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Genocide in Gaza

Since December 27, the Israeli troops have been killing the innocent Palestinians. Already, more than 900 people have died. Every now and then horrible scenes are being telecast. No one can say how long this will continue. The attack by the Israeli troops is nothing new. Probably it has become their routine work.

France and Egypt are exerting pressure on the UNO to stop this war. The latest news is that in New York the Security Council passed a resolution urging an "immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire", and for Israel to withdraw from Gaza after its two-week air-and-ground offensive. However, the United States refrained. This shows that the USA has absolute support for the massacres committed by Israeli soldiers. Moreover, the most striking question is why did the Security Council take such a long period of time to pass this resolution? Couldn't they pass the resolution within twenty four hours of the attack? What is the fault of those innocent victims? Will they ever get justice?

"It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America." This was Barack Obama's election victory speech in Chicago. I do not know what change did Obama bring to the USA, but there is no doubt that its policy regarding international affairs remains unchanged.

Akash Pradip
Lecturer in English
Bangladesh Health Professions Institute
Savar

Just a week ago Israel started its brutal attack on Palestine. Shamefully, this inhuman act



has been supported by the USA as usual like before and still it calls itself a civilized country. The Israeli army is attacking with missiles and tanks.

When will it come to an end?
Md Mahbur Rahman
Old town, Dhaka

People should protest the aggression and barbaric acts of Israel and its supporters by boycotting the products from those countries. This boycott can be at any level starting from cosmetics to industrial machineries.

If we cannot help Palestinian people in any manner, at least we should stop helping their

oppressors.
Mohammad Faruk
Nurjahan Road
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Children are crying, sitting near their dead mother, father is busy carrying his beloved child to the hospital. These are some of the pathetic pictures coming from Gaza. Israeli forces are brutally killing the civilians.

I cannot understand what the UN is doing. Why do they remain silent?
Mohammad Zia-Ul-Haque
Eng. Department
IUC

Hasina and BCL cadres

In 2001, the people of this country voted the AL out of power mainly due to the unprecedented terrorism resorted to by their party cadres, especially the BCL, Jubo League etc. Instead of asking for a halt to those activities, at that time the AL chief even called the BCL cadres as her "golden boys" - much to the annoyance and displeasure of the general public. Life in educational institutions, villages and cities became unbearable due to their nefarious activities.

During the BNP rule, terrorism by the JCD and Jubo Dal cadres was allowed by their party chief which was one of the many reasons for the downfall of their party in the just concluded national

election. I would, therefore, appeal to Sheikh Hasina not to tolerate any repetition of such activities by her party cadres. Already, BCL cadres have resorted to factional fighting in Salimulla Medical College and occupied the halls of DU by driving out JCD cadres forcibly. The leaders and activists of BCL vandalized a number of rooms at different dormitories of DU. The BCL men also allegedly ransacked rooms of journalists and looted their belongings before taking control of the halls. It appears there is no change in sight as the BCL leaders and activists are doing the same thing the JCD men did on the campus earlier. Whereas Hasina at the time of her casting vote asked all concerned to shun politics of violence and revenge. Then why is this happening again?

Is it the testimony to change that the people asked for loud and clear? Is it not utter violation of their party chief's directive to shun vandalism? If this trend of vandalism by the BCL activists is not nipped in the bud, there is every likelihood of campus violence spreading throughout the country in no time, severely damaging the credibility of the AL and shattering the expectations of the voters. Therefore, it is the duty of the AL chief now to warn those BCL activists to refrain from all kinds of vandalism on the campus. This practice of "occupation of halls" in the educational institutions MUST come to an end. We are waiting for a positive response from the AL chief on the issue. The people of the country have overwhelmingly voted the AL to power for a change.

We do not want repetition of any terrorist activities, we want peace. The students should be asked to devote themselves to academic activities only and prepare for future leadership.
Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

Foreign policy

It is indeed a commendable act by the newly appointed PM to appoint Dipu Moni as the country's first woman foreign minister. It is hoped that this will translate into a more level headed and sober approach to all affairs foreign and their offshoots pertaining to domestic issues too. Her initial comments about dealing with militancy and terrorism are of some concern here and it requires some reflection. Your paper quoted her saying:

"Militancy and terrorism are not limited to geographical boundary. For that reason, we will take effective steps to fight it in consultation with our neighbouring countries as we want peace and stability in the entire region."

Although she is absolutely right that militancy and terrorism are not confined by geography, but, on the other hand, the fight against it is led by nations that practise state militancy and terrorism the world over, have no concern for human life other than their own citizens and have total disregard for international law and justice, i.e. the US and Israel et al. Therefore she needs to take a cautious approach to these "steps" she is about to take.

Also it is vital that she does not rely too much on these foreign nations to address the problem of militancy and terrorism as that could be quite detrimental to the interest of BD. Moreover, she must not allow these "consultations" to facilitate dictations from the foreigners who will not have the interest of BD at the forefront and their "advice" if adopted in any policy could lead to unnecessary civil unrest. Since militancy is erroneously connected with Islam these days, she would do well to be mindful of the fundamental nature of Islam, i.e. it is a spiritual-political ideology (Deen), has a political face to it and many Bengalis exercise it. This awareness will equip her to be able to decipher legitimate non-violent Islamic political expressions from mindless militancy.

