

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 8, 2015

Combating extremism

Harness resources, coordinate efforts

A recently organised seminar by this paper titled "Extremism and Challenges for Bangladesh" brought together security analysts, researchers and leading editors to discuss ways and means to tackle the threat extremism poses to the country.

What is evident from the recent spate of killings of, first, a number of bloggers, and now, two foreigners, and the statements made by law enforcers thereafter is that there needs to be greater coordination among the police forces and intelligence agencies.

Although we are still unsure about who was behind these attacks, it is imperative that we neither overlap nor underplay the gravity of the situation. That militancy exists in the country cannot be denied; what is not established is whether the recent attacks are part of a greater campaign by an organised extremist outfit.

Many experts believe that tackling extremist groups requires a specialised approach and cannot be handled by the police alone. It requires greater cooperation among all law enforcement agencies and the intelligence apparatus of the state. Enforcers need better equipment, specialised training in counter-terrorism and the creation of a branch that will be dedicated to tackling the threat posed by terrorism and terrorists. An apex body, whose primary focus will be to gather and analyse information pertaining to extremists, their activities and passing those on to other relevant branches of security forces for action, may be set up. There must be dissemination of information, and non-state actors like the media have to be made partners for informing and educating the public against radical elements.

Woman subjected to public beating

Is this the law of the jungle?

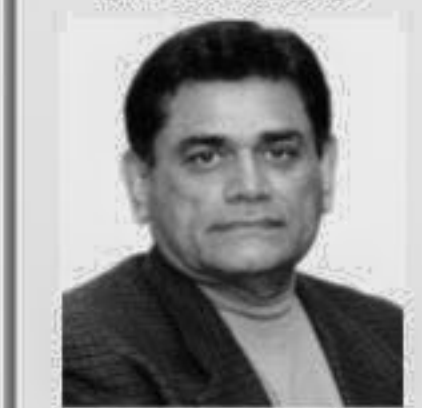
WE are absolutely repulsed by the incident in Kaliakor upazila in Gazipur, where a 45-year old woman was beaten publicly by a village elder for "disobeying" him. Jalal Uddin, the village elder, had sent message to her to attend an arbitration meeting to resolve a long standing dispute between her and her younger brother, but she had refused to come, urging him to come to meet her instead. Infuriated that a woman would dare refuse him, he dragged her out her of house and beat her with a stick in front of her neighbours till she lost consciousness. She is undergoing treatment at the hospital.

It is completely unacceptable that such an atrocious instance of violence against women should take place at day and age when we, as a nation, profess to prioritise women's equality and empowerment. Not only did the man think it was his right to beat up a woman mercilessly simply because she disobeyed him, it seems as if the whole village thought so too, or at any rate, they were least perturbed by it. They just stood by and watched; two other villagers even participated in the attack. This just goes to show the alarming extent to which violence against women is still tolerated, even endorsed, in many parts of the country.

What is equally shocking is the fact that despite a case filed by the victim's son and ample photographic evidence of the beating, the police are yet to arrest the perpetrators. Exemplary punishment should be meted out to demonstrate our zero tolerance policy towards violence against women.

IS or not, how does it matter?

STRATEGICALLY
SPEAKING



Brig Gen
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
ndc, psc (Retd)

combated the physical manifestation of extremism and terrorism in the country.

This country in the last three decades has been the target of many extremists groups that wanted to sponsor and create sympathisers for their cause and indeed to set up a base for their ranks here. The extremist groups that have germinated here have stemmed from causes quite germane to this country but not without influence generated by developments in other parts of the globe.

That we have successfully prevented the widespread expansion of the phenomenon physically is demonstrated by the preemptive actions carried out successfully by the security forces in the last six or seven years which have prevented a repetition of the incidents of August 2004 and 2005. However, we had warned in this very column several years ago that the fact that there have been no major terror attacks in the country since 2005 is no reason to be euphoric that the extremists have been quashed. Admittedly, they have been in the process of reorganisation and that they retain a degree of operational and intelligence capability as the ambush of the police vehicle carrying JMB operatives in February last year demonstrates.

On the other hand, we may have not been as successful in preventing their ideological inroads into the country. Arrests of potential Jihadists in the last

one year indicate that the narratives of the extremists are perhaps striking a sympathetic chord amongst some of the youths in this country.

