

## ISIS recruitment mission thwarted

### Counter the Jihadists' warped narratives

THAT the international extremist groups would cast their net in Bangladesh is not surprising or unexpected, and arrests of two young persons intending to join the so-called IS Jihad in Syria and Iraq indicate the active presence in Bangladesh of their recruiters. We commend our security forces for their quick action.

It is significant that latest arrests including some of the leading members of JMB and HUIJI have been made after the message of Zawahiri speaking of establishing an al-Qaeda wing in South Asia was broadcast recently, and also the spurt in IS operations that have taken a wide swath of Iraqi and Syrian territory under its control.

The eyes of the recruiters have been focused on the malleable and vulnerable youths, and contrary to common perception, poverty despair has nothing to do with the psyche of the target group. And this is something that this paper, through these very columns has been highlighting in the recent past. It is worthy of note that the two young men were university students and from relatively affluent families.

In this context we should not fail to comprehend the underlying message that the arrests of the two youths puts out. And it is that there are young people in Bangladesh motivated enough to risk their lives fighting in foreign lands for their beliefs. Unfortunately, the narratives of the so-called Jihadis are finding resonance in the impressionable minds of some of our youth. And the only way to achieve a psychological insulation of the vulnerable group is to put out a counter narrative to show that it is not the path of real Islam that the so called Jihadis are following but a corrupted interpretation that defiles Islam and its true followers.

## National museum in a declining state

### Important items at conservation risk

A report in a leading Bangla daily on the national museum published Wednesday exposes in graphic details what appears to us to be a near-decadent state of the treasure-trove, the repository of our history, heritage and culture. It is under the roof of a single building with a large number of galleries that visitors get to see a whole range of invaluable manuscripts, documents, arts and artefacts, memorabilia and mementoes. Such a journey back through time helps us rediscover our past, take pride in our heritage and imbibe confidence in the future.

For the international visitors, the museum mirrors the vitality of a nation, and in that sense it is much more than a tourist showcase. Most nations, therefore, attach a great value to their national museum, and invest in them for a scrupulous conservation of the collections having regard for wear and tear.

Bearing all this in mind, it is disquieting to know that in the manuscript and document gallery, valuable possessions like old and rare manuscripts of religious books are in damp condition; world famous Dhakai Muslin and Murshidabad ivory work specimens are at a grave risk of decimation. Although the museum has an inventory of 88,233 items only 40 galleries exhibit some 4,000 pieces, which constitutes 4.5 percent of total collection. That speaks volumes about the museum's present state.

We are looking for that restorative action to lift the museum from the current morass underpinned by an increased investment and right kind of expertise that have been long overdue.

## WORLD TOURISM DAY 2014

### Tourism and community development

MOHAMMAD SHAHIDUL ISLAM

TOURISM has always been considered a blessing to the community since prehistoric times when primitive man started to move away from his usual habitat, often to great distances, in search of necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. In a word, tourism has stood beside the poor community. With the passage of eras, tourism has won over the world and the world in turn has won over tourism. Present-day tourism is very theoretical. These days it is a subject of research and higher studies. Nothing is left out of the close grip of tourism.

This year, World Tourism Day theme focuses on fostering 'Tourism and Community Development.' Communities across the world face enormous challenges as their social, economic, and environmental resources are being depleted and destroyed. Only sustainable development can pave the way to achieve recovery and enhance the quality of life for everyone in these communities by developing local assets to revitalise economies, limiting waste and pollution, improving the status of disadvantaged people, conserving natural resources, and promoting cooperation and efficiency. Tourism's role has been considered as a significant tool for sustainable development.

In developing countries like Bangladesh, the contribution of tourism in alleviating poverty is enormous. Its incorporation in policy-making in countries such as Nepal and Bhutan has resulted in greater dividends with increasing GDP. Tourism is no more new in Bangladesh and yet it remains an embryonic means to lift the country on to a solvent status.

