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Annapolis M-E conference

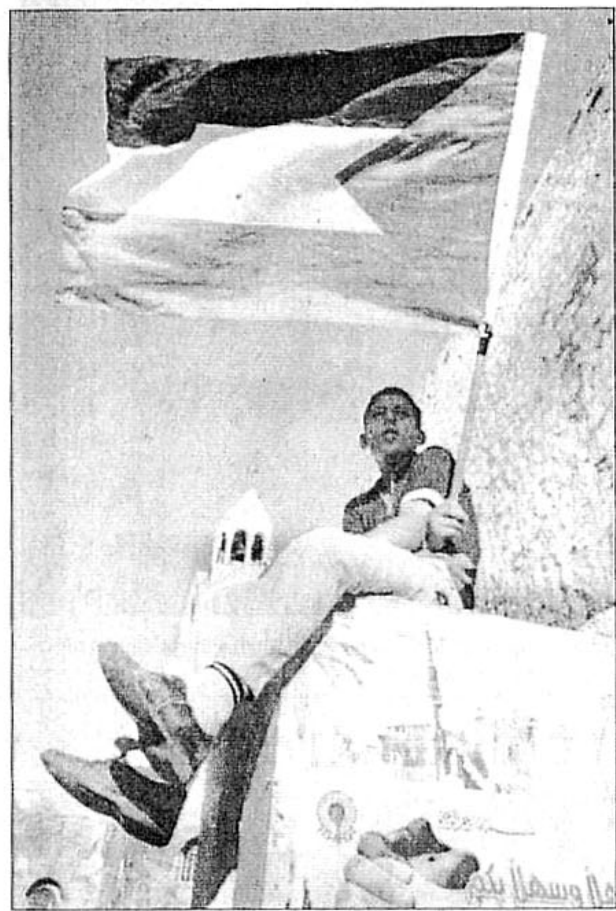


PHOTO: AFP

Many times on many occasions, at different venues, places, cities and capitals, the USA has arranged, invited, proposed, promised and lured the leaders of the Arab World for statehood and freedom of Palestine on the basis of 'two state solution' of Arab-Israel conflict for comprehensive peace in the Middle East. But all the meetings and discussions proved futile due to US-Israel secret deals, intrigue and dilly-dally tactics. We feel the Annapolis conference sponsored by US President George Bush would again end in a fiasco.

The synopsis on Palestine-Israel history is that with the advent of Islam in the 7th century AD, Palestine came under the peaceful and benign Muslim governance. Its earlier record is very sorrowful, gruesome and tragic. In 931 BC the Hebrew kingdom broke into two states-- Israel and Judah-- due to internal feud. Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece and

Rome in turn conquered Israel and Judah, killed many Jews, turned them into slaves and transported them to distant countries. The Jews were lost in wilderness and the existence of Israel and Judah was wiped out.

The Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand, are born and brought up in Palestine and they have been living in Palestine for over 1,300 years.

Israel is an illegal state within the state of Palestine. The Jews in Israel are not the citizens of Israel. They are not born and brought up in Israel. They are the immigrants from various countries that faced the great Holocaust, Nazi Germany and many European and American countries, who have been pushed to Israel as part of an international conspiracy to meet and protect the geopolitical, military, diplomatic and economic interest of the west.

Israel is living in a fools' paradise. It is surrounded by

Arab countries. How long the USA can give Israel huge economic and military aid for its survival? Israel must realise the gravity of the situation, have vision, wisdom and self-respect and live in peace and harmony with the Arabs.

When the illegal making of Israel was under process, the USA and the UK applied the theory of 'two state' solution for comprehensive peace in the Middle East. They created one illegal 'state' Israel in 1948. But why the original and legal state of Palestine has been deprived of its statehood, freedom, and human rights for over 60 years?

If the 'black' and 'white' can live in peace, harmony and democracy in South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and many other African countries, why not the people of Palestine and Israel?

OH Kabir
Hare Street
Wari, Dhaka

"Micro-credit interest charges"

Much as I appreciate your publishing my article on the above subject in your today's issue (29th November 2007), I have to convey that there have been some mistakes in understanding my technical paper which are as follows:

(1) In the first sentence, I wrote, 'It is often said that the financing charges applicable to most of the micro-credit operations, including those levied by the Grameen Bank (GoB) in Bangladesh, are high relative to the prevailing interest rate in the conventional market'. I wanted to convey that GoB levied interest charges are considered high compared to the level of interest rate prevailing in the conventional market, not 'highly relative to the prevailing interest rate...'. I hope the meaning is understood clearly now, and that my formulation was OK.

