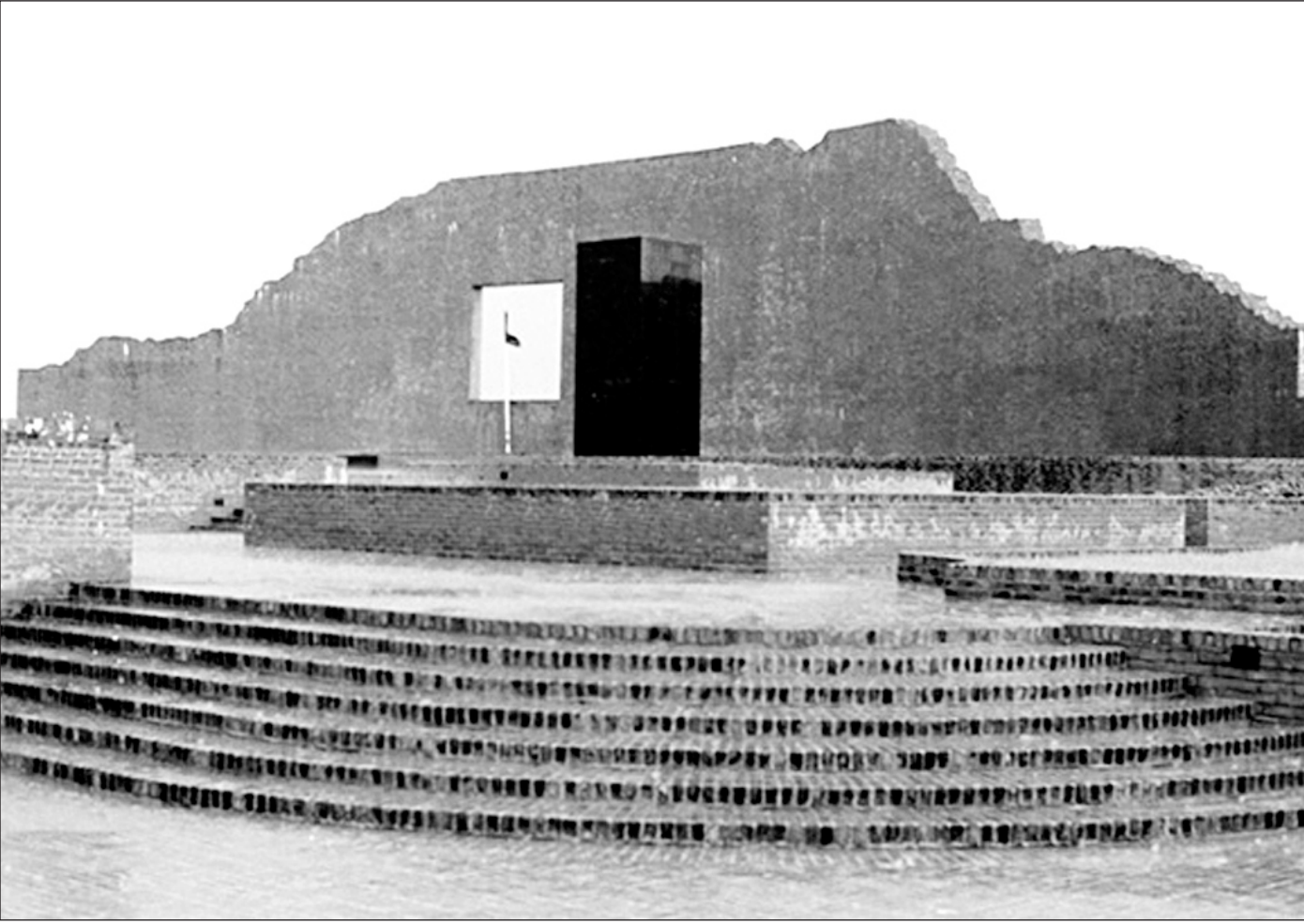


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Naming 1971 mass killing sites



A few days ago I was reading a newspaper article: Auschwitz is officially stamped as 'German' (The Independent, London, 29-06-2007). Now a Unesco world heritage site, Auschwitz in Poland was the infamous Nazi concentration and extermination camp where Hitler killed more than one million Jews and other people during the Second World War.

