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Bill Gates' visit

Thank you very much for a thoughtful editorial on the Bangladesh visit of Bill Gates and his wife. I am glad that a lot of dignitaries including the Prime Minister, Education Minister, ICT Minister as well as BRAC Chief accorded him and his wife Melinda a warm reception. Sometime during the last year, Bill Gates paid a visit to India and committed handsome funds for IT sector development. I as a humble but conscious citizen did urge him at that time through your daily to extend support to us.

Again I would like to draw his attention to expanding philanthropist activities in Bangladesh.

Professor Dr. A.M. Choudhury

Dhaka



CU cafeteria

This refers to the piece "Chittagong University Arts Faculty Cafeteria" published in your newspaper. It is really very pathetic that such a well-reputed university of our country cannot serve its students properly. Almost 8,000 students of science and arts faculty need to go to the "underground cafeteria" to have their food and the cafeteria serves low quality food, which can harm their health. They have to stay on campus for attending classes in empty stomach.

The CU authorities must take an urgent step to solve this problem.

Hafsa Bintey Faruq

Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Reform of caretaker government

For sometime past there has been demand from opposition parties for reform of caretaker government and by now this has become a hot issue. On the

other hand, there has been stiff opposition to the idea from the ruling parties. In my view this demand can be met with a minor change in the existing provision of the constitution. Just adding one more clause by retaining the existing clause can do this. The new clause can be like this: a Chief Advisor having support of the all the parties has to be appointed.

If all the parties do not come to a consensus, the existing system will prevail because, after all, election

must be held in the interest of democracy.

Momtaj Jahan, Fulbari, Sylhet

Biogas and electricity

This refers to the letters of Mr. Kabir and Mr. Haider. Biogas is another gaseous fuel like natural gas, used as a source of energy for running generators, pumps or any utility equipment. Animal manure in rural as well as urban areas of Bangladesh is used directly as cooking fuel, and often as a fertiliser in preference to producing biogas. I believe use of biogas from human excreta is somewhat taboo being associated with filth in rural areas. However it is slowly being introduced; after overcoming normal social stigma. It has been used as a cooking fuel in some rural areas through active advocacy of some NGOs. As far as I know biogas is also being used in our armed forces barracks (possibly navy) as a cooking fuel instead of natural gas. The quantity of gas available depends on the quantity of excreta. It can therefore be utilised in places like hospitals, hotels, hostels and other community based locations for a continuous source of biogas. Use of biogas as fuel for power generation depends on the economy of size and costs, as explained by Mr. Haider. As a matter of fact many industries generate in house electricity using natural gas as fuel, both as prime and stand by power; which is economic and reliable.

What we should go for is ease our demand for electric power by paralleling all stand-by power generators to the grid. The cost of the protection and paralleling equipment is small compared to new investment. It will provide additional power without capital investment for land and machinery to obtain power. Using this option there should be no difficulty in getting between 80 to 100 MW of power particularly during maximum demand period in Dhaka city. This is what needs to be done, instead of going for use of biogas for power generation. However the use of biogas as domestic cooking fuel is an area that deserves encouragement.

S.A. Mansoor, Gulshan, Dhaka

Million dollar question!

Bangladeshis are shaken by some fearsome suicide bombings. At the moment the million dollar question is "can I return home safely and soundly?" I don't think the government can answer this burning question precisely. I am greatly disappointed with our political parties. In this crunch time of the nation they are still engaged in blame game but what was required is national consensus. We can't let our country to be another Iraq. Everyone has to come forward to stop the heinous activities of the JMB. A campaign has to be launched about the real perspectives of Islam. I think Imams

throughout the country can serve this purpose very well through their Friday speech. Awareness campaigns against fundamentalism and JMB have to be launched.

Ashek Ahmed, On e-mail

Response to bomb attacks

The repeated threats of further attacks and the recovery of bombs in Gabtoli bus terminals etc all seem to prove that the JMB has the capability to continue with its mission of disrupting normal lives of the common people, defying the heightened vigilance by the law enforcement agencies.

As is always the case, our political parties fail to stand up to the occasion and rise beyond petty party interests. As your editorial (Dec 4) pointed out, it was naive of the main opposition to demand the government to step down as a precondition for any dialogue. It only speaks of the immaturity and probably insincerity on the part of the Awami League to solve the real problem at hand.

The party in power on the other hand appears to be pathetically helpless and only half-hearted in its attempt to root out the problem. The BNP seems to have gained this illusion that it can cling to power forever banking on the combined vote bank of the 4-party alliance. It is therefore desperately trying to keep the image of the alliance in tact by denying any links between

and I cannot stop myself from commenting about this. Bomb attacks have become an inseparable part of our daily life. Everyday we hear about such incidents. Rafiqul Islam, the injured police constable, is now under treatment at the CMCH. He and his entire family are now waiting for an uncertain future because it would not be possible for him to return to normal life completely. There are thousands of people like Rafiqul Islam, who are the victims of these bombings. It is high to rein the bombers in.

Marjanul Hassan Shapla
Manarat International University

I am just amazed at how quickly politicians change their tunes! For example, the leaders of the BNP are now saying how disappointed they were with the Awami League's refusal to sit with the government to discuss the militancy issue.

