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# Religious extremism



I was greatly shocked to see the news that hundreds of religious extremists had vandalized the sculpture 'Balaka'.

This news has made me think again about this issue. When the whole world is in a state of shock following the Mumbai tragedy, some so called mullahs are trying to destroy the image of this country to the world community. In 1971 the brave sons of this soil sacrificed their lives to give us freedom to live without fear. But a few people, those were also against the Liberation, are trying to destroy the achievements of the heroes of this country.

What do they want to prove by that? Where do they get funding to arrange such kind of terrorist activities? What are our national intelligence agencies doing when plan for such kind of attack on our culture is being formulate? Has not the government failed to carry out the responsibility to protect the image and heritage of this country? Who are patron-

izing this group? These are the questions that need to be answered.

If such kinds of activities go on in this country, this would surely make a bad impression about Bangladesh to the rest of the world and they would treat us as religious extremists. As a result, the door of the world would be closed for us as no country would take the risk to let us enter into their territory. But we all know that wage earners' remittance is making a significant contribution to our economy. This would also be hampered by the activities of such zealots.

Finally I, on behalf of the millions of poor people of this country, would like request the government to save us from this threat.

**Muhammad Majidul Haq Patwary**  
Senior Officer- Call Centre Operation  
Customer Care Division  
Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited  
Mohakhali, Dhaka

## Elections

The upcoming election schedule has been declared to ensure proper democracy in our country. All political parties have the equal opportunity to show their dedication and worth for the real goodness of the country & countrymen. In the recent past, we observed many unwise & evil acts by the governments who were in power.

As a result, the nation had to suffer a lot in many ways. They still blame the politicians for their long sufferings. Special thanks to the CTG for their brave & timely treatment of the corrupt politicians around the country. It should be a good lesson for them.

Anyway, the upcoming election is very near at hand. The EC has taken all possible steps to make the election neutral & acceptable to all. No matter which party comes to power next, we can only hope the politicians will move together in the interest of the country and its people. Moreover, the leaders should bear in mind that this is the high time to go ahead & build a corruption-free Bangladesh.

**Manjur Alam**  
Shining Star School  
CDA, Agrabad  
Chittagong

We have many expectations regarding the upcoming general election in Bangladesh. As a citizen of Bangladesh, we hope the political parties will nominate honest and patriotic candidates who will build our motherland as a developed country. But we become very disappointed when we see corrupt, crooked and dishonest politicians getting nomination.

Nasty politics has begun among the political parties to grab power. We see loan defaulters participating in the election, political parties are making alliances with autocrats and war criminals.

They have no principle, no ideology. Power is everything to them!

**Manik Chowdhury**  
Chowdhury Bari  
Fatullah  
Narayanganj

## Mumbai carnage

In terms of death it was not the biggest but in planning and execution it was the most horrific one. Death of so many innocent people in such a cowardly attack is not only a condemnable act, rather a brutal atrocity on humanity. The whole world condemned the attack. We here in Bangladesh join the condemnation with the sincerest feelings for the innocent victims. Such incidents should never occur anywhere in the world.

But this is only wishful thinking. No expert can predict or prevent such occurrence till root causes of religious hatred, preaching of extremism and genuine regional problems are addressed. All the causes are interlinked. These are global problems and should be looked from a global angle. In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, Kashmir is the brewing pot of all religious hatred, in the Middle East it is Palestine. Terrorists recruit their pawns showing the plight of these tortured people. Young people are the easiest preys. Now if we want to get rid of so-called Islamic terrorism, a rightful solution to these problems must be ensured.

The suggestion may sound over simplified. But in this complicated world simple things are always overlooked!

**M. Sanaul Huq**  
Uttara  
Dhaka

## Tajuddin Ahmed

I would like to raise a question to Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed's daughter who is regularly writing about the life and times of her father. Recently, in one of her writings, she has mentioned that her father was already killed by being sacked during his lifetime from the cabinet. What was then in store for him?

We hope she would shed some light on this aspect of her distinguished father.

