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Hezbollah's victory --the flip side

Prof. Karim Makdisi, lecturer in the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration at the American University of Beirut, and Timur Goksel, former advisor for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, recently wrote: "Indeed, Hezbollah has emerged politically stronger within Lebanon and the Arab region for resisting Israel and restoring pride to Arabs so used to military defeat and political submission; while Syria and Iran have gained from Hezbollah's success." But they failed to mention that the Shiite party of Hezbollah has won a propaganda victory at the expense of Lebanon. While Hezbollah fired

rocket after rocket on Israel without suffering much casualties, the Israeli air force completely destroyed Lebanon's infrastructure and Lebanon's fragile recovery after years of civil strife has come to an end.

The question remains: Why Hezbollah provoked a war by kidnapping and killing some Israeli soldiers at a time when Israel was thinking about withdrawing from parts of the West Bank? The answer seems to be that Hezbollah carried out the attack at the bidding of Iran and Syria. Makdisi and Goksel are right when they say that 'Syria and Iran have also gained from Hezbollah's

success." Only that their gain was Lebanon's loss. And they will continue to gain if another confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel erupts. Hezbollah might once again restore pride among the Arabs, but Lebanon's economy and infrastructure will again be the victim.

The Israeli forces must withdraw and the UN peacekeepers must accept the responsibility for stopping Hezbollah from lobbing rockets across the border. Otherwise, the war will resume and Lebanon will pay the price.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Weapons of math instruction!

A public school teacher was arrested at Bergstrom International Airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a slide rule, and a calculator. At a morning press conference, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld said "I believe the man is a member of the notorious new group called 'Al-gebra' (pronounced, Al-gee-bra). The Secretary did not identify the man, who has been charged with carrying 'weapons of math instruction.'"

"Al-gebra is a problem for us," Rumsfeld said. "They desire solutions by 'means' and 'extremes', and sometimes go off on tangents in search of 'absolute value'. They use secret code names like 'x' and 'y' and refer to themselves as 'unknowns', but we have determined that they belong to a common denominator known as the axis of medieval with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philosopher Isocrates used to say, 'There are three sides to every triangle.'"

When asked to comment on the arrest, President Bush said, "If God had wanted us to have better 'weapons of math instruction,' He would have given us more fingers and toes."

White House aides told reporters they could not recall a more profound statement by the president.

Adeeb Kamal
7561 Wildfern Drive
Mississauga ON Canada

Indulgence or incompetence?

Headline news items (Aug 20) on the grenade attack investigation and Huli's regrouping are very important eye openers for all of us. It seems even if the suspects return from their self imposed exile, our (efficient?) investigators will not be able to find these characters who are the flesh and blood incarnation of 'HG Wells' 'The Invisible Man'!

As for the Huli, they may be possibly parleying secret deals for providing the election muscle and vocal power with dual weapons of religion and grenades to help the power seekers win the elections.

Given this possible scenario, what chance or courage is there for the poorly paid police operatives to either investigate efficiently or deter effectively the various violent perpetrators that are let loose - possibly thanks to the authoritative indulgence from the apex of power. An observer
On email

Plight of an Air India passenger

Experiences of Bangladeshis travelling abroad by Air India have been far from satisfactory. A recent episode of travel of a very dear friend of mine from Dhaka to London via Kolkata and Mumbai is a classic example of what a professional airliner ought not to be. First, there was an unusually long delay in Kolkata which no one from the airline was willing to explain. Far from it, they were not even willing to listen. During this delay the passengers were confined to a so-called transit lounge where the toilet facility was nothing to 'write home about'. Every time a passenger forewarned the airline staff that they would miss the connecting flight in Mumbai they were told that the London flight would wait for the passengers from Kolkata. When this flight finally arrived in Mumbai, lo and behold, the London flight had already left. Now began an insufferable wait for the next flight. It was a wait for hours. The ordeal was ghastly. There was no looking after the passengers, the toilets here were even worse than Kolkata's clogged and overflowing. The Bangladeshis passengers were made to wait in a ghetto like waiting room while the foreign pass-

port holders, even of Bangladeshi origin, were taken away to a hotel, the behaviour of the ground staff was despicably arrogant.

These apparently minor incidents may have a far reaching negative rub off on bilateral relationship of the two countries without any fault of the people who rule them. Aly Zaker, On email

Our identity

We are proud citizens of independent and sovereign Bangladesh. But we wonder and are shocked as to why there are divisions and differences among our leaders, intellectuals, literati, bureaucrats, journalists and ourselves on the identity and nationality of the people of our country.

Why do we have two different and distinct identities -- 'Bengalee' and 'Bangladeshi'?

Why don't we have a common and single identity and nationality for our fourteen crore people?

By virtue of the names of their respective countries the people of Australia are known as Australians, the people of the USA as Americans, the people of China as Chinese, the people of Malaysia as Malaysians, the people of Russia as Russians, the people of Iran as Iranians, the people of Nepal as Nepalese and so on and so forth.

But what is wrong with us? Why is there exception and discrepancy in our case? Why do we call ourselves Bengalees on one hand and Bangladeshis on the other hand?