The ability of the national economy to benefit from tourism depends on the availability of investment to develop the necessary infrastructure and on its ability to supply the needs of tourists. The book, Community Development through Tourism, authored by Sue Breeton, an associate professor at La Trobe University, Australia, is the Bible in this regard. This book examines the development of local communities through healthy integration of community planning, business planning and finally tourism planning.

Whilst poverty alleviation remains a highly ambiguous, much debated concept, Sue Breeton proclaims that community development through tourism is the only responsible long-term solution for managing poverty in the third world.

Bangladesh will need to recognise that the critical issue for tourism developers today is ensuring a net benefit tomorrow for the entire environment in which tourism takes place. Its benefits will act as a catalyst in the overall development in Bangladesh. Tourism could be the main actor for community development reiterated by the theme of world tourism day 2014. Happy World Tourism Day!

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# The looming threat

## STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

Incidents of November/December last, however, have proved, if proof was required, that there are organised elements with pronounced political views for whom violence and destruction alone justify their existence. To such elements, protests are 'jihad,' thus providing a religious overtone to recruit people, raise funds and justify acts of violence. A closer scrutiny would likely reveal a clandestine but extensive and collusive network of terror, duplicity and religious extremism that runs through the activities of organisations that are outwardly religiously benevolent and public-spirited. Appearances, however, could be deceptive and dangerous.



It needs to be noted that the extremist activities are always invariably secretive and protected and flourish under the guise of various charity organisations and trusts. A distinguishing characteristic of the so-called religiously motivated activities is that they are not driven by any domestic agenda or grievances but a broader supra-national agenda or ideology. The initial recruits for extremist cause may have been petty criminals and students from the religious schools, but as time passes a significant proportion of the new recruits are better educated with some holding professional degrees in medicine, engineering and computer science. The number of criminals joining extremist outfits, however, remains a constant feature of recruitment.

Informed sources opine that the philanthropic exterior of suspected extremist groups has, over the years,

quietly facilitated in usurping considerable space from the State. This has reportedly created significant political and social capital for the extremist ideology and may be helpful in manipulating political gains.

The power and influence of the extremists were dangerously reflected in the recent political violence. Those wishing to take a deeper look into the matter may find it interesting that in times of political crisis the leadership of extremist groups has ventured to create a parallel narrative of hope and strength for expanding their political capital. There is, therefore, cause for concern because if mainstream political process slips into deeper levels of despondency, extremists will definitely dominate the political stage. The question is, should we be concerned about the growing political and social influence of extremist groups that could transform the polity into radicalism?

While delving into the above query, we may perhaps cite the example of Pakistan where problems of nation-building persisted as the society experienced long periods of unrepresentative rule. The ruling set-up there found Islamic ideology as the way out of the perceived challenges to its legitimacy. In Pakistan, popular sources of legitimacy based on a mass mandate started to lose their relevance and, almost as a corollary, divine sources of legitimacy were articulated and cultivated by the ruling elite.

In Pakistan, the power of the Islamic idiom undercut the intellectual idiom of the society in general. Thus, debates about democracy, economy, education, culture, women's issues, human rights issues as well as the functioning of bureaucracy, judiciary and army drew heavily on the divine sources of morality, authenticity and accountability.

Sub-continental experience indicates that the more the ruling establishment provided space for politics of Islam due to its own strategic compulsions in both foreign policy and domestic contexts, the more the disparate Islamic elements sought to shape the country's ideological discourse according to their own priorities and preferences. Religious groups have sought to define the State through street agitation, lobbying, networking and vote politics.

We have to understand that if we have a relatively mature institutional base then the extremist movement would neither be represented in the mainstream politics nor would it be able to carry out terrorist activities in various localities. We would not be subjected to hate politics along sectarian lines with its attendant human cost.

The military elite of Pakistan sought to activate the divine sources of legitimacy during the Afghanistan war in partnership with the American military might and financial muscle. In the process, the extremist and the obscurantist elements got strengthened beyond all proportion. Sadly, the agenda for democracy lost its momentum in Pakistan. We in Bangladesh surely do not want to jeopardise our democratic pluralist existence by not recognising the potential and actual threats from the so-called religious extremists.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

## America's ramped up nuclear capability: Prelude to another Cold War?

## STRANGER THAN FICTION



TAJ HASHMI

capability does not lead to a nuclear conflagration, it is going to signal further nuclear proliferation, arms race and a new cold war.

