

## We are aghast

### Egyptian military must restore freedom and democracy

We are aghast at the scale of brutality with which a peaceful civilian demonstration was crushed on the Cairo streets by Egypt's military. We have already expressed our surprise and shock at the high-handed manner in which it flushed out protestors from their encampments Wednesday. But the sheer enormity of the outrage, as it has come to light through further reports, forces us to condemn it again and empathise with the families whose members fell victim to such savagery. The telltale ever-swelling civilian casualty figure says what happened on that day was an outright massacre.

We fail to imagine how a country's army can turn on its own population with such ferocity. We have no knowledge from recent history of any security force descending with this kind of overwhelming force on their own people.

One wonders what prompted the Egyptian interim authority to resort to such unheard-of violence against pro-Morsi supporters who have been only staging a peaceful sit-in programme demanding reinstatement of the deposed former president!

And with this scandalous act by the military, all the dream and hope that January 25, 2011's Egyptian revolution had brought with it has been shattered and turned into a nightmare.

The world should unite in the condemnation of this heinous act by the Egyptian military, create pressure on it to reinstall the elected government and do whatever is necessary to ensure Egypt's peaceful transition to democracy.

At the same time, the interim government should conduct an investigation into Wednesday's excesses and punish those responsible for it, especially court-martial the army officers found guilty.

## Alarming drug abuse

### Rev up containment measures

WHILE we are kept busy with a raft of issues and non-issues; incipiently, the curse of drug addiction has reached an alarming proportion. This conclusion is borne out through concerns voiced by international organisations like the United Nations and World Health Organisation (WHO) lately. The magnitude of drug abuse in South Asia in general has critically increased with Bangladesh figuring as one of the most vulnerable countries.

The incidence of drug abuse in our country can be gauged from a simple statistic that ten percent out-patients to hospitals come with addiction related complications involving heroin, marijuana and phensedyl. The average age of drug addicts being 22 we are talking in terms of hundreds of thousands writhing under the spell of drugs. They may turn into lost generations if we do not apply brake on the unfolding menace.

The reasons are all too known for such social aberration; only that systematic efforts are lacking in using various research results on the subject. Peer pressure, curiosity and excitement, dejection, family problems and mental stresses drive the impressionable groups into the clutch of addiction. Going by a police version in the last two-three years more teens have been arrested for using drugs than ever before.

The priority remedial strategy should include effectively curbing of easy access to drugs and opening up of guidance and counselling wings at educational institutions and ward levels. This needs to be complemented by setting up rehab centres for the chronic cases.

## Long, bloody night: Massacre in Egypt

EDITORIAL DESK: DAWN

IT was all fire and blood in Cairo on Wednesday, with the Egyptian army perpetrating one of the Middle East's most brutal massacres in recent times. The enormity of the crime has landed the armed government in a political quagmire from which it is difficult to see it extricate itself and the country. The means chosen to break up two peaceful camps were barbaric. The disparity in death toll figures -- the ridiculously low 525 given by the health ministry and over 2,000 claimed by the Muslim Brotherhood -- is of no consequence; what matters is the brutality behind the crackdown. The level of force employed by the army on unarmed protesters, who included women and children, was chilling and mind-numbing. In fact it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that the army wanted the crackdown and the lethal use of force on civilian demonstrators to be an indication of its future policy with regard to all dissent.

While the world was horror-stricken, international denunciation of the killings could have been far stronger. However, it is noteworthy that criticism poured in even from the regime's most ardent supporter -- the Obama administration. Secretary of State John Kerry called the army action "a serious blow" to the reconciliation process. Even though the generals can draw satisfaction from the fact that Washington will continue its aid to Cairo, Mr. Kerry did say that such acts of violence only led to "greater instability, economic disaster and suffering." Denunciation of Wednesday's events has also come from the European Union and the UN, though -- perhaps not surprisingly -- the Arab League and the toothless Organisation of the Islamic Conference have chosen to keep mum on the Egyptian generals' criminality.

Egypt is now in for what looks like a long, dark night of instability and violence, stemming basically from an act of treason -- the army's overthrow of an elected government. The Muslim Brotherhood supporters are not going to retreat. They have reasons to resist, and they are backed by an ideology in which they believe. The ideology itself may not be acceptable to all sections of Egyptian society, but the Brotherhood-backed Mohammed Morsi had won an election. And when the deposed president made mistakes it appeared the army was just waiting in the wings to find a pretext for overthrowing an elected government. An election in the foreseeable future looks difficult if not impossible, and no one is responsible for this tragedy more than the Egyptian generals.

