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Statement in parliament

Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Abdullah Mohammad demanded immediate withdrawal of the US-led coalition forces from Iraq, and raised a point of order saying, "The United States is an enemy of humanity. Its forces are involved in brutal killings and other human rights abuses in Iraq."

terminate any doubts though. Why? You may well ask we'd need to build an island; we'd build an island because we need a neutral place in the size of a medium sized country but after poring over the map of the planet Earth I failed to find even a tiniest place, which doesn't belong to any country. What the hell we'll do with it? Ah good point, we'll dump all the religious extremists or terrorists (help yourself with whichever term you're comfort-

think twice to choose a leader for this group Old George Bush has proved he's well capable of leading this group twice around. Now you don't really have to have the brains of Einstein to deduce the contents of the next group. It's the Al-Qaeda the ultimate fruit that has borne on the saplings of freedom and free speech that US has planted for free into the impassable terrains of Afghanistan in the 80s; and the other extremist outfits who are emulating their foot prints in Iraq

Mahatma Gandhi has said 'an eye for an eye would make the world blind'. So we have no other option rather to dump these bloodthirsty elements into an isolated place and let them perish there on their own accord. I don't know whether it would be smart of an idea to have modern day weapons with them in that island but I think it wouldn't really hurt us if allowed them to have weapons that are written in their holy scriptures like swords, bows and arrows. At least we'd be respecting the respective faiths; it would really look good won't it?

There in the middle of the island these thugs would be able to wage battles to their hearts content and kill as many as they like. Far, far away from them we'd be happily pursuing our life on our chosen paths.

But apparently there is a big problem. The Zionists and Christian extremists wouldn't budge from the holy soil of their holy land and as far as we've seen the al Qaeda people aren't really that choosy about terrains. To solve this problem we'll dig out great chunks of lands from Jerusalem (Do you think the Palestinians would bother much about these craters?) and other countries who want to get rid of these terrorists too will have to come up with their donation of soils and sands we'll dump these in the middle Atlantic or Pacific Ocean. For instance, Bangladesh can hugely benefit from this project as all the Bangladeshi rivers are badly in need of dredging.

Bangladesh can handsomely dredge up the riverbeds and donate these silts to this noble cause and it would keep Bangladesh free of floods in the upcoming decades. Now how do we transport these soils to its destination? Well when there is a wish there most probably is a way and I happen to be a firm believer of it. Yeah go on laughing at it as long as you wish but once you get over it don't you think we ought to do this much to ensure the safety of vast majority of people like us before the third world war breaks out?

Fred & George Weasley On e-mail

Dr Yunus's roadmap

At the 15th Anniversary celebrations of The Daily Star, Dr Yunus laid out a roadmap that has elevated him in the eyes of the nation as a thinker who provides the vision for its people and direction for the economy and guidance for facilitating the environment for growth. This is what the role of a government should be.

I recall having attended a function when Dr Kamal Hussain's "Gono Forum" was launched when he as the keynote speaker laid down the frame work of how an ideal political party should develop and participate in the development of the country and after the event was over the participants were awe struck by the details and depth of the presentation and the practi-

Thoughts on Ekushey

On those days ripples of Ekushey were not heart-felt in my sleepy town (bazaar to be precise). My first experience was rather tangential through unauthorised reading of my brother's daily memoir. On Ekushey his writings were brimful with a nondescript defiance. It was exhilarating with a twist of Kafkaesque distortion as if our national psyche was bobbing through a chimerical haze of uncertain identity. It was late sixties. My father who actively fought for the becoming of Pakistan was still nascent with Pakistani nationalism. My brother, notwithstanding his deference to the Pakistani national flag was bubbling with a defiant difference.

a tolerant brand-Sufism. Cross-religion reverence for "Mazaar Culture" grew out of the inclusive benevolence of the Sufi Saints. Thus we notice splendid panoply of religiosity at Shah Jalal in Sylhet or at Bayezid Bostami at Chittagong. With diminishing influence of the tolerant Sufi philosophy, we see a hardening of religious chrysalis trying to filter out the traditional commonality and sharing of religious/spiritual practices. The Language Movement of 1952 and its eventual culmination in the Liberation War of 1971 slowed the process. Post-liberation political mistakes, however honest they may be, gave a sad opening for the defeated (Islamic Right) to

religious cultural identity that was essentially Bangali. Shah Jalal's Mazaar was bombed for it represented the tolerance of Sufi Islam.

Fifty-four years later, as we look backward we see yet another uneasy dichotomy in our national psyche. We still are groping in a labyrinthine haze of uncertain national identity. An Iranian is an Iranian, a Palestinian is a Palestinian, an Indian is an Indian this is plain and simple! There are no ifs or buts! But a Bangladeshi still remains, at best, a hesitant BANGALI.

