

Priests under threat

Say NO to the bigots

COMING on the heels of the attack on an Italian priest in Dinajpur on Wednesday, the news that several priests have been threatened with death is very alarming. Attack on Dr. Parolari was the second of its kind on a Christian padre. Evidently, these are acts to precipitate a situation in the country by marking out people of minority faiths as well as foreigners who present easy and soft targets.

And we would not be remiss in suggesting that all these killings are linked and motivated, with a purpose. Apart from making these groups feel vulnerable and unsafe, targeting the priests is being done to destroy the very texture of the society that is woven on inclusive, syncretic and secular fabric.

We understand that with regard to the attack on Dr. Parolari, several people have been arrested as have been a few in the cases of killing of the two foreigners and attack on a local priest. But that is not enough. These cases do not admit of any delay, because it is essential to not only bring the perpetrators to justice, it is equally important to identify and nab the masterminds behind these killings, attacks and threats.

And equally importantly, while it is the government's duty to nab the perpetrators, the society must come together and get behind our brethren of the minority faiths and those foreigners that have devoted their lives to the marginalised and poor people of this country, far away from their own home; only then can we hope to put an end to the nefarious designs of the dogmatists. We cannot and will not allow the bigots to dictate our lives.

Preparing for the future

We must not wait till it's too late

THAT Bangladesh would be among the worst hit countries in the world for climate change has been a severe cause for concern for environmentalists and policymakers in the country. Although over the years Bangladesh has taken commendable steps to mitigate the possible effects of climate change, a recent UN report launched ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris reminds us that there is no place for complacency given Bangladesh's acute vulnerability. The report states that on average 7.2 million people in Bangladesh would be affected by flooding as a result of sea level rise between 2070 and 2100, and 20.3 million people will be living in areas at high risk of cyclone by 2050.

With global warming, the probability of sickness, malnutrition and death from the resulting heat waves, intense storms, and floods increases, further exposing already vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, the chronically ill and socially isolated people. It is expected that heat-related deaths would rise to 30 per lakh in 2080 compared to four per lakh in Bangladesh between 1961 and 1990.

If we are to escape these bleak probabilities, we must act now to decrease emissions, which includes pressurising countries with high emission levels to commit to cutting down on their carbon footprint during the Climate Change conference. We must also take appropriate adaptation measures such as constructing dikes to lessen the impact of climate change. In addition, as per the WHO recommendation, we ought to have a national policy in place to deal with the health problems associated with climate change and build climate-resilient health-centres in coastal areas.

COMMENTS

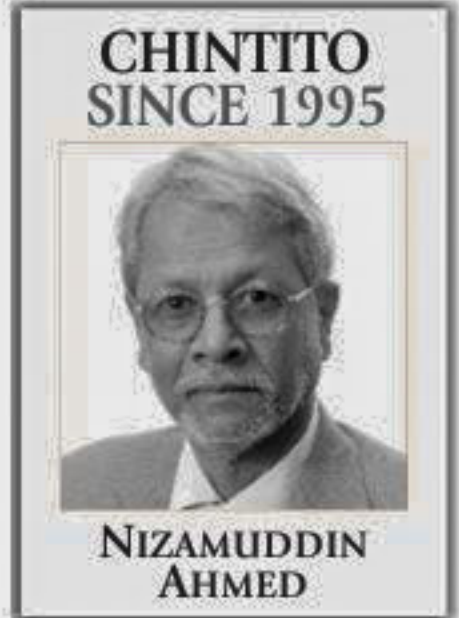
"More diseases, more deaths"
(November 18, 2015)

- ▼
- Labid Ashim**
This is no good news for us.
- ▼
- Rehana**
Climate change is threatening our development.
- ▼
- Arnob**
How is our government preparing to tackle this changing climate situation?
- ▼
- Muna Ahmed**
First world countries' massive carbon emission is largely responsible for global climate change.

"IS threatens to attack on Washington, other countries"
(November 17, 2015)

- ▼
- Zia Uddin**
So it's another strong message to Russia that for taking part in the air strike against ISIS, they have to pay for it.
- ▼
- Anwar Akhtar**
It's a war in disguise of a different agenda.
- ▼
- Afrin Zaman**
I wonder how IS gets internet access and media attention, not to mention logistics for advanced weapons and planning of synchronised attacks.

NOT ALL TERROR VICTIMS make the news



national colours, a 'try it' gimmick launched on Facebook, provoking criticism from those who did not; all on the walls of the online network that has close to 1.5 billion monthly users worldwide.

Bangladeshis are by and large easy pawns to any hujuk, such as the effortless changing of the profile picture, but the more offended sympathisants argued from behind the blue-white-red tricolours that they wanted to show the world that, although Muslims, they were against such killing of innocent civilians by an armed cadre, whose activities have nothing to do with Islam.

Their detractors questioned why then the nouveau French did not paint themselves in the insignia of Lebanon when 43 people were killed just the day before, or of India when 164 were killed in a coordinated attacks across Mumbai 26/11 in 2008, or of Kenya when 147 were massacred by militants in Garissa University only last April, or of Egypt when in July 2005 when 88 were killed at the Sharm-el Sheikh resort, or of Turkey when another 128 fell to ISIS-claimed atrocities this October, or of Palestine ever since the state was born. One simple answer could have been 'Facebook did not hook up the option to do so'. Being well aware of the addiction, I would say that users are that much under the control of the powerful social media.

