

Iran and Bangladesh: Fatwas and Free Speech

by Naem Mohaiemen

Today, Iran is belatedly distancing itself from the Rushdie fatwa. But, in our corner of the world, some Bangladeshis seem determined to outdo Iran in misguided religious fervor.

"We should consider the Salman Rushdie issue as completely finished," announced Iranian President Khatami while addressing a press conference in New York.

death. It's as if somebody were to break your picture of the world, and everything you think about somehow ceases to be true. That's one definition of insanity. Dhaka streets now reverberate with our own brand of that insanity, as "fundamentalist" organizations further their own agenda through anti-Taslima propaganda and misogynist hysteria.

fatwas that will be carried out by enforcers everywhere. The ulemas of al-Azhar in Cairo, for example, have issued dozens of religious opinions, including the one that authorized the shedding of the blood of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba because he advocated back in 1965 making peace with Israel.

ance was considered sufficient to efface the offense, according to the text of the Koran itself. In the end, no less an authority than another Iranian Ayatollah questioned the legitimacy of Khomeini's fatwa.

protest. Pakistani political parties, stung by Rushdie's unflattering portrait of their escapades in his previous novel "Shame", helped enflame those sentiments. Surprisingly, these protests were repeated on a smaller scale in Bangladesh as well.

Khan who conspired to prevent this from happening. That was how the war of secession began, but you wouldn't know it from reading this book. Rushdie also spoke out in defense of England's Bangladeshi immigrants. In a 1984 essay "An Important Fire", he called for an investigation into the death by burning of a Bangladeshi family in London.

terminated by the colour of your skin... Until you, the whites... [face] up to and eradicate the prejudices within almost all of you, the citizens of your new, and last, Empire will be obliged to struggle against you.

— why should such an essay be removed from our syllabus? If the essay should offend anyone, it should be apologists for British imperialism! But now it becomes clear that none of the protesters ever bothered to read the essay in question.

Misguided Fervour

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The forgotten history of Rushdie

In the first year of the Rushdie fatwa, I was a student at Dhaka University. I remember classmates in the Economics department condemning Rushdie in unequivocal terms.

Let the Disaster Be a Wake-up Call

by Manzoor Ahmed

THE devastating flood of 1998 has been called the worst of the century. Given the total number of people affected and the economy of the damage to infrastructure, property and crop, it is probably the worst so far in the recorded history in this region.

Narayangang embankment barely held. Will it hold the next time? Add to the causes that increasingly aggravate and magnify the dangers of natural monsoon floods the effects of global warming.

whole nation faces. Let the childish bickering, attempt to score a point over the adversary on every issue, using every problem for political advantage, vain glorification of personalities and one's own loyalties, and the relentless urge to take credit for oneself while undermining others come to an end.

manage our natural resources, and how we harness science and technology for improving people's life. Let us play the game of the state by the rules of representative democracy, to which our major political parties and most citizens profess their allegiance.

The World of Colours

by A Husnain

There is the Ozone Hole (OH) at one end high up in the heaven, and the bottomless basket (BB) at the other, where Bangladesh is located. Somebody miscalculated — we are too poor to be saddled with the floods and the BB (not Bangladesh Biman).

THIS world of ours has always been full of colours, but perhaps it is getting more colourful, sided by the science laboratories. To nature's vibrant colours of the rainbow, human ingenuity has added an anti-rainbow (like nuclear matter) to our future hopes.

identical oversight. This information explosion has the potentiality of a nuclear bomb — its deterrent power, which can be vouchered for by the US and Malaysia, both of which are facing similar critical missions. Leadership is on trial, monitored by the sex police.

problems: trying to fit a square metal into a round stomach; resulting in indigestion due to materialistic immaturity. The Ruble was made flat to pile up, but it acts round and rolls away. All over the world there are examples of forcing square pegs into round holes.

temperature of the Earth, melting polar ice and disrupting wireless communication, according to the scientists. The natural calamities have continued to pitch in during this and the coming decade, initiating more changes (the havoc factor is secondary on the Cosmic scale).

Has Egypt Become an Economic "Tiger Cub" in the Region?

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

THE stereotypical image of Egypt to many outsiders is a land of ancient civilisations Pyramids and belly-dancing. In recent years a popular perception is that the country is being torn by the Islamic militants and this understanding allows to obscure the sustained economic growth in the country for the last five years.

The new buildings are coming up near the Nile, infrastructures are built and there is a new economic environment which has been in the country for the last five years. The economy has been diversified and the untapped markets are being explored.

and plays no part in the economic growth of the region. Despite the above negatives, Egypt has been able to register about 6 per cent growth for the last five years or so. It is an achievement brought about by economic liberalisation and pragmatic policy pursued vigorously by the government.

Who looks after management, governance, and overview of the network of systems in the public sector? If IBM spend several billion dollars a year on R&D, how much (percentage wise) a government should spend on providing better services to the people? It is not the statistics, it is the quality (vs quantity). An airline advertises "Smooth as silk" service. How to provide smooth silky service in the public sector?

Management vs Governance

by A M M Aabed

The system includes both the human and the technical factors. That is why we read frequently about human systems loss (in power, telephone and bureaucratic sectors). In developing systems (in the emerging nations), human management is always a recurring problem, because the nation is building up a base, foundation, or bank of trained human resources.

WHAT is the difference between management and governance? It is a baited question, with traps. Is there any difference? The basic principles are not much different, with technical variation in applications. There are two main components: the leadership, and the system. Both have to click together (technically, in phase or in tune).

strategy. Play technique is used to outwit the competitor, while position is an environmental variable. Plan is strategy formulated ahead in anticipation; while outcomes try to detect the pattern over a period of time. Perspective is the internal pervasive trend, integrating into a set of values. The three levels of strategy may comprise cooperative interface at the top level of a group of companies, followed by business strategy for one company in the group, descending into functional in-house strategy for each company.

thrown away — not an oak tree! The advise is to spot the problem when it is small. Nip it in the bud, is a well known proverb. The quiz is: nip what? How to identify it through a well designed early-warning monitoring system (EWMS). Mere routine monitoring is not enough, the Early Warning masala (spices) must be incorporated, the monitoring personnel and the system must have sensitivity levels suited for the assignment (a military operation, a disaster rehab project, or routine monitoring of the local or foreign markets).

The question arises whether the problem is within one's own or immediate control. Anticipation can be developed through systems analysis. The latter technique has to be studied, learned, and practised to gain experience and unlearn many fads. The discipline is something more than common sense, intuition, book knowledge or the sixth sense (hunch). The use of common sense is a first-aid for survival, with scanty input for proper diagnosis and non residual treatment.