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Cox's Bazar and Sundarbans

It was learnt that New Seven Wonders Authority (N7WA) dropped two natural sites of Bangladesh -- Cox's Bazar & the Sundarbans -- from the list of natural wonders of the world on account of certain irregularity. The said irregularity, as reported by the media, was casting of more than one vote from one e-mail ID from certain websites.

We also found some websites or facebook applications where more than one vote could be cast. Further, it was also noticed that confirmation of the vote by opening return mail from N7W to the voter's e-mail account was not required. It is truly confusing and does not match with the prescribed guideline of the N7W authorities, but many people used those sites/pages without knowing what could be the consequences.

Possible measures on the part of N7WA could be to discard those votes or block those sites and applications. Instead of doing that, N7WA dropped the number one and two contending natural sites from the contest and we do not know if this is a permanent measure. N7WA must have designed some system to cancel fake votes, which clearly failed and they took unjust punitive measures against competing natural sites.

If, for example, the same people who opened sites hav-



ing anomalies as mentioned above open similar websites to cast fake votes in favour of another competing site, say Mount Everest; will N7WA drop Mt. Everest from the list too and if they do that will that be proper?

We expect immediate

return of Cox's Bazar and the Sundarbans to the contest in order to ensure a fair process of selection, so that N7W's endeavour gets global acceptance as a selection based on fair practice.

Shakil Monzur
On e-mail

Drowning incidents

Despite an abundance of coverage in our newspapers on the number of drowning incidents, including the rising number of students' drowning in Cox's Bazar, drowning is still an under-recognised problem in Bangladesh.

Recently, a man scoffed at a friend of mine who mentioned the Water Safety Program the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) runs to teach children survival swimming skills. "But all village children know how to swim!" he exclaimed.

However, statistics reveal the reality, that drowning is the leading cause of death of children in Bangladesh. More than 17,000 children die from drowning every year, which equates to over 46 children each day. The Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey revealed the shocking statistics in 2005 and since then similar surveys have been conducted throughout the region which indicates that this

tragedy is prevalent in other developing countries also.

This man's statement reflects the lack of community based knowledge on what swimming actually is. Swimming is not splicing around in waist deep water, it is, according to international early swimming standards, being able to cross 25 metres of open water by oneself, removing oneself from water without assistance and floating for 90 seconds. This floating activity simulates the likely action in the event of sudden immersion in water, falling off a boat for example.

Swimming is a learned skill that will provide immunity for life against drowning.

Living in Bangladesh, where our rivers and waterways are part of everyday life, it is important to have these skills to keep safe in any environment where there is water.

Dr. Aminur Rahman
Technical Director
Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh
Dhaka

Obama and the future of US

Two of my most favourite Canadian columnists are Dan Gardner of the Ottawa Citizen and Margaret Wente of the Globe and Mail. They are among the most analytical minds who should be read in all journalism schools. Their comments about U.S. presidential race are extremely interesting.

Dan Gardner touches the heart of the soap opera taking place in the Republican National Convention (RNC) when he writes: "John McCain's story is as good as they come, full of courage and accomplishment, but it's also more human than the saccharine confection fed to the family value crowd Thursday night. Republicans would not, one assumes, have gone misty-eyed at the heart-warming tale of a married 42-year-old who leaves his first wife -- a woman who stuck by him through his five years as a prisoner of war -- for a 24-year-old beauty queen. And so in the tale told at the convention, the first wife was dropped down the Orwellian memory hole and in her place, the audi-

ence was told the charming story of how, when John met Cindy, John told Cindy he was younger than he was and Cindy fibbed about being older."

In this make-believe world of the RNC, everyone lives in a world of fairy tale. As Margaret Wente wrote in the Globe: "It took Sarah Palin to turn the dull old Republican convention into an amazing show. Finally, someone who might beat Barack Obama in the ratings! Who cares about geriatric white men in suits? But who wouldn't tune in to see a scrappy dame sock it to the elites? You can keep your degrees from Harvard, your snooty New York Times and your non-fat soy latte... Sarah Palin eats mooseburgers for breakfast, and she will destroy you! ... Personally, I think we're witnessing the Republican Party in meltdown. The soap opera is sort of entertaining. But it makes American democracy look fundamentally unserious."