(2) In the middle of the write-up the para starts as, 'In the case of the micro-credit borrower, the central question relates to what she actually pays back, and the time'. 'the time' does not make sense. In my formulation, I had written '...what she pays back and on time'. There are a number of other, if less objectionable, amendments.

(3) Introducing so many paragraphs has not enhanced the quality of the paper or accuracy of its expressions.

Although I believe in the editorial prerogative to edit, it is less justified that distortions should appear in any form.

Abu Reza
One-mail

Release of university teachers

It is great news that the four teachers of Rajshahi University have been released unconditionally

and that has really reflected the hidden feelings of general public. We are also very eagerly waiting to see the government decision on the release of respected teachers of Dhaka University as well.

This is certainly a very prudent and foresighted decision of the government and we very much appreciate and welcome this decision at this juncture, while the teachers were in principle unanimously moving forward to take some action programmes that could jeopardize the university's academic atmosphere to some extent.

Nasar, One-mail

Setting a wrong example?

Teachers have the greater burden of setting the moral standards not only by teaching the same in the classroom but by living by them. When a teacher teaches about moral behaviour and discipline in his classroom, only the students sitting inside the four walls of the classroom have the opportunity to learn. But when they live by that, the rest of the world have the opportunity to learn the same. As you can see the later form of teaching not only has an exponential effect compared to the former.

I feel embarrassed to learn that our teachers failed to see that and set the precedence that they are above the law.

Moeen Ahmed
VA, USA

MP's qualifications

I disagree completely with the writer under this heading (10 Dec) that an MP candidate must have 15 years of political experience at union, thana, zilla level etc. Such a requirement will fossilize the political process for career politicians and there will be no newcomers and no new big ideas. The writer has also been misin-

formed about such a process in other countries; for instance in the UK there is no such requirement. That is why Una King could be nominated and won the Tower Hamlets seat for Labour in 1997 when the local career politician with long experience Ms. Paula Uddin made way for her.

Of course an educational requirement is a must to understand and take proper part in the proceedings of the House, and this and only this along with clearance from criminal record or debt defaulting etc are only legal matters for consideration of nomination for an MP candidate. Popularity, charisma, experience etc must be left to the parties. There must also be provision for independent candidates or new parties in any election, and not only catering to the wishes of the old and established parties. Forfeiture of hefty deposits in not gaining certain percentage votes should be the only deterrent in these matters.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

CI sheet price

Cyclone Sidr hit Barisal Division and parts of Khulna & Dhaka divisions last November. As most of the inhabitants of the affected areas are poor, they cannot even think of PCC/BCC building. They have to reconstruct their shelters with wood, bamboo and Corrugated Iron (CI) sheets. But the price of CI sheet has gone sky high in the last one year. General people cannot afford it. In the international market the main raw materials of CI sheet, Hot Rolled Coil (HRC) and Zinc Ingot have risen sharply.

I urge to the government to address the issue on an emergency basis.

Mr. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

Inaccurate news

In BTV news on the Armed Forces Day on Wednesday, 21 November last, it was mentioned that the Bangladesh Armed Forces comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force had come into being on 21 November 1971. The information is not correct. Neither the Armed Forces, nor the Army the Navy, the Air Force was formed on 21 November 1971.

During my 27 year long stay with the Inter-Service Public Relations Directorate from 1975 to 2002, I never found such information to be released from the office. What I found was that the Army Day used to be observed on 25 March, the Air Force Day on 28 September and the Navy Day on 10 December till 1982. In 1983, the Armed Forces Day was observed, for the first time, on 21 November. At that time, it was said that the freedom fighters had launched first combined offensives against the occupation Pakistani forces on land, sea and air on 21 November 1971.

It may be recalled that the Bangladesh Army, the Bangladesh Navy and the Bangladesh Air Force were formed in April, 1972. The fact, however, remains that the Bengalee members of the then Pakistan Armed Forces defected from their services and joined the people from all walks of life including the Police, EPR and Ansars to free the motherland, following the crackdown by the Pakistani occupation forces on the innocent people of Bangladesh on the fateful night of 25 March 1971. That was possibly the moment of inception of the Bangladesh Armed Forces.

We should understand that even our smallest deviations, either willful or otherwise, might be tantamount to distortion of history. It is, therefore, imperative that we all guard against distortion of our national history, especially the history of our Liberation War.