Mohammad A. Zaman North Carolina, US



A generational fault was immensely palpable. The inter-wing disparity, hegemonic attitude of khaki-clad Urdu-speaking juggernaut and many other maladies of the Field Marshall (Ayub Khan) eventually transformed that into a nine-month-long struggle for independence in 1971.

In 1971, we emerged as a new nation dedicated to the proposition that we are BANGALI, that we are bound together by a single language, that we share a common cultural heritage - and such was the promise of Ekushey and eventually of its natural culmination the Liberation War. Islam came to Bangla on the wings of

regroup and later, despite a narrow following (about 10%), rise to prominence through shrewd electioneering. The inherent weakness of the mainstream political parties was just an abetting factor!

The 80's witnessed importation of belligerent Islam that was hitherto subliminal in Bangladesh. Belligerency was imposed tacitly in the name of religion. In the midst of general lawlessness they committed or at least condoned grave offences against religious harmony. Hindu temples were desecrated for obvious reason. Ramna Botomul was bombed on Pahela Baishakh for it represented a non-

February comes every year. The month brings festivities and events-- Valentine's Day, Book Fair, the advent of spring and a very important occasion in the lives of people. Ekushey is also the International Mother Language Day. February to us is a month to be inspired by -- it teaches us to love our mother language, our country, to show respect to the heroes of Language Movement who resisted with all their might the evil design of some quarters who tried to snatch our right to speak in our own language. While observing Ekushey the new generation gets the opportunity to know the history of our Language Movement from many write-ups published in magazines and newspapers and covered in TV programmes on the day. Even I, at the last leg of my life, (in 2004) came to know the history of the melodious, memorable song "Amar Bhaier Rakte Rangano Ekushey February" in an article published in "Prothom Alo's weekly magazine "Chutir Dine" depicting the life of the famous singer Abdul Latif, who first put tune to the song written by Abdul Gaffer Chowdhury. The song was first sung by Abdul Latif at Dhaka College in a function arranged by the students of whom Iqbal Ansari Khan and Atiqul Islam (both of them are no more with us) took a leading role and the college authorities rusticated Iqbal Ansari. His mother Anwara Khatun who was also a leader of the Language Movement, an MPA in the then East Pakistan fought for his son and, ultimately, Iqbal Ansari Khan was allowed to continue his studies. But he had to stay in jail for some time. The surprising aspect of the whole matter is that although I was his wife for 42 years, I only know of his active involvement in the Language Movement only the other day. He never boasted about his involvement in presenting the famous song for the first time. He never thought he had done anything extraordinary and he was right.

Munira Khan Green Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Curtail freedom of speech!

Desecration of the religious icon of Islam can in no way be justified on the pretext of freedom of speech, for freedom of speech is meant for serving the greater interest of mankind. But this publication of cartoon on the prophet of Islam has undermined humanity as a whole and just added fuel to the fire of continued clashes between Muslims and Jews as the Muslims perceive that the disgraceful portrayal of their prophet was masterminded by the Jewish high command. In the last few weeks the world has become turbulent with protests being carried out by Muslims all over the world. The protest in some places claimed innocent lives as the law enforcing agencies intervened to control the height of the flame of the agitated Muslims. The UN Secretary General as well as the world community has already called upon the governments to tackle the violent protests.

Now the west should realise what harm they have done to the world in the name of so called practice of freedom of speech. They have increased the already existing hatred in the Muslim mind for the west manifold which permanently ensures the making of harmony among the religious races totally impossible. I request the world community particularly the westerners who claim to be the exponents of democracy and freedom of speech to take lesson from the consequences of this callous act and apply sense of proportion about the practices that have the potential to create controversy and fracas.

Mohammad Abdul Hannan, University of Dhaka

Referring to the Danish cartoon controversy, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed mentions (Feb. 6) that papers in "Norway, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and ... New Zealand" have reprinted them. Then he says "It is scary that this united western front of nations, many of whom possess the nuclear bomb and have dropped it on human beings..."

I feel that it is even scarier that comments such as the above go unchallenged in our country. The writer must have been well informed; after all, he's writing from Princeton. Was he counting on the mass ignorance & amnesia of our masses, who are ever ready to swallow the lies of the higher ups, to get away with this type of statement?

Readul Islam, Kalyanpur, Dhaka

cedures and such publications as Roberts' Rules of Order, I'm at a loss to understand how the member can raise a point of order to demand immediate withdrawal of US forces. The understanding I have of parliamentary procedure is that a

"Point of Order" is to bring attention to the body an infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking, not to raise an external issue.

M. M. Haque New York

Let's build an ISLAND!

Yeah I-srael, S-udan, L-ondon, A-merica, N-ablus and finally D-enmark. Now put the alphabets in capital letters together it's ISLAND you've read it right the first time also, but it's better to

able with) in it so they can fight to their death.