But there is hope. Polls show that Senator Barack Obama enjoys close to 90% of African-American support and a high percentage of Hispanic support. If this holds, Mr. Obama will need only about 30% of support of white voters to win in a landslide. This is also within his reach as he enjoys massive support among young whites. On the other hand, his Republican rival, Senator John McCain's support coming almost exclusively from middle-aged whites who support him by a wide margin. However, Mr. Obama has galvanized black, Hispanic and young white voters who are likely to turn out in record numbers to hand him a landslide victory come November. Sarah Palin can go back to shooting moose for breakfast.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Traffic jam

These types of writings are very much common in the dailies (just like the traffic jams on the ways and roads!). On 11 September Shamim Murad suggested timings for the educational institutions and others. I agree with him. However, I want to say something more about the permanent removal of traffic jam from the capital city. For this, the first thing to do is that all the garments factories and other such types of industries should be shifted from Dhaka. But will the owners of these industries allow this to happen? Yes, they will, if they are assured of the smooth transportation system from their industries to Dhaka. I think it is not very easy to launch metro rail service in this unplanned city. Again fly-overs are also very much costly and it will not provide a permanent solution. So if transportation system is developed outside Dhaka, industrialists will find comparatively cheap labour and will establish new firms outside Dhaka. And this disintegration will obviously help the city to remove the overflow of working class. We all have to think about the average speed of Dhaka city at present and what it will be in near future. So the authorities should take necessary steps to construct roads and highways connecting the districts with Dhaka and ensuring smooth and speedy transportation. Is it very much costly?

We should think of a permanent solution.
Pallab Kumar Hazra
MA in English
Dhaka University

Benevolent leaders

After the French Revolution, the concept of benevolent leadership emerged! Some of the members of the royal family of France took refuge in the far-away princely states of India for escaping the wrath of the then revolutionary French people.

Our head of the state, government & services must come out of the invisible and valueless shackles and must stand next to the people every day, hour and second and eventually become benevolent leaders and remain in the hearts and minds of the people.
Golam Ashraf
Dhaka

Disgraceful!

The incident that took place on 4 September in Natore was really barbaric. The lives of Sumaiya, Nupur, Runa, Arpita Barua are now almost ruined. What is their fault? The attack that has been launched upon them is sufficient to destroy the country's image. While they were busy in their peaceful meeting for establishing "Bangladesh College of Physiotherapy", they were brutally attacked. How could it happen in a civilised country?

The government should investigate the whole matter and punish the culprits. What is more important is the compensation. The government and college authorities should ensure financial support for the innocent victims. Otherwise, how will they survive? We want justice.

Pradip Das Akash
Lecturer in English
Bangladesh Health Professions Institute, CRP
Savar, Dhaka

My dream government

While the national election is looming with uncertainties, I figured why not just fantasise about a government that I think will win it all. I hope all the readers will join in and share their dream.

In my dream/fantasy government, I wish to take great leaders from all parties or background. I wish to see the following in the cabinet:

Cultural/Religious affairs/Human Rights minister: Sheikh Hasina: I think Hasina can speak for all the minorities and ensure equal rights. She should also be in charge of sustaining our culture.

Education minister: M Zafar Iqbal: Someone with so much knowledge about science should be in charge of our education.

Finance minister: Dr. Yunus - not because of his microcredit invention or the Nobel Prize, but because of his vast knowledge of economics and genuine sympathy for the poor, he should be in charge of building our economic backbone. He is well travelled and can convince the donors well.

Home Minister: Dr. Kamal Hossein - someone with integrity, yet no fear to voice opinion, should stand against corruption.

Foreign Minister: Khaleda Zia - She has great relations with the Middle East and China and so can resolve lot of the migrant workers' crisis and convince China for investment.

Prime minister: Fakhruddin Ahmed - with a background of finance and recent experience with our broken and dysfunctional system and with an unaffiliated political stance, he will excel as the ultimate leader.

President: B Chowdhury - the BNP removed him. I would just give that position back to him.