Aren't they the same politicians who denied the existence of such groups in Bangladesh and blamed the AL and other groups and newspapers (Time, New York Times, among others) for fabricating such stories?

Alamgir,
Troy, Michigan, US

I am shocked to read the headlines of my country's newspapers every day. The JMB threatens us in a very ominous way. This is time to sit together & save the country from the hands of the fanatic elements.

Rajul Hasan, Sydney

I read the article about the victims of the bomb attacks on Chittagong court on November 29

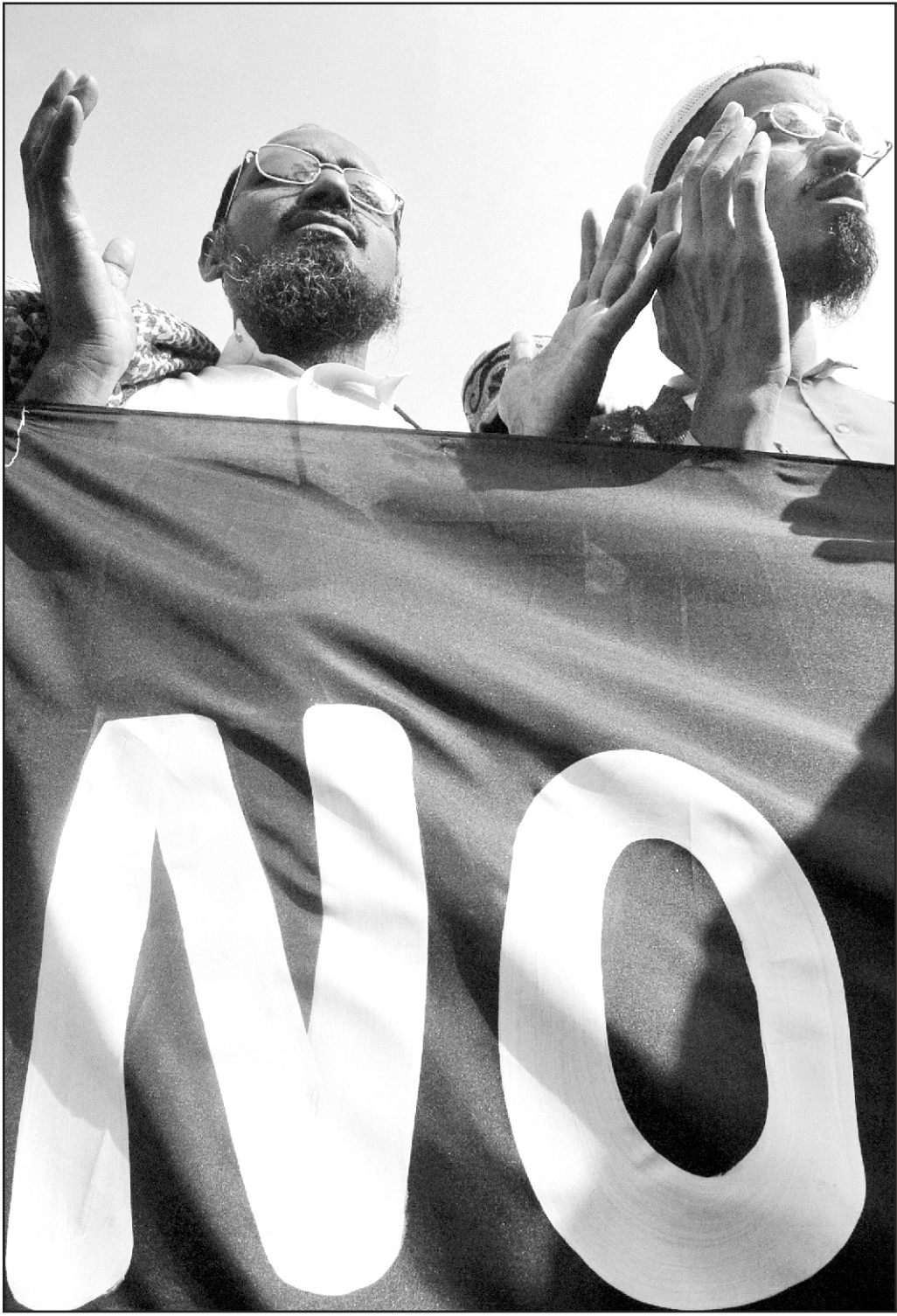


PHOTO: AFP

sleep. Things always turn heavier and greater, either good or bad, and it is also generally accepted that no mind lies idle ever. As our so-called political leaders are guiding us through a dark and uneven path towards hell, so do the anti-social elements in making there mischievous grips tighter. Our elite class, in power now or next, is busy bagging their bounties, flirting with the popular needs, crises and demands, and unleashing their claws and teeth on the ignorant, ill-educated, impoverished and helpless sections.

Can we blame, in true sense, these victims sacrificing themselves as suicidal bombers alone? Our leaders must take responsibility for them, because they are the products of their own laziness, dizziness, ignorance, plot, double game, jumble policies and what not.