She must not equate legitimate Islamic political expressions such as a radically expressed alternative Islamic economic solution to poverty in BD with militancy or legitimate resistance such as protesting BSF activities on the BD border with terrorism.
Muhammad Bakhtiyar
One-mail

Language issue

That language is the dress of thought is more or less known to all of us and every nation in the world has its own mother tongue which is very sweet and dear to the nationals. English is recognised globally as an international language which is in a commanding position among other languages prevalent in different countries of the world. Ever since the period of colonisation by the English of different parts of the world, the use and dissemination of the learning of English language have been widely made with a view to making the position of English firm and consolidated. Even though the mother tongue of a nation is much sweeter than any other language, English as an international language that holds a unique position and it goes without saying that learning of English is of paramount importance.

In Bangladesh secondary schools English was taught from 2000 to 2006 minus grammar but it is important to note that the learning of grammar usually makes the foundation of knowledge of a student solidly established.

Students themselves are by means responsible for total lack of knowledge in question but it may be mentioned that the former policymakers were absolutely responsible for the damage they did to the learners. It needs no telling that the policymakers then sent the learners to their doom. The learning of English at school level without grammar is unwise and unthinkable. We are easily reminded of the fact that mere possession of degrees cannot make a man educated.

To make the students keenly interested in the pursuit of the knowledge of English the need for learning English grammar and translation should be emphasised on an urgent basis to a high degree and with this end in view at least ten marks should be distributed for one passage for translation along with the inclusion of detached sentences of ten marks so as to make the students at secondary level thoroughly conscious of the proper and practical use of grammar and language learning.

Besides, a book of stories or a short novel of an English novelist may be selected for the students of secondary schools in Bangladesh and teachers in English should have at least graduation degrees with English of three hundred marks to meet the urgency of the day. A graduate nowadays reading English of one hundred marks in his/her graduation is once in a blue moon able to meet the growing demand of the sharp-witted learners particularly of the higher classes at secondary school levels in the country.

Md Ashraf Ali Mondal
Assistant Headmaster
Police Lines High School and College, Bogra

Hajj

I am writing with reference to a LETTER FROM EUROPE headed "In sorrow, not in anger" written by Mr. Chaklader Mahboob-ul-Alam, a columnist of The Daily Star, that appeared in your issue of January 5, 2009. In his letter, Mr. Alam provided details of his agonizing experience while performing Hajj. It is indeed regrettable that his "joy and spiritual exhilaration" was tainted due to the fact that he had to part with his passport as this was taken away by the Immigration Authority of KSA without any receipt. He went to a great length in his frantic efforts for recovery of the passport. He further stated that he "was asked to pay an amount of approximately two hundred euros" to some authority in Medina and was advised to go the next day to collect his passport. Sadly, even after this payment the passport was not delivered as promised!

The frantic attempts of Mr. Alam to recover his passport are agonizing in fact from what he writes it appears that his attempts turned into obsession. Along with my wife I also performed Hajj this time, and our experiences are totally different from the ones cited by Mr. Alam. We (and also our fellow Hajjees) did not feel unprotected when our passports were exchanged with hand bands that would serve, during the remaining part of our stay in KSA, as legal document in substantiation of the fact that we were genuine Hajjees travelling on legitimate documents this practice is applied for all visitors and has been in place for many years. Our passports were returned in due time before our check-in at the departure lounge of Jeddah Airport. The

government of KSA has to be paid some fee for reimbursement of costs incurred for transportation between Mecca Medina Arafat, rent for camp at Mina and Arafat. Payment of Euro 200 by Mr. Alam may represent reimbursement of these costs.

It is indeed interesting how the KSA authorities manage such large congregation of people going for Hajj from so many countries each and every Hajee, out of millions, is duly accounted for with amazing precision! Mr. Alam would have enjoyed his holy trip to KSA if he could muster his confidence in the government of KSA who had been successfully managing this yearly event with great efficiency.
Mainuddin Ahmed, FCA
Uttara, Dhaka

Price and crime

The Awami League has earned my appreciation for checking the prices of the essentials so quickly. But I wonder why the economists failed to understand during the past caretaker government the Awami League's secret in checking the price hike.

Now what we need to watch for is the supply of essentials

reaching our markets through smuggling via the border from a neighbouring country which may lead to a temporary price drop but will destroy our local producers in the long run. We must also remember that money in the hands of those in the black market will supply funds to the criminals which will also boost the crime rate.

We need to save our own producers by helping them increase production. More supply from our own suppliers will contain the price hike in a systematic and sustainable fashion.
Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

The young and the wise

Are the stalwarts playing the role of the think tank? Will they monitor and the government's decisions if they are going to make any wrong step from behind the curtain? That means, there will be a double layer governance system. The young generation will lead the country from the front and the experienced stalwarts will play their role from behind the curtain to build up our beloved Bangladesh. If this is the cause of leaving aside the stalwarts from the cabinet, the AL is really going to bring a change and finally they have to realize there is nothing to mind. Every one from top to bottom, whether in the government as cabinet members or not will have to work for the sake of building Bangladesh, that is, the cherished dream of the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the cause of our independence.

