orchestrations, the credibility of the intelligence agencies as well as the leadership of the Bangladesh authorities have been under question. The

of the authorities, the overwhelming majority of the people of

Bangladesh will not tolerate their extremist ways. It is hard to believe that this elevated form of outburst complete with state of the art synchronised execution of the heinous bombings is congruent with the serenity of Bangladesh and its traditional peaceful and hardworking ways.

Simply put, I do not think this type of terrorism is home-grown. Our enemies have simply taken a first stab at showing us we are completely defenceless when it comes to domestic security.

Following my last visit to Bangladesh in May, I noticed a semblance of the much wanted peace brought about in the streets of Dhaka by the deploy-

Minister cannot find a single qualified individual who can put the intelligence and the internal security of the country back in order. There have been enough trial runs at the helm of the home ministry and successive incumbents have only proved their sickening inexperience, if not complete lack of understanding of what the job entails.

It is time to put a person of integrity and skill before incompetent lackeys.

As for the leader of the opposition, her misguided politicisation and more importantly her failure to recognise that the very fabric of the intelligence agencies of the country has collapsed only confirms that had she been at the helm when this incident occurred, she

against this new brand of evil that threatens our future.

The bottom line is if Bangladesh is to be taken seriously as a safe place to live in, a safe place to invest one's money, a safe place to bring up children, all quarters need to work together instead of finger pointing at each other.

**Shabbir A. Bashir**  
San Francisco Bay Area, US

Sixty-three districts of Bangladesh were rocked with bombs within a span of thirty minutes. The attacks threw the country into a state of uncertainty over its security system. The government and the opposition have as usual started playing the blame game without giving well thought out comments and

pretend among some people. To expand an ideology, love and sympathy must play the pivotal role, not the muscle power or any other form of force. Bangladesh enjoys democracy in the midst of flaws and obstacles. What's the need to undo this system and introduce a new one, which most people don't desire? The Jamaatul Mujahadeen is said to have been claiming the responsibility of the blasts. Several leaflets also contain this message. But this cannot be taken as absolute proof. Maybe, some vested quarters took the opportunity to create unrest in the country in the name of religion or religious extremism. The matter has to be investigated thoroughly, before we can reach any con-

## Lawyers and politics

We notice that our lawyers are getting too much engaged in political activities. Their legal profession seems to have made them bored.

It also seems that they are trying to invigorate themselves by staging processions, counter processions regularly in the court premises.

**Md Arif Sadeq**  
University of Dhaka

## Two nation theory

The two nation theory evolved by Mr. Jinnah was the basis for the creation of Pakistan, at the cost of the lives of millions of Muslims. After the establishment of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of India, Mr. M.

A. Jinnah gave his famous declaration "Hindus will cease to be Hindus &

Muslims will cease to be Muslims". So Mr. Jinnah himself exploded the concept of the two nation theory, the basis of Pakistan. History is replete with instances of mass massacres of both Hindus & Muslims. The situation and the circumstances needed the creation of Pakistan because so much communal hatred was generated that retaining of united India had become impossible. But after the creation of Bangladesh the two nation theory is completely dead.

The need of the hour is the creation of a loose confederation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. India has the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia, the largest Muslim country of the world.

**S.M. Khalid Chowdhury**, On e-mail

## Saarc and Pakistan

I really appreciate Mr. Dev's viewpoint, but may I take the liberty to state that unless and until the Kashmir problem is resolved according to the wishes of the Kashmir people, there will be no forward movement in Saarc. I also have to remind Mr. Dev that India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir, and as of now, both these countries are armed with nuclear weapons. Therefore, it will be catastrophic if there is a war between these nuclear-armed neighbours.

Mr. Dev has talked about democracy in Pakistan. Well, what kind of democracy we can find in a third world country? There is no democracy in third world countries, there is only "Lootocracy", which means loot and grab. The same type of system exists in Mexico, which is a neighbour of the only world power. By the way,

Mexico has been democratic for the last 110 years. Democracy has not worked for the Mexicans. So, do Pakistanis yearn for democracy? I don't think so. The poor masses of Pakistan don't need democracy. What they need is good governance, food to eat, a good educational system, and jobs. May I ask what kind of democracy China has and why in the world China is advancing so fast without joining the democracy club. Isn't the rapid advancement of China giving headache to the only superpower of the world?

