

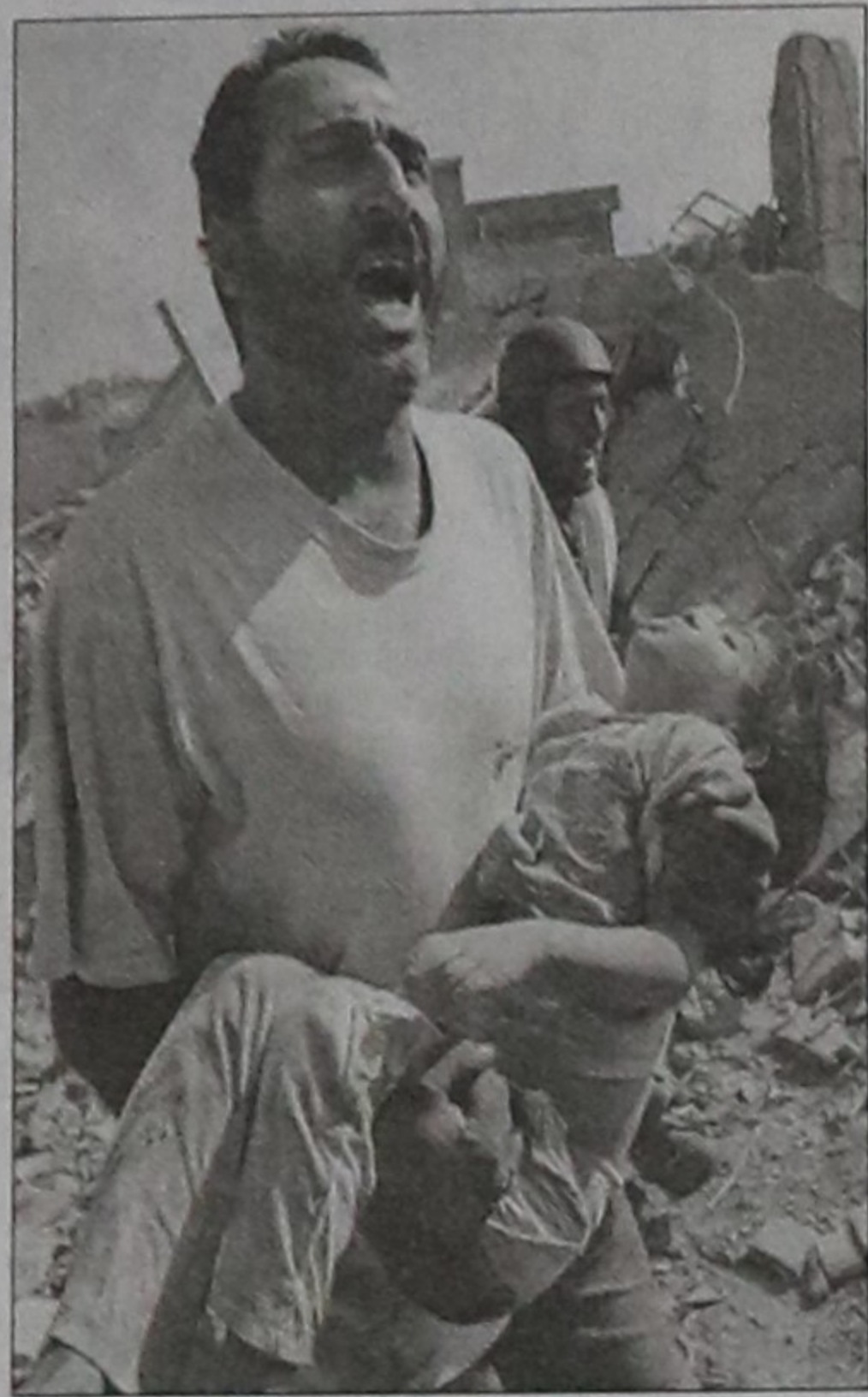
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Israel's terrorism

In this ruthless world we repeatedly witness events which are too distressing to be described in words and clichés. Even in this enlightened era, sophisticated brutality frequently reigns over the trampled emblem of humanity as the civilized world turns deaf to the desperate calls of the oppressed. The harrowing pictures of the Gaza carnage everyday remind us of this unacceptable and yet inescapable axiom. It's easy for political analysts to put responsibilities on several factions while seating in luxury cabins. World leaders, who have been silent for long, are now engaged in formulating complicated reconciliation schemes, instead of taking immediate pragmatic initiatives. The international community is engrossed in its pursuit of the hard facts while concrete actions are needed to end the gloomy misery of a confined race dying hopelessly. I guess today only the innocuous Palestinians who are being brutalized mercilessly can sense the concrete 'hard facts'. The hard fact for them is that as the civilized world silently watches they have to count the bloodstained bodies of their infants and endure the merciless Zionist butchery.

