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Ridiculous!

Our prime minister has invited the opposition to a dialogue to resolve the problem of growing militancy in the country. And the prominent business bodies and their leaders along with other prominent figures are asking the opposition to sit with the government for a dialogue.

Why the dialogue? To resolve the problem.

What is the problem? Militants are killing people. Whom they are killing? The secular people mostly from opposition parties. None of them are from any parties which are in the government.

And the government is arresting the culprits and releasing them. Initially, the government denied the presence of militants. And government MPs, ministers are on record of having said that the militants are doing good for the country.

And the militants are killing the opposition party leaders and members and secular people. And this government is not secular at all. So why should the government arrest and punish them?

Ghassan Uddin Saudi Arabia

"National dialogue on terrorism"

I read your editorial titled "National dialogue on terrorism" on December 02, 2005. I am not so sure about ruling party's "self-realisation of the monstrosity of the problem" as you proclaimed as reasonable. So far we have seen how the government has delayed the justice to the oppo-

Bestsellers on astrology

Believe it or not, it is true that books and magazines on astrology are the best sellers in the end of a year or the beginning of a new year in our country. These books expound the characteristics and future of the enthusiastic readers. Many people take these books as the source of inspiration when they start doing anything.

There are arguments for and against believing in these books but it is true that those who do not have any faith in astrology may still be interested in them. These are basically a great source of ideas to inquisitive minds that strive to find out the meaning and purpose of what we see or imagine about people around.

Rubab Abdullah Residential area Dhaka Cantonment Dhaka-1206

In reply to 'About Shariah Law'

Based on the letter 'About Shariah Law', I have the following comments to make. I guess most of us don't understand Hudd and Tazir. The Holy Koran and Hadith have prescribed only a few punishments (Hadd, plural Hadud) and in case of the rest of the offences, Islam has left it to the governments and the judges to determine punishments according to the circumstances of time and place, and these are called Tazir (Taziraat in plural). However,

Unfortunately, from then it has rapidly been increasing. One of the major causes behind it is the lack of government's seriousness in tackling the problem.

As usual here in Bangladesh we are continuously playing the blame game. But that doesn't help us. So, let us be united once again for eliminating the bombers and building a peaceful Bangladesh.

Abdullah M. Taher Farmgate, Dhaka-1215

Regional convention on terrorism

I'm pleased to see the news in DS that India has proposed a regional convention on terrorism. It is good thing that Bangladesh is going to assume the chair of the BIMSTEC during the meeting. It will be a milestone against terrorism.

Md. Solaiman Manarat International University Gulshan, Dhaka

Cupbearer lectures against wine!

A Jewish scientist succeeded in making the atom bomb. The US did kick off its first ever use without any cogent reason and got the status of the human monster by annihilating over two hundred thousand human lives in Japan. With this inhuman track record (US record confirms 200 various wars it has fought after the WWI) the same US declared that it wanted to clean Iraq of WMD!

stand the security purposes, and definitely not hard to see why our political system fails to understand the woes of common citizens.

My example is very small, mostly metaphorical; but it is some of these little things that sum up to something large, something that unarguably predicts failure. It is evident that neither of our political parties in their respective terms have been successful to clean us of our flaws - flaws which once removed will lay a path for prosperity. Of course that job is up to us, but I agree with Mr. Zahir U. Hyder who wrote on 4.12.2005 in his letter "Hartal Losing Appeal" that for the sake of democracy in this country, we need political

parties. Seriously, in the light of these failures, I think we do need a new leader to guide us to that level.

Md. Tauseef Anwar On e-mail

JMB

The country is going through a crisis. The atrocities committed by so-called JMB or other activists have created a panicky situation and media has also been partly responsible for trivialising the issue without making any investigation into the origin of the problem. The acts of terror cannot be condoned, nor can people support such acts that affect the otherwise peace-loving people of Bangladesh. There is just no room to justify these activities no matter who is behind these or what motivates the people to commit these subversive acts. One must

want to see happen for the most obvious reason. It cannot be denied that some topiwalas are being apprehended by the law enforcement agencies but it is also ascertained that these people were used by vested quarters both domestic and foreign to create a situation to prove this country a "failed state".

As for myself, I could not take my car out to take my sick child to hospital and had to be content with a slow moving rickshaw van for days and even then I had to be watchful for homemade bombs.

I am not a conspiracy theorist but have an inquiring mind unlike many who tend to believe everything they read or see in the media.

We must ask ourselves whether we are really capable to undertake such a fine and sophisticated task of detonating countrywide 500 bombs in complete secrecy by the clock, whether the people the media accuse of perpetrating the violence i.e. topiwalas are genuinely capable of military planning and have the resources and access to such explosives and materials.

The obvious question that comes to our mind is who is training them, arming them, controlling them, planning the sequence of events in sophisticated military style i.e. compartmentalisation of intelligence and providing all logistic support to carry out the acts of terrorism. General people have no access to such materials and resources and so, who is it - the big question that occupies our mind.