As to what happened in 1971 in East Pakistan which later became Bangladesh, well do we Pakistanis like it? I don't think so. The responsibility lies with Mr.

The Saarc dream, well what kind of dream I simply don't understand. May I mention here that the Indians here in the US don't buy Pakistani products. Many Pakistani products are of superior quality and cheaper compared to Indian products, but the Indians won't touch it. When I talked to Indian gentlemen about this, they told me that their community won't buy Pakistani products and so the Pakistanis are also avoiding Indian products. Believe me this is happening in America.

So at this juncture Saarc is almost dead.

**Masood Khan**, Chicago, US  
**Preventing launch disasters**

and route of the vessel) which are much more stringent than the load line convention rules. Passenger ships require more rigorous subdivision of its hull against damage and flooding and require a higher margin of safety for its static and dynamic stability.

The BIWTC vessels which are mentioned by Salahuddin as safe are so because they are made safer by such design under the supervision of professional Naval Architects from the very planning stage through to the completion stage and afterwards by a standard 'inclining test' which must have proved an adequate margin of safety for its stability. This is also the practice in the British Marine and Coastguard Agency

## CULTURAL ASSAULT

A culture comprises the way of life, art, belief, rules, custom and tradition of a nation. It's the heart of a nation, and portrays the norms that people follow, the mentality they have, how civilised they are and what their position is in the world. But sometimes, a country's culture is badly influenced by others and subsequently its culture is over-



shadowed. Many intellectuals are of the view that Bangladesh is a victim of this cultural assault. Nowadays our culture is being threatened by alien cultures, especially by Indian and Western culture, thanks to the television channels.

**Mars**, Dhaka University

Yahya Khan and the so called democrat, Mr. Bhutto. If the two wings of Pakistan were not governable then they should have been separated peacefully. It was a mistake to station the Punjabi army over there.

As for Taliban, well this is the creation of the superpower who now downs them. Let's not forget that these are the people that kicked the Soviets out of Afghanistan and that led to the downfall of the Soviet Union and which made the US the only superpower of the world. After the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, the US disowned the Afghan (Mujaheddin) Taliban.

I refer to the letters of Salahuddin Ahmed and SA Mansoor on this topic. While such disasters can in no way be excused we must be careful that any proposals we put forward to reduce such incidents are realistic and conform to maritime practice and experience in other countries.

Salahuddin writes about applying the "International Load Line Convention" to the inland passenger launches. This Convention is mainly for sea-going cargo vessels plying internationally. For passenger ships while plying nationally or internationally "Passenger ship construction rules" are applied (depending on the class

with whom I held the post of a Principal Marine Survey, before retiring after 25 years of service.

**Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

## Travels in Pakistan

Mr. Akhter Salem Fahmi has written a very good article, but may I express my thoughts and opinions about the tragic event. I was 8 years old when my parents migrated to East Bengal from Kolkata in 1949. My dad had a flourishing business in Kolkata and I was enrolled in a prestigious school, but things started to change in Kolkata and life was not

safe for Muslims. The Hindus were taunting the Muslims to leave Bharat. In East Bengal, my dad didn't find any proper job and we had to face many hardships. I wasn't able to attend grade school or high school. However, I passed the Metric exam as an external candidate and then I was enrolled in Jagannath College in ISC class. I completed my BSC from there and then I went to Dacca Law College. I remembered Mr. Jinnah's speech that Urdu and only Urdu should be the national language of Pakistan and that speech started a controversy. Then hatred and a deep mistrust of Urdu speaking people formed afterwards. And the most surprising part is that Mr. Jinnah's mother tongue was not Urdu! He was born in Gujarat and so he was a Gujarati. He couldn't read or write Urdu. His statement started a storm of protest in East Bengal. One day, when a peaceful demonstration was passing near the Dacca Medical College, the demonstrators were fired upon and as a result three innocent people were killed. A procession in Jessore was fired upon as well and many people were killed there. These were peaceful demonstrations and they were demanding that Bengali should be the national language. Was this a crime? Who ordered that lethal force be used? I don't think any Bihari was involved in these heinous crimes. At no time there was an Urdu era in East Bengal. Urdu was a foreign language and it had no base in East Bengal. There were no Urdu newspapers that were printed in East Bengal.