**Anonymous**  
Dhaka

## Religion of peace

How many times the Muslim scholars had to reiterate that Islam is a religion of peace after each and every terror attack that drew international attention. Nowadays it seems to be a monotonous and defensive monologue from one group of people to the rest of the world.

But I along with millions of Muslims in the world know how our Holy Quran talks about peace and humanity; how the life of our beloved Prophet (Pbuh) was a living example of peace and tolerance. Have we forgotten the clear utterance of the holy book that killing of one innocent human being is equal to killing of the whole humanity? Haven't we remembered the famous saying of the Prophet (Pbuh) (to his fellow soldiers before a military expedition) to exclude children, women, old people and any innocent person or even crop-fields during the battle? I really don't know how differently they (the terrorists) read the holy book. But it pains me and millions of other Muslims around the world to see our religion as well as other major religions being hijacked by radicals in this era of scientific progress when we are supposed to be more aware and informed.

Like many other millions of Muslims, I also know how western media is biased against the aggressions of Israel on Palestinians and Indian armed forces' role in Kashmir; I also know how "Islamophobia" is on the rise and how grounds of Iraq and Afghanistan are soaked with the blood of millions of innocent Muslims; but my question is, what are we gaining by these acts of terror? Are they really doing it for the sake of religion or only for the sake of revenge? I know somebody might tell me that utter desperation and frustration push these young men into a world where rationality in the normal state of mind is obscure and death is more coveted than life, but still a wrong cannot be an answer to another wrong; revenge will bring about perpetual hatred; killing will lead to more killing (mostly of innocent human beings).

I think time has come for us - Muslims to talk about our religion more loudly and start our own soul searching. We need to draw the real picture of Islam not the one portrayed by the biased media and enemies of Islam. In this regard each and every Muslim is an ambassador of Islam. We have to wake ourselves up and work for our own sake because almost all of our governments, political leaders and in some cases religious leaders are either corrupt or ineffective. May God help us all.

**Zafar Hadi**  
California  
USA

## Raffle draw?

A few days before the Eid-ul-Fitr, 2008 I bought a few items from a very well known shopping mall and almost inevitably was endowed with some raffle coupons. Being cautious enough, I carefully scrutinized the date of the draw. It was 2nd week of November 2008. So, I opened the web address they provided with the coupon and found no results there. Having the feeling of being cheated, I sent an sms to the address and got an instant reply. It says: "Sorry! your respective coupon number does not match with the results of the draw."

I am afraid there was no draw. Had there been any, why didn't they publish the results in the web or in the newspapers as promised by the authorities?

It is mentionable here that before the last Eid-ul-Azha, 07, I was also given a few lucky coupons from the shop I bought some goods at the same shopping mall. Reaching backhome, I found the date of the coupons was over. I was ridiculed by my family members.

Would the law enforcers think about the matter?

**Monzur Rahman**  
Dhaka

## Politicians in jail

Several hundred politicians and other professionals were sent to jail after 1/11. They are now released on bail and some are still in jail on various charges like corruption and graft. A good percentage of politicians and others who were in jail are taking part in election being nominated by the respective party or individually.

They are talking about their good qualities such as family status, social service, education, professional career etc. But one thing surprised me that many of them feel proud of telling the voters how many years he was in jail and how many court cases are still against him. It seems these are all good qualifications for them!!

From my personal observation, I should say there are thousands of voters in the country who have never been in jail or even in the court! It is really difficult for them to realize the importance of being in jail for a candidate in election, particularly when the voters compare them with politicians of other countries.

This is the crucial time for the voters to think over the matter.

