

# Pakistan in denial

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PEOPLE'S representatives in Pakistan have spoken. The legislators of Pakistan, in their infinite wisdom, have adopted a resolution condemning Bangladesh for executing the punishment given by the appellate division of the highest court of the country to the 'butcher of Mirpur.' They have clearly made a decision to hide their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and deny that the collaborators committed any crime at all. Perhaps for them it was not a crime to try and keep East and West Pakistan together.

Every individual in every country has the fundamental right to keep his country intact. However flawed this view may be in our eyes, we do not contest the view of those who wanted to keep Pakistan together. They had their own reasons for deciding to do so. But resorting to barbaric brutality is another thing. The 'butcher of Mirpur' decided to carry out brutality to achieve his end result, that is, to keep Pakistan's territorial integrity. Only territorial integrity is what he was aiming to achieve, for there never was a meeting of minds between the West Pakistanis and the East Pakistanis. It was not an integrated nation to begin with.

In adopting the resolution the Pakistani law makers made two things very clear to us. First, 'the butcher of Mirpur' was indeed one of their closest allies and, therefore, guilty of all that has been proven against him in the highest court of the country called Bangladesh. Second, that Pakistan still holds on to the imaginary image of the then East Pakistan as an integral part of their country and therefore they are within their lawful authority to deliver their verdict in the internal affairs of "East Pakistan."

Never mind that the people of Bangladesh have given their verdict, both in mock courts and in public protests, to punish all war criminals. Even the maximum punishment being asked for by the public at the Projoonmo Chottor is not commensurate with the crime they committed against the Bangladeshi nation forty two years ago. If this same punishment had been given forty years ago it would have made headlines. It should not make headlines now. The devil has not been given his due, he has received much less. Our wounds have not been healed by this execution. They have only been bandaged to stop the bleeding. The pain of loss does not leave a nation, especially when the loss is so huge. It can only be protected from further hurt, in this case from the people of Pakistan who are represented in their National Assembly and who have taken it upon themselves to open the old wounds.

This action will do no good to anyone and Pakistanis must see that. Damaging relations with Bangladesh is not what they should be aiming at; what they need to do is acknowledge that crimes against humanity of the cruelest kind were meted out to their fellow countrymen in 1971. The leadership in Pakistan must openly and unequivocally seek forgiveness from those who have been affected eternally by the unjust war, having lost their dear and near ones. Bangladesh lost too many lives, brutally murdered by the Pakistani junta and their east Pakistani collaborators. It is time that Pakistan and its rulers and lawmakers opened their eyes and saw the spade that dug Pakistan's grave. Breaking that spade will make no difference now, but breaking that deafening silence and saying "sorry" will make a huge difference.

For us it is not a time to rejoice at the execution of the collaborator who had such a long list of crimes against his name, but more a time for reflection. We cannot forget that these war criminals were given a long leash of forty two years; that they were permitted by our shortsighted leadership to fly the blood soaked flag of Bangladesh on their roof tops and on their cars for five of those forty two years. We must not let that happen again. Our leaders need to learn how to read the pulse of their people and respond to their calls with vision and sincerity. Closing their eyes when they need to open them wide is not how people's representatives should act. They must act in the interest of the people. That interest includes maintaining a healthy relationship with neighbouring countries. Protests to acts of immaturity shown by the legislators in Pakistan must be responded through a mature and time tested diplomatic method.

Resorting to any kind of violence from either side would only create cracks in the existing stable relations between these two countries. It is easy to break relations, very difficult to create and sustain a good one. We must build better relations with Pakistan through engagement of their mature and talented civil society that understands the history of our breakup and supports our existence as an independent sovereign country. For Pakistan it is a time for introspection too. Its leaders need to open the story book of Bangladesh and let their people find out what truly happened in those nine months. It is not a hidden history but one that is available everywhere in books, videos and movies. All Pakistan needs is to lift the ban on "learning more about Bangladesh and its birth."

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# Political 'promises' and 'pledges'

ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

USUALLY, promises made by politicians are meant to be broken. But a rare example was set by our opposition leader who promised that her alliance would wage a "new type of movement" after October 25 if the government did not restore the caretaker government system in the constitution within the time frame. Yes, indeed, the nation is witnessing a new type of movement since the deadline expired. In the name of protest, guerilla types of attacks were made on ordinary common people who have nothing to do with politics. They are throwing petrol bombs on running buses full of passengers, setting fire to public transport, killing and burning innocent travelers and commuters. Burn units of different hospitals are being filled with charred people, more than the unit can handle. *Hartal* and *oborodh* are called together.

