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Suicide bombings



It was truly shocking and profoundly frustrating to learn about the suicide bombings in Chittagong and Gazipur. I could not believe at first that the suicide bombings that we only heard of happening in other places of the world, eventually took place in Bangladesh. Before this incident, it gave us somewhat of a comfort that none of the bombing incidents were suicidal. Unfortunately, we could not avert what was appearing to be inevitable.

What is regrettable is that had we been a little careful at the beginning, we could have stopped the rise of religious extremism in our country and could have averted such tragic loss of lives. The JMB people who carried out the attacks simply could not have gathered so much strength had we not given a deaf ear to the early warnings. Had the party in power been more careful about how it plays its political cards, JMB could not have become such a monster threatening ordinary people of the country. The government now has to take the majority of the blame for creating a Frankenstein.

I simply do not understand how the JMB people could really believe that by blowing themselves up, and in the process killing ordinary people, they could establish Islamic rule of law in the country. Nothing could be farther from the true teachings of Islam. It is a deep insult to the sentiments and aspirations of

the religious, tolerant and peaceful Bangladeshis.

What is more unfortunate and deeply troubling is the thought that this is perhaps only the beginning. We probably would have to endure many more incidents like these. The Frankenstein that has been created will simply not wither away so soon. It would have some lasting impact before, if ever, we could finally put an end to it.

Zubair Sadeque
Breckenridge Court
Pittsburgh, USA

Now suicide bombing has started in Bangladesh. It is a headline in world media (both electronic and print) today. We have no time to waste before uniting the two major sides of politics. Today courtrooms are targeted, who knows tomorrow they will not target Hawa Bhaban, Shudha Sadan, Gono Bhaban, Banga Bhaban, Parliament building, Supreme Court, Police headquarters or Army headquarters? So please no more blame game- we need stern action. Immediately the army should be mobilised alongside Rab and police against these extremists. As these terrorists do not have any respect for human lives and conventional justice system, this is perfectly logical to subject them to parallel justice such as indefinite detention, crossfire, targeted execution, property bulldozing etc. Unfortunately, these terrorists are not afraid of death, may be only worried about well-beings of immedi-



PHOTOS: AFP

ate family members. So the government should now bulldoze the properties of identified suicide bombers' families to the ground and confiscate their bank accounts. This may act as a deterrence. The government should take lessons from Indonesia and Pakistan about how to quash the terrorists, how to deal with Madrassah system etc.

The prime minister has invited the Awami League to go to parliament to discuss the issue. This is a good sign, but she needs to do more. As a good gesture, she should immediately end the coalition with Jamaat. Otherwise, Jamaat will continue to domi-

nate the BNP and it is the BNP which is likely to pay the price. At this time of crisis, we need unity among the BNP and the AL, as they were united against autocratic Ershad. They should consider forming a grand coalition for at least the next two elections. Both parties bear the spirit of the great liberation war and ideally one is centre-left whilst the other is centre-right. They should not have trouble to dump Jamaat and Islamic extremists. This is the only way we can save our motherland from becoming another Afghanistan.

Dr. Khalid Moinuddin
Lecturer, Victoria University,

Melbourne

Terrorism or suicide squad of JMB is not a simple problem for us, its roots are deep. It is threatening us like any other burning problems--AIDS, drugs, bird flu. Have we taken adequate steps as citizens of Bangladesh? Is this the responsibility of Police/Rab only? As citizens have we taken enough responsibilities upon our shoulders?

Still after several months of country wide bomb blasts we are only listening to news on the blasts. But we need to fight against this problem by arousing people's consciousness

regarding security, dubious activities, exploitation of religion and so on.

As citizens of Bangladesh we need to think beyond hartal, which is a self-destructive way because it hinders the country's growth. We need a mass movement against these terrorists. The government should also involve general people. We fought against the Pakistanis in 1971. Now we need to fight again a different war against terrorists who are much stronger than the Pakistanis were, because the terrorists are within us, they are also Bangladeshis.

Selina Akhter Banu

Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Please take a moment to translate the heading of this letter into Bangla and also remember the Home Minister's statement after the bomb blasts in August last year. Is he still looking for the enemy?

This gruesome cruelty signals that the religious extremists are prepared to give their lives to further their cause and go to the level of utter extreme, likes of which we have seen happen elsewhere.

Honourable Home Minister, I forward this question to you to ponder over, where is the security cover that was put over Dhaka a few weeks back?

Mohammed Adeeb Aziz,
On e-mail

While I appreciate the prime minister's appeal to peoples' religious sensibilities about true Islam and how it would not condone terrorism, I can't help but feel there is something very wrong in how the message is being conveyed.