The Israeli rationalization of this mayhem is utterly baseless as it's understandably not possible to eliminate an organisation like Hamas by literally waging war against defenseless civilians who are trapped in the middle of a grim humanitarian crisis. Instead of subverting Hamas this impetuous offensive will actually help Hamas expand itself and make its causes more justifiable. The impracticality of the Israeli military objectives becomes apparent when we underscore the fact that the majority of the Palestinians killed by the military assault are harmless civilians who had no link whatsoever with Hamas. This actually manifests that the real objective of this brutal military mission is what it is actually achieving: namely, mass murder of civilians in order to consolidate the Zionist supremacy in the region, demonstration of Israel's military strength and demoralizing the destitute Arab race so that their aspiration for a free homeland dies out forever. Furthermore, this military operation will eventually prove to be fatal for the rest of the world as this conflict will inexorably deteriorate the global terrorism situation and pave ways for fresh conflicts. In the past identical Israeli aggressions gave birth to hatred and belligerence in the Arab world that ultimately culminated in numerous terrorist activities. To a great extent, the ongoing Israeli aggression has put emphasis on the actual origin or the 'root' of global terrorism.

America and the other world powers should understand the simple fact that 'the war against terrorism' will never be successful unless and until such 'origins' are carefully uprooted. When it comes to the rise of global terrorism the western leaders incessantly blame radical organisations like al-Qaeda and Hamas. And in the process they diplomatically remain oblivious of the terrorist nations like Israel and its impulsive actions that are responsible for unleashing the vicious monster of global terrorism. I'm not arguing in favour of the terrorist organisations or their extremist ideologies. However, we must understand the fact that in order to



exterminate the inescapable curse of terrorism we must also formulate a 'preventive approach' alongside the popular 'cure strategy', which is only possible by internationally counteracting the destructive policies of terrorist nations like Israel that directly and indirectly stimulate extremism.

Kh. Asef Safa Kabir
Zakir Hossain Road
Lalmatia
Dhaka

The ineffectiveness of the UN was clearly demonstrated in its failure to prevent Israel from carrying out its heinous attacks on Palestinian civilians (with the death toll

crossing 1000). The silence of Arab countries (with some mere rhetoric from some countries) is not surprising since Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are basically being run by US backed governments. In addition, the EU countries have also not acted swiftly enough with only recently the EU humanitarian chief condemning the violence. Israel's motive is clear. Since they already have a greater control of West Bank, their obvious target is now to entirely capture Gaza or weaken Hamas so that they will no longer be a force to reckon with. Hamas' rocket firing into Israel is basically being used as a pretext to carry out massive genocide on Palestinian people.

The incoming Obama administration now has a role to play. The world is waiting for Obama to end this violence. But as far as the US foreign policy is concerned, it is hard to expect Obama's administration to be belligerent towards Israel. But if Obama really represents "change", then he must act in the way we all expect him to. While the US does not waste time in condemning Iran, North Korea and Cuba for their violation of human rights, their support for Israel basically indicates their "doublespeak".

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS
Dhaka

With thousands of Palestinians being killed in Israel's Gaza offensive, the world leaders are still keeping quiet, despite knowing the consequences of it. Every now and then we found Palestinians wailing in both print and electronic media over loss of lives or habitats.

From my very childhood I have been witnessing this situation but I couldn't realize why Israel was committing this genocide, or who were backing them up. Thousands of people were killed in a sequel to the crisis between the two countries. People became and still are becoming homeless due to this long conflict.

Innocent children who know nothing about politics are becoming the worst victims of this conflict. As far as the recent reports are concerned one third of the Palestinians killed recently in air attacks carried out by Israel were children. These children, however, lead uncertain lives with no basic rights provided for them.