The present government has failed the nation on many fronts, pervasive corruption, gross incompetence and utter inefficiency of both political and administrative leadership have hampered progress like never before but the opposition has failed to take up the issues to gear themselves up for forming the next government. It is thus rumoured that all these acts of terror are aimed at creating issues at the expense of the our stability, progress and nationhood.

We do not seem to learn from global events nor do we intend to improve our capacity to understand our nationhood. Most people get carried away by the media hype as if the bombings have destroyed the country. Today no nation is immune from terrorist acts.

We are going through a testing time and we must stand united and together in this hour of crisis. It is not the time to squabble or raise the petty party politics above national interest. There is this great responsibility that rests with the judiciary and the law officers not to be intimidated. They must not choose to abandon the course of justice in spite of threats or intimidation as they must keep in mind that this is not the first blood that the nation has bled, remember the course of our history through out the ages and the struggle in 1971. So, we all stand together in it and our resolve to maintain our independence and sovereignty must not give way to any threat or intimidation, no matter how powerful the vested quarters are. Otherwise, we as a nation shall perish.

Khandaker R Zaman On e-mail

Suicide attacks

I am very much shocked with the recent countrywide bombing incidents that took many valuable lives. Islam, the religion of peace, surly doesn't permit such destruction and wayward activities. Some misguided people are taking advantage of the ignorance of common people regarding Islam and portraying a wrong picture of the religion.

Islam has been preached in this sub continent through love, tolerance and equality, not with brutal force. I would request the Islamic scholars to come forward and help remove all misunderstanding and fanaticism. As a nation we always stood united whenever any crisis arose. I hope that this time also we will not fail to rise above our own interest; otherwise it will endanger our very existence.



Last century, Che Guevara laid out tactics of an armed insurgency. He identified three factors essential to start with:

- 1. Public discontent on existing establishment of power
2. Popular belief that force is the only way to change
3. A popular cause to fight for

According to Guevara, at the beginning, a small secret group will start hit and run attacks against symbols of establishments: police, army, administrative body etc. Since ordinary people hate the establishment, they will appreciate its harassment. This appreciation will increase the popularity of the movement until it reaches the critical mass.

In Bangladesh, apparently JMB has made a mix of Guevara tactics and religious zeal. They started attacking the establishments like judicial courts. But they might not have studied Guevara to the fullest. Che particularly emphasized on popularity, because in the long haul insurgents have to depend on people for their food, money, and shelter. And popularity is exactly what JMB is not getting by blasting bombs. Public discontent is here, but it is not against the system; rather it is a frustration against people who are running it.

Second and third factors of Guevara do not exist at all. As for the third factor, their tactics are self defeating to their cause of establishing Islam. The underlying principle of the tactic they borrowed from their sworn enemies—the communists, that small number of people can be sacrificed to achieve good for greater mass, is fundamentally against the teachings of Islam. Islam values every life. It is written in the Holy Koran that killing one person is like killing the whole humanity. JMB will be able to convince only a few gullible people.

The catch is, it takes only a few people to wreck havoc. That is why their doomed prospect is no reason for complacency; rather they need immediate and active confronting. The musts are continuous police operations not allowing them to rest and regroup, and public vigilance. It is also important to bring them to book as per the laws of the country, through a judicial system they are fighting against. If we can't show our confidence in our system, it will only aid their cause.

In the long run, Madrassah education needs to be modernised and regulated, and mosques should be monitored to ensure they are not hijacked by religious zealots.

Ashish Ahsan Uttara, Dhaka 1230

Growth of extremism

The recent developments in Bangladesh have proved beyond doubt that the country's government is not serious about tackling the rise and growth of extremism. It is generally believed that the masterminds behind the blasts share the same ideology with the majority in the four-party ruling alliance.

It seems the BNP-led government is only interested in holding on to power at the cost of the lives of innocent people. They are not even worried that the series of events are giving the country and its people a bad name.

To stop Bangladesh from going Afghanistan or Pakistan way, it is imperative that the international community acts in good time. One should not also rule out the possibility of an outbreak of civil war in the event of uninterrupted rise of extremism.

The international community should strive to make the people of Bangladesh understand that they are not against the ordinary citizens as most of the political leaders generally play the religious card to garner popular support against the international community.

Ramen Roy On e-mail

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Who thought the country could change so drastically? I mean take a look at the newspapers. It's filled with headlines such as "Suicide bombers", "Robbery in jewelry shops", "Corruption", "Ministers linked with militants", I mean there is nothing positive about this country. People claiming to be religious are doing unreligious deeds. Where does Islam say that you can kill innocent people to get what you want? Although I am not even in my twenties but I know that Islam is a religion of peace. So is this peace? A minister said that the media created these extremists. If the Honorable Minister would kindly give more details on how they did it, citizens would be very much happy.

Truth is the biggest casualty in today's Bangladesh.