How many Urdu speaking or non-Bengalees were there? There was the union of Egypt with Syria and when they didn't like it they parted peacefully. The fate of the people who migrated from India to East Pakistan was worse.

**Mohammad Ali**  
Chicago, USA

## Public university teachers

Almost a decade ago prominent writer Ahmed Safa wrote that there was no real community named university teachers. There are only some groups such as yellow, striped, violet etc. In the last ten years the situation has not improved, rather it has worsened. I think, it is high time we evaluate the activities and performance of public university teachers. Concerned policy makers should think and come forward in this aspect.

It is essential to mention that a

university is not only a place for knowledge dissemination, rather it is a place for cultivation of knowledge. Newer and newer branches of knowledge should be developed at a university. Mutual participation of students and teachers is the key element of knowledge cultivation. But unfortunately, in recent times most public university teachers are not interested to get involved with that gracious process. They are not showing adequate respect to this noble profession. Professionalism is declining day by day. Those teachers are forgetting the issue of commitment; the most necessary thing for this profession. To be a public university teacher one must have excellent academic background, which is expected to be further developed in their teaching career.

But many of them have converted teaching as a side business whereby they utilise the brand name "university teacher" to attain personal and economic goals. They take classes in several private universities, do consultancy in private firms, and become advisor in multinational companies and so on. The house of their own, public university, is deprived.

The best students of the country get admitted in public universities after sitting for a highly competitive admission test. In the very beginning of university life they envision a lot many things. But those dreams and expectations become unrealistic when they find teachers missing classes regularly with or without prior notice.

It is not students' fault to study with lower tuition fees, as the government is providing a huge amount of money as subsidy. The teachers take classes in private universities with full care and responsibility. They take class quizzes, give assignments, arrange mid term exams and publish results with a given deadline. Actually, at private universities teachers are bound to follow certain rules and regulations regarding academic affairs.

Most private universities are now passing through a controversial phase of their operation, which forces these institutions to regularly monitor teachers' performance.

**Fahim Fuad Prottoi**  
Shantinagar, Dhaka



## Western despots

When Muslim despots commit crimes, you can easily tell because they think they own the whole country and they do anything they feel like. But when Western despots (they call themselves politicians) commit crimes, they talk in such elegant language that one can easily mistake them for saints. I have noticed that when it comes to deceiving people, America, Britain and Israel are the best in the world. It is shocking how easily they can put spin on a true event and then change it into something totally different. They know that people will not accept their crimes, so they carefully infect the subject with lies to confuse people and eventually shift everyone's attention away from the main issue to something they are comfortable with. And while everyone is busy debating the "deliberately created" confusion, the perpetrators walk away with their crimes, be that theft of oil, land, putting puppet government or sponsoring state terrorism.

Take the issue of Iran's nukes, for example. The whole issue is quite simple: Is nuclear weapon good, or is it bad? If it is bad then let's get rid of all nukes; and if it is good, then leave Iran alone. But the anti-Muslim bullies avoid this question because whichever answer they give, they end up losing. If they admit that nuclear capability is bad then they have to get rid of their own stock, and if they admit it is good then they have to leave Iran alone. So what they do is start talking about other issues like Iran's unstable government, its mullahs, the threat it poses to the Mid East (even though we all know the biggest threat to the Mid East is Israel).

Take Palestine as another example. Western leaders keep demanding "You should stop suicide bombers". But Palestinian suicide bombers would not exist if Israel didn't occupy their country in the first place. So the question we should be asking is "When will you go back to pre-1967 borders?" But they avoid this question, saying they need to negotiate. When Muslims retaliate they demand immediate end, without negotiation. But when Muslims tell them to end their killing and looting, they say they need to negotiate, even though they have been negotiating since 1950!

It is time for the West to stop its hypocrisy and double standards against Muslims.

**Azad Miah**  
Oldham, UK