

# Arresting BNP figures is an outrage

## Such provocation can only aggravate matters

THE government's decision to arrest some senior leaders of the BNP and go looking for others has been not only outrageous and unwarranted but also blatantly out of step with rudimentary democratic norms. At a time when the nation is looking forward, despite the difficulties along the way, to move toward a resolution of the crisis, such a decision will not just put the clock back but create the perfect conditions as well for an escalation of the crisis.

The sweeping arrests on blanket charges conflict with rule of law and any semblance of decency and civility in politics. How senior leaders could be treated in such a ham-handed manner is beyond comprehension.

Those whose agitation has caused all this mayhem and chaos must take full moral responsibility for their action. But that cannot justify the kind of harsh measures adopted by the administration against senior leaders of the opposition. This can only push the opposition into taking harder line with the result of spurring more violence.

As it is, public support for the hartals has been low, given that they have upset business, turned education on its head and in the overall sense pushed the country further towards the brink. So where was the need to precipitate a fresh crisis?

There is yet time for both sides to pull back from the precipice. That time, we might add, is getting increasingly narrow. In turn, the chasm only gets wider and deeper, putting the future at unimaginable risk.

# Local machinery help farmers

## An impetus to farming

ACROSS Gazipur district, very few buffalos can be seen tilling the land. That is because nowadays in areas like Kaliakair, power tillers and tractors have replaced the traditional cattle-drawn plough. And it is not just ploughing, rather most of the process involved from tilling to turning the crop into finished rice is slowly being mechanised across Bangladesh. What is interesting to note here is that this technological innovation is being driven mostly by locally produced machinery coming out of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI).

BARI has produced 22 types of farming equipment ranging from ploughing, applying fertiliser to the land, crop-cutting, etc. These are being introduced to farmers in phases under a project that aims to mechanise the farming scene nationwide over phases. Some 700 mechanics and 1,000 farmers have received training under the first phase. The advantage associated with procuring BARI-produced equipment is that farmers receive subsidy up to 25 per cent on selling price. Again with the fall in general livestock population, it has become imperative to introduce equipment that will replace traditional farming animals. Mechanisation will assist in increasing production and reducing wastage – two major farming issues that have plagued policymakers for decades.

A survey carried out by BARI shows that utilising a fertiliser-application machine can save urea and crop wastage to the tune of Tk7,500 crore per annum. Besides the cost factor, were these equipments to gain widespread acceptability of the farming community, it could spark the growth of a whole range of ancillary industries that can generate further employment.

# Impossibly Iran!

## SHAHRIAR FEROZE

AS we were optimistically following the nearly three decade long mistrust over Iran's nuclear programme between the US and Iran inching toward a breakthrough, Benjamin Netanyahu's offensive statements on Friday threatened the positive ending out of the accord.

His marked statement: "Israel is committed to making sure Tehran never gets a nuclear weapon" sounded as if an imminent Israel military strike to halt the Iranian nuclear programme was round the corner.

Hypothetically asking: if Iran did stop its nuclear programme further ahead, destroyed its existing stockpiles, opened and surrendered its facilities to the international community; would Netanyahu's Israel follow suit for ensuring peace in the wearisome Middle East?

While following the dialogue reaching its 3rd and final day a few things seemed obvious to point at.

Firstly, the main conditions as per the accord for reaching an agreement had not been fairly thought-out. If analysed, the accord reflects the US's take-more-and-give-less dominant policy. Secondly, Israel's defiant and non-cooperating stance. And thirdly, if the dialogue ends in a stalemate what would happen next?

The agreement is expected to ease some sanctions on Iran if it stops enriching uranium to 20% purity—a key step on the process of building a nuclear weapon along with destroying its existing stockpiles. Reasonably speaking: it's unlikely to happen since the "core sanctions" imposed upon Iran would stay in place.

Root of the discord, as yet is the enrichment issue. It's difficult to accept that after having advancing so far with the programme Iran would suddenly limit or stop its advance with a dangerous Israel looming large with threats. On the other hand prohibiting Iran from owning a nuclear weapon will relieve the Americans through giving an upper hand to Israel in the Arab region.

But in reality if Iran obstinately intends then it would precede its programme -- if required in clandestine, and despite all sanctions. Maybe it already has a nuclear weapon made from its stockpile of 410 pounds (185 kilograms) of uranium at 20% purity (as per International Atomic Energy Agency reports) of which we are not aware.