Extremism has come into focus again, this time hoggied by the issue of whether the dastardly killing of two foreigners have anything to do with the direct association of the extremist group, Islamic State. We are informed that the government had forewarned that foreigners may be targeted in this country -- the

While it is essential to eliminate IS link without dismissing outright the possibility of their existence in this country, it is also essential to identify and nab the perpetrators, keeping our mind open to all the possible motives for the killings.

reason, we presume, why the Australian cricket tour was called off. Whether the Australians shared the intelligence with Bangladesh we don't know, the Americans surely did. And in spite of the actions the government had taken, two unfortunate citizens of two countries very friendly to Bangladesh, nonetheless, fell to the bullets of the killers whose motives, other than to precipitate a situation in the country, remain to this day, unclear.

A tenuous claim purportedly by IS has confounded the situation. And the killings and the claim of association has changed the strain of the government's position on the issue of IS and religious extremism in general. Whereas not in the very distant past we had been made to believe that the country was pervaded by

religious extremists, we are now told such a state no longer exists now. I say this to highlight, once again, the consequences of not looking at a thing in the correct perspective. And this was amply highlighted in the roundtable that this newspaper organised on 6 Oct, on the issue of extremism, the details of which appears in the opposite page.

It is important to understand the consequences of downplaying and overplaying the issue of extremism and terrorism. The consequences of such an attitude were brought out long ago and I cannot resist quoting what this very column carried as a part of an article on February 11, 2010 in this regard. The relevant portion of the article said, "The issue of terrorism has been addressed differently at different times in our country, varying from a position of complete denial of the existence of terrorist or underplaying the threat, as was done during the erstwhile 4-party alliance regime, to overplaying the issue in a manner which gave the impression to a less informed person that the country was saturated with terrorists, as was done during the initial period of the current government's rule. Neither is close to reality. And none of the extreme positions help because, apart from the diluting the issue, it prevents the expression of appropriate methodologies to fight terrorism, particularly those that are motivated by religious ideologies."

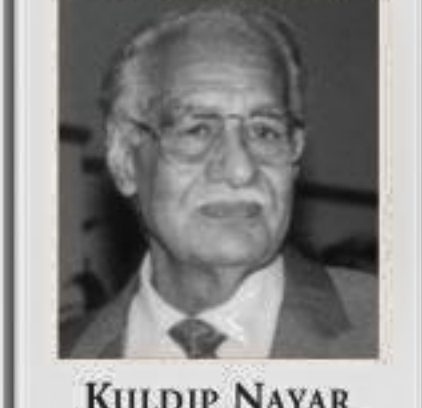
There seems to be a panic denial overdrive. And IS has predominated all our thinking and utterances. While it is essential to eliminate IS link without dismissing outright the possibility of their existence in this country, it is also essential to identify and nab the perpetrators keeping our mind open to all the possible motives for the killings.

No investigation will yield results if conducted with a closed mind. Accepting the presence of extremist groups or their sympathiser does not discredit a country. On the other hand not recognising their existence may prove harmful to the state, as we have seen to our discomfort.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

Unravelling a forgotten chapter

BETWEEN
THE LINES



KULDEEP NAYYAR

WEST Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has done well to declassify the files on Subhas Chandra Bose. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should have followed suit and make available to the public the documents and papers which the Centre possesses on Bose. While declassifying 64 files comprising 12,744 pages, the chief minister informed the media that documents proved the Bose family was spied upon. "It's proven... I will only say it is unfortunate," Banerjee said. The first disclosures in April by a media house revealed a 20-year surveillance on the Bose family, between 1948 and 1968. These were accessed from only two declassified special branch files of around 50 pages. The papers reveal how dozens of spies of the Intelligence Branch, as the state IB was then called, mounted surveillance on Netaji's older brother Sarat Chandra and his sons Ameya Nath Bose and Sisir Kumar Bose.

The IB sleuths intercepted letters at a post office near their residence and tailed the family members around the country, drafting secret reports that were sent to IB headquarters in New Delhi. These early revelations from the huge mass of documents have rightly incensed the Bose family.

"This kind of surveillance is usually done on anti-national elements and not freedom fighters like Sarat Bose," Netaji's grand-nephew Chandra Kumar Bose said. The Bose family has reiterated their demand for a probe by the Centre into the snooping.

A Special Branch letter, from the trove of documents declassified on Friday, reveals the government order which first authorised interception of the Bose family letters from their residences on 38/2, Elgin Road and 1, Woodburn Park, Calcutta (Government Order No. 1735, dated 20/9/48). The special branch cites this letter to ask its headquarters for a one-year extension in the interception period because it had been carried on 'with good results'.

