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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

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 Hull'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 Hull, 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 religion 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-clogged and overflowing. The Bangladeshi 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 four 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 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 Bangladeshi 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

the Muslim world was seething with impotent rage as they were unable to stop the killing of the Palestinian and Lebanese Arabs and destruction of latter's civilian infrastructure by the Israeli armed forces in an asymmetric war a few weeks ago. If history is recalled then it would appear that the Arabs are suffering now for the sins of their fathers. The Arabs sided with the British imperialists in dismembering the Turkish empire during the First World War. The Turks were fellow Muslims. But the Arabs decided to trust the Christian British and later Americans in their struggle for freedom from the Turkish domination. Ironically, the Indian Muslims at that time decided to support the Turks in their fight against the British imperial power. If the Arabs had waited a little they would have gained freedom anyway after the abolition of the Turkish Caliphate by Mustapha Kemal in 1922.

After the defeat of Turks, Arabia including Hijaz was handed over to Abdul Aziz of Nejd. Sharif Hussein was driven out of Hijaz by Abdul

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 Ibsa 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.

Ibn 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



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
AJU, 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

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