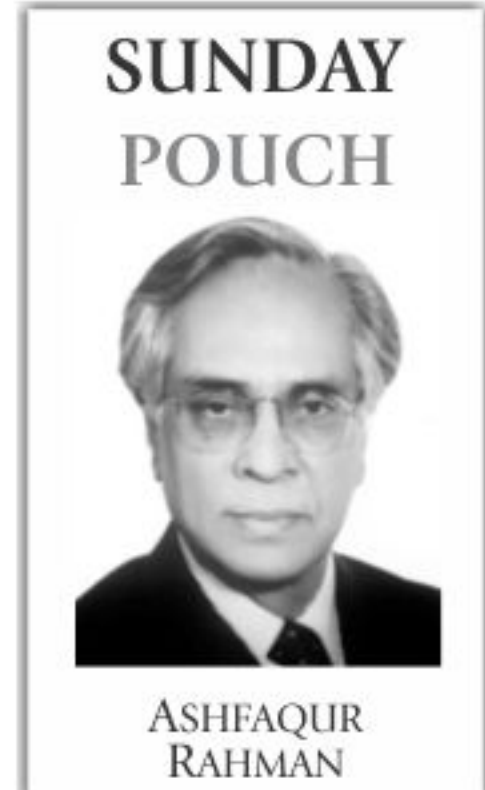
The question that puzzles us the most is exactly how much can the Iranian nuclear programme be set back since a complete halt to uranium enrichment in the country now seems impossible?

The negotiations during the time of writing had reached the most sensitive of stages.

But, whatever the Geneva outcome is -- let it be the first step on resolving the crisis without a military intervention. A war is what worries us.

# New dreams, new possibilities!

## EDITORIAL



AST month, there was a new resolve to move towards changing the geo-political map of Asia, especially this part of South Asia and East Asia. This seismic development was little noticed elsewhere in the world. It did not even get much attention in the neighbourhood. During the last visit of Indian PM Manmohan Singh to China, a momentous decision had been taken by India to move ahead with China, Bangladesh and Myanmar under the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar (BCIM) process and build an economic corridor that would start from his country, traverse through Bangladesh, cut through Myanmar and pierce into the underbelly of China in Yunnan province. In essence, this multi-billion dollar project would indeed 'link South Asia and East Asia for economic activity.'

The corridor is an idea that was developed when discussions about economic cooperation among the four countries were mooted for some time now under the BCIM dialogue process. These discussions were held since 1999 by academics and think tank representatives of these countries. It was always a non-official process, and some governments shied away when called upon to join the discussions. Therefore, when PM Manmohan agreed to raise the corridor issue in an official discussion with the Chinese leaders, the subject of the corridor itself became halal. So why did India suddenly change its stance? It was simply because trade with China was falling precariously and there is trade deficit between India and China. Therefore, India thought it better to promote trade using the idea of the economic corridor if, in future, the new trade route could generate trade in new products.

Bangladesh had always been a strong advocate of cooperation under the BCIM dialogue process. Senior government officials from Dhaka often joined the BCIM dialogues. But this renewed interest by India this year has encouraged all the other three countries. So the economic corridor has Bangladesh's firm interest.

When our Foreign Minister Dipu Moni recently went to China on an official visit she took the opportunity to talk about BCIM with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Both the leaders immediately agreed to deepen economic cooperation by promoting the construction of the BCIM economic corridor.

Now what exactly is this corridor? Everyone knows that all the four countries, i.e. Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar, are geographically connected. So once this corridor is built it will facilitate the flow of goods between two of the world's largest economies, China and India. It

will also provide greater economic resources to the growing markets of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Already, India and China have each established a study group on the economic corridor.

The corridor will cover 1.65 million square kilometers, encompassing 440 million people in China (Yunnan), Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bihar and West Bengal in India. A combination of road, rail, water and air connections will be built up over time. This connectivity would help cross-border movement of people and goods. It would give greater market access and promote multilateral trade. The corridor would be a modern 'Silk Road.' It would face minimum overland trade obstacles.

In February, 2012, officials of the four countries had quietly agreed to the initial plans to develop a 2,800 km highway leading from Yunnan (Kunming) to Kolkata (India) through Myanmar and Bangladesh. The proposed route would start from Kolkata, enter Bangladesh, travel to Sylhet and cross into north east India. It would then cut across to Myanmar and after travelling the breadth of that country enter China through Yunnan and hit its capital Kunming. In many areas this route already exists. But there are gaps in the road which need to be built anew or upgraded.