This is a sad reflection on Jawaharlal Nehru. Understandably, the Congress party is quiet. Yet, the party should have privately assured the Bose family that it would have no objection if there were an inquiry to apportion responsibility. Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose

were the two leading lights of national struggle against the British rulers. Both were close lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi, who was guiding the movement. The difference between the two was that Nehru, distinctly against weapons, had come to have full faith in non-violence as the method against the mighty British masters to win freedom.

Even when he differed with Gandhiji, who found no difference between Germany's Hitler and Great Britain's Winston Churchill, Nehru's sympathy lay with the Allies fighting against the Axis to protect and preserve democracy. For some reasons, Gandhiji had come to believe that Germany would win the war. He took many years to change his viewpoint. But this did affect the thinking of the Congress

With the disclosures of files in Kolkata, a forgotten chapter of India's freedom movement has been restored. Bose, who constructed Indian National Army (INA), with the support of Indians living in South East Asia, has got the spotlight.

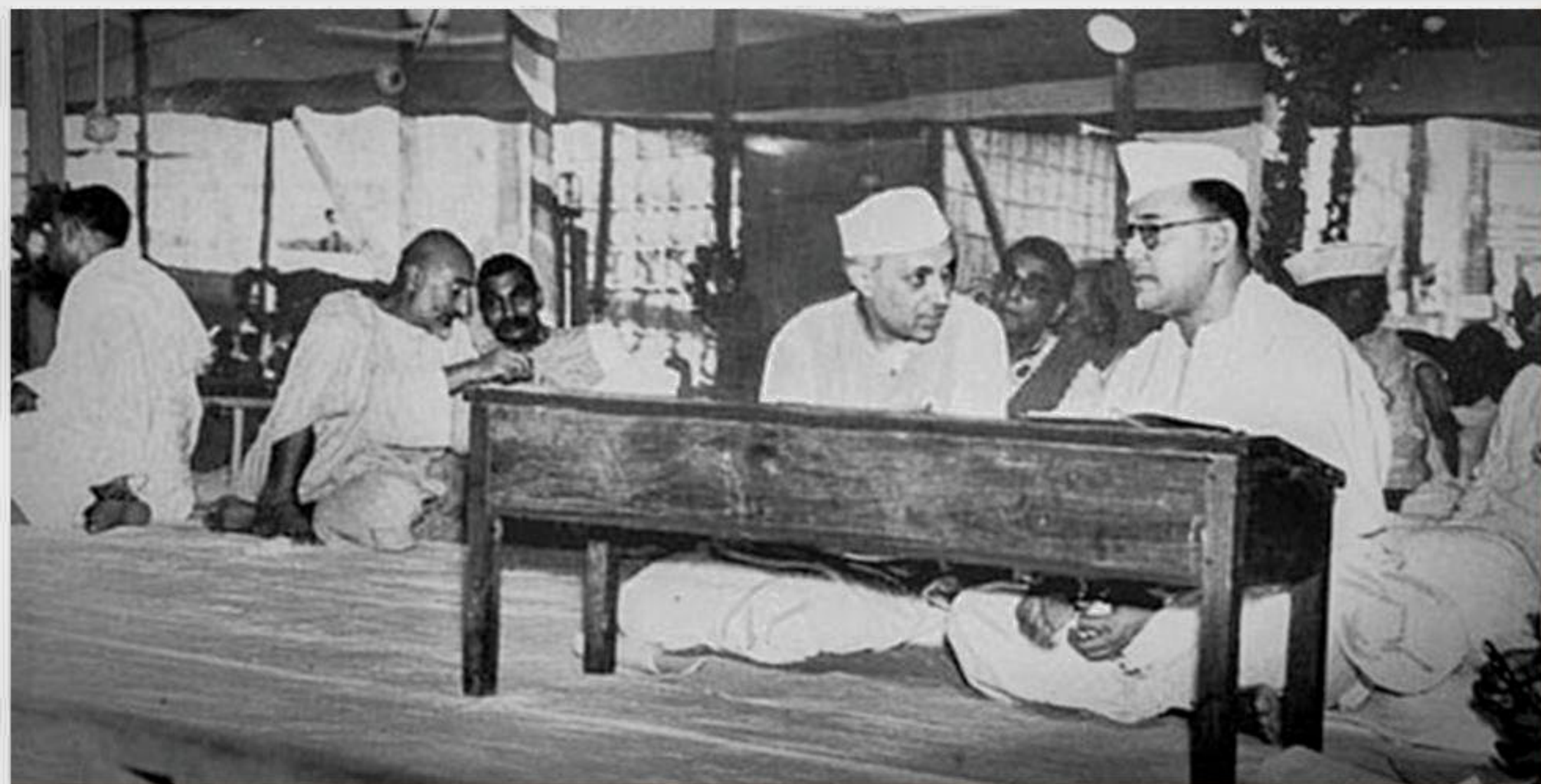
There is no doubt that he guided Indians living in South East Asia to establish the INA. Whether the Japanese would have allowed India to live as an independent nation after liberation is difficult to imagine. The fascists had their own agenda and had no place for democratic thinking. But there is no doubting Bose's determination. He would have fought against the Japanese if they had tried to make India their colony.