It is high time for the world leaders to come to the same platform to help rescue the people of Palestine from this dreadful situation.

Sarwar Hussain
Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering
University of Chittagong

BCL issue

I totally disagree with the editorial of January 19. The editorial calls for "applying brake on BCL excesses". Why only apply brake? Why not get rid of them completely?

Can anyone from Bangladesh tell me what benefit do the people of Bangladesh get from these different student wings of our political parties, mainly the AL, the BNP and the JP?

Why should any political party have any presence whatsoever in our country's educational institutions? What for?
Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

Public space

"Why should the non-car-owning majority allow the car-owning minority to store their private property, i.e. cars, on public property at no charge? Why should my every walk to the store be akin to a

stroll through a parking lot?

Why should that majority be subject to the many costs and risks to health and safety attendant on the private car?"

--"The Ethicist", a weekly column in the New York Times Magazine (July 27, 2003)

The problem of parking is a typical "commons problem". Land belongs to the community and is freely available to everyone. While this sounds like a good thing, common ownership and use leads to misuse, and as a result, everyone suffers. When land for grazing is available to all, the land is quickly over-grazed, and soon it is of no use to anyone. Common ownership only works when access is limited to a few people. For each individual, grazing their animal on community land for free is a benefit; when everyone does it, the whole community suffers. In the same sense, what works for an individual driver parking free wherever he wishes is destructive for the community as a

whole.

Off-street parking is seen as the appropriate remedy to reduce traffic, since it would presumably decrease the number of cars parked on footpaths and streets. However, by providing more parking, traffic increases both locally and regionally. Market-priced curb parking, in contrast, decreases traffic congestion both locally and regionally.

Residents have no innate right to park free at curbs; we can't leave our private goods (beds, etc.) on the street, so why can people leave their cars? Public space is for public use, not for the individual, private benefit of a few drivers.

In the US, curb parking is free because drivers resist paying for it, and they vote. The situation is somewhat different in Dhaka; a combination of ignorance about the problems of parking, and eagerness to serve the elite, lead to policies that in the end

will only increase traffic congestion, thus harming drivers as well as everyone else. Free parking can be compared to free desserts. Imagine if all restaurants were required to provide a free dessert with every meal. Restaurant owners would simply raise the price of the meal to include the dessert, whether or not the diner chose to eat it. Those who do eat the desserts would become overweight and more likely to suffer from diabetes, and those who didn't would find their meals becoming more expensive since they are paying for the "free" desserts of others. Free parking, like free desserts, are a bad deal for everyone, however appealing they may look on the surface.

Afrin
One-mail

Misuse of mobile phone

Nowadays the mobile phone is inextricably linked to our daily life. However, because of

some unscrupulous people it becomes a headache for our general people. They are creating unnecessary trouble for us (especially women) by making many unsolicited calls and sending obscene messages.

Mobile phone companies should take some urgent steps to address the issue.

Oruj Ahmed
Business administration
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology,
Sylhet

Mosque incidents

How could people be so uncouth as to defile the sanctity of a mosque? This is not a political set-up!

It was a very shabby way to protest a decision taken by the administration. It could have been done in a decent and dignified manner outside the mosque premises.
A Muslim
Dhaka

Plagiarism

I love The Daily Star very much and consider it part of my life. So far about twenty-five letters of mine have been published in The Daily Star. However, we all know, especially those who write, that plagiarism should be avoided under all circumstances.

I can refer to a letter being published recently which had striking similarity with one of my own write-ups! This was of course sent by a reader. I appeal to all to refrain from such activities.
Hasnat, AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

Be decent to girls

Girls in our society are facing various kinds of harassments in different ways. 'Teasing' is one of them, which even results in ending a girl's life.

To stop all such activities, we need moral education, and this should be added to the textbooks as well.

Above all, people have to come forward and swear that they will not commit such crimes against women, who are mothers or sisters or wives of some among us.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmanla Fadi
Madrasa
Chittagong

Talk show experts

After the change over of one-eleven there emerged many shushil shamaj members who were not much known to the public before. They suddenly surfaced and started imparting knowledge to the public including the members of caretaker government as invited participants of talk shows from all quarters like retired bureaucrats, army generals, lawyers, teachers, politicians and leaders of some business organisations, associations etc. We remember the suggestions of forming a national government, constitutional hazards created by taking over of power by the CTG and its legality and of course, their remedial suggestions.