The whole country is burning because of their senseless violence making innocent people, including young children, victims of arson and bombs. Schools, colleges and universities are closed because of repeated shutdowns. People are living in fear and anxiety and there is no surety whether one will come home or not, once one steps out the door. It seems like their hatred is against common people whom they consider as enemies and expendables, who deserve to be burnt and die.

This time, other than 'new type of movement,' the BNP chairperson also promised a new trend in the running of the government if voted in to power. Though she did not explain in detail, she gave an indication of taking measures to bring qualitative changes to the country's confrontational political culture, as well as free it from corruption. The ruling party had also made similar pledges before the last parliamentary election, and that contributed greatly to the party's overwhelming victory. This time the AL is begging for votes by asking people to help keep up the process of development for building a new and modern Bangladesh.

Since, both have previous experience of serving this nation, they know very well that the needs and expectation of our common people are very little. They are not after big houses, luxury cars and expensive vacations; all they want is peaceful and secured environment so that they can make a decent living on their own. Their expectation from the government is not very big; all they need are basic necessities like good education system for the citizens, better infrastructure facilities, uninterrupted power, gas, water, transport and safe and most importantly secure environment. And they will do the rest.

But our leaders are underestimating the strength of the common people who have gone through many hardships like flood and other natural calamities, one after another, causing the loss of many lives and properties. But what

amazes us is the courage and boldness of our people in the face of natural disasters and their determination to build anew. If given the right kind of platform and opportunity the people of this nation are capable of achieving anything that is beyond imagination of our politicians. Despite all odds, it is our poor farmers, workers at home and abroad, entrepreneurs and all the hard working people, who are showing us the signs of hope, prosperity and stability, not the politicians. Things are now looking brighter and going excellent for us. Our economy worth \$158.58 billion is growing at the rate around 6% -- making us the next manufacturing hub in the region. Unfortunately, so far our leaders have failed us. They must understand that economic democracy, and the gradual development of market based economy, strengthens the basis of democracy.

Our current dirty politics touches every sphere of a citizen's life. Political attachments among teachers, doctors, government employees, journalists, and other groups are dividing us and making us enemies of each other. From educational institutions to government recruitment, from business to mass media, opportunities have been based on loyalty to a party rather than merit. Both the ruling and the opposition parties must discourage such politics as it breeds a politicised bureaucracy and malfeasant law and order. It always has a bearing on good governance. In a democratic society everyone is entitled to have political view but if anyone wishes to do active party politics then he/she must resign from their respective post and join mainstream politics.

At present, the lust for 'power' made both leaders detached from people who put them on the 'chair' in the first place. They seem to be living in the darkness for too long and as a consequence both have lost the sense of rational thought and direction. Both are so adamant on their claims, and they will not move an inch from their stance at any cost. What cost they are referring to—cost of human lives, cost of social progress, cost of state and private property or cost of our economy? They need to think and come out of their shell and change the present sadistic political culture, must understand that there will be divergence of opinion in a multi-party system, but they need to be resolved in a way that is acceptable to all parties concerned.

Political disputes need to be solved in a political way. They need to learn to forgive and forget and must have the ability to manage effectively and implement policy under a set of political, economic and social constraints that truly determines a leader's success. No one seems to know and understand the meaning and spirit of democracy, but all claim to be its leading lights. The culture of 'sacrifice,' 'consensus,' 'compromise' and 'negotiation,' which seems to be lost and forgotten, needs to be brought back to democratic culture of Bangladesh.

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# Hefajat-e-Islam is coming to town, again!

ISHFAQ ILAHI CHOUDHURY

THE clock is ticking. Hefajat-e-Islam is coming to Dhaka on December 24. As I write this article, the horrors of the day-long siege of Hefajat-e-Islam on May 6 followed by its occupation of the country's financial hub, burning, looting and vandalizing of private and public properties, and then their ejection by law the enforcement agencies are still fresh in our mind. The Motijheel siege ended in a bloody showdown, exact death toll still remains a matter of controversy and conjecture. Since then, of course violence has become part of our lives.

The repeated political impasse between the two major parties had resulted in the rise of political violence and poor governance which in turn created space for the extremist religious forces to grow in the country.

During the period 1999–2005, we saw the rise of outfits like Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami, Bangladesh (HUJI-B) that adopted terrorism as a means to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh. During these years, Islamist forces grew in strength, often with official cover and patronage provided by the party in power.