New Delhi, the centre of the British

Bose. The Narendra Modi government should have no compunction in doing so, whatever the fallout.

One argument advanced for keeping the files secret is that the disclosures may have an adverse effect on relations with foreign countries. How that could be, is not yet explained. The Soviet Union, where Bose took shelter, has disintegrated. Moscow is now a far more liberal place than it was back then. The archives should have some papers to throw light on that period as well.

For some reasons, the Modi government is reluctant to let the nation know the entire story. Whatever his compulsions, PM Modi would ill-serve the democratic norms which demand that the people have the right to know. Surely, he



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

party leading the national movement.

Nehru often expressed his sympathy with the Allies in the sittings of the Congress Working Committee, the party's apex body. However, he followed Gandhiji who, Nehru believed, would release the country from the British bondage. Bose was clear in his view that violence should be used if necessary. When he escaped from jail in Kolkata, and travelled all the way to Germany through Afghanistan, he thought that there was no harm to get assistance from a dictator to liberate India. (I have visited the two-storey house where Bose spent the night).

rule, has the key files. I doubt that when they are made public, the question that would still nag the nation is whether everything had been disclosed or whether some files that showed Nehru in a bad light had been destroyed. One thing which has been proved without any doubt is that the Nehru government was keeping surveillance on the Bose family even after his death in an air crash in 1945.

In fact, the air crash story has come under suspicion after the files were made public. It has become all the more necessary for the central government to throw open all the files and papers relating to

doesn't want to be considered a person who acted as a censor and kept back from people what they had the right to know.

Mamata's remark that what Nehru did was unfortunate will be echoed and may damage his image. But what he did was so un-Nehru like that he deserves to be criticised. Nehru's name is associated with free information, which is essential for a free response in a democratic setup. In view of the disclosures, posterity is going to pass on a harsh judgment against India's icon and first prime minister.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

COMMENTS

"A trigger happy MP"

(October 5, 2015)

Razib Ahmed

Nowadays in Bangladesh, it seems that the lawmakers have the right to break the law.

Kamrul Islam

Is he a lawmaker or a criminal? I wonder how these types of people become MP.

"Buses ripping off city commuters"

(October 5, 2015)

Salim Uddin

There is no fare chart in the buses. Why?

Mustaqeem Asad

I think it is time for another big peaceful protest.

"People suffer for traffic restrictions"

(October 4, 2015)

Mahabub Hasan Dipu

These receptions create daylong traffic jam.

Md Farhan Yakoob Hara

VIPs should not use the roads. They may travel by helicopters within short distances.

Taj Muhammad

Do they care about the ordinary people?

Promoting income tax culture

The Income Tax Fair is gaining popularity every year among the taxpayers who can now easily file their income tax returns in the fair in a congenial atmosphere. Our

heartfelt thanks to the authority concerned for organising such events. We request them to maintain a similar, friendly atmosphere at the tax offices throughout the year. It would greatly encourage people to pay their due taxes.

Jawad-Ul Islam
Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Preventing militancy

You asked a very pertinent question in your editorial "Combating militancy" published on September 19, 2015. You wrote "...we must also delve seriously into why the extremists' narratives resonate in the psyche of a segment of our youth..."

I would like to mention only one incident. Operation Protective Edge, a military operation, was launched by Israel on July 8, 2014 in the Hamas ruled Gaza strip. Seven weeks of Israeli bombardment resulted in the death of over 2100 people, most of whom are Gazans. Israel was neither questioned in the International Court of Justice nor was a sanction

slammed on Israel. The entire Muslim world watched in frustration women and children being killed. In this age of satellite channels and powerful media, the quick drawn conclusion is that the support and nourishment given by western powers are responsible for such kinds of atrocities committed by Israel. Youths of the world, especially Muslim youths, want a just world. If USA, UK, France keep supporting this sort of extremism, it becomes easy for other religious bigots/extremists to radicalise the youths to find a solution by violent means.

Bazur Rahman
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