

Attacks on NCP leaders disgraceful

Better security measures should have been taken for NYC-bound political delegates

We strongly condemn the attacks on National Citizen Party (NCP) Member Secretary Akhter Hossen and Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara by Awami League supporters in New York City outside the JFK Airport on Monday. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was also with them at the time. According to reports, eggs were hurled at Akhter, while a torrent of sexist slurs was directed at Jara. The three were part of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's delegation to the 80th United Nations General Assembly.

While everyone has a right to protest, nobody has the right to be violent or abusive. The AL supporters' behaviour was reprehensible and demonstrates that they have learnt nothing from the July uprising and the public's rejection of the AL for its brutal crackdown on protesters. Nor is there any sign of remorse for the brutal deaths of over a thousand civilians in the uprising. It is deplorable that AL supporters are still following such a violent political culture, manifesting it even on foreign soil. What is also concerning is the image such acts create of Bangladeshis in an environment where anti-immigrant sentiments are rife, with likely adverse repercussions for our diaspora as a whole. In the past, there have been similar attempts to attack Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam as well as incidents of vandalism at the Bangladesh Consulate General.

We are also disappointed that the chief adviser's office was unable to ensure adequate security for these three political leaders despite their being part of his delegation. The CA office has expressed regret over the attack, stating it was politically motivated and alleging that Mirza Fakhrul was also assaulted. The statement further noted that precautionary measures had been taken, but due to last-minute visa complications the three were rerouted through another exit. It added that despite formal requests for VVIP access, the airport authorities denied it, exposing them to risk. According to a report, the three leaders did not have the same visa documents as the others in the delegation who had VVIP access. This should have been factored into the pre-visit planning by the CA office, with proper follow-up actions.

This disturbing incident and those that occurred before should make the CA office more diligent and foresighted when arranging foreign visits for officials or other individuals in official entourage. It is also important to ascertain whether the Bangladesh Consulate General played its due role in providing the proper protocol to the political leaders.

It is, however, reassuring to know that one of the culprits who recorded himself holding up an egg and hurling abuses at Akhter Hossen has been arrested. We hope that such unsavoury incidents are avoided in the future. Going forward, Bangladeshi consulates must be more vigilant and take pre-emptive actions (such as informing local police) to prevent belligerent groups from gathering outside airports, consulates, or other public areas. Given the hostile climate created by many AL supporters living abroad, the CA office must take extra steps to ensure the security of all Bangladeshi officials and delegates visiting foreign countries.

Shocking deaths of firefighters in Tongi

The incident raises questions about the safety of firefighters

We are shocked by the deaths of two firefighters in an explosion in Tongi's Sahara Market on September 22. Reportedly, upon receiving information about a fire at a chemical warehouse in the market, a team of firefighters from Tongi Fire Station rushed there to handle the situation. However, tragedy struck when the team approached to douse the fire after being assured by one of the owners that there were no flammable or explosive materials inside. The following explosion indicated that there were, in fact, highly explosive substances inside the warehouse, although it is still not known exactly which materials were stored there. The two firefighters who died sustained 100 percent burn injuries, while another person is presently fighting for his life with 42 percent burns.

The incident has raised some fundamental questions. The warehouse owner misled the firefighters about the nature of the materials stored there; was it because hazardous chemicals were illegally kept in the warehouse? Did he not realise that such false information could endanger public safety? Also, it needs to be seen whether there are other chemical warehouses in the market operating secretly and posing a danger to the public. Shahin Alam, station officer of Tongi Fire Station, stated that had they been informed about the presence of explosive substances, their response strategy would have been different. That two lives were lost due to false information is unacceptable.

Our firefighters routinely risk their lives while on duty, yet their safety and well-being are often overlooked. The memories of the tragic explosion at the BM Container Depot in Sitakunda, Chattogram on June 4, 2022, which claimed the lives of 13 firefighters, are still fresh in our memory. Such incidents reveal serious concerns about the protection and preparedness of our firefighting teams. Reports indicate that firefighters often operate without essential personal protective equipment, such as fire suits or breathing apparatus. Furthermore, compensation for injuries or deaths remains grossly inadequate, while there is no insurance coverage for deaths or injuries either. Such a situation is deplorable.

We, therefore, urge the government to ensure that the salaries and other benefits of firefighters match the risk and gruelling work that they have to do. The government must also take strict measures to prevent the illegal operation of hazardous chemical warehouses for public safety. Regarding the Tongi incident, the government must conduct a thorough investigation to find the real reason behind the explosion and hold the individual who misled the firefighters accountable. Additionally, it must ensure adequate compensation for the families of the deceased and provide proper medical care to those injured. Above all, the government must take decisive steps to prevent such tragedies from happening again.