In recent years, international media have mistakenly referred to it as "Polish concentration camp". In response to Polish diplomatic pressure (and much of German annoyance and shock) the Unesco recently decided to rename "Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration and extermination camp 1940 1945" to "Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi con-

centration and extermination camp 1940 1945". Welcoming the Unesco decision Poland reacted by saying, "This is a victory for truth... (otherwise) Poland might be blamed for taking part in organising and running the Auschwitz".

In Bangladesh, there are about four thousand known genocide/mass killing sites of 1971 created by Pakistan occupation army and its Bengali and non-Bengali collaborators (Al- Badr, Razakars, Al-Shams, Bihari gangs etc.). I am requesting the government, Liberation War Museum and other authorities concerned to scientifically preserve and properly rename these mass killing sites.

For example, Rangpur Cantonment mass killing field (Rakto Gaurab) could

be renamed as 'Rangpur Cantonment mass killing field' of the Pakistan army (March, 1971); Rayer Bazar Intellectuals killing field could be renamed as 'Rayer Bazar Intellectuals killing site' of the Al-Badr (November-December, 1971); Adityapur mass graves could be renamed as 'Balaganj-Adityapur mass graves by Razakar collaborators of Pakistan army (June, 1971); Mirpur Jallad Khana killing field could be renamed as 'Mirpur-Jallad Khana mass killing well by Bihari collaborators of the Pakistan army (1971)'.

We also hope that all war criminals - Pakistanis and Bangladeshis -will be brought to justice soon.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK

"A Golden Age"

Our joys know no bounds when our country comes to limelight for any good piece of work or achievement of its people living at home and abroad.

The other day, the novel 'A Golden Age' authored by Tahmima Anam received a lot of exposure in the Western media, which has given us a real sense of achievement.

As we all have come to know, the novel has been on the bestseller list in England and has received reviews from the British press for its elevated narrative and linguistic technique.

Its publication is remarkable: it is the first ever novel written in English which is set against the backdrop of our Liberation War; it is, Tahmima rightly said, an eye-opener for a lot of younger Bangladeshis living at home and abroad who have not had the opportunity to learn about the people's experiences during the War of Independence.

Before I conclude, I cannot help thanking Tahmima Anam for writing a great novel which is an emblem of patriotic zeal.

Md. Faisal
Shook Bahar, Panchlaish Chittagong

Our politicians

Those who study political science, or have a little education, should know that the duty of humans is to

do some good for their parents, for themselves and for the nation as a whole. The politicians accomplish such jobs on a wider scale. But the situation in our political arena is totally different. Here politics is done to destroy the backbone of the country.

Lots of party men from the Awami league, the BNP etc are now locked up in prisons. They have been arrested on different criminal charges. The caretaker government has revealed their real faces to the people.

Well done, the CTG, and shame on the politicians!
Shatabdi
Regional Public Administration Training Centre (RPATC) Officers Quarter, Rajshahi

Caretaker govt.

The present government is doing a commendable job. The anti-corruption drive has attained people's support. Still, what hurts us is its double standard in this regard. When some vicious delinquents are behind bars, some other like-minded fellows are going unnoticed and even unheard of by the caretaker government. These criminals are now talking about "reforms within" so that they are not brought to justice. We should realise that villains are always villains. No good can come out of the bad guys!

I think it is time for the govern-

ment to identify these people and take them to custody. Otherwise, its laudable achievements and actions will be questioned.

Shahidul Islam Chowdhury
East Nasirabad, Chittagong

Information superhighway

I would like to focus on the important issue of fibre optic network and its current position. It's been a year our country was connected to this information superhighway and it should be useful to the general people. Only the relatively solvent people are able to get the benefits of Internet. Only a few people in cities, towns can use it. Students of primary and secondary level, residing in villages, don't have access to it.