Surely corruption is not permitted in any of the religions, but we do it, we are the world leaders. Take, for example, political murder--there is not a single party which can claim its members have not been involved in such activities even if the leaders themselves are innocent. Which religion condones raping of a three year old girl or 80 year old grandmother? But we regularly see such reports in

our papers. People who do this are already beyond normal sensibilities, ethics or religious feeling.

So, will this message be successful in curbing the rise in terrorism? Unfortunately, I think this is not the way to tackle the menace.

Sanjoy Kumar Nath,
Chittagong

The whole nation still has a confusing question in its mind. At what cost is the BNP government keeping its alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami? After all these events which have taken place, evidences unearthed, civilians killed, the judiciary being attacked, what is the game plan in the minds of our leaders? Just sit back and blame the opposition and tighten security- but what security, for whom? ministers? social elite? what about the public? what about an average person?

The government has played hide and seek with its people for too long, it's about time they take the blame of their failing home security and take immediate measures to eliminate the root of terrorist activities, and make people responsible for their hands and links with extremists. Much has been said and written by many, it's about time we see the government's words put into action and actions slowly transformed into success.

Mashruf Habib
Los Angeles, US

Press freedom

The issue of our press freedom is hogging the headlines (DS editorial Nov. 24). The comment of the Press Council is relevant (DS, Nov. 24).

As newspaper reader for several decades since the Raj days, I am surprised at the large number of dailies published from metropolis Dhaka. What is more surprising is the large number of English dailies and periodicals, when the new generation is weak in written and spoken English (state policy?). How many total millions of newspaper readers, when more than half live around the poverty level, and the same percentage are illiterate? There are too many Bangla dailies. How these papers are economically viable? How about a White Paper?

Let us admit that in today's fast world, there are grey and black sheep everywhere in the world. With the high corruption rate prevailing in the society, why not make 30 per cent allowance for lapses and unethical practices?

When the Regulators do not get the benefit of the doubt, the political rulers have to admit they cannot regulate a badly deteriorating society. The latter cannot control the political ethics; therefore the politicians are unfit to rule for some period in the immediate future (as per standard practice!).

More national debates are required at the top level, specially when the parliament is one-eyed.
A Husnain, Dhaka

"Falen Parichoyete"

The Sanskrit words in the caption require results to follow resolutions. The Daily Star and Prothom Alo editors have utilised the Saarc meet in Dhaka to focus on some problems facing Bangladesh and India.

The Indian Prime Minister was forthright in his response: "If Bangladesh has any grievances, real or imagined I am quite willing to sit together to get to the bottom of these... If there is any truth to these we will correct them." [DS 15-11-05]

Neither of these grievances mentioned the killing of Bangladeshis by the BSF. How fervently we wished the Prime Minister of Bangladesh seized the opportunity of at least referring to this senseless and un-neighbourly behaviour. Instead of solving this human problem, the first action by

BSF is firing. These firings have been going on for years with no sign of lessening. These have been reported from time to time in all newspapers.

Sad as it is before a day elapsed, or more correctly speaking, before the ink of the Saarc meet dried up came in the news of a Bangladeshi killed by BSF in Thakeugaon border (DS 15-11-05). Three days before the meet two Bangladeshis were killed in Maulvibazar border. In both cases abduction of Bangladeshis by BSF preceded protest and flag meeting requests by Bangladesh to no effect as usual.

The Saarc spirit did not last twenty four hours!
Muhammad Anisuzzaman
Uttara

Religious Education

The decision on the introduction of Religious Education as a compulsory subject in class IX from January 2006 is appreciable. The importance of Religious Education in a developing

country like Bangladesh cannot be ignored. It is, to all intents and purposes, a must. It will make students familiar with Arabic and will enable them to read and learn Arabic properly.

Religious education aims at the understanding of the basic principles of Islam and inculcating faith in and reverence for the Almighty, the Holy Quran and the Prophet (Pbuh) It fosters the Islamic virtues like truthfulness, justice, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, honesty etc. It stresses the importance of practice of the religious teachings. It makes us aware of our duties and responsibilities as a true Muslim. It refrains us from leading chaotic, distorted and immoral lives in the face of the macrocosm. It also teaches us how to lead pure, honest, pious and ennobled life beneath the sun. Religious education plays an important role in building the character and conduct of human beings.

Quazi Md Mahboobul Haque
Comilla

How free is our

press?

