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Khaleda Zia's arrest



PHOTO: AFP

Tragic realism?

In literature, the term for unlikely events juxtaposed into reality is called Magic Realism. Great authors have used this concept in many of their masterpieces. The books that twine together the real with the unreal often satirically speak of the nature of society. In correspondence to politics and governance in Bangladesh, the unbelievable information that is being stripped and exposed is indeed real, but the extent of these events is unbelievable. The events compiled together speak in the tone of an unpublished magically real story, where the plot is being unfolded. Unfortunately, this is a true tale where the bottom line had been leading to spoil the values of

the country. Let us begin our magical journey in 2004. Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil repeatedly stated that only the Almighty could help the survival of the then BNP led four-party alliance, after a certain deadline. Of course constitutionally it seemed rather impossible and then it seemed quite amazing too. At the end of the deadline nothing happened and normal activities resumed. Then the opposition secretary appeared to say that he was still holding onto the trump card, which would be used to shatter the government later. Not until recent times, did we hear about the real deal. The AL had reportedly decided to bribe seventy members of parliament. Each of them were to

receive a crore and some even more. Seventy MP resignations would force the government to fail, not to mention the grave disgrace of the BNP itself. In a magically real book, such a story would be considered fabulous. However, in real life it is quite a shame to even think of such situations.

The reported news has sparked many other questions. Did the AL chief and other principal leaders hold meetings with the target MPs regarding the decision? Could they make such gallant comments without a nod of agreement among all the parties involved? The possible answers to these questions are yet more shocking. If the BNP lawmakers had agreed to indulge in such a fabulous package, their integrity is to be questioned. Those seventy MPs represent twenty three percent of the parliament, representing about 29.1 million or roughly twenty percent of the population of Bangladesh. These parliamentarians were elected to bring to the table the issues of their areas and work to solve them. It is so unfortunate that instead of doing that the parliamentarians would slip into selfish schemes dominated by illegal money. We are so unfortunate that instead of producing magic realistic literature we have brought to reality the magic realism of books and thereby ruin the cause of the people, the country and slapped democracy. I was under the impression that only books could include bits and pieces of Magic Realism. After a while of beholding it seems that our own very politicians have brought it to reality.

Saad Quasem

Assistant to President

PERI- Project for the End of Rape

Inc

Philadelphia, PA

Student politics

I think it is always good to discuss about our own country. Many men have many minds. I oppose student politics. I came to know what they actually do when I was a resident of Sir Salimullah Hall in DU. Student activists do virtually nothing.

It seems that they take lease of the hall or the university. Some of them carry arms, not the pen. So how can student politics benefit the students in general?

Md. Motarab Hossain

On e-mail

Party politics and columnists

Be careful about our Think Tanks (empty?) who would try to write articles terming the present chaotic situation as mass movement. Don't you think it is high time to ban party politics from educational institutes and trade unions?

Invite the intelligentsia free from party affiliation to write about this subject in The Daily Star.

Abdul Malek Sikder

Dhaka

No sympathy for troublemakers

I had a stressful evening when I learned from my sister (a DU student) that they would have to vacate the hall. She had to walk a long way to reach my aunt's house. She paid the price of her university mates' unruly destructive behaviour. I have no sympathy for the students who created anarchy even after the government expressed regret and withdrew the army camp from Dhaka University. I will not be surprised if the employers now even more favour private university students over public university ones.

It is learned that the camp established in DU gymnasium was not for controlling the university. Their area of responsibility was Kamrangir Char, Kotwali and Lalbagh thanas. For them there was no good space

The detention of Khaleda Zia by a court in Dhaka has not come as a surprise to the people as the ACC filed very specific charges against the ex-premier, alleging her involvement in abuse of power. The nation expects that she will receive required legal assistance and a fair trial. There should not be any form of ambivalence in administrating her case and she should be given the full right to represent her legal team.

The people will raise question about the merit of her case and the opponents of the CTG will campaign about its vindictive nature in framing the case, unless the CTG ensures full transparency, swiftness and fairness in handling her case.

AFM Mohiuddin

On e-mail

No one should be above the law rather no one should think that they can get away with injustice, lies and deception. Khaleda Zia's arrest was inevitable, but I still rejoice to see her behind bars with as much happiness as I did

when her political nemesis Sheikh Hasina was arrested.

It is extremely sad to see that persons close to Ziaur Rahman, a man of impeccable personal honesty, could stoop to this level. But justice is what we need for national reconciliation. Let this be a lesson to all future aspiring leaders let them know that crime does not pay.