The BNP-Jamaat government initially denied the existence of these terrorist forces, but as the terrorist activities grew in intensity and frequency, there was rising international pressure on the government to take action against those forces. The government then came down heavily and by 2007, after a few death sentences and long term imprisonment of the key figures, the JMB, HUJI-B forces apparently went out of the radar screen. It was revealed during investigation and prosecution that most of the JMB and HUJI-B

activists came from Qawmi madrasas, traditional Islamic religious schools, thousands of which had sprang up across the country, uncontrolled and unaccounted for. However, it was considered a taboo to blame the madrasas, and their education system that produced the terrorists, lest it hurts the feeling of the ordinary Muslims who continued to support the madrasa education as an act of piety. The rise of Hefajat once again has brought the Qawmi Madrasa system into focus.

The AL government came to power in 2009 with a manifesto that included education reform, including reforming madrasa education. While a number of positive steps were taken to improve the general education system in the country, virtually nothing was done in the field of Qawmi madrasa education. The government's attempt to register the Qawmi madrasas and to open them to government inspection and supervision was resisted by the Madrasa authorities.

The exact figure of Qawmi madrasas is not known. It is estimated that about 15-20% of the school-age youth of Bangladesh are now educated in Qawmi madrasas. It all started in the early 1980s with the patronage of then President General Ershad, who adopted

'Islamisation' of the society as tool of convenience. Setting up mosques and madrasas across the country was one such measure.

Unfortunately, the elected BNP and AL governments that followed Ershad's fall from power continued to allow unbridled growth of madrasas as a policy of appeasement of the Islamist forces.

Most of the Qawmi madrasas follow a

are not only unprepared to face the challenges of the modern world, but have a very narrow view of Islam as a religion.

The government, in its effort to appease the madrasa lobby and especially to neutralize the Hefajatis, recently declared setting up an Arabic University and a Qawmi Education Board, but the effort was abandoned due to stiff opposition from the Deobandi groups.

The rise of the Hefajat took all of us by surprise, but it is now evident that they had been organizing for a long time. The Hefajat-e-Islam emerged from Darul Uloom Muinul Islam Madrasa in remote Hathazari, near Chittagong.

We scoffed at the Hefajati threat until when they reached the outskirts of Dhaka on May 5 and the streets were packed with thousands upon thousands of white turbaned madrasa students. We had to revisit the Hefajat's 13-point demand to ascertain what these people stand for. The demands

included: declaring Bangladesh an Islamic state, imposition of Sharia law, death penalty for apostasy, declaring Ahmedia community as non-Muslims, seclusion of women from public life, breaking down of architectural heritage which the Hefajatis described as idols etc. These demands are all

in common with the Taliban of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Taliban destroyed thousand year old historic statues; they routinely destroy female schools on the plea that women need no modern education; they force the girls into Burqa and ban them from public life and employment. It is ironic that taking advantage of the political chaos and poor governance, an obscurantist organization such as Hefajat-e-Islam could flourish in Bangladesh and threaten the very ideological foundation of the country.

That the Hefajatis are a potent political force has been proven in the last five city corporation elections. BNP, which is a centre-right political party, took full advantage of the Hefajatis to play the Islamist card. They were able to convince a large voting population that Islam is indeed in danger in Bangladesh with Awami League in power. It is possible that with the combined support of the Hefajat-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami, BNP could sweep the next election, when and if it happens. However, the problem will start soon thereafter when BNP will try to put the genie back into the bottle. The Islamist forces by then will be calling shots and BNP will have to give in to many of the demands of the Islamists.

Time is indeed running out for us to prepare against the emerging threat poised at our gate ready to destroy our gains of independence and freedom. The best way to fight religious extremism and terrorism is to create a broad and common platform of the democratic forces and not to allow the extremist forces exploit the political vacuum. A common front against all form of religious extremism could be our best defence. The question is, "Are we ready?"

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ANISUR RAHMAN

syllabus and text books prescribed by Darul Uloom, Deoband, a madrasa in UP, India, set up in 1866. These madrasas are also called Deobandi Madrasa. The madrasas generally follow a 17th century syllabus known as Darse Nizami that emphasizes on Islamic Sharia of Sunni tradition. When these students graduate from Qawmi madrasas, they

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

1 Dance with a line

6 After a while

11 Hunter in the stars

12 Green hue

13 Train station

14 Nostalgic song

15 Office sight

17 Antlered animal

18 Avoids work

22 Opposed to

23 Courting animal

27 Crouching the throne

29 Cowboy contest

30 Big parties

32 Pigeon's

33 Chocolate treats

35 Old horse

38 Sandwich shop

39 Suspect's story

41 Quartz variety

45 "Robinson Crusoe"

46 Low digit

47 Cast member

48 Sword material

**DOWN**

1 Atlantic catch

2 Mine rock

3 Tiny taste

4 Noble quest, figuratively

5 Poker payments

6 Seek

7 Everything

8 Ocean motion

9 Demonic

10 Smell awful

16 Boar's mate

18 Attire

19 Top draft rating

20 Singer Redding

21 Cafeteria melee

24 Pop star

25 Camp-

27 Present "Scroam"

28 Departs

28 Less cool

31 Take to court

34 Sharp's counter-parts

35 Zilch

36 Baldwin of "30 Rock"

37 Present

40 Scary shout

42 "we there yet?"