So the alternatives are very important in this sector.

Maruf
Ahmedbagh, Dhaka

William Carey

The write-up on Reverend William Carey by Rubab Abdullah (4 July) was quite justified and perhaps long overdue. Carey learnt various Indian Languages at the time and obviously his purpose was not merely scholarly. First, he was a Christian missionary and his prime duty was to preach the gospel to the natives. And that is why the native languages and their development

to enable translation of the Bible for the understanding of the natives were so essential. This does not however demean his scholarly contribution because all languages, literature and scholarly pursuits initially were based on religious scriptures. Al-Azhar Islamic University in Cairo was established more than a thousand years ago for this reason and later Oxford University in England was established for turning out priests for the Christian religion. As women could not be ordained as priests, they were not allowed into the universities for higher education. And that is how the women were educationally discriminated, the effect of which is still felt today in senior positions and other areas in society.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Teaching English

Much has already been written on the topic of the abysmal standard of English of the mainstream educational institutions—say, the schools and colleges. Since the majority of the students attend these seats of learning, the issue of the decline in the standard of education demands close scrutiny. Needless to say, our students, with their poor command of the language, will not be able to cope with the demands of the fast-paced world. Being the language of international communication, English holds the sway and in all probability this status of English will gain in strength.

Those of the readers who are involved in the profession of teaching—especially those who are serving in the schools and colleges located outside the cities—know how incapable our students are in expressing their thoughts, let alone their feelings, in English.

Another point that I would like to make is that most of the educational institutions are bursting at the seams: perhaps the rapid growth of population is the reason. Be that as it may, we cannot allow the trend of rot to grow deeper, as far as the teaching of English is concerned.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Reform issue

Talks are rife these days of reforms within the political parties. Have the ashaab kahaf (or Rip van Winkles, if you would like to tread the path of Washington Irving), suddenly woken up from their deep sleep? Clamorous rumblings are heard from the cavernous insides of the Big Two. Lately even Ershad and B. Choudhury have also jumped onto the bandwagon. Do they really

mean it? Forgive me, I am a poor believer and find it difficult to accept things that I cannot see.

There is but one sure-fire acid test: Let the people be the arbiters. Isn't that what democracy is about? "The people are the source of power," thus spoke Ziaur Rahman, father of the BNP. "The Awami League is the party of the people (or words to that effect)," says Hasina. With so much faith in "Janogon" none should have any qualm about people power.

To empower people I propose proportional representation (PR) to replace the Westminster system. Adopted in many of the European countries, it is the most modern method of democratic pluralism and infinitely superior to the system of first-past-the-post, currently in practice.

When the 'vote' came to India on the British back in 1935, it was a novel idea. Over time it took roots in the Commonwealth. It has lived its day and with time has given birth to many weeds and atrophies. The necessity for introduction of our very own caretaker government is a proof positive of the unsuitability of the British system in our climate. The need of the hour suggests that we think anew.

The biggest advantage of switching to PR would be that political parties will be obliged to bring about continual update by themselves without being forced or dictated from outside. Transparency will obviate one-person rule.

The 'public' will have to be let in on the party manifesto and their operational plans. For in this system people will cast their votes for the party—not for any 'boromiah' or 'Choudhury Sahab'.

All parties will have to be registered; their affairs will be known to the Election Commission. The upshot—no secret funds, no chandabazi and no secret agenda.

In the political arena an age of discipline will be ushered in. The days of Mama-Bhagney/Husband-Wife parties will be over forever. No longer shall we have to contend with 85 or so political parties. A party that will fail to garner at least 5% of the votes cast will have no voice in Parliament on Administration. Thus over time so-called parties will die a natural death.

Shall we allow the old order to change, yielding place to the new?

A citizen
One e-mail

Lots of accusations, counter-accusations, negotiations and discussions are going on about our politicians after 1/11. We are unfortunate to have elected or rather coerced to elect MPs of very little substance. The real ugly faces and the gross misdeeds of most of the politicians have been exposed by the authorities.