Muhammad Husain
Former Director-in-Charge
ISPR, Ministry of Defence
Dhaka

Decline of colonial powers

The exploitation of the third world by the rich industrialised countries, that is colonialism, continues, directly or indirectly. Today the DCs and the LDCs are facing additional pressures: natural disasters, relocation of factories, and the hunt for untapped sources of natural energy. Bangladesh is a victim, and is under increasing social pressure due to turbulences in religious escape routes, for economic salvation, and the trappings of western democracy templates. The newly emerging nations are facing the indirect effects of the global village syndrome. The IT effect on societies has increased the awareness of the masses [note the hartal on shortage of fertilisers]. The reduction of the communication gaps in the have-not societies has made corruption a hard issue to tackle by the regimes, lured by the economic disparities between the first and third worlds. Now religious extremism is sought as an escape route back to religion, not back to virtual politics.

Where is the British stiff upper lip? How the astounding political tsunami in Australia came about? Today South Asia is in ferment-- suspected to be organised by powerful foreign vested groups. Pakistan and Bangladesh are unstable; and suppressed aspirations of the minorities are bubbling over in India. Note the synchronisation of the secret

blueprints of the past colonialists: divide and rule, and create law and order problems.

The global human civilisation appears to be facing a periodic, long-time cyclic change; keeping in the background the climate change, publicised as the greenhouse effect. The developing countries cannot take advantage of the leverage effects, dominated by the rich industrialised nations. The United Nations has been made impotent--the veto power is still there.

The single international currency, the US Dollar, enjoys the monopoly; but it is declining erratically. The OIC could not float the international currency for the Islamic world. The Middle East wealth is stored in the United States, providing a strong reserve base. The British pound sterling is isolated, and the Euro is virtually buoyant. Japan is isolated, and stagnated. The S Korean economy is controlled by cartels. Only China is booming menacingly, making the Americans jittery. There is a pattern in global economic changes, which are being noticed this decade. The world's only superpower has problems it cannot control unilaterally, led by the looming shortage of natural energy sources.

The developing countries have to enlarge long-term visions, and not run into local squabbles and political hair-splitting campaigns. We miss the national goals and objectives--it is the survival of the nation, not of political parties.

AMahasen
Dhaka

Textile technology institute

The low investment, low technology and labour intensive garments industry has developed tremendously in the last two decades in Bangladesh. Huge demand of production ingredients like, nit & woven fabric, button, zippers, level and packing materials of the garments industry created scope for backward linkage industrial units. A good number of industrial units have been set up in the last couple of years to cater to the demand of the garments industry, especially yarn producing spinning factories, fabric producing factories, processing dying and washing plants that have come up and created a good number of jobs. But these backward linkage industrial units are confronting shortage of technical experts in textile technology these days. On the other hand, every year thousands of crone is spent by the government of Bangladesh to impart general and religious education in public and private school and colleges, which ultimately increases the number of unemployed educated youths. What a pity!

The situation is not different in Munshiganj district, which is adjacent to capital Dhaka. Thousands of youths here are interested to get technical education. So an institute of textile technology, which will impart undergraduate textile engineering education, can serve their cause.

We urge to the government to set up a textile technology institute to impart textile technology based education at diploma level in Munshiganj.