To someone who is a newcomer in the country at first sight it might appear that here the press and the media are enjoying absolute freedom. The government (both the Awami League and the BNP) has been saying so. But is that really true? As an ordinary person whatever information I am receiving is by virtue of the newspaper and the electronic media. But unfortunately every day very few numbers of good news items are published. In Bangladesh the media men are doing the riskiest job. The job becomes even more horrible when they are searching for true stories. In Bangladesh the governments have never been satisfied with the media. Because it is through the media general people learn what wrongs the government is doing; therefore the government has to suffer an image crisis. The stories concerning government's connection with various allegations of corruption and terrorism are the irritants. But it is the media which

every time reveals the truth. For example, it is the media that first of all brought Bangla Bhai to the limelight. Although the government rejected all the stories but following Aug 17 those stories are proving to be true. Unfortunately, in recent times few top ministers were angry with the media and they blamed it for everything. A few days back it was also alleged that a newsman was manhandled by a state minister. It has been learnt that the government is preparing to make a new law with provisions of punishment for the media men. In Bangladesh there is existence of yellow journalism but it is very rare. Such laws are necessary to tackle yellow journalism. But any attempt to apply the law to prevent constructive journalism would be unfair and the government would be affected as the election is getting near. Oppressions on the journalists are on as well. Few days back the police beat a reporter from Channel-I mercilessly although he gave his identity! We have seen how Tipu Sultan was tortured during regime of the previous government.

The journalists are sacrificing their lives as well. But the government of the day possesses an adverse impression about them. But we have to change our attitude, as we should learn to accept the truth. Nowadays it is seen that the media workers are divided into factions carrying the banners of various political parties. So, when one newspaper or channel is publishing news about the irregularities committed by either government or the opposition their supporter newspapers and channels are denying it expressly. So, we the general readers are in a dilemma as to the acceptability of the news. So, journalists have to be cautious about politics. If the politics claws over the society of the media men they will lose unity among them and when their rights would be at stake, they will suffer indeed.

Moinul Alam
Eskaton Garden Road Dhaka

Greeting Albanian counterparts

The November 29 edition of The Daily Star noted that the President and Prime Minister "felicitated" their Albanian counterparts on the occasion of the Liberation Day of Albania, and that the President "expressed his firm belief that the friendly relations and close cooperation existing between the two countries would be further developed and consolidated in the coming years."

First, I have never seen any reason that this is a news story, that we felicitated someone or they felicitated us. It would be a story if there were something more to it but most countries feel they must acknowledge someone else's holidays or disasters, and they expect other countries to do the same for ours. But these seem to be non-stories.

Second, have we really developed such a friendship and cooperation with Albania (which I'm sure most people can't find on a map) over the years that we need to let every reader know we're going to strengthen that relationship? What

relationship do we have with Albania? A high volume of trade (imports or exports), sales of equipment or utilities, or do we provide assistance to one another?

Nothing I've read to date shows me anything in the way of a relationship that's even minimally important.
M. M. Haque, New York City

Madrasah education

In Bangladesh, two types of educational system i.e. school and madrasah are in vogue. This trend has been going on since the British period. For that reason, a haphazard situation is prevailing in this connection here. This is today unexpected. A massive movement is needed in this regard urgently.

There is a very clear difference between school and madrasah educational arenas. The philosophy of one is completely different from the other. Moreover, dissimilarity of assessment between school and madrasah is a matter of pity and shame!

Consequently, one considers other as a sworn enemy and raises a hue and cry unnecessarily?

Remarkably, one party cherish that the other party knows nothing in respect of worldly news and views. They think that the other passes time only in eating, drinking and merriment.

Sarwar Ali
Dhaka

The month of Victory

December is the month of victory. It is the month of joy for Bangladeshis. December brings happiness in our life. December says that "We are independent". December introduces us as Bangladeshis to the rest of the world. It's a historical month.

Inspired by December, we should work together. The politicians and people of Bangladesh should work collectively to counter the subversive elements. The blood of our heroes can't go in vain. Long Live Bangladesh.

Shashi Khan
Mizan Manson
Bottala Bazaar, Tangail



PHOTO: AFP

Inefficient government

The situation prevailing in the country speaks out that it is an ineffective and inefficient government. Looting, killing, robbery, bomb blasts etc. are rampant in the country. Ten to twelve bomb blast incidents occurred in the country. But no real culprit has been brought to book. This indicates sheer inefficiency of the present government. The recent bomb blasts across the country amply prove that the law and order situation is precarious.

The government has utterly failed to handle other sectors also. The Industries and Factories are in a moribund condition.

Approximately 50% Government Factories have been closed or are on the brink of closure due to wrong and unwise policies followed by this government. Unemployment, price hike, load-shedding, acute shortage of water and gas are examples of the problems that people are facing. The solution to the above mentioned issues and problems should be figured out as soon as possible.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Bangladesh. The vast majority of the population of the country directly or indirectly depend on agriculture but it is deplorable that due attention has not been

paid to this most important sector. The government should adopt the latest technique of cultivation to grow more food with the collaboration of developed countries. Due incentives and interest free loan should be given to the poor farmers.

The present budget is not up to the mark. It is not a people-oriented budget. It does not reflect people's hopes, needs and aspirations. Furthermore, it is a pro-rich budget. Fixed income groups and poor people are adversely affected.

Naushad
Mohammadpur, Dhaka