**Prof. Lutfur Rahman**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Is it enough?

I am a Bangladeshi American, a registered Democrat. I voted for Barack Obama in our Presidential election. But I always keep track of my beloved Bangladesh. I am fortunate to watch popular Bangladeshi Television channels, despite being in the US and therefore I get all news right away. Recently, two former prime ministers and the leaders of the two main political parties talked with each other, smiled at each other. This event has drawn a huge interest in Bangladesh, the TV channels were very much ecstatic. Perhaps, it is good that at least these two leaders talked with each other when most expect them to avoid each other. But did the nation accomplish anything after the so much publicized brief conversation between the two leaders? Barring any miracles, one of them will be the next prime minister and the other one will be the leader of the opposition. Thus the whole nation's hope rests on

these leaders. It would be very encouraging, if both go out of their way and prepare a joint statement in which they would declare unequivocally:

1. They will accept the election results no matter whose party wins.

2. They will meet once in every two months to discuss about all relevant issues.

3. They'll meet after the election and pledge to help each other for the sake of the nation. (In the US, the Republican nominee, Senator John McCain met with President-elect Barack Obama in Chicago. If political rivals can meet in the USA after the election, why can't two Bangladeshi leaders follow this nice example?).

4. No matter which party wins or loses, the other party won't engage in hartal and such harmful activities.

5. They will do their best to get rid of corrupt and hooligan elements from their parties.

I am sure, whatever I have asked for is in many Bangladeshis' minds and the whole nation will appreciate it, should they prepare such a joint statement.

**Bazlul Wahab Shaheen**  
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



# Voters' rights

There is a debate whether the activities of the caretaker government and the emergency rule are acceptable to the people of the country or not. But there is no doubt that the mass people want change in every sphere of life whether it is institutional or non-institutional. Just for this people have waited for a period of two years sacrificing lots of things. But we never hope the change will come only from the commitment of one group of people, or one

organisation or one community. For ensuring the change, a complete and comprehensive participation of all people of the country is necessary. And the law-makers of the country should play the main role.

They should bear in mind what the people want from them. People want change and a true democracy everywhere!

**Md. Saiful Islam**  
Zia Hall, DU

## Fathers' choice!

Very recently a new business front has been opened in Bangladesh. The name of this new business is "Marriage counselling" in Bangla we call it Ghatokali. Now there are many offices in Dhaka city. I know a distant friend of mine who has opened an office in Dhaka recently. He explained very shortly over phone some experiences he had during the last few months in this business.

According to him, the parents, especially the fathers of brides, prefer the sons of politicians, army officers, ward commissioners and area commanders of party cadres or student leaders who have hard links with high profile political leaders.

While I asked him about the reason behind the choices, what he told me is very interesting. The parents believe that if, God forbid, something happens to the groom of these categories, their daughters one day may become a political leader, who knows, may be a prime minister, an MP or at least a word commissioner, whatever may be the quality of education the daughters have.

He gave me some practical examples in support of his claim and advised me to learn more.

I was convinced by his reasoning behind the wishes of the parents. He pointed his fingers to some examples of the on-going nominations. Didn't we see many wives of some disgraced or jailed leaders getting big-party nominations to participate in the forthcoming election? He was rather a bit angry with the court ruling which has barred the wives of some

leaders who have been convicted and jailed for more than two years of imprisonment.

**Shafiqul Islam, NY**

## Concrete jungle

I want to share a very sad story with all of you. Every morning on my walks I come across a bunch of monkeys. The first day I saw one of them and was quite surprised as to how they survive in this overcrowded polluted and unfriendly city. Then I realized if we could why not them. There was a particular family of mother and baby that became familiar to me. I noticed them most regularly. I began to wonder about their lives and sometime when I saw two groups fighting and chasing each other across the street, I would wonder about the welfare of this particular family. The baby would hold on to the mother very tightly as they crossed the big road and jump up the wall to climb the big tree. It was an amazing sight and gave me a feeling of loneliness in the concrete jungle we live in.

On my daily 50 minutes routine walk my thoughts were preoccupied with all sorts of things but this family would surely take up at least 5 minutes of my time. Sometimes when I didn't see them I would wonder if they were all right. I even gave the mother and the baby names calling them Kiki and Chichi. I never stopped to exchange greetings with them because that would break my walking rhythm. Which was very selfish of me but that is human.

About two days ago as I was walking on my usual route my legs froze and I

stood motionless as I saw my two primate friends crushed on the roadside. They have been separated and lay dead in the gutter. I stood by them for a few minutes watching the lifeless bodies of Kiki and Chichi probably crushed by a speeding vehicle unaware of the hurt they have left me.