It may be mentioned here that if a citizen of Bangladesh dies in Saudi Arabia while performing hajj, killed in road accident in America or Europe or arrested in Cyprus or Korea while entering there illegally he is rightfully identified as Bangladeshi and not as a Bengalee.

Further, when we watch or listen to a cricket match commentary in television or radio held in Zimbabwe, Australia, India, Pakistan or England our players are addressed and honoured as Bangladeshis and not Bengalees.

The people of India call themselves Indians. The nationality of a Bengali speaking inhabitant of West Bengal, a province of India is Indian and not Bengalee. The people of Pakistan call themselves Pakistanis. The nationality of a Punjabi speaking inhabitant of West Punjab, a province of Pakistan, is not Punjabi but Pakistani.

We would request our leaders and all concerned to arrive at a consensus without any hesitation, fear, favour or ill-will against anybody on a common identity and single nationality for the people of Bangladesh in the greater interest of our national integration, worldwide respect and recognition, love, affection and amity among our people and peace, progress and prosperity of our country. OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Election fever

At the moment the country is getting ready for the national elections. In both the camps, the government and the opposition, lobbying is on for getting nominations for MP election and for achieving higher GPA (Grade Point Average) in political manipulation tests for future lucrative positions and postings. People on the ruling side are trying to please the ruling party leader by proving themselves to be die-hard supporters of the ruling party. On the other hand, both genuine and turned-into

Aziz. The British decided to create a homeland for the Jews in Palestine by endorsing the European Zionist agenda which came into being in 1948, after another world war. At that time the Jews were only 7% of the total population of Palestine and they were locals like the Arabs. They did not demand a Jewish state. The Arabs protested but not unanimously. Till today the house of Ibn Saud, Jordanian royal family who are Sharif Hussein's descendants and the Sheikdoms around the Persian Gulf are the staunchest allies of American-British imperialists. They are all Sunni Muslims. The majority of Jews in Israel now are European Jews who migrated there after the creation of Israel.

In a strange twist of history the Shias have now become the lone fighters against the American-British-Israeli axis. Shia Iran and Hezbollah are now poised against the American-British-Israelis to fight and restore the Muslim honour and Palestine to Palestinians. However, as long as the Muslim countries remain divided on the issue of taking

sides vis-a-vis Americans, it is doubtful whether Iran alone would be able to do anything fruitful. On the contrary, we may again witness the destruction of another cradle of human civilisation like Iraq and Afghanistan. The Americans and British would do everything to keep the Shias

pitted against the Sunnis. Unless the Muslims unite against them, Israel will continue its genocide against the Arabs. Ibne Azad
Mirpur, Dhaka

Israel is attacking Lebanon without any provocation so that the Muslim countries,

especially Iran, are drawn into the conflict. The plan is to prepare the ground for an assault on Iran.

The Muslim countries should remain united to face the Israeli aggression. Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed
North Hall, Dhaka
College, Dhaka



genuine supporters are struggling to enlist their names in the merit list maintained by the leader of the opposition.

Even in the public offices, frustrated officials and employees are showing their utmost adherence to the opposition party by extending maximum non-cooperation with the offices run mainly by the ruling party supporters - as if they are not serving the government of Bangladesh but the ruling party offices. They are getting wild to ensure their entry into their party run offices after winning the election!

A pertinent question arises - should this be the situation from the moral and democratic point of view? Is it fair to divide national values and goals into segments?

I would sincerely like to appeal to the ruling party leader as well as the opposition leader to nominate really honest persons from their respective parties who will selflessly work for the well-being of Bangladesh and its people. They should also avoid meeting flatterers who hide facts for realising their narrow interests!

We have wasted a lot of time in unproductive acts. Now let's look forward towards building a really happy and poverty-free Bangladesh.

Let the elections be fair.

Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

Garment industries

It is not possible to develop our country overnight, rather we have to go ahead gradually for its development. Our garment industry is one of the most important sources of foreign currency earning. So it is obvious that the industry plays a very vital role in our economic progress. But the workers in the garment factories are deprived of what they should get.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter and adopt remedial measures to set things right in the garment industry.

Md Nazmul Huda
English Department, International Islamic University Chittagong.

A growing concern

A university teacher is a nation builder who helps produce worthy citizens. If such people, holding very respectable positions in society, become corrupt, then the country's image is shattered. Many of the university teachers are now appointed on political consideration. Such teachers get involved in the game of politics and do not bother much about academic activities.

What can we expect from these highly politicised elements? The question should be answered if we want to save our higher education system from the hands of such people.

Md. Rabiul Islam (Rabi)
MBA student
University of Rajshahi

Don't distort history

Bangladesh is a small country, but indisputably it has a glorious history of independence movement. But it is now a disgraceful and unavoidable reality for us that we have got into such a situation or are passing a time when this rich history is being presented inaccurately or partially. In fact, we, the young generation of today's Bangladesh, are greatly confused.

It is really a matter of great concern that we are distorting the history which should have been written in an impartial manner for the sake of its being properly evaluated or esteemed throughout the world.

Md. Saiful Islam Khan
Dept. of English
Jahangir Nagar University.

