

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 27, 2016

'71 Genocide

UN should recognise it as such

If there is anything that keeps the wounds of 1971 festering in our hearts it is the lack of recognition as yet by the UN that the killings by the Pakistanis of three million Bangalis can only fall within the category of genocide. We endorse the call by the speakers at the international conference organised by the Center for Genocide Studies that rigorous campaign be launched to get UN recognition in this matter.

The UN defines genocide as crime "committed with the intention to destroy in whole or part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." And in the numerous reports quoting the Pakistani generals, their motive behind their brutal actions initiated against us on the night of 25 March 1971 with "Operation Searchlight," was exactly what the UN Resolution of 1948 describes.

The killings have been reflected in the international media through various reports and commentaries in 1971, and since then there are a large tome of narratives acknowledging and describing the killings as genocide.

We fail to understand why the UN has not recognised the 1971 carnage in Bangladesh as genocide when, for example, the Rwandan killings of the Tutsis by the Hutus have been recognised as such. The Guinness Book of Records lists the Bangladesh genocide as one of the top 5 genocides in the 20th century.

Procedural issues must not be allowed to stand in the UN's way of accepting the realities and giving them due recognition. This should be done not only to assuage the pains of the 160 million people of this country but to also acknowledge a dark period in history and to strengthen humanity's resolve to prevent such occurrences in future.

Good news for the visually impaired teachers

Technology provides ease of teaching

It is estimated that there are more than 100 visually impaired teachers working in schools in the country's education system. A government initiative is bringing together visually impaired teachers and schools to use multimedia and computing skills that will enable them to make PowerPoint presentations in classrooms. This is part of a bigger push to bring digital content and ease of learning to some 20,500 secondary and 5,400 government primary schools that will help usher in a new teaching method to the more than 4 million students across the country. The introduction of modern technology is bringing tools like touch screens and new software that aid visually impaired teachers to make lessons fun for students.

The introduction of "screen readers", essentially a software programme that allows blind or visually impaired readers to read text that is displayed on the computer screen, eliminates the problems a physically challenged user faces with traditional keyboards. The user can thus bypass the problems associated with sight and perform functions that a non-impaired person is able to. These teachers can now become fully functional not only in giving lessons, but also making them much more interesting by putting together lessons that combine text with animation.

The programme is part of a larger push to break the barrier down for those people who have till now been lagging behind due to visual impairment. We congratulate the authorities for bringing modern technology and teaching methods that are bound to be more inclusive in nature for students and teachers alike.

DR. MD. ABDUL ALIM

LECTION is an irreducible feature of democratic governance. Its main goal is peaceful resolution of societal differences, while building citizen trust in the capacity of collective decisions and institutions to govern. But, violence undercuts the entire investment. When poisoned by violence, the voting process is fatally flawed and the outcome is suspect; trust, therefore, is diminished or lost. Electoral violence is one of the greatest obstacles to democratic consolidation. It not only affects the credibility of the electoral system, but also destroys the democratic system and the rule of law.

The risk of violence is present in nearly every election around the world, even in established democracies. According to the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), violence was observed in the recent elections in Germany and Spain.

On the voting day of the first phase of the UP elections held on March 22, violence left 11 people dead and around a thousand others wounded; while during the campaign period, 10 others died and more than 2,000 were wounded (Prothom Alo, March 23, 2016). Two more people wounded on Election Day succumbed to their injuries the following day. So, the first phase of the UP elections left 23 people dead and around 3,000 wounded in total.

There are five more phases of the UP elections that will be held till June 4, 2016. Now, the question is: will such violence also be witnessed in the rest of the phases? Do we need such 'electoral democracy' at such a high price? Will the perpetrators of violence not be brought under legal procedure? The answer to all these questions must be "no" and all the electoral stakeholders must take a "zero-tolerance" approach to election violence immediately.

The first and foremost reason for election violence is the holding of partisan election for the chairman position. In many upazilas, there were two to three candidates from a single political party, one of them was officially nomi-

nated by the party while two others were known as 'rebel' candidates supported by a MP and/or local party leaders. All these candidates tried to "win at any cost" and all of them had strong political support, which resulted in a significant number of incidents of violence.

Secondly, the use of illegal money can function as both a cause of and a tool for electoral violence. In the first case, money is the cause of electoral violence, either relating to the state of the voters in general or affecting the incentive structures of political actors. In the second case, some political actors may use

He also exacerbated that they don't have much control over them. So [we] don't get cooperation from them as per our expectations. That's why these incidents [violence and irregularities] have been happening." To address the security concerns, on March 2, the EC ordered the formation of two types of coordination cells at the district and upazila levels led by the DC/ADC and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), respectively. The local police are also the part of these committees. In Bangladesh, officials of the local administration have to maintain good relations with the local MPs as

electoral process, which leads to increased legitimacy of the government and, thereby, less chances of political turmoil. According to Norma Kriger (2011), "If the electoral process is not managed professionally and impartially by a trusted institution, the risks associated with organising elections increase drastically. Unfortunately, history has shown discredited election commissions are incapable of managing a competitive electoral environment, and often find themselves at the core of controversy." Evidence from many countries of the world shows that true credibility works as an antidote to electoral violence.