These were the people who advised our only Nobel laureate Dr. Yunus to float a political party. We the common people took them as masters of all knowledge and were listening to them with our ears wide open. After the conclusion of national election on 29 Dec. all their predictions have been proved to be meaningless.

I believe the general masses are more intelligent than the experts who come from different backgrounds, the peoples' collective reading of crux is more accurate than those experts'.

The verdict of 29 Dec. amply reflected what the general public wanted. In future all governments must take lessons and must read the leaps of the public.

I therefore think the new government's primary tasks should be elimination of extortionists at all levels, bringing down the price level of essentials as quickly as possible, helping our farmers with chemical manures, seeds, diesel and electricity at reasonable prices, start running the wheels of business as quickly as possible, facilitating transportation and communication etc.

These actions will give the new government a fine start.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Let's rectify our history

I am pleased to witness the landslide win by the Awami League over the shamelessly corrupt BNP and their allies. This victory of the masses is a huge defeat for the anti-liberation forces. After the win by Obama here in the US, this is the icing on the cake for me. I can feel the wind of change here in the US and in Bangladesh! For the moment I am elated even though it is a long road ahead!

Perhaps we can urge Sheikh Hasina, Mr. H.T. Imam and other leaders to ensure that justice is served in the murder of the Bangabandhu and his family in Dhanmondi and the four national leaders inside Dhaka jail through the conspiracy by Mushtaq in 1975. We need to remind Bangladesh about the sacrifice the four leaders made by not giving in to the conspirators and the military dictators in the background. How many leaders would have chosen death over bribes if they were faced with a similar situation? The more I think about the gutsy and defiant stands of the slain leaders during the troubled times in 1975, the more I respect them. Bangladesh has been deprived of the truth for 37 long years. Numerous mistakes have been made in the past in this respect. The people of Bangladesh have said no to the anti-liberation forces once again. Let's not allow anyone ever to distort the truth of the liberation war and its aftermath.

We had a very rocky start since 1971 as a country. The verdict in the Jail killing fell short. The verdict on the murder of Bangabandhu and others on 15 August 1975 is incomplete. No one has been officially censured in

Bangladesh for providing employment to the murderers of the slain leaders at Bangladesh missions all over the world.

Sonar Bangla, Bangabandhu, the four national leaders and freedom fighters are intertwined. In my opinion, we cannot build a Sonar Bangla with distorted history and grave injustices perpetrated to the architects of Bangladesh.

Therefore, establishing the truth and justice are the need of the hour.
Tariq Matin
Potomac, Maryland
USA

Scarcity of water

We, the inhabitants of Chittagong city, are suffering due to acute shortage of pure drinking water.

The water which is supplied by the WASA is highly polluted with toxic elements.

Moreover, according to the doctors, this salty water can damage the kidney.

Some people might think that the so-called mineral water can be a solution to this problem. But this is perhaps not true.

It is the duty of the WASA to provide uncontaminated drinking water. But so far its performance has been very poor.

Aiman Bin Shaofiqul Hamid
Dept. of English
International Islamic
University, Chittagong

Strategic resource

war

Strategic resource war is an age-old affair that we often see between different nations, the last being the invasion of Iraq by the USA. History also reveals large scale European colonialism which was extended to all the continents and had its share through the East India Company in this subcontinent. This was nothing but plundering of the resources of other countries.

At this point, I would like to refer the news article "Myanmar signs gas deal with S Korea, India, China" which was published in The Daily Star on 30 December 2008. The report reveals that Myanmar has signed a gas deal with S Korea, India and China to export natural gas from Block A-1 and A-3 at the

Rakhine coastal region, near the border of Bangladesh.

I presume that there will be questions in near future regarding the maritime border of Bangladesh which were also put on spotlight before by India and Myanmar.

Therefore it is high time for the newly elected government to go for a tripartite discussion with India and Myanmar, so that the countries concerned stay within their own picture-frame. The recent appearance of ships from Myanmar and India in the territorial waters of Bangladesh has also instilled a deep fear in the minds of the people of Bangladesh. These issues should be handled carefully.