Apertinent question arises at this juncture: what sort of politicians does the country require?

Most of the politicians of old order in the Awami league, BNP, Jatiyo Party have lost their relevance and usefulness in this dynamic, developing, competitive, educated world. They simply lack the modern outlook.

So, we require urbane, humane, well-educated, well-versed, intelligent, less selfish politicians with good family and moral backgrounds. They should be mentally and physically fit to run the statecraft. All the political parties should actively nurture and promote such persons of substance. Survival of politicians and political parties will depend on the above factors. Otherwise, all powerful 'Janogon' will reject them.

SN Mamoon
One e-mail

Hasina and Gandhi

Dr. Mozammel H. Khan's comparison of Sheikh Hasina with Mahatma Gandhi (July 3, 2007) didn't sound at all logical.

Bangladeshi intellectuals, on both sides of the political divide, bear partial responsibility for our current mess. My question to them is: Why did you have to make yourselves subservient to the two ladies whose only claim to fame lies in being the daughter of Bangabandhu and the wife of Ziaur Rahman respectively?

Engr. ABM Nurul Islam
Blumbergasse

Desco disorder

Recently, Desco staff came to my apartment and asked for the bills paid. At that time I was in my office. As I live in an apartment, my receptionist rang me and described the situation. I reached the scene immediately and saw that my electricity line was disconnected. I rushed to Desco office in Gulshan-1 and showed that I had already paid all my bills, and asked them why they disconnected my line. They replied that their list was not updated, and asked for a reconnection fee of Tk 1,800 from me!

Now whose fault is it? Is it the fault of the residents of Dhaka who

pay bills regularly or is it the fault of Desco?

Now my question is, what kind of country are we living in?

Mahmood
Gulshan, Dhaka

Electoral rules

The Election Commission should be the most powerful independent institution to control democratic culture of political parties. "Towards free election" by Mr. Badiul Alam Majumdar published in The Daily Star's Forum, July, 2007 issue is a laudable initiative discussing the path to free election. I am adding some more points.

1. The two major political parties have never tried to create an internal environment to facilitate emergence of future leaders. This has been avoided to establish family rule. I feel there should be definitive steps to take in this regard by the political parties striving for registration with the EC.

2. A new political party may take years to gain public support and thus may not gain 3% of the votes in the coming election. The suggested cancellation of registration if they get less than 3% vote in the 9th parliamentary election needs further thought. Imposition of too many conditions may discourage potential social leaders to be involved in politics.

3. As in political organisations, NGO leaders find scope to come closer to people at the grassroots level. NGOs are institutions where scope of dedicated pro-people leaders can be developed. It is true that many NGOs, like political parties, are directly run by families. But there are the transparent NGOs too, local and foreign, and are run in a transparent manner, empowering people to take charge of their own destiny, making them self-reliant and creating new leaders. I consider imposing any bar to be a disadvantage to the dedicated NGO leaders willing to join politics.

While the rule of law is supposed to prevent criminals' involvement in politics, it is important to design electoral rules in such a way that true leaders don't get demotivated.

Muklesur Rahman, MBA (MIS)
Dhanmondi

Unholy business

The holy majars (shrines) of our country have now become a safe sanctuary of corruption. Some so-called caretakers or *khadems*, as they call themselves, are using the shrines as the shield for running their unlawful businesses and are spoiling the sanctity of these holy places. These people are using all the majars to deceive the gullible devotees. They earn millions by selling the huge number of sacrificial animals, piles of candles and all other things offered by the devotees.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, there are twenty thousand majars in the country. Among them 1,500 majars are in Dhaka, 2,588 in Chittagong, 500 in Sylhet and others are located in different places of the country. Almost all these holy places are now occupied by some greedy *khadems* in the name of serving them.

The major authorities arrange two or three-day long *oorsh* (religious congregation) only to allure the disciples to collect money from them. Apart from this, some majars have become safe havens for the addicts. Though these evil prac-

Hamas and Fatah

Both Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas have been elected by the Palestinian people. Why then are they slaughtering each other?