Mohammed Rashed
One-mail

Same politics, same people

In the western world when there is election defeat, the head of the party resigns & the new leader comes with fresh ideas. In our country, we want some change but it's not coming. Still the people are running behind the motorcade of the politicians who betrayed them for so long. Most of the time the "chamchas" are running their motorcade. We never think how much money, power & wealth these "chamchas" have.

If you look how the media is controlled in a developed country, there is a rule. For example if you have a TV channel, you can't run a newspaper in the same city. Very strict law. Otherwise, one or a few people would control everything. In our country if you want to own a TV station, what qualifications or fitness do you need? If you are from the party which is in power, you don't need any qualification. How long will this continue?

Shafiq Rahman
Sydney, Australia

Battle of minds

The mega venture titled 'Battles of Minds' of 2008 is going to start soon. Recently, the British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BAT) & the Department of Business Administration jointly organised a workshop to prepare the contestants of Shahjalal University at the 'Seminar Room' of the department. It was an excellent arrangement.

Such type of ventures should be continued by other corporate bodies as well.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

In response...

The government's initiative to start all the schools at 7.30am is indeed commendable. As a resident of Dhanmondi, where most schools (English Medium) are located, I would definitely stand up for this new rule. This redirection will certainly help to curtail the horror morning traffic scene in Dhanmondi, where the roads are populated mostly with the vehicles of school goers. It is ridiculous that a lot of time and effort are wasted being stuck in traffic early in the morning every weekday.

Many parents may lament at the idea of getting their kids up as early as 6.00am to prepare themselves for school, however, in the longer run even the kids stand to benefit from this rule. It is nothing unusual that most children in our country are well adopted with the habit of going to bed late, sometimes as late as 12.00am. This late bedtime put