Palestine's recognition is not a reward to Hamas

How Western media obscures Palestinian suffering



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The recognition of Palestine as a state by some major Western powers, including the UK and France, has come so late that many would argue these nations also bear some responsibilities for the thousands of preventable deaths that have occurred in Gaza. Yet, US President Donald Trump, the most powerful man on Earth, believes the recognition of a Palestinian state by key allies is effectively rewarding Hamas for its attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which started the war. According to White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, "Frankly, he believes it's a reward to Hamas."

President Trump repeated the same diatribe against its allies that have independently announced recognition of Palestine at the United Nations General Assembly's 80th session. Shockingly, it's not just President Trump, who earlier this year shockingly proposed to convert Gaza into "the Riviera of the Middle East"; many leading media houses, particularly in Britain, also echoed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's outrage by likening the recognition as a surrender to terrorism.

Headlines in the British media, the day after the announcement by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, are anything but an unbelievably shameful dehumanisation of the Palestinian people. Picking up a few words from Hamas' reaction that the recognition by the UK, Canada and Australia were "victory for the justice of our cause," the *Daily Mail* splashed out "Hamas claims victory." *The Times* took a similar approach, though quoting families of Israeli hostages who have accused the prime minister of handing Hamas "its greatest prize." The Telegraph headline also said, "Hamas declares 'victory' after UK recognition of Palestine."

There were, however, a few



Smoke rises from an Israeli strike as displaced Palestinians, fleeing northern Gaza due to an Israeli military operation, move southward after Israeli forces ordered residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the south, in the central Gaza Strip on September 24, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

exceptions who are known for their liberal and leftwing views. The *Mirror's* front page reads "the best hope for peace," showing a photo of damaged buildings in Gaza. The *Guardian* quoted Sir Keir Starmer's claim that the decision showed "commitment to a two-state solution." But the domineering tone was of the right-wing view of anti-recognition of a Palestinian state.

It has been alleged for quite some time that the mainstream media in the West are inherently biased against Palestinians. The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM), founded by the Muslim Council of Britain and known for monitoring anti-Muslim bias in British media, pointed out that BBC presenters shut down genocide claims in over 100 documented instances while making zero mention of

180,000 video clips from seven UK broadcasters and three international broadcasters, as well as about 26,000 news articles from 28 British media websites and found a similar pattern of bias in favour of Israel. However, the BBC rejected the allegations of bias, saying, "We do not think due impartiality can be measured by counting words. We make our own independent editorial decisions, and we reject any suggestion otherwise."

This is not mere minimisation of Palestinian suffering, rather deliberate or unknowing downplay of Israeli atrocities and war crimes that have been continuing with impunity for nearly two years. Israel's Gaza campaign is perhaps the only genocide broadcast live despite absence of any journalists from outside world. The Netanyahu government has done

everything possible to keep the media out of Gaza by denying access to foreign journalists, shutting down Al Jazeera and indiscriminately killing Palestinian journalists.

According to the United Nations, more media workers have been killed by Israeli forces during their ongoing military campaign in Gaza than the journalists killed in two world wars and wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combined. In various counts, the toll varies between 220 and 272. While covering the Gaza war, Palestinian journalists' unmatched sacrifices to tell the stories of devastation and inhumane sufferings of the innocent victims, including women and children, to the world were largely ignored by most Western media outlets. Instead, briefings by the Israeli Defense Forces' spokesperson got prominence in their coverage.

The most disturbing aspect of the mainstream global media's coverage of Palestine's recognition is its continuation of the same approach to reporting on the Gaza invasion—one that dehumanises Palestinian lives, equates the general population of Gaza with Hamas, and normalises atrocities to the point of whitewashing war crimes. The contrast with their treatment of Ukraine's war with Russia could not be starker. While Ukrainian victims of Russian invasion justifiably get humane treatment in the language of their reports and commentaries, the innocent Palestinians under Israeli occupation are often subjected to being equated with terrorists.

It is true that the recognition of Palestine by these Western powers is largely symbolic as the US remains steadfast in favour of Israel. But this symbolic gesture is crucial to keep the hope for a two-state solution of the conflict as Netanyahu insisted that there will not be any Palestine. This long-awaited recognition should now be followed by coordinated and practical measures to bring an end to the Gaza war and annexation of the West Bank. Immediate suspension of arms supply and military cooperation are the least these countries could do to resume negotiations for the future of Palestine, freeing Israeli hostages and civilians languishing in Israeli prisons, and rebuilding Gaza.