Our leaders and guides have so far forgotten about the ideals and morals of their own, let alone their principles to do good and commitment to the people and country. Ideals and morals run downward. If they become corrupt and turn themselves violent to satisfy their vested interests, what will be there for the common people? In all respects ranging from economy to politics, education to governance, rights to laws, a very bleak scenario is apprehended. The laymen cannot be blamed for their ignorance, weakness and poverty alone; the rulers must share the failure.

Can the rulers answer the questions - why the common people still

seek justice when they obviously know that justice is on the side of the moneyed, why the poor people will send their children to school when they don't have enough food or cloths or when they know for sure they cannot go farther with memorising-vomiting game in the name of education, why the parents will not bribe the high-ups for their sons' or daughters' social security when the good-reasoned bosses would love to take that, why the politicians use the young people against each other in the political arena? Letting alone the complex political and economic questions, there are many more untouched simple questions to be addressed. The answers are expected only from the rational rulers, not from the ignorant, power-greedy, lackadaisical, immoral, ill motivated and hypocritical people.

We are the common people bitten bitterly by our conscience arising out of our observation of insincerity, inability, deceitfulness, lack of transparency and unwillingness to do good on the part of the ruling or waiting-to-rule classes.

Saidur Rahman
Mirpur, Dhaka

A serious crisis

As we all know by now, Bangladesh is going through a serious crisis. Some ideologues are abusing religion and poverty to spread violence in the civic life. While the secular culture and rich heritage of

Bangladesh make it a very unlikely breeding ground for a Taleban-type regime, I am concerned about the insincerity of our dominant political leadership and the inefficiency of our state machinery.

I am not sure what we, the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs), can do in addition to the face saving works we do in our everyday interactions here.

One of the things I have found out by reading some of the online Bangladeshi newspapers is that the masterminds use the "Qaomi" madrassahs as their recruiting ground. One of the leaders of those madrassah associations (and an active partner of the present regime!) recently said that they get their funding not from the government but from outside, a major outside source being the NRBs around the world. I don't suggest that the NRBs stop funding their less advantaged compatriots. However, we can add conditionality to that funding by asking the recipient to pursue their studies in mainstream schools (or at least in "Alia" madrassahs with more up-to-date curricula) rather than in Qaomi madrassahs, where, I gathered, the curriculum is more biased towards rote learning with a very limited worldview.

Wishing the best to all Bangladeshis back home.

Mohammad Irfan
Denver, Colorado, US

They kill, we warn

Militants of various hues mis-using the name of Islam are randomly killing innocents. Our government only goes on warning that they will be severely punished according to law. In this case Rab and its crossfire seems to be useless; which is employed to eliminate robbers, criminals and other unsavory elements; not these killers - one wonders why? With potential killers and their supporters they move softly; only arrest, interrogate and release!

The government's total incapability, and open double standards asking for publics help, and punishing people's representative when he points a finger; creates more doubts than reassurance regarding its intentions. It seems the government is creating a smoke screen, rather than taking on the terrorists head on with determination and without mercy; which is needed.

One wonders if this is not a new version of the infamous "Al Badr" and "Al Shams"



PHOTO: AFP

killers let loose in 1971 under the planning and guidance of the leaders of Jamaat who seem to be a dominant partner of the government today! Together they, blame the opposition, external sources, foreign power et al, while keeping a blind eye on transgressors in their own fold! They want to have a joint party meeting of victims and suspect killers and supporters with equal participation to contain the out of hand murderers! Could there be a more ludicrous idea? BNP possibly does not believe in the saying that "As you sow, so you reap" The BNP welcomed the Jamaat with open arms to restart democracy and today divisions and subdivisions of this Jamaat are creating the killers who seem to flourish day by day without effective hindrance; trampling democracy with devilry! The government seems to forget that "You can fool some people for all the time" and "All the people for some time"; but not "All the people for all the time". The

days of reckoning are not far away; and hopefully at the end truth shall prevail.

ProBono Publico
On e-mail

Once upon a time our sweet little motherland produced many courageous people who dared to stand even before the high tide all along in the middle of the sea. Our national flag still proclaims the sacrifice and courage of our ascendants. But unfortunately, in spite of being the descendants of these heroic people we, the new generation, do not possess that courage, boldness and integrity. We always find ourselves helpless before injustice, inequity, extortion etc. Though we want to bust and say, "This is wrong" but every time our attempts are suffocated because we are afraid of facing the brutal reality. May be, this is the reason why some of our youths are misguided and have fallen easy prey to religious extremism. Their agitation against the

existing system turns them into deadly human bombs who dare to blow themselves up without any hesitation, as they have nothing to lose.

Therefore, if the government wants to uproot the problem tree of militancy, it should try to change the corrupt social, economic and administrative systems and thereby establish a society which will be for the people and by the people. Moreover, we, the new generation, should keep this in mind that the militants are using our fear as the most lethal weapon against us. If we are afraid we will definitely lose. It is now our time to show them that if they can give their lives for their groundless ideology, we too have the guts to sacrifice our lives for the sake of our own motherland, just like the martyrs of 1971.

Sagor & Tania
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