During recent fighting for control of Gaza, Hamas was accused by Human Rights Watch of "violations of international humanitarian law, in some cases amounting to war crimes." These crimes include killing of noncombatants, killing inside hospitals and summary executions. According to Human Rights Watch: "Hamas military forces captured 28-year-old Muhammad Swairki, a cook for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's presidential guards, and executed him by throwing him to his death, with his hands and legs tied, from a 15-story apartment building in Gaza City."

Such brutality of Hamas toward fellow Palestinians

German people and Britain and France paid a heavy price for negotiating with him on that basis.

Hamas' brutality to fellow Palestinians belonging to Fatah shows that it remains an essentially terrorist organisation despite its past successes in Palestinian elections, and its current benevolent pretensions. By killing sick and wounded Palestinians in Gaza hospitals, Hamas has showed that it is a terrorist outfit which will not hesitate to kill fellow Palestinians if they belong to the rival camp. As Prof. Salim Mansur, professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario and an expert on the Middle East, recently wrote in The Ottawa Sun: "Efforts in appeasing Palestinians and funding them with expectations that reason will prevail over bigotry have had



stands in stark contrast with the moderation it has shown to kidnapped BBC journalist Allan Johnston by arranging his release. But why Hamas showed no mercy to Mohammad Swairki, a poor Palestinian cook? The answer may be that Hamas thinks by electing, the Palestinian people have given it the mandate to do whatever it likes. But Hamas may be reminded that Hitler was also elected by the

contrary effects as they murder each other."

The only solution to this inter-Palestinian bloodletting will be to ask the Palestinians to renounce violence and follow in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, who achieved India's independence nonviolently. It is time both Hamas and Fatah gave up violence as their creed.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

tices have been continuing for years, the law enforcers seem to have always overlooked these things.

So, I request the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to stop the illegal businesses at the holy shrines.

Rukan Uddin
Department of English Leading University, Sylhet

Corruption

Rampant corruption and shameless nepotism totally destroyed the medical education system in the country during the previous *jote* regime. Professionals with blessings from the BMA were unduly awarded 'abnormal' promotions. Medical officers became 'Profes-

sors' and 'Directors' overnight flouting all norms and regulations. Surprisingly, most of them have managed to remain safe so far.

Due punishment like demotion and termination should be meted out to those found unduly rewarded. Incompetent and spineless members of the PSC were equally responsible for the mess and turned the PSC virtually into a post office.

Shamim Ahmed
On e-mail



Dhanmondi Eidgah

We thank the reporter for writing on construction of a 'temporary' market near the Dhanmondi Eidgah. What he fell short of mentioning was that the Eidgah is one of the 22 listed heritage properties in the city. Any construction near it without giving due consideration and respect and without taking special permission from competent authorities is a violation of several laws and regulations, e.g. BC Act 1953, National Building Code,

Antiquities Act, and Imarot Nirman Bidhimala, with punishment of up to 7 years in jail! Other laws also prohibit taking over parks and playgrounds.

There are various ways of building a temporary structure at a cheaper and more functional way.

Mahbub Rahman, PhD
A citizen



I have to admit that Ashrafal and Rahim have played a gem of an innings during the second innings on the 3rd day's play of the second Test against Sri Lanka, as their vigorous and resilient batting made the Lankans a thing or two to worry about, but prior to that the Bangladeshi batting had been giving us perpetual shocks, which paved the way for the so-called conscious critics to rip off our Test status.

We have seen a great innings from Ashrafal. But if he plays well in one innings, then he fails to live up to the expectations in the next few. He is not the young buddy anymore. It should be noted that Tendulkar began to take up the gigantic responsibilities of his team from this age, in which he passed the best part of his cricketing life. Tendulkar used to make a quick-fire 30 plus in the early days of his career, but he exposed himself to criticism for not metamorphosing the fifties into hundreds. Suddenly, Tendulkar became consistent.

Ashrafal ought to follow the example of Tendulkar.

Nasih UI Wadud Alam
Premier University, Ctg