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# Muslim identity and Pakistan

## STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD  
NURUL HUDA

threat of a majority domination, which led to the formation of the All-India Muslim League in 1906. This was the beginning of a search for distinctive political identity—not a quest for separate homeland—with a demand for the protection of their political rights as a minority community through the creation of separate electorate.

The granting of the above privilege of separate electorate by the colonial State in the Morley-Minto reform of 1909 elevated the Muslims to the status of an "All-India" political category, but positioned them as a "perpetual minority" in the Indian body politic. These structural imperatives of representative government henceforth began to influence the relationship between the Muslim League and the Congress.

The Khilafat movement of 1916-18 that used a pan-Islamic symbol to forge a pan-Indian Muslim unity, contributed further to the strengthening of Muslim identity in Punjab and Bengal. Frequent use of religious symbols by the overzealous Ulama, who were pressed into service, highlighted the Islamic self of the Indian Muslims. It was indeed from the Khilafat movement that a serious communal riot erupted in Malabar in 1921. This Muslim mobilisation under the banner of Khilafat generated a sense of inferiority and insecurity among the Hindus.

The Hindus, emulating their aggressive other, started counter-mobilisation. The inevitable result of such mobilisation along community lines was the outbreak of a series of riots between the Hindus and Muslims in the 1920s, affecting practically all parts of India. Mahatma Gandhi lamented in 1927 that the resolution of the problem of Hindu-Muslim relations was beyond human control, and had passed on to the hands of God.

The 1920s were a time when whoever talked about community was dubbed as anti-nationalist or communalists. This eliminated the likelihood of accommodating the community identities within a composite nationhood and destroyed all possibilities of a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League. The Muslims at this point looked for "shared sovereignty" and a political arrangement capable of accommodating cultural differences. They were not against a United India but contested Congress's claim to indivisible sovereignty.

The public pronouncements of Congress secularism came at a time when religious identity was being articulated practically at every sphere of public life by both the Muslims as well as the Hindus. The leaders of Hindu Mahasabha decided to operate as a separate pressure group within the Congress, trying constantly to marginalise the secularists and destroy any possibility of an understanding with the Muslims.

Within the Indian National Congress there was a contest between two rival concepts of nationalism, one based on the idea of composite culture, that is nation above community, and the other founded on the idea of racial domination of the Hindus, more particularly of the subordination of the Muslims. Significantly, the protagonists of the former gave way to or made compromises with those of the latter, giving ample reasons to the Muslims to be

ON August 14, 1947, the State of Pakistan came into existence as a result of continuous political movement waged for the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of Indian sub-continent. Though the creation of such a State has not been able to satisfy the political, moral and material aspirations of the Muslim community, it might be of academic interest to examine if the partition of India with creation of Pakistan was inevitable.

In retrospect, it appears that the prospect of the introduction of representative government in early 20th century created the

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suspicious about the real intent of Congress politics.

In a war of symbols, non-essentials became non-negotiable demands for those wanting to mobilise communities along religious lines. Playing music in public acquired significance and the issue was used in UP, Punjab and Bengal to consolidate Hindu solidarity and the CP and Bombay to divert attention from the rising tide of anti-Brahmanism. This "music before mosque" not only sparked off a series of violent riots between 1923 and 1927, but also became an emotive issue dividing the electorate along communal lines in the election of 1926.

It is interesting to note that even in 1930s Muslim politics remained caught in provincial dynamics as their interests in Bengal and Punjab, where they were a majority, were different from those of others in the minority provinces. The All-India Muslim League was little more than a debating forum for a few articulate Muslims in the minority provinces and had made no impact on the majority provinces. Quite significantly, the resounding Congress victory in 1937 election and the arrogance that it bred, however, gradually brought all divergent Muslim groups under the banner of a revived and revitalised Muslim League under the leadership of Jinnah.

The Muslims had politically gained a lot in the 1920s and 1930s. The doctrine of separate electorate was now firmly enshrined in the Indian constitution. They had wrested power from the Congress in the majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab. Two other Muslim majority areas, Sind and North-West Frontier Province, had been elevated to full provincial status. All those came to be threatened by the Congress victory in 1937 elections. Mr. Nehru declared with supreme arrogance that there were now only two parties in the Indian political scene, the Raj and Congress.