I would urge the government to create a team of experts to settle all sorts of maritime and territorial issues so that our natural resources are not exploited by the neighbours and they can avoid all sorts of future public uproars in this regard.

Zahid Ahmed Choudhury
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Expectations from MPs

Again people have shown their maturity by electing members of parliament rightly in the context of Bangladesh politics. People have some realistic needs, which politicians are committed to fulfilling.

The government has to lower the prices of food commodities, generate electricity, create employment, control law and order, ensure availability of fertilizer, insecticides and irrigation facilities etc.

Mission
Mirpur-1, Dhaka



Mandate for change

The extraordinary support for the AL is definitely a mandate for fundamental change in the system of governance in the country.

After all, they have the two thirds majority. Can Sheikh Hasina & Awami League deliver that change? Can she liberate the country's people from the yokes of colonial bureaucratic system of governance?

After everything settles down, the country will go back to the age old colonial system of governance, despite the overwhelming participation of the nation in the election.

From the secretariat to the upazila offices, it's the non elected, non answerable bureaucrats who will be the supreme rulers of the day to day affairs of the country. The minister is not the executive head of the ministry but the secretary is. Ministers' orders cannot be issued as government orders unless approved by the secretary. The scenario at the districts and upazilas is even bleaker. There is zero representation of the public in the governance at those levels.

The notorious system that was devised by the colonial rulers to keep us under subjugation by our own people continues to this day, despite two independences.

If the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina wants to capitalize on the support of the goodness of good majority then as promised she has to go forward with the upazila election. Hope her government will hand over the total administration of the upazilas to the elected chairman & council members. She will face a lot of resistance from the bureaucracy by way of government rules & regulations but she has the backing of the vast majority as well as the two thirds majority in parliament to do and undo anything in the greater interest of the nation. All administrative powers which are exercised by the bureaucrats at those levels should be vested in the elected chairman & council of representatives.

This will empower the upazila people to be their own rulers. They will truly be independent. The Bengali word swadhin carries more meaning as it means "swa plus adhin", self-rule may be.

Until & unless we establish democracy; self rule at the grass root levels, democracy will not have its foundations. Opinions of the majority, their hopes & aspirations, likings, disliking will not be expressed in the affairs of the country, nor their support will be of any strength to the elected government. The handful of elected ministers at the centre will be disconnected from the electorate by way of the bureaucracy which will be at the helm of day to day affairs of the country.

The vast majority of Bangladeshis has shown the keen judgement of right & wrong by routing out the parties with an anti-liberation past. They also opted for the less corrupt of the two parties.

Wishing all the best to the statesmanship of Sheikh Hasina.
Mizan
NY, USA

Cultivation of tobacco

The general belief that tobacco is a profitable crop is the principal reason for farmers taking to it. Once they begin, the hardship still does not convince farmers to switch to other crops, due both to lack of awareness and knowledge of cultivating other crops and inability to have loans and other services, including assistance in selling the crop. Through the aggressive activities of the tobacco companies, a farmer is "coaxed" into tobacco farming simply by watching his neighbour "graduate out of poverty" after cultivating this crop. Such a demonstration effect could be achieved for other crops as well.

One possibility would be to grow food crops in school gardens and open spaces inside mosques and other public places, which could serve as demonstration plots. The output could be distributed among school children, or even to the destitute, as part of a supplementary feeding programme, thus combining programmes to encourage vegetable cultivation with alleviation of the most extreme poverty.

When considering such an inte-



grated approach to improve livelihood as well as decrease cultivation of tobacco, a further component could be considered, of introducing eco-sanitation. Eco-sanitation, by combining agriculture and sanitation, has the dual benefit of reducing diseases caused by poor sanitation, and improving access of poor farmers to nutrient-rich, safe fertilizer (GTZ). More access to fertilizer means higher yields, and less expense on fertilizer, which itself is

produced through polluting chemical processes. Many existing institutions and organisations could be mobilised to promote such integrated programmes, thereby simultaneously addressing multiple sources of poverty and ill-health, and ensuring that investments in helping poor farmers switch out of tobacco have multiple benefits to the farmers, their families, and the community.

Abdul Kaddus Ripon
Dhanmondi, Dhaka