Iftazar Sayeed On e-mail

JAMAAT'S MINDSET

An acquaintance of mine went to appear for an interview for the post of medical officer in one of the hospitals owned and managed by the Jamaat supporters. He was asked many questions from medical sciences which he could answer properly, and then he was stricken with the ultimate question. He was asked a specific difficult question about a religious

practice which an ordinary person would not be able to reply. A Jamaat supporter might have replied it correctly. That doctor was disqualified. The appointing authority wanted to make sure that they were recruiting a man of their choice. This story is true for all the outfits owned overtly or covertly by that party. They are a state within a state, a country within

Bangladesh. It's very difficult to penetrate their minds. Devoid of any logic, they act like being 'possessed' by some spirits, keep on destroying our culture, society and people.

It's high time that they are identified and isolated.

SN Mamoon, Dhaka



sition leader regarding her family tragedy on August 15, 1975. Then there is the issue of grenade attacks on Suranjit Sengupta, Sylhet Mayor, killing of SAMS Kibria and killing of Ivy Rahman. Those glittery scars are continuously distracting attention. Unless the government addresses those issues and shows some signs of improvement, I don't see any positive response coming from the opposition. What if the opposition claims that this is just eyewash to divert attention? Unless the above issues are addressed sincerely it is hard to believe that the call was a result of self-realisation rather than just clever eyewash. Without addressing the barriers standing between the ruling coalition and the opposition the result of a dialogue will be a big 'zero'.

Zakaria Khondker, e-mail

every government can make laws in the area of Tazir anew, if it feels necessary.

Terrorists who are attacking judges are damn ignorant people. These terrorists do not know that most of the laws in Bangladesh have no provision which violates Islam.

Atiq, University of Dhaka

Militancy and our response

Nowadays religious militancy is an internationally recognised hot issue. It is a serious problem that the world is now confronting with. Bangladesh is not out of their sinister scheme. Though it is now in its peak, it started long ago during the previous Awami League regime when a powerful bomb was blasted in Ramna.

It set out blitzing against the most innocent civilians of Iraq and unleashed almost all its awful & lethal devices that it had developed till then.

What a travesty of truth and justice! Aftab Alam Advocate, Swat

Moribund political culture

I am not really mourning the death of anyone; rather I am mourning the brain-dead state of our political system. At 1:30 PM, 5th December 2005, the entire Mohakhali crossing was shutdown for 25 minutes, keeping the area in sheer deadlock with hundreds of cars just staying put. Why? Some high-up had to come out of ICDDR,B and make through the crossing. It is not hard to under-

stand the country is not under occupation, nor the freedom of exercising religious beliefs particularly that of Muslims who happen to make 90 percent of the population is under threat and as such there is no room for any insurgency or Jihad. It is, furthermore, against the ideals of Islam when acts of violence are committed that kills innocent people and jeopardises a peaceful society.

The name JMB is drummed up as if all the people who wear a beard, a topi and practise Islam are the culprits, though a Muslim is the last person to harm another person or a society or a nation unless, of course, his own freedom is threatened. So, theoretically, it is not conceivable that the Muslims of Bangladesh will commit such acts of terrorism as it ultimately threatens our own sovereignty - the last thing that we will

Beggars and DMP's role

Mr. Tajul Islam's call to the DMP to do something about the beggars who are a nuisance and who create a bad image of our city and our country was definitely an interesting one. He has asked the DMP to evict these beggars and rehabilitate the deserving ones. Honestly, I think the entire idea is a wishful one. Beggar or no beggar these individuals are also citizens of the country and they have every right to be where they want to be. It is true that when causing a disturbance the police have the authority to arrest or fine them, but they do not have the author-

ity to evict them from the city. As far as negative images are concerned I doubt if the removal of beggars from the streets would do anything to mitigate the obvious facts. The facts are that we are an impoverished nation where a large percentage of the population depends on agriculture for their income. We are also a corrupt nation where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. We are an unfair nation where opportunities are available to those with best connections and merit and ability play a small part. We have a country where societies

are biased and bigoted and yet we simply ignore the symptoms and turn a blind eye to such acts of bigotry. We have a very high unemployment rate and yet our government does very little to create jobs for the deserving. We have a very high inflation rate and people would starve if they do not beg, steal and commit other forms of crime. Our society is close minded enough that health education is avoided as much as possible to the extent that AIDS will soon become an epidemic.

Given all the above it is highly unlikely that the issue of beggars

will be solved. Removal of a handful of beggars from one location results in the availability of space at which point beggars from another location will move. If you have them fined they will have even a greater reason to want to earn that money. They have no education, no marketable skills. We are an extremely small country with a population of 140+ million. Whom are we trying to kid? We are more interested in the beautification of a city so that we can hide certain unpleasant things. I think the city should create jobs, deal with slums and the horrid living conditions, deal

with drug issues, AIDS and other health issues and not simply get rid of them, because we can't get rid of them. Bulldozing slums and the eviction of beggars will create even greater problems. I think we should look for solutions that work and not ones that create problems that are worse. The image of our country should be improved first and foremost before we improve the image of Dhaka city.

Zeenat Z. Syed, Atlanta, GA