Ariel Sharon could have led the Zionist terrorist group who upon having a dream intruded into the Arabian heartland and started to uproot the Palestinians from their land where they have been residing for generations, now that Sharon is in vegetative state, let's appoint Olmert (what's his first name) as the captain of this group. I don't know much about politics nor about laws but I do damn understand that I wouldn't take it lying if some bunch of thugs intruded into my house and claimed that I no longer am the lawful owner of the house and thereby I should vacate it. Don't you find this act of usurpation pathetic and condemnable? You'd surely fit rightly into the second group: the Christian terrorists. We do not need really

and other parts of Middle East. I don't think it wouldn't be bad to erect another bin to collect the other bands extremists like Shiv Sena, The Maoists of Nepal and the group ETA of Spain in another bundle.

All the groups I've mentioned above are engaged in one violence or the other and they have been causing a lot of bloodshed and anarchy with all their might with weaponries ranging from rocket propelled grenades to car bombs from nuclear bombs to the daisy cutters. We the general people have seen enough. We who need to steady our nerves on the aftermath of an encounter with a cockroach don't really enjoy watching these stuffs going on around us. And we are sane enough to understand that violence cannot be tamed with another act of violence. As



PHOTO: AFP

Counterproductive HARTAL

Yet another hartal. Your editorial in denouncing the hartal was timely and appropriate. One fails to understand what the 14 party alliance has achieved out of this half-hearted hartal other than causing enormous miseries to thousands of people. I will

particularly be critical about the so-called leftist parties who claim themselves to be pro-people. These one-man parties have rarely contributed to the well being of the people. When the AL was constantly following the unconstitutional path of boycotting the parlia-

ment perhaps this was the time when these unrecognised parties could have gained some footholds in national politics. Instead, they are again playing the role of 'B' or 'C' team of AL and following the path of aggression towards the general masses. AL's decision

to join parliament was praiseworthy. But it is yet to be seen whether this decision was only motivated by the membership issue. Let us keep our fingers crossed. N. Z. Khan Dhanmondi, Dhaka

cal aspects which suited our requirements in the nurturing of our nascent democracy at that time to the extent that they commented that it was like Dr Yunus had laid down the plan.

In my view I feel the time is right where people like Dr Yunus must step forward and lead the way in materialising the concepts and ideas that he has so eloquently articulated in the function. The country will wholeheartedly welcome such a move, which will be a welcome change from the negative political climate that it is passing through presently.

It can all start by targeting the next election with the primary objective of "electing honest and strong leadership through a free and fair election"- if the "Green Party" in Europe could make a dent in certain countries with their very simple agenda of preserving the environment, then there is no reason why Dr Yunus's initiative with such a bold objective would falter.

The teeming millions whose lives he had changed through his "microcredit" programmes are his organisational assets and would jump start his initiative of organising a political platform along with the civic groups, associations and professionals.

The country needs new and proven talents to lead it in the coming years. Afzal, On e-mail

Limping BTV

With much regret I am raising this unusual question! But this is the common opinion of the day. Many people have satellite television connections particularly in all towns and cities like Dhaka.

Many others are having these connections every day. And nobody enjoys BTV. Those who like me still cling to BTV (but the

number is dwindling fast) , are tired of the monotonous programmes of this channel. Really, except for some programmes, the hookup of this national channel is bad, outdated and substandard and this is the opinion of the general people. I think it is time to completely overhaul this channel. When it fails to attract general people towards national development and aspirations (socio-cultural, religious, agricultural, health, welfare, educational, economic and political), it does not serve its purpose and objectives. Regrettably, its news some-

times does not cover the latest events. BTV news coverage is poor. Particularly the foreign news. Sometimes, old news items are read/repeated.

The viewers brought this and many other problems of BTV to the notice of the authorities many times before. But no marked change has occurred to this national channel.

From that point of view, my attempt may also turn out to be futile. But the matter is very urgent!

I beg to be excused if I am wrong in pointing out this issues not all of which are in BTV's control. The solution is also not easy, but the

Corrupt police

The Daily Star in its 15 February issue published two news items against the wrong doing of the police force. The first one was against a police officer who wanted to bribe a TV news staff to conceal a wrong doing. The second one was against two sub-inspectors of Ramna thana who allegedly snatched Tk 1.5 lakh and a cell phone from a market owner at Maghbazar. This is very disturbing news. In civil society people depend heavily on police whom they consider as their custodians and a friend in need. A few months back we read how an OC directed to kill a college student in Dhaka city over a land dispute. We also read many other stories. These reveal that the total value sys-



PHOTO: AFP

tem of the police force has changed, particularly among the new generation of police officers. When they are taught at the police academy we are sure that they are imparted lessons on morality and ethics. In the passing out parade all of them promise to serve the nation as per the constitution and other rules and standards. But now we see different things. It seems that people also have lost their confidence in

police but no civil society could run without police. Therefore, I would urge the authorities to look into this matter seriously and before recruiting any policeman or officer they should review their family background and track their past activities closely. Khaleque Zaman Kabul, Afghanistan