May justice take its course with swiftness and fairness. May we learn to call a spade a spade. May we move on to brighter days ahead. May Bangladesh become the successful dream nation so many of us pray for every waking moment.

I extend my gratitude once again to Dr. Fakhrudin Ahmed for putting the mechanisms in place to lock away the corrupt in our society. I thank the ACC for carrying out its duty without fear or favour to any political party. Good job!!

Shabbir A. Bashar, Ph.D.

Vancouver, USA

to renew their faith in Bangladeshi politics.

About the scuffle that was reported on the occasion of Begum Zia's visit to the US, the matter went so far that The New York Times, failing to interview her, reported that the 'minions' would not let their adversaries approach her. While holding a dinner reception in her honour, a gentleman kept on haranguing the guests to sit down, as according to him it was a "Formal Dinner", betraying his ignorance about this kind of occasion.

These devotees of Bangladeshi leaders do not shy away from physical confrontation, as Mr. Haque has observed, bringing shame to Bangladesh and her people, both at home and abroad. I myself was ambushed by these apparatchiks once. They are so absorbed in their political activities that it seems the only thing necessary to get them going is to mention anything that has to do with politics in Bangladesh. For example, in 1984 when 50% of Bangladesh was inundated by floodwaters, a group of Bangladeshi lobbied Bangladesh Aid Consortium meeting in Paris, not to send aid. After the devastating cyclone in 1985, another group busied itself by telling the media, that the disaster was a mere opportunity for the Bangladesh government to exploit the generosity of US people.

By the way, it seems that those politicians and other practitioners of various crafts hailing from Bangladesh probably are as adept in mesmerizing Bangladeshi as they are at home. A Bangladeshi diva, in an assemblage arranged to hear her sing, took advantage of a captive audience and began sermonising on politics. A prominent Bangladeshi citizen, a political leader of course, in a gathering, for his reception, most possibly thinking that he was at Lal Dighi or Paltan Maidan, gave such a "fiery"

speech that the listeners went into frenzy, clapping to their heart's content.

The few publications that might be construed as serving or expressing the views of the Bangladeshi abroad, are more apt to espouse the viewpoints of their favorite Bangladeshi political entity, with an added agenda to increase the number of readers, the ultimate means of enhancing profits.

It is so painful to see the Bangladeshi abroad, instead of letting due process of law take its course, are resorting to methods, many of which are intended to thwart the administration of justice.

About the practice or promotion of Bangladeshi language and culture abroad, the very method, used for the purpose, is reflection of our lack of knowledge of English, our unfamiliarity with the customs of our adopted land, our reluctance to assimilate and, above all, our futile attempts at covering these deficiencies up.

Mohammad A Meah

Paramus, New Jersey, US

What government is it?

Can the chief adviser or anyone responsible on his behalf clear the confusion arising due to the latest statement of Army Chief General Moin U Ahmed, who said that the present government is an army backed caretaker government, which contradicts the law adviser's claim that it is a national government.

Perhaps, the closest conclusion I can draw to clarify the matter is: to save the country from near disaster the army decided rightly to support the present team to take charge of the statecraft. So it is a national government backed by the army. Correct me if I am wrong.

SS Nasim A Chowdhury

Somersby Gardens
Ilford, Essex

Razzaq quits



Abdul Razzaq's sudden departure from international cricket is a big loss to both cricket as well as the Pakistan team. He was undoubtedly an amazing all-rounder, although I always felt that his bowling at times looked sluggish but his pinch-hitting style batting has always been a treat to watch. His unexpected retirement comes at a time when Pakistan are looking to re-build their team after the World Cup debacle and also at a time when a new coach has just arrived. I would blame the selectors here because Razzaq has made it clear that the reason behind his retirement is that the selectors did not include him in the 15-man squad heading for the Twenty20.

World Cup and he has also stated that his retirement is a symbol of protest. The selectors' decision seemed absolutely ludicrous because Razzaq is the kind of player who is perfect for a Twenty20 tournament and he is the sort of batsman which every team will dream to have, especially in Twenty20 matches because he has the ability to shatter the morale of the bowlers with his fiery shots and most importantly he can score swiftly. He has proved it in the past that he is a match-winner plus he is also vastly experienced and hence his exclusion had no justification. His retirement highlights the unpredictable nature of the PCB as the board at times seem to make preposterous choices without giving proper attention to the consequences their decisions would have on the team. These sort of incidents are nothing unusual for Pakistan cricket because we have seen in the past that talented players suddenly faded away after playing for a year or two, may be due to rifts with the board or may be they never got a second chance after just one or two poor performances but that does not necessarily mean that they deserved to be omitted from the squad. Similarly, the reason behind Razzaq's exclusion from the squad is also a mystery. But now he has left and I am sure that all-rounders like him are not available in large numbers.