**Akku Chowdhury**  
One-mail

## Rajuk plots

Recently RAJUK has advertised for residential plots at Purbachal and Uttara Extension project and these were published on 27 and 28 November, 2008 respectively. The last date for submission of application is 18.12.2008 for both cases. From 28.11.08 to 17.12.08 there are only 10 working days because of weekly holidays, Eid holidays and Victory Day holiday. Only ten working days is too little time to get the application forms by standing for hours in the designated banks and filling up the forms with all the information needed and the required affidavit.

It has been reported that non-judicial stamp papers needed for affidavit have disappeared from the market. Especially, the wage earners abroad will suffer as they could not see the ads as the internet editions do not carry them. We would, therefore, request Rajuk to kindly extend the last date of submission of application for these plots at least to 15 January, 2009.

**Dr. Nooruddin Ahmed**  
Professor  
Department of Chemical Engineering  
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology  
Dhaka

## Electricity generation

When the world is facing tremendous shortfall in fossil fuel supply and when the world is concerned about saving itself from the green house effect and billions of dollars are spent for keeping the world safe and habitable, as a third world underdeveloped country we often chop down trees, burn kerosene for cooking etc. Why don't we consider building an offshore power plant in the shallow waters of the Bay of Bengal. This could be the wind based power plant, which most of the Eastern European countries are using these days to generate electricity.

Since Bangladesh is in dire need of electricity and setting up a hydro, gas, diesel or coal power plant is not an easy task and also time consuming, why not take up the wind based power plant which takes lesser time in construction and can be installed at the shallow waters of the Bangladesh coast in the sea without much of a problem. According to reports, a 1,200

megawatt capacity wind power project will take roughly 10-12 months to install on land but since we already have shortage of land in the country due to the booming population this can be installed in the sea also which will take probably 24 months to operate. An area of only 17sqkm is required for generating 1,200 megawatt of electricity.

The project will be eco-friendly and the country can attract foreign investments in this particular sector and eventually other sectors when uninterrupted power supply can be ensured.

Bangladesh, which needs foreign aid to finance modernization of different projects/units of the country, can attract foreign investment in billions of dollars for this wind based power plant as they do in Eastern Europe. Since the crude oil price is unstable and the stock is limited, the wind power for production of electricity will probably be the ultimate power generation system the world will look for. With the existing gas, coal and under