Mohd. Jamal Uddin
Sripalli, Munshiganj Sadar
Munshiganj

Divorce

Now-a-days divorce, a widespread social disease, is affecting our

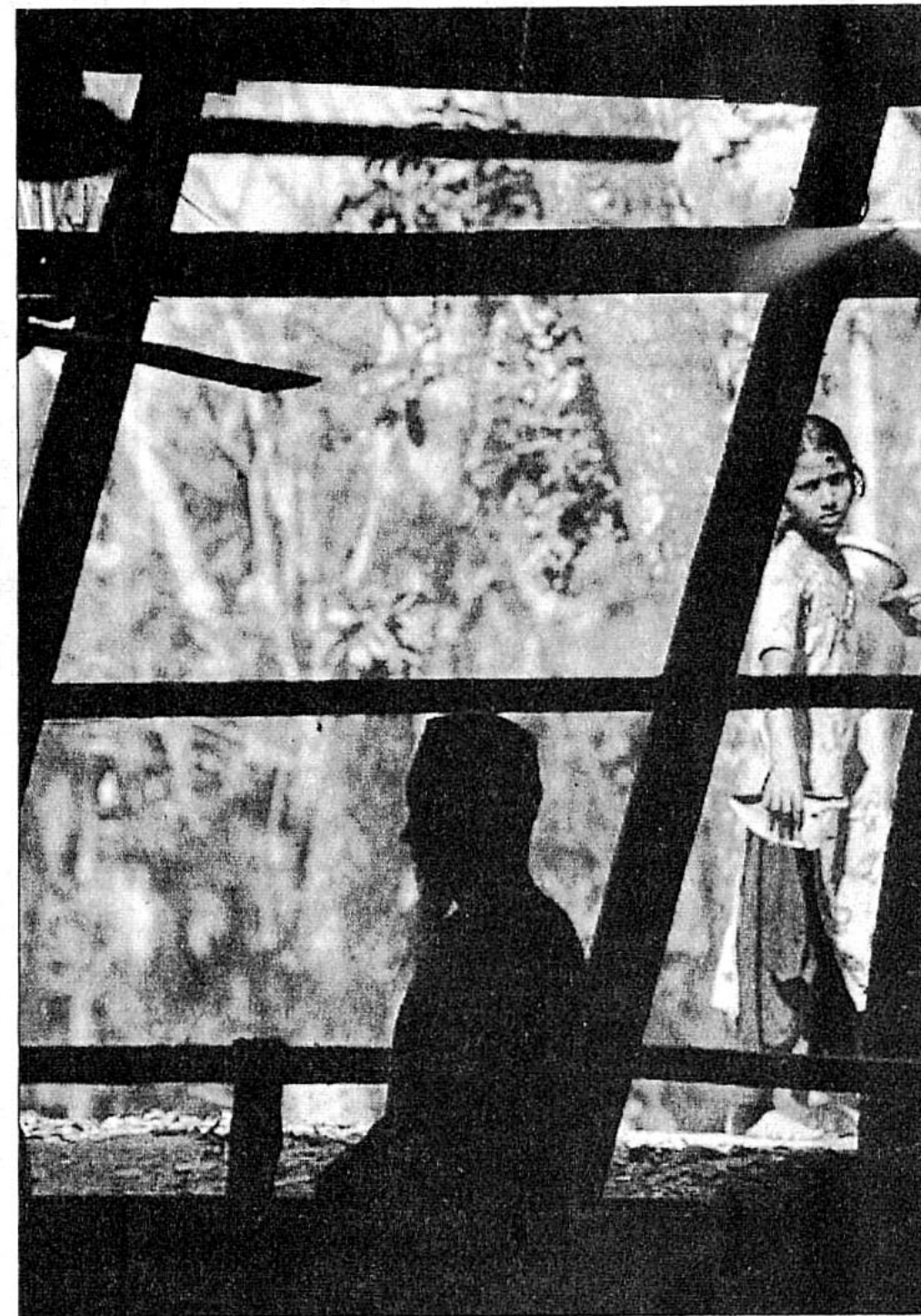


PHOTO: AFP

Sidr

As Bangladeshis we all are familiar with different types of natural calamities. The repeated floods and the recent Sidr led to deaths of thousands of people and dislocated many other things. But Sidr could not destroy our mental strength. We can rise up again.

We have the ability and the confidence to

fight. So, on this point, we must think positively not only against Sidr but all other challenges.

- We fought, we are fighting and we will fight against all the negative things.

MD Ruhul Amin
Pharmacy faculty, DU

family life. But have we ever deliberated on what the possible factors and consequences are and what remedial measures we have to adopt to redeem our people from its gangrenous effect? Actually, it is high time we did so and any procrastination may deteriorate the situation hampering all possibilities of finding out a desired remedy. However we have to diagnose the ominous trend with a critical and analytical attitude. In doing that the most obvious factors that come out are conflict in personality, impact of satellite channels, extra marital relations and so on. In this case we have to remember that marriage is a holy bond that can never be defiled by noxious causes as mentioned above, it is a gateway to peace and prosperity, felicity and success and above all sound life through commitment, sympathy and co-operation. Whoever embarks on this new life should be committed to maintaining that

marriage does not mean momentary pleasure only and it is not a child's plaything that is vulnerable to personal whims, nor a commercial enterprise that is contingent upon monetary gains; over and above it is a track of patience, prudence and sacrifice for mutual understanding.

But in our society modern couples, driven by their impulsive decisions, never care about the bedrock of marriage and take it for something worthless. That is they are very often seen embroiling themselves in personal attacks against each other with reference to faithlessness, sense of superiority and inferiority, dowry, difference of opinions, maladjustment in ages and so on which lead them to hasten their separation. This is a typical picture of our society which indicates that we are trying to keep pace with the western traditions, hurrying away the age old unity and sympathy without ever considering that a

little bit of patience, prudence and sense of propriety can ward off the painful situation. But before that we have to participate in indirect action against the tendency.