Last month, an eight member Chinese delegation visited Bangladesh and handed over a draft of the proposed framework of the economic corridor. The Chinese have already given a similar draft to India and Myanmar. It will be the subject of discussion in a meeting to be held in Beijing this December by representatives of all the four countries.

The economic corridor once built should attract extensive trade and investments. Bangladesh would benefit from its location right in the middle of the region. Since the BCIM region is considered to be one of the richest in the world in terms of natural, mineral and other resources, there would be enough scope to build manufacturing plants to use these resources. Besides, the region is home to numerous ethnic groups and some startling tourist attractions. These will all help to quickly foster services in this entire region. New jobs will be created and this backward region would be a source of great earnings for all the four countries.

It is too early to say when the economic corridor will be a reality. But given its economic prospects there is urgency in all the countries to see its completion. The big factor is where the financing to build this difficult road will come from. Since China is a country which has the experience to build such mega-projects and to develop mechanisms to pay back investment, we may indeed be in good hands. For Bangladesh, a completely new dimension to our economic growth would be opened up. The BCIM countries could be another conduit to our future prosperity.

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# | The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

# De-Americanising the world

NOAM CHOMSKY

DURING the latest episode of the Washington farce that has astonished a bemused world, a Chinese commentator wrote that if the United States cannot be a responsible member of the world system, perhaps the world should become "de-Americanised" -- and separate itself from the rogue state that is the reigning military power but is losing credibility in other domains.

The Washington debacle's immediate source was the sharp shift to the right among the political class. In the past, the U.S. has sometimes been described sardonically - but not inaccurately -- as a one-party state: the business party, with two factions called Democrats and Republicans.

That is no longer true. The U.S. is still a one-party state, the business party. But it only has one faction: moderate Republicans, now called New Democrats (as the U.S. Congressional coalition styles itself).

There is still a Republican organisation, but it long ago abandoned any pretense of being a normal parliamentary party. Conservative commentator Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute describes today's Republicans as "a radical insurgency -- ideologically extreme, scornful of facts and compromise, dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition": a serious danger to the society.

The party is in lock-step service to the very rich and the corporate sector. Since votes cannot be obtained on that platform, the party has been compelled to mobilise sectors of the society that are extremist by world standards. Crazy is the new norm among Tea Party members and a host of others beyond the mainstream.

The Republican establishment and its business sponsors had expected to use them as a battering ram in the neoliberal assault against the population -- to privatise, to deregulate and to limit government, while retaining those parts that serve wealth and power, like the military.

The Republican establishment has had some success, but now finds that it can no longer control its base, much to its dismay. The impact on American society thus becomes even more severe. A case in point: the virulent reaction against the Affordable Care Act and the near-shutdown of the government.

The Chinese commentator's observation is not entirely novel. In 1999, political analyst Samuel P. Huntington warned that for much of the world, the U.S. is "becoming the rogue superpower," seen as "the single greatest external threat to their societies."

A few months into the Bush term, Robert Jervis, president of the American Political Science Association, warned that: "In the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States." Both Huntington and Jervis warned that such a course is unwise. The consequences for the U.S. could be harmful.

In the latest issue of Foreign Affairs, the leading establishment journal, David Kaye reviews one aspect of Washington's departure from the world: rejection of multilateral treaties "as if it were sport."

He explains that some treaties are rejected outright, as when the U.S. Senate "voted against the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1999."

Others are dismissed by inaction, including "such subjects as labour, economic and cultural rights, endangered species, pollution, armed conflict, peacekeeping, nuclear weapons, the law of the sea, and discrimination against women."

Rejection of international obligations "has grown so

entrenched," Kaye writes, "that foreign governments no longer expect Washington's ratification or its full participation in the institutions treaties create. The world is moving on; laws get made elsewhere, with limited (if any) American involvement."

While not new, the practice has indeed become more entrenched in recent years, along with quiet acceptance at home of the doctrine that the U.S. has every right to act as a rogue state.

To take a typical example, a few weeks ago U.S. special operations forces snatched a suspect, Abu Anas al-Libi, from the streets of the Libyan capital Tripoli, bringing him to a naval vessel for interrogation without counsel or rights. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry informed the press that the actions are legal because they comply with American law, eliciting no particular comment.

Principles are valid only if they are universal. Reactions would be a bit different, needless to say, if Cuban special forces kidnapped the prominent terrorist Luis Posada Carriles in Miami, bringing him to Cuba for interrogation and trial in accordance with Cuban law.