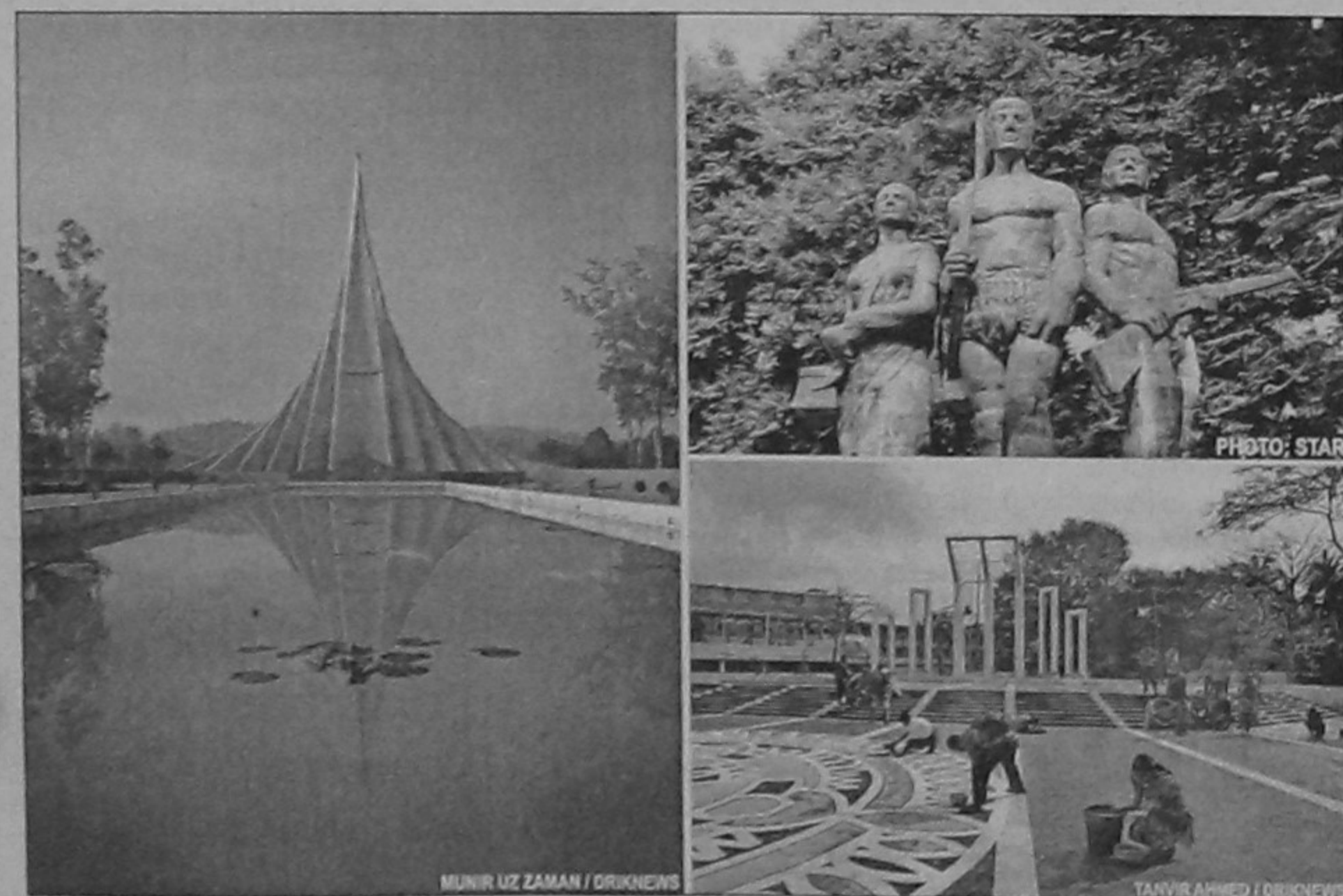
discussion nuclear power plant, the country can overnight become self sufficient in electricity and can export it to the neighbouring countries which will certainly help in generating foreign currency also.

Bangladesh, which relies mainly on gas, coal and hydro based energy for its electricity production, is lagging behind its neighbours in attracting foreign investments. As a country Bangladesh can also reduce dependency on oil imports from the Middle East, keeping in mind the on going conflict in the region, especially the future threats on Iran and Venezuela by the United States on the nuke and political issues.

When the world is facing crises on natural gas and crude oil and the prices of both these natural resources are going rocket high, as a developing country, we should invest in the wind power for generating electricity to battle the ever increasing demand.

**Sohel Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi  
Dhaka

# Protect national identity



The militants are active again, and out to destroy our heritage and culture. This government is too soft on the religious fundamentalists. I am very concerned about the protection of our 3 historic monuments. These are : 1. Shaheed Minar 2. Jatiya Smiriti Saudha 3. Aparajeyo Bangla. We want to know very clearly from this government what kind of security protections are in place to protect and preserve these these national historic monuments. I have very little confidence in the Dhaka University authorities to provide due protection to two of those historic monuments. The DU itself is well divided on ideological lines and carrying flags of different colours not friendly to our secular cul-

ture.

I recommend that the SSF be deployed at Jatiya Smiriti Saudha, and the Aparajeyo Bangla and Shaheed Minar be protected by the University Cadet Corp of students.

I am not sure whether we have very good replicas of those three historic monuments available on commercial basis. If these are not available, some organisations may kindly come forward and put them on sale during this month of independence. Kindly make the best quality product and the prices should be within the reach of all sections of people. There might be other opinions to fine tune my idea.

**A reader**  
One-mail