Buetscene

Buet is drifting. The VC clearly failed to tackle the undue pressure of the students. There was no need to yield to the students' pressure to postpone the examinations originally scheduled for watching WC matches. The fact that Bangladesh was not fielding its team in the competition, and no other education institution in the country was asking for such vacation was good enough ground to ignore the students' demand and put an end to the matter.

A meeting of the academic council of Buet could have said no to it, and the teachers jointly could stand behind the VC to stop it. The academic calendar should have been maintained. When considerations other than academic interest override the administration's decisions, an academic institution is bound to suffer. About what happened afterwards, the less said the better. It's a shame for the Buet administration, and shame for the Buet students as well.

A proper investigation should reveal the wrongdoers and they should be punished for playing with the academic careers of thousands of students. They must prevent recurrence of such unruly behaviour of students in future.

A concerned citizen
On email

Politics and education

The recent decision of upgrading 'Dawra' as an equivalent degree to B.A. is politically motivated. The decision has been taken without any prior assessment and preparation. We even don't know what the Qawami madrasah is or what is the curriculum of this religion-oriented education system. It will only create confusion.

The BNP has not been voted to power to take such unreasonable decisions on its own. Rizwan-ul-Huq
Farazipara Lane, Khulna

Muslim countries

It is time the Muslim countries should really think whether to quit the UN, as it is no longer a neutral world body to deal with the problems and conflicts that are savaging this world every day. Rather, the UN is being increasingly used to chastise countries that fail to satisfy the US lust for world dominance and its illegal love for the state of Israel. The world does not belong to the US that it should submit to it. Using the UN, America destroyed Iraq by imposing sanctions and embargos and finally occupied the country. Because of UN sanctions millions of Iraqi children had died of starvation and malnutrition. America is now contriving to impose sanctions on Iran and Syria. This will be a shame and unforgivable sin if the Muslim countries allow America (through the UN) to impose sanctions upon any Muslim country in future.

Don't think (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Muslim countries) that you are safe from US

aggression. Yesterday Iraq, today Lebanon, tomorrow Iran and Syria, and day after tomorrow surely you will become the target of the US. Please forget about the divisions of Shiites and Sunnis. There were no Shiites and no Sunnis at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). These all happened after him. So, please keep aside all differences.

The Muslim countries cannot live again with honour and dignity until they quit the UN and shut down the US embassies in their capitals. Syeed Haque
On email

Reform within the parties

The next general election will take place sometime in January-2007. The big political parties have already formed alliances to contest the election. The tradition of Bangladesh is that if you win everything's fine, but if you lose nothing is right. The parties never accept election results in the right spirit. In 2007 elections, too, something will happen; the old stories of rigging will be told once more by the losers.

The political parties are already talking tall in favour of reform to the present system of

caretaker government and the Election Commission. We have already wasted much time on the reform issue, but nothing has happened.

I think reforms within the political parties are also very important to ensure that the best candidates are nominated by the parties. The Election Commission has laid down some rules, but those are not always adhered to.

So, only the political parties can bring about the desired changes, by not nominating corrupt and incompetent people. MH Chowdhury
Lake Circus, Kalabaghian, Dhaka

Disgraceful

The recent disgraceful act and utterances by a government high-up is a shame to the nation. We have seen people like him coming to power in the last 35 years and finally disappearing, but people like Mr. Debapriyo do occupy a permanent place in the minds of people.

Let us hope that the secular people of Bangladesh will evaluate Mr. Debapriyo for his work and not for his religion.

Munim Chowdhury
New York, USA

Bismillah Khan



The towering musical personality and 'Shehnai' maestro, Bismillah Khan, has left us forever. The national flag flew half-mast in all the government offices of Uttar Pradesh in India. The Indian government declared one-day national mourning on his death.

Bismillah Khan was a historical personality as well, playing 'Shehnai' at the first celebration of the Independence Day of India in 1947 at the Red Fort in Old Delhi. What a great honour! Not only India but also the whole world has lost a genius.

May God give him eternal peace in heaven.

Mrinal Sarkar
Lecturer in English
College of Development Alternative
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



No state honour for the poet

Bengalees around the world are deeply shocked at the death of poet Shamsur Rahman, the greatest name in contemporary Bengali literature. As a poet he added a new dimension to the modern Bengali poetry.

Shamsur Rahman did not believe in 'Art for art's sake', rather he had a great commitment to his society. He was a pro-people poet with a progressive vision. During our war of independence his poetry inspired our freedom fighters and freedom-seeking people. Indeed, he fought with his mighty pen in 1971. We should honour him as a freedom fighter!

Unfortunately, this great man did not get the state honour that he deserved after his demise.

Md. Anwarul Kabir

Assistant Professor
AIU, Dhaka

We mourn the death of poet Shamsur Rahman and pray to Allah the Almighty for his eternal peace. Our hearts go with the bereaved family.

With the obituary reference one can hope that a day will come when our beloved poet will be re-laid to rest with full state honour.

Probashi
On email

The nation will have to wait for years to produce another Shamsur Rahman. What we have lost we cannot feel now. He will be remembered for his great contribution to Bengali literature. M Alauddin Ansary, DU