Achieving this objective is neither easy nor cheap, but it is the most effective tool to prevent electoral violence from materialising in the first place.

It is the responsibility of the election organisers to protect the electoral process from conflict and violence through security planning and putting security instruments in place. It is good news that the EC has decided to ask the ROs to file cases against those involved at all 65 polling stations where voting was suspended. Besides, the EC asked the police authorities to suspend the cops for failing to discharge their duties. Along with this, the EC has to assess the security planning undertaken for the first phase of elections through a holistic approach, which includes identification, deterrence, detection and mitigation. And all of this must be done immediately so that the EC can implement this in the second phase of the UP elections and beyond.

Research shows that "when conflict or violence occurs, it is not a result of an electoral process; it is the breakdown of an electoral process." Hence, all the electoral stakeholders should bear in mind that the nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in this country pose a serious threat to the national quest for a stable democratic transition, as well as the attainment of the long term goal of consolidated democracy.

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PHOTO: STAR

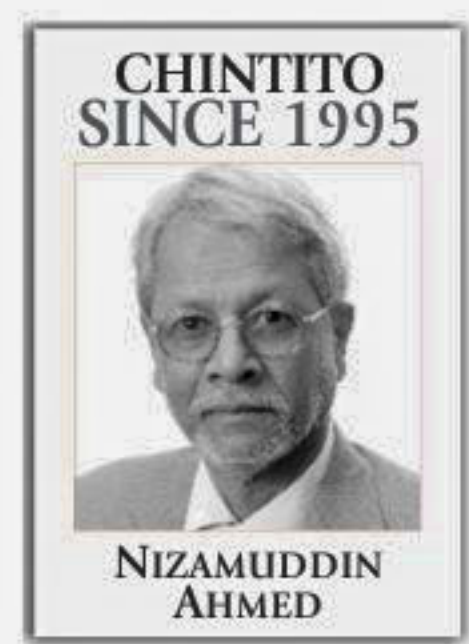
money as a tool to trigger electoral violence, as they believe this can serve their goals. Various newspaper reports state that illegal money is often used to buy nominations and votes. When political parties and candidates spend huge amounts of money, they cannot afford to lose elections, which ultimately leads to the triggering of violence.

Thirdly, violence erupted due to EC's lack of control over the election administration, especially at the local levels. The Chief Election Commissioner "blamed government officials for not cooperating with the EC in holding the elections in a fair and peaceful manner".

well as the local leaders of the party in power. Their postings are also often influenced by those leaders. In these circumstances, the committees led by the DC/ADC and UNO do not work properly. An independent EC must not simply delegate conflict management and mitigation responsibility to security forces and the judiciary; it must be in the driving role. It is imperative to establish EC's full authority over the entire election administration, including the security forces.

Finally, the most valuable asset to control election violence is the credibility of the Election Commission and the

No wonder I aren't the one



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

It is common knowledge that most ministers find their electoral promises untenable. This is why: they guarantee the unattainable. But I am beginning my subtle campaign with a pledge to fulfil some of the more simple undertakings.

The world has trended towards moneymaking since currency was invented and therefore, my first bet is on the shipping ministry dealing with imported cars. If I were appointed its boss, I would ensure that they came through the port without horns. Drivers of all educational levels blow the horn whenever they are behind the steering. Some do it to move rickshaws into the sky; others because they are floating in the sky with a foot on the pedal but none on the ground. To put an end to the deafening sound pollution, we have to update the LAW.

If I were to be invited to be a minister of LAW, I would train myself to shut up at crucial points. I would only speak when spoken to. I would be extremely courteous to all institutions of the state. I would be extremely careful that my loose utterances do not jeopardise the process of discerning right from wrong. My statement should not reflect the condition of my mental HEALTH.

If I were to be sworn in as the minister of HEALTH, I would immediately get admitted to a reputed medical college, private or public, because I would want to be able to understand the psyche of the professionals who I would have to administer, to feel their need (as I would be looking after their welfare), and to understand the technicalities of the services that they ought to provide. My ministry would advocate the policy that healthy life can be derived from partaking in SPORTS.