Bangladesh must uphold its secular heritage



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Bangladesh is currently experiencing a troubling rise in far-right rhetoric. Many try to justify this by pointing to similar trends in India and even Western democracies. However, as someone living in Glasgow, Scotland, I have witnessed a powerful counter-narrative—one that offers hope and inspiration for those who believe in a secular and inclusive Bangladesh.

In the heart of Glasgow city centre, I recently observed a vibrant crowd waving Scottish flags, Palestinian banners, and placards reading "Migrants Make Our NHS," "Scotland Needs Migrants," "None of Us Chose Our Place of Birth," "Stop the Far Right," and "We All Bleed Red." The gathering was a peaceful demonstration against far-right ideologies and in support of migrants and refugees. What stood out was the unity across communities—locals and immigrants, young and old—coming together to reject hate. Police and organisers ensured the event remained peaceful, even as a small group of far-right agitators attempted to disrupt it. They were calmly turned away, their divisive message drowned out by the overwhelming call for solidarity.

It is undeniable that far-right movements have gained a grip globally. In India, majoritarian politics have intensified communal divisions. However, the rise of the far-right in India is deeply rooted in its colonial history and has evolved into a domestically grounded ideological framework. Since 1947, India's right-

wing forces have crafted their own narrative, often adjusting their tone to accommodate regional sensitivities. For instance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aware of the cultural diversity across India, does not attempt to replicate Gujarat's political model everywhere. When in West Bengal, he publicly acknowledges figures like Rabindranath Tagore to appeal to local sentiments.

Unlike their counterparts in Bangladesh, Indian far-right leaders rarely seek ideological guidance from abroad. On the other hand, far-right movements in Bangladesh have often been influenced or fueled by external elements, particularly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and parts of the Middle East. The transnational connections are evident—Bangladeshi Hefazat leaders, for example, have recently visited Afghanistan to reportedly draw "ideological inspiration" from regimes that, in reality, promote religious authoritarianism. This external influence has shaped a more rigid and imported version of far-right politics in Bangladesh, alienating it from its own pluralistic heritage.

Interestingly, when comparisons between India and China arise in Bangladesh, a prominent portion of Gen Z tends to favour China. Yet, paradoxically, many of these same young people are influenced by the rise of fundamentalist politics in India and far-right ideologies in the West. Gen Z in China, however, does not appear to be motivated by global

far-right trends, at least in the same way. Their political orientation is shaped more by domestic narratives and state-controlled ideology than by transnational far-right movements. This contrast highlights how external ideological influence plays a more significant role in shaping far-right tendencies in South Asia.

What is often overlooked in

Gen Z and Millennials are generally more progressive and supportive of diversity. However, in Bangladesh, despite the uprising led by students, Gen Z is often portrayed as leaning towards the far right. I believe this image is misleading. A dysfunctional political culture and limited civic education pushed many young people towards reactionary views, and unfortunately, many of them remain alienated from Bengal's rich secular history, which must be reclaimed.

Bangladesh's public discourse is that these far-right surges are not going unchallenged. Across the world, people are standing up for pluralism, tolerance, and human rights. The Glasgow demonstration is just one example showing that the story of our times is not only about the rise of hate, but also about the resilience of hope. Bangladesh's founding principles were rooted in secularism, linguistic rights, and cultural diversity. The spirits of 1971 Liberation War and

2024 July uprising were of inclusion, not exclusion. Yet today, some seek to rewrite this legacy, using the rise of far-right politics elsewhere as justification for intolerance at home. But should we follow the most divisive examples from abroad? Or should we look to those who are resisting hate, those who refuse to let fear and prejudice define their society?

My personal experience in Scotland is that younger people are more likely to be anti-far-right than older people. Gen Z and Millennials are generally more progressive and supportive of diversity. However, in Bangladesh, despite the uprising led by students, Gen Z is often portrayed as leaning towards the far right. I believe this image is misleading. A dysfunctional political culture and limited civic education pushed many young people towards reactionary views, and unfortunately, many of them remain alienated from Bengal's rich secular history, which must be reclaimed.

The Glasgow rally was a testament to the power of secular values. In Bangladesh, we must reject attempts to pit one group against another, whether based on religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation. By standing up for secularism and inclusion, we can set a positive example for the region and the world.

It is a choice to accept or deny the far-right wave sweeping across Bangladesh that each of us must make, every day, in our words and actions. We can choose to be bystanders, or we can choose to be upstanders. Let us draw inspiration from Glasgow and countless other places where ordinary people are standing up to hate. Let us remember the true spirit of 1971 and the July uprising.

In every country, the forces of division and exclusion are being met by the forces of hope and inclusion. The question for Bangladesh is simple: which side of history will we choose?