Some American analysts find it unbelievable, that "a president who campaigned for 'a nuclear-free-world' and made disarmament a main goal of American defense policy," has thumbed-up a massive revitalisation for new generation of nuclear warheads and weapon carriers. The price tag is estimated to be a trillion dollars over the next 30 years. The justifications for the "modernisation of nuclear capabilities" -- apparently not synonymous with increasing nuclear warheads -- are baffling.

While Russia is alleged to be on the march; China is assumed to be pressing further its territorial claims to the detriment of its neighbours; and Pakistan is "expanding" its arsenal. Gary Samore, Obama's nuclear adviser in his first term, has singled out Putin's "invasion of Ukraine" as "the most fundamental game changer" in regard to America's ramping up its nuclear capability. One assumes, thanks to the growing influence of the hawks in Washington, soon Iran's purported nuclear capability will further rationalise America's nuclear modernisation programme.

As a *New York Times* editorial (Sept 24, 2014) has pointed out, during the past six years Obama promised to make the world eventually nuclear arms free. And that his promises have substantially de-escalated the arms race: 13 countries so far have completely eliminated their nuclear materials, and 15 have destroyed portions of their stockpiles. Nevertheless, there are about 2,000 nuclear weapons located in 14 countries, and 25 countries have the materials and technology to build their own bombs.

What is apparently baffling is Obama's raising the nuclear modernisation budget from \$70 to \$84 billion a year. Interestingly, having no qualms with spending a trillion dollars to build a dozen nuclear submarines, 100 new bombers and 400 land-based missiles, and spending billions on weapon upgrades, the Congress hardly debated the issue.

As we know, in accordance with the "Weinberger Doctrine" (he was Reagan's defence secretary), America does not want to commit the Vietnam mistakes. Now, it favours using overwhelming force for a swift and decisive victory, as it achieved in Iraq in 1991 and 2003. In 2011, America spent \$739.3 billion on defence, equivalent to more than 45% of what the rest of the world spent on defence that year. Obama's latest volte-face indicates two things: (a) either he has started believing in American hawks who love to see their country as an empire, which should be on the path to "permanent war," or (b) he is too vulnerable to the overpowering influence of the

Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) on the Congress.

We have reasons not to blame Obama for his "ambivalence" towards arms race and nuclear escalation. The Nobel Laureate in Peace is anything but the "most powerful man in the world." He cannot overpower the hawks and the MIC, who, as one analyst believes, want at least one major war every ten years in some distant part of the world. The hawks are good at generating fear among the bulk of Americans about the unknown or least known enemies, such as the ISIS and the Khorasan Group in Iraq and Syria.

In view of Obama's latest "backsliding on nuclear promises," one may argue as to why his administration and the beneficiaries of the "permanent war" should spend another trillion dollars in the next three decades on nuclear modernisation while America has slowly and steadily entered into the arena of another long war in the Middle East against the ISIS, who seem to have appeared from nowhere, and despite meager resources and manpower, captured substantial territories in Syria and Iraq. As America's latest war is being planned -- albeit with tepid support from five Arab autocracies, one of them (Saudi Arabia) also regularly beheads people in the name of Islam and Shariah like the ISIS extremists -- it should make the hawks and MIC happy. So, why should the Obama administration go for the nuclear modernisation?

**Nuclear modernisation would eventually lead to nuclear proliferation. And there is no guarantee that terrorists and terrorist-states would not have access to nuclear technology.**

We believe the nuclear option is not for containing Russia, China or Iran. It is all about the "profits of war." Another cold war or "cold peace" may lead to further arms race, even nuclear proliferation. Nevertheless, America and its Western allies would remain dominant militarily in the foreseeable future. It seems, America's latest military adventure in the Arab World gives credence to what General Wesley Clark said about the Pentagon's long-term plan to invade several countries in the region, including Iraq, Syria and Iran, without any specific reasons but -- as one would guess -- for the benefit of the MIC alone.