43 Golf support

44 Snaky fish

**Yesterday's answer**

1 C

2 A

3 E

4 I

5 O

6 N

7 S

8 T

9 U

10 D

11 H

12 G

13 R

14 Y

15 A

16 B

17 F

18 J

19 K

20 L

21 M

22 P

23 Q

24 R

25 S

26 V

27 W

28 X

29 Y

30 Z

31 A

32 B

33 C

34 D

35 E

36 F

37 G

38 H

39 I

40 J

41 K

42 L

43 M

44 N

45 O

46 P

47 Q

48 R

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

11-16 CRYPTOQUOTE

C B J ' N H T B B C . V Q N B J X Y N G

I Y R Y J V F J C I B R Y J V . L B O

C B J ' N G F R Q D B T Q R Q T .

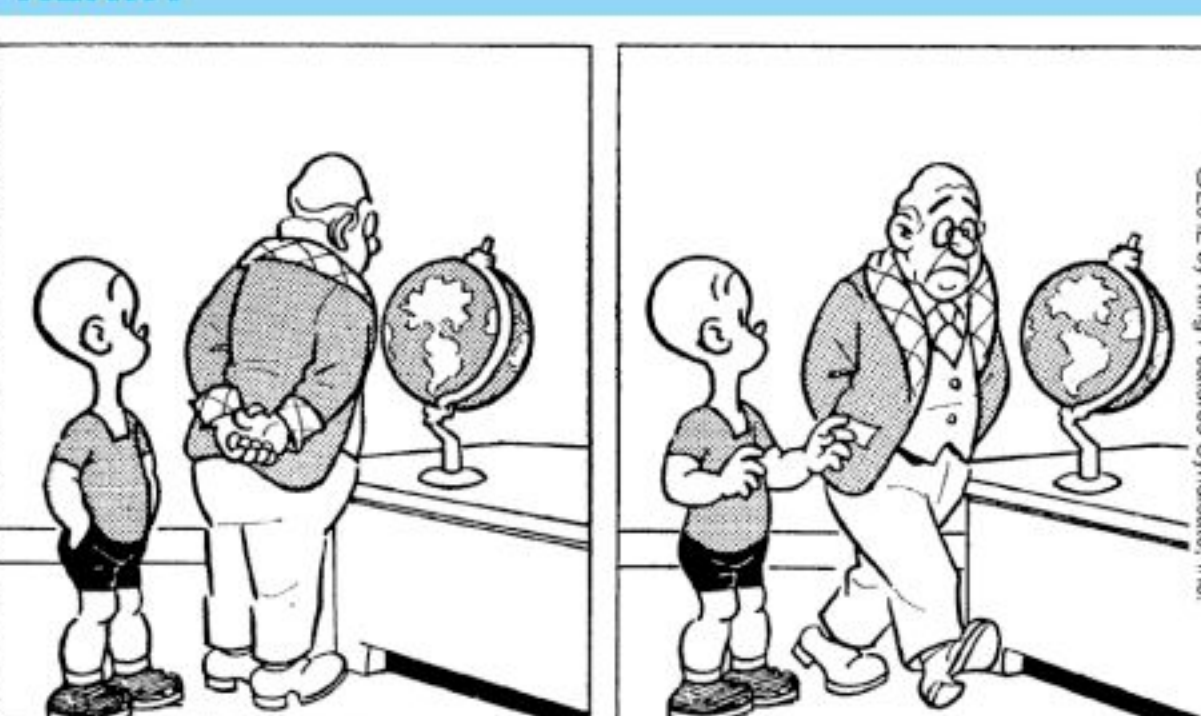
— I Q B H O Z E F V I Y F

Yesterday's Cryptoquote:  
FAITH IS TO BELIEVE WHAT YOU DO NOT SEE; THE REWARD OF THIS FAITH IS TO SEE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.  
-- SAINT AUGUSTINE

BEETLE BAILEY



HENRY



by Mort Walker



by Don Trachte



QUOTABLE Quote

"I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn't learn something from him."

Galileo Galilei