

MAILBOX

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Memories of Blood and Terror

On March 24, 2017, *Star Weekend* published an article titled Memories of Blood and Terror that sent shivers down my spine. As I was reading Arun Kumar Dey's narrative on what happened on the night of March 25th, to his family, his mother, his father, I did not know how to react. I could not imagine what I would do if I was in his position, and how I would talk about it after so many years. Like the writer, I would like to honour all those who have lost their lives for the liberation of this land, and also those who have had to witness and remember such haunting scenes.

Adrita Aporna
Banani, Dhaka



Sukumar's Myth and Magic

The nonsense poetry is part and parcel of Bengali literature, especially set aside for children. It makes the reader enthusiastic about literature. The significance of this poetry has been highlighted in the article "Sukumar's Myth and Magic" published by *Star Weekend* on March 24, 2017. The nonsense poetry catches the attention of both mature and growing children of different ages. It represents the abstract faces of the society we belong to. Nothing is what we see, feel, and experience in our authentic life. It can be said that the nonsense poetry has its own profound meaning under its exterior. The reader will have to delve into the poetry to really grasp on.

Joshinta Areng
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PHOTO: MOSFIQUR RAHMAN JOHAN

"You can conquer almost any fear if you will only make up your mind to do so. For remember, fear doesn't exist anywhere except in the mind." – Dale Carnegie, writer

SNAPSHOT



PHOTO COURTESY: ICRC

Over the Boundaries

As I was reading the article with the titled 'Over the Boundaries', I was awestruck by the patience and determination the physically challenged youth possess, because it requires a great deal of physical movement and energy to play cricket. As the youth, like Sumon and Rinku mentioned in the article, play cricket, it subliminally gives them an immense sense of self-assurance, dignity and self-respect. Moreover it is another dimension of cricket added to the ever glorifying sport that excites the whole nation. It is really a worthy step of the respective authorities. A great amount of kudos to them!

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The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

| EXTREMISM |

The Home Minister had reportedly asserted in early March this year that, "militancy problem remains under control". One wonders what the basis of his assertion was. Interestingly, no sooner had he uttered these words than we had three back to back terrorist incidents. Such utterances, one feels, are indicative of a lop-sided approach to the problem. From observing the counter terrorism efforts so far, one sets the impression that we are look.

In spite of our successes in physically neutralising a few members of the extremist groups, they keep resurrecting through their violent acts is only reinforces the truth that violent extremism and terrorism are hydra-headed monsters that will self-perpetuate unless the very drop of their blood that helps in the regeneration is clogged for good. For the extremists, it is the 'idea' that motivates them, which is the cause of regeneration of their cadres, and unless that 'idea' is defeated the phenomenon will persist. What are we doing to counter the 'idea', if anything at all?

The recent acts of terrorism across the globe have demonstrated our vulnerability, since no one, and no country, is beyond the extremist's reach, whether it is a wealthy western country or a famished, war torn sub-Saharan nation. It is clear, too, from the recent acts perpetrated by the terrorists in Bangladesh – and there have been three in the spate of ten days – that they are going for hard targets. And this is perhaps a change in their strategy. But what these acts in Bangladesh and the ones in London, Brussels and Nice also demonstrate is that one or two highly motivated individuals can wreak havoc, both physical and psychological, as amply demonstrated by the London attack, and that too, in a very crude way. And they don't have to be linked to any terror group, local or international, or be directed by one.

The 'lone wolf' threat is another worry for the state. These 'lone wolf' may be self-motivated-having become so through the ubiquitous medium of the internet that is being extensively used to propagate extremist ideology and which seem to find takers albeit in small numbers, even in Bangladesh. These people are motivated enough to blow themselves up. Otherwise how does one rationalise the act of the 17-year-old who was killed in his aborted attempt to attack a police box in Uttara a week ago? Reportedly, he had gone missing for the last seven months only to appear as a vector of death in our midst. Where he



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

LOOKING FOR A BLACK CAT IN A DARK ROOM

BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)



PHOTO: SHAIKH NASIR

was and with whom in the interregnum we don't know. And that is what the agencies should concentrate on. The question is, are they doing so?

It must be admitted that there is an increasing awareness among the planners and security and law enforcing agencies that terrorism and violent

extremism are not merely law and order issues but essentially a battle of ideas. And although we are not aware of any articulated counter-terror strategy of the government, the matter of violent extremism and countering it is something that should occupy the minds of the agencies.

And all these suggest that we have to get our bearings right with regard to our counter-terror efforts. So far our reaction to terror or violent extremism has been episodic rather than phenomenon-centric. And although there is a realisation that countering extremism is predicated on a battle of ideas, we are not sure if we are throwing up effective alternative narratives as riposte so as to prevent violent ideologies from taking hold of people and stop them from crossing the line towards actual violence. I dare say we are not. And this is due entirely to the absence of a coherent counter-terror strategy which may be in the making but not yet out.

Only when we draw up a workable plan that factors in all essential parameters can we effectively combat a dynamic phenomenon as violent extremism, particularly one that is motivated by religious thoughts. A well formulated strategy should also help in economising efforts in the preparatory phase by delineating the tasks and responsibilities of each of the related agencies and help determine the need for additional resources. Only then can one expect an effective coordinated response to a terrorist incident.

No terror attack can be predicted but what the state can do is to minimise its effects by quick and adequate response that can come with thorough preparation and heightened caution.

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