If I were to be given the charge of the ministry of SPORTS, I would be offered the post only because I ran 100 metres in my school sports and was a regular spectator of the metropolis football league matches. After the debacle on 23/3, I would personally impose on our cricketers the need to understand the difference

between heroics before scoring two winning runs from three balls and just nudging the ball to become 'tigers' after winning the match. West Indies showed last Friday that they took lessons from our EDUCATION.

If I were to be flying a flag on my car as minister of EDUCATION, I would ban drivers from stopping their vehicles two metres from the school gate and then getting down to open the door for the lady inside so that she could disembark and trudge the distance of a few steps to pick up her son, while fifty vehicles behind them go crazy in a jam created out of nothing. To add to the civil woes, the driver will wait for her to get back into the car, or at best snail drive looking for parking space, while another one hundred cars join the

If I were to be given the charge of the ministry of SPORTS, I would be offered the post only because I ran 100 metres in my school sports and was a regular spectator of the metropolis football league matches.

honking orchestra. It is no different when such owners visit a market for COMMERCE.

If I were to be sitting in the cabinet as minister of COMMERCE, I would import lots of backlights and front lights, lots of them, so that our buses could afford to buy them. I would also initiate annual awards to honour city bus drivers for discerningly grazing the others' vehicles only on the sides, and despite no break lights, almost never ever hitting each other front to back; it's different on the highways. That calls for another award, but the m/o food could launch that, because it would be in recognition of the excellent eyesight of the vegetable-consuming drivers who can see a bus coming to a halt without any imported brake

lights. I am not opting to become the food boss because we have surplus. To showcase such talent, we could expand our TOURISM.

If I were to be offered the helm of the ministry of TOURISM, I would ensure that every tourist, whether arriving at Hazrat Shahjalal or Benapole or at any other PoE, would be gifted a lungi (ladies also love to wear them) and a ripped open jackfruit in summer, and salted hog-plums in winter to taste first-hand with their fingers the finer qualities of Bangladeshi life. And they do come to savour those local delicacies, you know. In fact, we could amaze visitors with any product of our AGRICULTURE.

The success of the 'fruits with foreigners' campaign will definitely increase my chances of heading the m/o AGRICULTURE. I would then want to put a stop to the brick kilns because of their adverse effects on the environment, what with every new venture eating away more arable land. However, with new buildings being inevitable in a country surging ahead, I will have two options: encourage my industries cabinet colleague to set up plants for cement/concrete blocks or request for a change of portfolio to the environment ministry. In the latter position, I can intimidate the agro minister for damaging the ecosystem, a sustaining issue in countries FOREIGN.

As FOREIGN minister, my first task would be to make our embassies and high commissions better furnished and cleaner than the residences of our envoys (diplomatic and non-diplomatic). Being just the reverse in many cases, at present they present a rather poor first-hand impression of our country. You will have heard of many potential tourists deciding against a trip after visiting the Bangladesh mission. And not all ambassadors can afford to invite every intending tourist over for a meal at their residence.

The above narration is testimony that almost anybody can lead any ministry. Overnight a non-entity on a subject can become an expert, and more alarmingly, the deciding factor.

And you are still wondering why I have never been sworn in.

The writer is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

COMMENTS

"Mushfiqur says sorry for defeat" (March 25, 2016)

Mortuza Rento

His 'sorry' cannot make us feel good at this point.

Khadija Rehman

Losing is part of the game. Our unconditional love and support should always be with the Tigers. No apology needed. Get over it and move on.

Syed Siddiqui

Don't be so upset, Mushfiqur. You raised our expectations but we understand that a team cannot always win.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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A near win

The ICC WC T20 match between Bangladesh and India was one of the most nail-biting matches that the cricketing world has ever seen. Bangladesh played extraordinarily well and tried everything to win but ultimately luck was not on our side. Though the Tigers lost the match, they won the hearts and minds of us all.

Sayek Ahmed Sajib
University of Rajshahi



The outstanding performance of the Tigers against India in the World Cup T20 match is historic. Tigers may have lost the match by one run but they have proved to the whole world that the moral victory goes to them. I sincerely extend my best wishes to them.

Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge, AB, Canada

How to prevent warming

Though summer is yet to set in, residents of Dhaka have already started to feel the heat. Offices, shopping malls and affluent people have started using ACs. ACs and refrigerators produce a huge amount of HFC (hydrofluorocarbon) which destroys the protective ozone layer of the Earth. Also, ACs require a lot of electricity the generation of which by conventional methods will emit more CO2 in the atmosphere warming up the environment even more. Planting trees can counterbalance the effects of warming. But

who is going to do it? I think the responsibility should be divided proportionally among the responsible parties. Those who use ACs should take the lead.

Also other energy saving methods like renewable energy, using energy saving bulbs etc. should be introduced to combat the problem. Otherwise, the city will become unliveable for all.

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