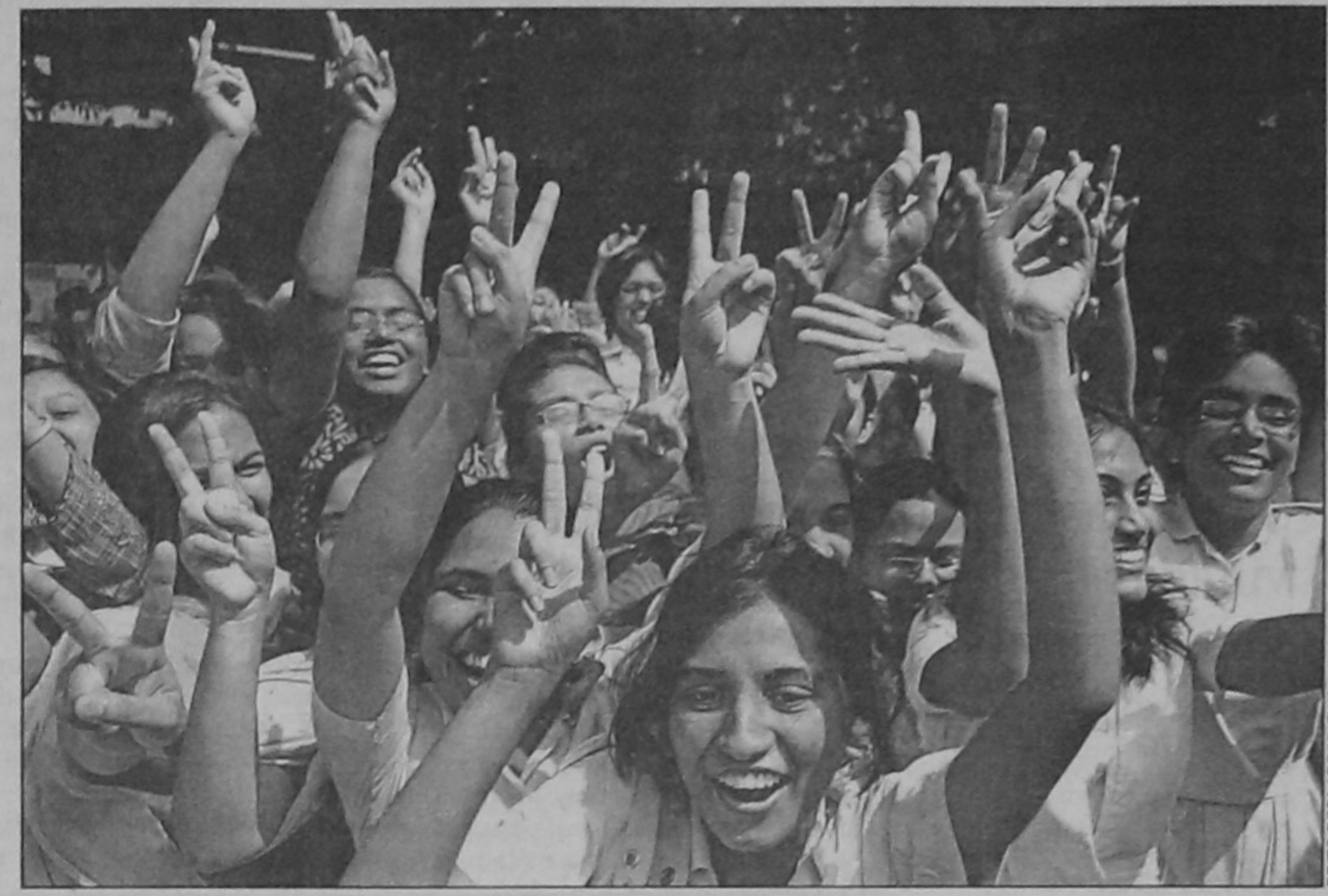
HSC results

This year's HSC results have broken all previous records with ease both in terms of pass rate and A+ count. On the face of it, it is a very auspicious sign. But if we dig deep into what has happened, we have good reason to be worried. I think the standard of script evaluation has fallen to an all time low. Never before did so many students get A+ in English. So a proliferation of A+ in English might lead us to believe that

the generation next has got over the perennial vulnerability in English. I tell you the situation is far from being like that. The way they have been handed a good grade (in most cases undeserving) would do much harm to them in the long run. If a student who has got A+ in English fails to speak and write the language with minimum of precision, the system that gave him the highest grade will be devalued. It is not to say

all students getting A+ are under-serving. Of course, there are some highly deserving candidates. But, I don't think the same thing can be said about the majority of A+ achievers. It is not their fault that they got an A+ gift. Perhaps, some powerful short-sighted high-ups are at fault who like to take credit for virtually everything.

Sadek
DU



the kids at a disadvantage in their development and behavioural disposition. Furthermore, the children will be able to commute in traffic-free roads at 7.30am. So, the "mean physical and mental agony for the little innocent children" can be averted, if parents can help children to beat the bedtime blue, switch off the TV and go to bed early.

Rezwan Mannan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Ropeway to solve traffic jam

Ropeway can be designed and established using the high storied buildings in Dhaka city. In this process in each area of the city certain multi-storied buildings will be selected and the ropeway will be established in between them. Thus the whole city will be covered. This can be very effective to solve the existing traffic jam and transportation problem in the city. The government as well as Dhaka City Corporation may think about this seriously and engage a consultant in this regard.

Shiplu Saha
One-mail

Police enquiry

The caretaker government has done an excellent job by separating the judiciary from the executive immediately on assumption of

power, which the political governments failed to do even after decades of promises. This is yielding good result.

But some loopholes still remain in the judicial system. When somebody files a suit in a CMM Court quite often cases are referred to thana for preliminary enquiry. A long time is given to the OCs of police stations for enquiry and they take advantage of it for bargaining with the parties and they mint money in the process. Some officials of courts are also involved in the process. So the police should be given a minimum reasonable time for enquiry if a fair report is to be obtained. If a survey/enquiry is conducted into the matter by the Supreme Court/Law Ministry this will be crystal clear.

I therefore urge the caretaker government to delve into the matter and bring some reform in the interest of speedy enquiry and dispensation of justice.
Montaj Jahan
Mirpur, Dhaka

Harassment of female students

The issue is intimidation and teasing of the female students by teaching staff. It is an offence allegedly committed against the innocent girls students who are captivated under the cover of education. If allowed to go unpunished, this

might lead to criminal offences in future.