Similarly, one may argue that investing a trillion dollars on nuclear modernisation would further benefit those who benefit from conventional wars as well. Conversely, one is not sure if the nuclear modernisation in the long run might be more profitable (for the MIC) than waging unpopular wars against Syria and Iran! However, America's ramping up the nuclear capability is likely to end the so-called unipolarity; and might usher in another cold war and "cold peace," hurting food supply, human rights, democracy and development across the world, especially in the Third World. Last but not least, nuclear modernisation would eventually lead to nuclear proliferation. And there is no guarantee that terrorists and terrorist-states would not have access to nuclear technology.

The writer teaches security studies at Austin Peay State University at Clarksville, Tennessee. Sage has recently published his book *Global Jihad and America: The Hundred-Year Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### BRU without basic facilities

I am a student of Begum Rokeya University. It was our long cherished dream to have a public university in Rangpur. After the university was established, we expected that it would contribute immensely towards improving the quality of education in this region. But sorry to say, even after six years of its establishment, this university is far from meeting that expectation. Shortage of teachers, inefficiency of management, lack of infrastructure, and most importantly, recruitment of poor quality teachers have proved to be the main obstacles to quality education. The university also lacks facilities like residential halls, medicare, teacher-students' centre, students' clubs, transportation, playground, laboratory, conference room, cafeteria and so on. To protect the interests of the students, the imperative is to devise a comprehensive plan and implement it. The UGC and the government should supervise the work.

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### Govt. must be firm against child labour

Life can be harsh and cruel for a child when the world abuses him without the slightest of remorse. Child labour is one such abuse. Although the government has pledged to eliminate child labour by 2015, in reality it is far from being achieved. Bangladesh passed a Labour Law setting the minimum legal age for employment at 14 in 2006. But the authorities concerned seem to have no headache to apply the law. Since the most obvious reason of child labour is poverty, which compels the parents to send their children to jobs than to schools, it is almost impossible to reduce child labour without eradicating poverty.



PHOTO: AZIZUR RAHIM PEU/DRINKNEWS

The government should impose strict restrictions on involving child labour in some hazardous jobs like ship breaking and recycling operations, prostitution, manufacturing, mining, stone welding, van pulling, electrical work and others. Awareness raising programmes should be run by the government and the media intensively. Schooling for all children must be ensured through incentives and strict monitoring, and creation of income generating opportunities for the parents should be given priority so that the poor parents don't need to rely on their children's income.

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### Democracy at gunpoint

The US talks about promoting peace and freedom and democracy, while it's occupying Afghanistan and Iraq and spreading democracy at gunpoint. Human rights activists in the Middle East say they can't even use the word "democracy" anymore -- it's become a dirty word because of what people have seen going on in Iraq.

Maybe other nations would have a little more respect for the US if they saw it promoting freedom and human rights and democracy among its allies. 'Now listen up, you Saudis and Kuwaitis. You need to cut out the beheadings and the amputations, allow women to vote, and permit more religious freedom. And you Israelis, you've been occupying Palestinian lands for more than 60 years now and your own Arab citizens are second-class slaves who live in poverty. You need to shape up and allow more human rights! And while you're at it, we think you should get rid of some or all of your hundreds of nukes, because they're a menace to peace in the region!'

There are American troops and bases in 138 countries around the world, and Americans have established bases in 37 of those countries since 9/11. It's an American ring of steel around the world!

Ted Rudow III, MA  
Palo Alto, CA, USA

### Comments on news report, "4 revoked, 1 withheld," published on September 23, 2014

#### Sayed Rahman

Such fraudulence by these high profile people is pathetic. It has undoubtedly tarnished the image of our country.

#### Genuine Musafeer

Such dishonest and unfair acts of some of the highest government officials are undesirable.

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### "New features to Indio-Bangla ties" (September 22, 2014)

#### Nirob darshok

Indian government is simply violating international law on shared river. Our government needs to be more intelligent to handle this issue.