Such actions are restricted to rogue states. More accurately, to the one rogue state that is powerful enough to act with impunity: in recent years, to carry out aggression at will, to terrorise large regions of the world with drone attacks, and much else.

And to defy the world in other ways, for example by persisting in its embargo against Cuba despite the long-term opposition of the entire world, apart from Israel, which voted with its protector when the United Nations again condemned the embargo (188-2) in October.

Whatever the world may think, U.S. actions are legitimate because we say so. The principle was enunciated by the eminent statesman Dean Acheson in 1962, when he instructed the American Society of International Law that no legal issue arises when the United States responds to a challenge to its "power, position, and prestige."

Cuba committed that crime when it beat back a U.S. invasion and then had the audacity to survive an assault designed to bring "the terrors of the earth" to Cuba, in the words of Kennedy adviser and historian Arthur Schlesinger.

When the U.S. gained independence, it sought to join the international community of the day. That is why the Declaration of Independence opens by expressing concern for the "decent respect to the opinions of mankind."

A crucial element was evolution from a disorderly confederacy to a unified "treaty-worthy nation," in diplomatic historian Eliga H. Gould's phrase, that observed the conventions of the European order. By achieving this status, the new nation also gained the right to act as it wished internally.

It could thus proceed to rid itself of the indigenous population and to expand slavery, an institution so "odious" that it could not be tolerated in England, as the distinguished jurist William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, ruled in 1772. Evolving English law was a factor impelling the slave-owning society to escape its reach.

Becoming a treaty-worthy nation thus conferred multiple advantages: foreign recognition, and the freedom to act at home without interference. Hegemonic power offers the opportunity to become a rogue state, freely defying international law and norms, while facing increased resistance abroad and contributing to its own decline through self-inflicted wounds.

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# LETTERS

## TO THE EDITOR

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## Why these attacks on minorities?

The burning of about 30 Hindu houses in Sathia of Pabna and terrorising the inmates to leave their home on a false and fabricated charge that a Hindu boy defamed our Prophet through internet just prove our vigorous claim of Bangladesh being a country of communal harmony false. We also had to see the destruction of Buddhist houses and temples including the priceless relics. Why this humiliation to other religious communities from their Muslim brothers when they were born and grew up with them? Where lies the virtue of humankind? The Muslims being the majority here in Bangladesh have the sacred duty to protect the minorities, but instead they commit such crimes.

A. H. Dewan  
South Kafrul, Dhaka

## 'Brutality beyond belief'



ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE

How heartbreaking! Hartal has firmly established itself as a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction' (WMD). It is time for the competent authority of the Republic, especially the judiciary, to do something. It is proved that calling hartal is tantamount to ordering killing of innocent people. Therefore, this deserves to be dealt with urgently.

Anami  
On e-mail

## Take army's help

The armed forces of Bangladesh stood by the nation during many crises. Starting from traffic control, this efficient institution has successfully implemented many landmark tasks including preparing the voter list, implementing the Hatirheel project, building flyovers etc. They also successfully conducted elections in many troubled regions of the world as a part of the UN Peacekeeping Force, and I am sure, both AL and BNP are proud of them. Since these political parties have failed to come to an agreement about holding the next general election and are leading the nation to disorder, they can take the help of armed forces to maintain the law and order in the country till the election and save the lives and properties of the citizens.

Mortuza Huq  
Brisbane, Australia

## Comments on news report, "No hope in sight yet," published on November 7, 2013

### Shahin Huq

Sheikh Hasina knows very well that a fair election under a neutral caretaker government means a defeat for her. Her refusal to accept the caretaker system implies that she wants to keep the premiership undemocratically.

### Spiderman

Thanks to the cartoonist. Only if the colour of the river water could be changed from blue to human blood!

### Nds

This is called uncompromising devotion to democracy and people's interest.

### Aasfisarwar

Does anyone know how to make the government listen without violent protest?

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## "Monir loses the battle" (November 7, 2013)

### Faisal

Shame on the two leaders of the two largest political parties!

### SM

Do our political leaders have any conscience? They are not humans anymore—even an animal has more compassion.

### MH Khan

Why did the government not send the boy abroad for treatment? For any sickness they go to Singapore and we pay their bills.

### Addf

Unfortunately, no protests were held for this teenager.

### Modon Mohon

This is what the two parties have presented the nation since 1991. They commit the same crimes repeatedly and blame each other conventionally. Yet we call them democratic parties. When do we call a spade by its right name?