The reality on ground reflected the Muslim sense of missing out from the patronage distribution system created by the new constitutional arrangement of 1935. The class approach in Congress policies and its emphasis on individual citizenship failed to satisfy the community-centric concerns of the Muslims. It was this collective sense of fear and dissatisfaction which was politically articulated by Jinnah. The passage of Shariat Application Act in 1937, with spirited advocacy by Jinnah in the Central Legislative Assembly, provided a symbolic ideological basis for Muslim solidarity on a national scale, transcending all divisive internal political debates. In December 1939, the Muslim League membership had risen to more than three million and Jinnah appeared as their "sole spokesman."

The Sindh branch of Muslim League passed a resolution which mentioned the need for "political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims," and asked the Muslim League to think of appropriate measures to realise it. It was the first declaration of the "two nation" theory, but it was not separation yet. The Lahore Resolution of March 1940 formally proclaimed the Muslims as a nation. It did not mention partition or Pakistan but signaled the transformation of Indian Muslims from a 'minority' to a 'nation.'

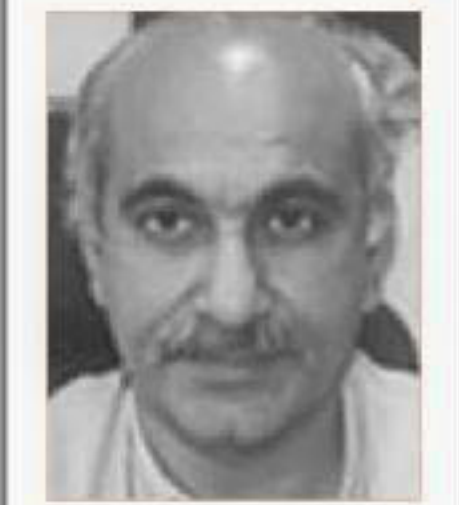
The road from the declaration of nationhood to the actual realisation of a separate sovereign State in 1947 was long and tortuous. The conceptualisation of a Muslim nation was not the brainwork of Jinnah alone or of a select group of articulate intellectuals. It was legitimised by thousands of ordinary Muslims of Sindh, UP, Bihar, Bengal, Punjab and other places.

The alienation of the Muslims was born of provocations from the militant Hindu nationalists as well as constant sneering by an intransigent secularist leadership of the Congress. Consequently, recognition of separate Muslim nationhood became a non-negotiable minimum demand and such sentiments were shared by a wider Muslim population. The Congress-led national movement cannot escape most of the responsibility for the emergence of a separate Muslim identity at a period when an anti-colonial pan-Indian national identity was in the making.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

# The evidence of humour

## BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

voter will remember 'Pakistan has two deadly weapons: AK-47 and A.K. Antony.'

If it is any consolation to Antony, jokes about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi are far harsher. As we leapfrog our way towards another general election, Congress might discover that its biggest problem is ridicule.

It does not matter now when the next general election is held. We are in the last chapter of a drama that has gone on too long. The life of this government is over; dreaming of resurrection on a deathbed is a waste of time. For most of this term, policy was lost in a swamp. Now, decisions are made to serve as slogans.

If Congress had truly believed in Telengana, it would have completed the process three years ago, used this time to absorb reaction and respond by showcasing the practical merits of its decision. An announcement now is mercenary: to milk the environment for what votes it can bring, and postpone ensuing problems. The timing is determined not by advantage to the people but by thoughts of benefit to the party.

But politics is not a parlour game, even when the parlour is as charming as one in a spacious Delhi bungalow. All that Telengana has managed to achieve so far is to split the Congress, spur rage on the Andhra street, and provide more fodder to separatist banners. The dispute over Telengana has generated a dispute over Hyderabad. The second can become as chronic as the first. What was intended as a win-win situation could become a lose-lose scenario.

Likewise, nothing stopped UPA from passing food

*Jokes are the evidence and the argument in this trial; the voter is both lawyer and judge in the court of the people.*

security legislation in the first six months of its second term, rather than the last six months, except fear that implementation would expose inadequacies of the project. Congress spin-masters still believe that this will help revive a formula that was brilliantly effective in a year when most of the present electorate was not born: 1971. Mrs. Indira Gandhi won a tremendous victory that year with a simple proposition: Woh kehte hain Indira hatao, main kehti hoon garibi hatao [They (meaning those opposed to her) say remove Indira, I say remove poverty].

A promise is only as good as the worth of its trust. In 1971, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was not enveloped by the odour of corruption, including within her own family. The poor believed that she would usher in an Indian version of socialism that would end their misery. No one laughed at Mrs. Indira Gandhi, or indeed her defence minister, except at his own peril. There are other reasons for scepticism.