It is surprising to watch the indifferent attitude and inaction on the part of the university authorities and the education department high ups. We do not know what is their expectation-leave it for time to heal up? But the movement against it is getting more and more moral support from society, and soon it may turn up to be a general issue of dignity and safety of women at workplace and in the educational institutions.

We know what happens when a car, private or public property, is set on fire or damaged by the rowdy mob. Immediately after that, the law enforcing agencies go on action including filing police cases against the known or unknown offenders. The process and the results are no secret to us.

The example of two classical cases are drawn here just to put emphasis on the issue of the girl students of the JU and to ask the relevant authorities to play a responsible role to punish the alleged offender/predator through the process of law.

I think all private and public universities shall have a committee on ethics, if it does not exist already, to deal with such cases quickly and judiciously, rising above any petty political consideration or pressure.
A reader
One-mail

War on terror redefined

The ghastly 9/11 is a dark day in history, that witnessed the most inhuman attacks on the humanity at large that led to the destruction of the American Twin-Tower, and a same kind of attack on the Pentagon in 2001.

The worst attack on humanity after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the global picture outright as it killed thousands of innocent civilians, and it also shattered the myth of American invincibility.

However, it was unfortunate that the bunch of terrorists, being misguided, caused such monumental destruction in the name of Islam. Islam, on the other hand, is a religion of peace, tolerance and harmonious co-existence. Since 9/11, however, the world has completely changed as George W. Bush launched a Global War on terror. And his invasion of Iraq paved the way for a genocide.

Moreover, that war on terror extended to Afghanistan. Pakistan, being the most trustworthy ally of the US, let the Americans enter its territory and bomb suspected areas and kill innocent civilians. This has raised questions regarding



America's intent. The whole world, since 9/11, has witnessed a kind of Muslim-hatred infused in the war on terror enterprise. Intricate issues between Palestine and Israel are still lying uncared for--unresolved; rather, as it is found, Israel is playing a role of American interest holder in the Middle East from its illegal outpost.

Today, after many years of intimidation of several kinds against the Muslims, discerning people with an unbiased wisdom tend to believe that the whole war on terror scenario has finally and brazenly turned out to be a war on the Muslims

in general. Now it has become imperative that the war on terror be redefined so that we all can reach a peaceful state of living.

At this point, however, it is to be made clear that we Muslims do not support any kind of terrorism on earth. Thus no Muslim can afford to do harm to others, let alone human slaughtering; those few gone awry or misguided are enemies of Islam and the Muslims in all respects--this is where lies the importance of the redefinition of the War on Terror.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Dynastic image

Every year 6th September is observed as Defense Day in Pakistan. This year it brought double rejoicing among the supporters of the ruling People's Party as its Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has been elected President of the country.

In the parliamentary form of government, the status of a president does not exceed that of a showpiece; but in the case of any Pakistani President armed with Special Powers under Article 58 2B means that he has been made equal to any 'dictator'. He is now authorized to dismiss any elected government, appoint or remove governor or provincial assemblies and army top brass too, on his own and without consulting anyone.

All such 'fortunes' have come to a man who was an unknown figure before marrying Benazir Bhutto. Even after becoming the husband of Pakistan's first woman prime minister, he could not check himself and was nicknamed "Mr. Ten Percent" for corruption he committed during his wife's rule.

He was charged and sent to jail first in 1990, soon after the dismissal of Benazir's first elected government; where he spent 3 years. He was again caught and jailed half an hour after Benazir's second government was sacked in 1996.

He was living in exile, when he got the chance to enter Pakistan to attend his wife's funeral. Within 24 hours he declared himself the Chairman of the PPP and was able to join hands with his arch rival Muslim League (Nawaz). The

success of two major parties in the February 18 election helped to remove Pervez Musharraf from presidency; and to fill in the gap Zardari unilaterally announced himself as the candidate for the position. No doubt, he is a clever politician.

The Bhutto dynasty is dreaming to rule Pakistan in the years to come.

Syed Ashraf Yusuf
Engineering Technologist
Halishahar, Chittagong