In fact, he was a rare player who will be sorely missed by his fans and fellow players. I hope that he will withdraw his decision and return to international cricket soon.

Wasif Wahed

Old DOHS

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I just came back from visiting Dhaka for two weeks in the middle of August. For the last one year, I have been following the events through your newspaper but this is the first time I had a first-hand experience of how life is in Dhaka. I am glad to say that whatever I saw was very encouraging. I was so glad to see so many positives in the daily lives of our families. To begin with, the airport experience was a breath of fresh air, everything was clean and orderly. I didn't see a single person around who had no reason to be there. I felt secured and safe when I was inside and when I got out. The streets were cleaner than last year when I last visited Dhaka. I also experienced much less traffic congestion.

I don't know whether I was lucky

or it was the norm. The footpaths were not taken over by the street vendors. I could park our car in the parking lots of the malls without any problem. I went to New Market by rickshaw one day and it was not as bad as I saw it last year. Everyone I talked to said how much better their lives are in terms of security and peace. I heard complaints from the rickshaw-pullers about the one way traffic system in Dhanmondi but somehow they forgot to acknowledge that they are charging according to the extra distance they have to travel. I sensed a feeling that normal, hard working, honest people felt much better because they know they have done nothing wrong and nothing to be afraid about.

Last year I had a feeling that honest people were pushed back to the end. They saw how corruption was eating up everything in the society. People gave up hope. We had a plot in Dhaka and it was taken away by people using forged papers and my dad went to court, police stations and no one could help him because the corrupt ones had everything in control. This time I could see that he was happy because the court did take the case and the police was investigating properly. So I can say first hand that this government brought a lot of good to the people.

I could also see unhappiness among the people who earned a lot of money using corruption and who started thinking corruption as a normal way of life. People who never pay taxes, who never abide by the rules are the unhappy ones. The street vendors who were selling things illegally occupying the foot-

Poor interview!

Something simply shattered me while I was watching a 'talk-show' in a local Bengali satellite channel the other day. It was that talk-show where Momo, the Lux superstar, was interviewed.

Shockingly, the interviewer's expressions as well as the delivery of words were frustrating.

Md. Baduzzaman Tamal

Mass Consultants

Farmgate, Dhaka

I am distressed to see the record increase in the number of diarrhoea patients at the cholera hospital in Dhaka seeking emergency treatment. I had the opportunity of dealing with several such surges while I was working at the Cholera Research Laboratory/ICDDR,B between 1966-1986. Here are my suggestions for controlling the number of new admissions to the hospital(s); if it has not been done already:

1. Immediately increase the level of chlorination in Wasa supplied water in areas where these cases are coming from. My experience tells me that it will cut down new attack rates

dramatically and also decrease typhoid and hepatitis A.

2. Concentrate such chlorination in the low-lying and densely populated areas of Dhaka city and Narayanganj. Inhabitants of Rayerbazar, Kamrangirchar, Keraniganj, old Dhaka, Mirpur/ Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, and Badda are the most vulnerable.

3. Institute a programme to monitor the level of chlorination, (very simple to do) by establishing a few sentinel points in these areas. If possible coliform-counts may also be carried out through the Institute of Public Health at

The Directorate of Health Services probably already counts the cases of cholera/diarrhoea. Someone senior at the ministry level should collect it daily and look at it for changes and take appropriate action in case there is no trace of chlorination in water or if coliform level exceeds WHO recommendation.

Dr. M. Mujibur Rahman

Former Programme Director
Cholera Research Laboratory
ICDDR, B
UNDP/FAO, WHO

bag and an effective attempt was made to encourage people to use paper, cloth, and jute made bags instead of using polythene bags.

Afterwards, the spectacle of not using this harmful thing was a bit positive and going well but the spirit of giving up polythene bags fizzled out.

However, I would earnestly request the government to bring back that spirit in our minds.

Razib

Kahalu, Bogra



I was watching on television the news of relief distribution among the flood victims. The thing is that flood victims were being provided the relief goods contained in polythene bags. Apart from this, even if we look around our markets we will find that the existence of polythene bag is still there and we all are using this bag. This is needless to say yet again that polythene is an utterly detrimental thing for the environment. Many campaigns were launched to prevent the citizens from using the polythene

bag and an effective attempt was made to encourage people to use paper, cloth, and jute made bags instead of using polythene bags.

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