Congress has been in power for three of the four decades since 1971, in sustained spells rather than the sporadic bursts of V.P. Singh, Chandrashekhar, Deve Gowda or Inder Gujral. Indira Gandhi's promise is still a dream.

Every election is another gate towards the future, not a backdoor to the past. We must solve inherited problems, of course, the most important of which is surely poverty. But this needs an economic programme that takes change forward in quantum leaps, not throwaway sops. In 2009, UPA won handsome endorsement because voters believed that if it got five more years, it would create a new India. Five years have passed. We are staring instead at a very old India, one we imagined we had shed in the folds of the past, weighed down with cynicism, its middle class ill with angst rather than alive with the vibrant optimism that was the story of the first decade of this century.

The dark side of today's political satire is the evil of corruption. There is a school within the ruling establishment selling the theory that corruption as an election issue has been deflected. This is delusion. The voter is not going to be finessed by the argument that all politicians are corrupt, and so theft of the present lot should be condoned. A jury can punish only the person in the dock, and the present government is on trial in the next electoral court.

Jokes are the evidence and the argument in this trial; the voter is both lawyer and judge in the court of the people. But there is some good news for those on trial. The maximum sentence is just five years in wilderness. The next five years will pass as quickly as the last five.

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# LETTERS

## TO THE EDITOR

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## Bangladeshi female wage earners' woes

This is about a Saudi princess named Meshael Alayban who is one of the six wives of a grandson of Saudi King Abdullah. She was charged with enslaving a Kenyan woman in California. She forced her to work in abusive conditions, 16 hours a day, for monthly salary of just \$220 and withheld her passport. The victim had signed a contract with an employment agency that promised her a salary of \$1,600 a month for a 40-hour work week.

In this context, I would like to refer to a recent report of this daily that says that around two lakh Bangladeshi women are currently working abroad, 90 percent of them in the Middle East. Many of them had poor pay, long working hours and some had even been locked up. After returning home, many of the workers complained of delays in getting wages and physical and mental torture that they had suffered there. That means the plight of most Bangladeshi female workers in the Middle East is almost similar to the Kenyan female worker's.

We urge the international human rights organisations to arrange schemes for educating the cruel employers like the above mentioned princess, extend their support to these victims and raise their voices to stop it.

Mobarak Ali  
Gopibagh, Dhaka

## Loan sharks

Many private banks are offering lucrative facilities to their clients under different schemes. They are providing their clients with various types of loans. Some of the banks also give education loan to meritorious students, especially those who wish to pursue higher studies abroad. Unfortunately, these loans, although offered without any mortgage or sponsor, have major drawbacks. The client has to pay an exorbitant interest rate. The interest rate is so high that it is not possible for the middle-class people, who really need the loan, to pay it. If these people were so capable of paying such huge interest, they would never need the loan in the first place.

Engr. Naome Syed  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

## Self-publicity with public money

Recently the government has started grabbing billboards across the country to show off its successes ahead of the next parliamentary election. The government is using public money for their election campaign. The question is, will it help the government to win the next election or will it affect the AL badly?

Samiul Rajjul  
Bangladesh University of Textiles  
Dhaka

## Punish the stone thrower

A young female engineer met tragic death as miscreants threw stones into the compartment of a running train which hit the girl in the head. Who are these miscreants and why are they doing so? Police department must unearth the story and nab the killer. Countrymen want to see these dangerous miscreants hanged. Only that will put an end to this sort of killing.

Khandaker Zia Hasan  
Special Correspondent  
The weekly Jogajog, Canada

## Comments on news report, "EC halts elections to 3 municipalities," published on August 14, 2013

### Nds

Degeneration process of credibility of the EC appears to have set in. Suspicion of the people about the EC's capability to resist government's interference in its functioning will get further intensified by this incident. Possibility of a fair and free election is getting diminished.

### Nantu

What is left of the independence of the EC is exemplified by this move of the LGRD. We now know what the EC is doing.

### SM

I guess AL could not release enough thugs and murderers from jails to allocate resources to their candidates.

### deep purple blue

Sadly, the loss of credibility of the EC has reached a point of no return just like that of the ruling coalition!

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## "Cancel Hall-Mark chairman's bail" (August 14, 2013)

### Nasirullah Mridha, USA

The ACC is doing Sonali Bank's job. In fact it was Sonali Bank's job to appeal for the cancellation of bail for Jasmine.

### Nantu

If the Hall-Mark chairman can be granted bail, then many others should qualify, including Adilur Rahman.