This is a great chance for the AL as they got the huge support in the last election, especially from the young generation. If they fail, the nation will not forgive them.
Mizanur Rahman Arif
One-mail

"Remittances keep growing"

This refers to the editorial of Jan. 10, with the above title.

Let me assure you that working in foreign countries like slaves is not fun. But Bangladeshi workers do this year after year. After months of hard work they send their hard-earned money back home which helps keep the economy running. We may not admit it, but without their hard-earned money Bangladesh's economy will not survive. Yet, when these expats need any help they find no one from our embassies to help them. When they return home they are harassed by airport staff. On some occasions Bangladeshi expats have even been killed by airport staff!

Those embassy officials get their salaries from our money. Those airline and airport workers get their food, clothes and shelter from our hard earned money. They have those jobs because of us. And when we come home they

insult us, they harass us and they even kill us! If you go to an airport worker with a query and ask him/her just one question, the way they reply as if you have killed a member of their family. Why do we have to put up with such arrogant and rude staff? Don't they know how to talk to people? And why don't Bangladeshi expats have any voting rights?

Both Hasina and Khaleda paid lip service in the past, promising to improve things. So far we have seen nothing. Nothing at all.
Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

Hats off to Venezuelan president

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has expelled the Israeli Ambassador from his country. We endorse it, it is a sign of great wisdom and humanity.

But, why are the Arab and other Muslim countries not doing the same? We think every country, which has got a sense of justice, should take concrete steps to stop the Israelis from this heinous aggression against the helpless Palestinians.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Why this disrespect?

As a nation why are we so underdeveloped, poor and uneducated, why does the country has hundreds and thousands of problems? Why is there no discipline in our everyday life, why are we still an underdeveloped country despite being independent for 38 years? I guess we all know the answer. We have forgotten to respect each other.

The culture of respect did prevail in our lives 20-30 ago when the students used to respect their teachers, when the children used to respect their parents, when the young used to respect their elders, when the politicians used to respect the people and last but not the least the rich used to respect the poor.

Today we as a country see indiscipline in each and every aspect of our lives. When we go out from our homes the first thing which we all notice is the car owners/drivers having no respect for the rickshaw pullers, the bus driver has no respect for the smaller vehicles and all sorts of vehicle plying the road have no respect at all for the traffic constable and the traffic signals.

The politicians do not respect the people's verdict and on top of that they do not respect the other politicians who have a different view.

As a Bangladeshi citizen, I would like to see my future countrymen shunning the culture of disrespect.
Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Political scenario



SHAHIQUL ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

The retaining of power for two consecutive years by the caretaker government and the delaying of the national elections have been an exceptionally intriguing situation that has confronted us lately. The caretaker government started off their proceedings by entering into the political arena quite ambitiously but consequently failed to live up to their desired expectations. The more they dug, the more dirt spilled out of the heart of this country. All kinds of obnoxious and filthy corruption were viciously interrelated and no doubt they were unable to cope with all these diverse predicaments and directly hit the core with the extremely restricted time limit they had. Of course in a country rules are made to protect it and for its betterment, but when those same rules and regulations act as a stumbling block for development and change, then they have to be deliberately overlooked. After the tragedy of 1/11, the

whole country plunged into deep worries. The political parties all went after each other's throat and made life miserable for the people. Under such immense pressure the caretaker government, which comprised caretakers of the highest esteem with unmatched capabilities which was accompanied by their rather outstanding and remarkable professional careers, succeeded in pushing this country out of the political unrest. But at the end of the day we all would be displeased to unwillingly agree with the fact that they really should have done more.

The AL has won a landslide victory in the elections. But if they exploit power and fail to win the people's hearts, then they have to be prepared to experience the same downfall as the BNP did.
Waheedur Rahman
DOHS Baridhara
Manarat Dhaka Int'l College

Accept defeat gracefully

It is heart breaking to see repetition of the same oration by the leader of the losing party, irrespective of whoever the person is. Being one of the members of the post liberation war generation, I earnestly urge all party leaders in current and future Bangladesh to create the legacy of gracefully accepting the election verdict and work in a united fashion for taking our beloved motherland on the path of peaceful political co-existence and achievable developments, the main themes of a multi-party democratic political process. Simultaneously, I also urge the winning party leader to establish a new political culture by meeting the losing party leader to extend her earnest and cordial invitation to work together for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, as we have seen in recent times in the US election that resonated the same theme of "Change". I may be one of the first few to ask for initiating this healthy culture of political humility, but am confident that I am not a loner in my thoughts and urges! We have had enough of the ailing political culture of accepting an election verdict when it goes in favour, while rejecting it if it goes against. We now need to move forward and require to see our politicians working in unison on critical national and economic



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issues in order to achieve meaningful development. The lessons to be learned from the last election are clear. It is perhaps time for ANY political party to think twice before it decides to form coalition with the anti-liberation forces for political gains in the short run!
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