Firstly, we should raise public awareness and the programme should be launched by social and religious leaders and intellectuals mainly for the young guys who are going to marry. Secondly, the media should broadcast such programmes for making the young generation comprehend what a bad practice it is and at the same time project the real worth of some so-called satellite movies and dramas redolent with baseless and misleading family conspiracy, conflict, separation and so on. Thirdly, dowry should be uprooted from our society at any cost.

Finally, we have to remember that marriage has contributed a lot to the progress of mankind.

Noor-e-Alam
Department of English
University of Rajshahi

Street beggars

The number of street beggars has increased enormously in the metropolitan Dhaka city, especially, in most of the traffic signals, foot overbridges, in front of mosques. Many of them are crippled (amputated foot or arm) walking with the support of crutch. Blinds are begging with the support of either son/daughter or a caring person.

Many are doing so, because of drug addiction or poverty.

My question is how these people are doing so? Is there any responsible authority to take necessary action and punish the people behind this business?

W. Islam
Uttara, Dhaka

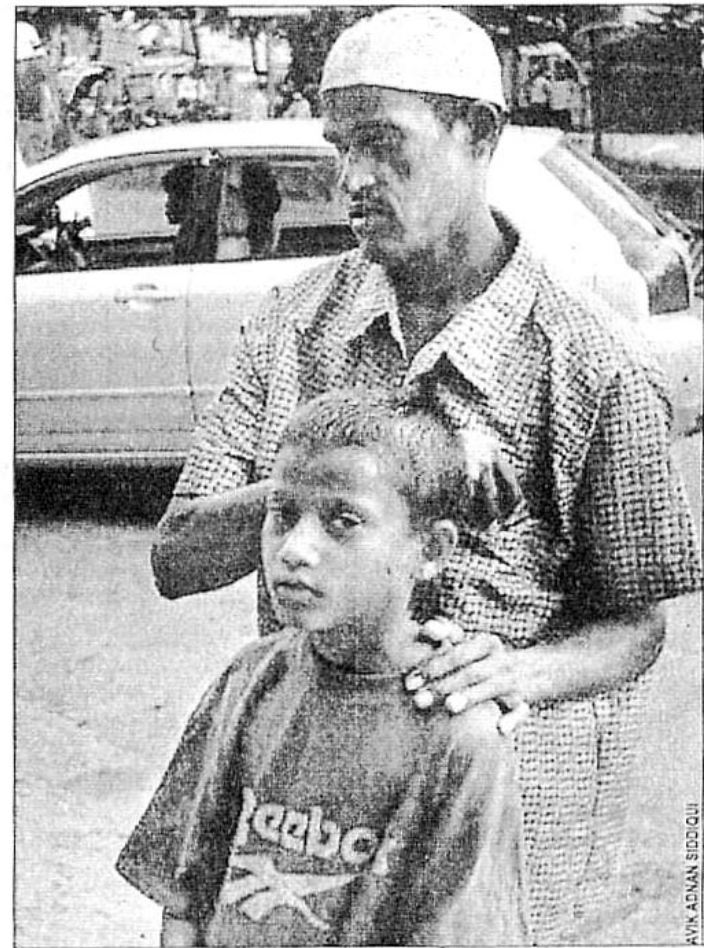


PHOTO: ANAN SIDDIQUI



Sun Temple

The Sun Temple of Konark is situated at Konark city in the eastern part of Orissa in India. During our family trip to India, I longed so much to have a glimpse of Sun Temple which is very famous worldwide for its intricate sculptures and carvings. At last, after lots of persuasions and arguments, finally I managed to make my father agree to go to Konark.

The Sun Temple was built by Narsinhadeva-I of Ganga dynasty in the 13th century. But there are also myths which say that Lord Krishna's son Samba had leprosy but the Surya deity cured him up. In honour of Sun God, Lord Samba built this temple. The Temple has a chariot with twenty four wheels driven by seven horses. Thus it also depicts the 24 hours and 7 days.

A visitor will be amazed by its gigantic size and beautiful statues on each side of the temple. The front entrance consists of a lion

on each side and I had a horrifying feeling that they would jump on me and eat me up! And I forgot to tell you people that Sun Temple has been included in the UNESCO world heritage sites. Anyway, I had to walk a bit far with my family to each staircase of the temple, but after this long tiring walk, the main view of the temple really pleased me.

Being entirely made of stone, the Sun Temple is a mixture of the aspects of life and its scene being described in the impressive stone carvings.

"Why can't we preserve our archaeological structures?" They show our enriched history and thus they can be great sources of tourist attraction.

Shatabdi Biswas
Officers Quarter
Regional Public Administration Training Centre
Rajshahi