Responding to a wave of criticism following the West's empathies with Paris in contrast to generally being deaf and dumb when such killings take place elsewhere, particularly in Muslim populated countries in Africa and the Middle East, Mark (that's Zuckerberg for you) came up with a better explanation (which he can apply only once) which goes to show the guy is smart. Reasoning why Facebook turned on Safety Check for Paris immediately after the attack, but not for bombings in Beirut the day before and other places, Zuckerberg defended: "Until yesterday [November 13], our policy was only to activate Safety Check for natural disasters. We just changed this and now plan to activate Safety Check for more human disasters going forward as well." Time will tell, Mark!

I am not getting into the online argument between the watermarked profile owners and the others. But admittedly I have been amused by the fact that not a single user (to my knowledge), even among those who detest the French representation and are seemingly outraged, have opted to quit Facebook in protest at its bias. Our walls are filled with memorabilia, photographs and memories to such an extent that we cannot just leave; divorcing someone perhaps is easier.

The wide coverage of the human response in the aftermath of the Paris attacks brought to us pictures of grieving relatives and friends, a sobbing acquaintance, a remorseful sympathiser, a community angry at the loss of precious lives, a nation shaken by its



vulnerability to terror, a world steadfast by its side.

Saddened as we are by the mindless acts last week of a handful of terrorists in Paris, we cannot help but state with compunction that France itself, the rest of Europe, and the US do not outwardly express their dismay, if you will, grief and anger at the demise of innocent lives, and call for eye-for-eye retaliation when terrorists strike Africa, Asia and the Arab world. "International terror doesn't mean only when it hits Europe or other Western countries, it's global. Solidarity to France, but to all those other terror victims that never make the news." (In the Now, RT, November 17)

A real-life hero who did not make the news was Adel

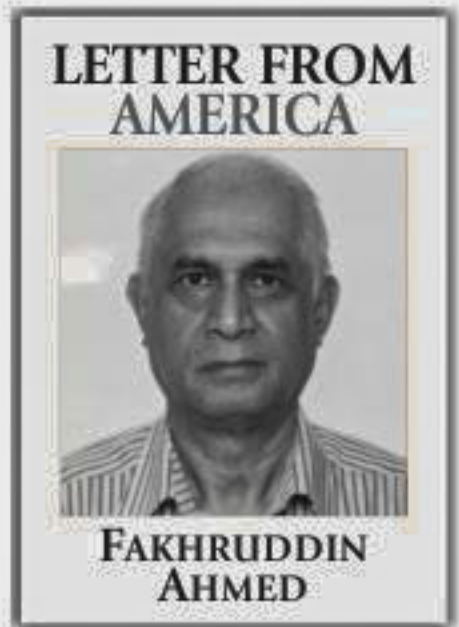
Termos. No, he was not in the Paris vicinity, where his story would have been made as tall as the Eiffel Tower, but he was in a Beirut market with his little daughter. Having witnessed the first explosion, he saw another bomber heading towards a crowded mosque, preparing to apparently detonate an explosive device. Fearless Adel tackled the terrorist to the ground, but the suicide bomber blew himself up. Dr. Elie Fares of Beirut said, "There are many, many families, hundreds of families probably, who owe their completeness to his sacrifice." Termos was killed in the explosion. His daughter will grow up to tell the world: my father's split-second heroism saved countless lives in the Beirut terror attack that November.

Terrorism is no different in black Africa, brown Asia or white America. If terror tragedies anywhere are given poignant and impassioned coverage, as for instance given to the deplorable extremists' attacks on Parisians, the world would gradually become a better place due to sharing of issues and understanding of pain.

The flowers, they bloom too in Beirut. The candles there, they too are made of wick stuck in wax. Let the fragrance of peace anywhere unite us all. Let the candlelight in one corner disseminate hope in another.

.....
The writer is a practising Architect at Basha Bari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and Fellow in the UK, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout leader and a Major Donor Rotarian.

Grading the Republican presidential candidates



estate tycoon Donald Trump (25 percent support), Dr. Ben Carson (24 percent), Florida Senator Marco Rubio (11 percent), Texas Senator Ted Cruz (10 percent), and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush (5 percent).

Donald Trump and the gift of gab: The so-called experts had predicted a short shelf life for Trump at the top. They contended that like Michele Bachmann and Herman Cain, who had also led the Republican race in 2012, Trump is a flash in the pan. But, Trump, who never held elective office, has confounded conventional wisdom. He has led the field for four months now, and shows no sign of decline. And the dastardly terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13 will only enhance Trump's appeal.

Xenophobia, especially towards Latino illegal immigrants, is at the core of Trump's candidacy. Defying political correctness, Trump has called the illegal immigrants drug dealers, rapists and worse. Instead of hurting him, the derogatory pronouncements have endeared Trump among the Republican base.

The Republican base, consisting primarily of aging, conservative whites, feels under siege. Here is why. In 1980, 83 percent Americans were white (12 percent were black, 6 percent Latino, 1.5 percent

Asian); in 2012 only 72 percent were white (15 percent Latino, 13 percent black, 5 percent Asian). America's dwindling white population is a major source of perturbation for these voters.

Trump has tapped into that reservoir of discontent by promising to build a wall along the US-Mexican border to stem the tide of illegal immigrants, and force Mexico to pay for it! In the last debate, Trump doubled down and promised to draft a "Deportation Force" to deport every man, woman and child (estimated to be 11 million) who entered the US illegally, back to Mexico.

Trump cited 1954's "Operation Wetback" when the Eisenhower administration forcibly deported thousands of illegal (and some legal) immigrants back to Mexico. ("Wetback" is a derogatory term for Mexicans who enter US illegally by swimming across the Rio Grande.) Challenged by the press that deportation will be brutal, Trump countered that it would be "humane."

Well-known since the 1970s, Donald Trump has the gift of gab. He easily "explains" absurd comments. He is capable of talking an enraged cobra out of biting him! Trump is not going away any time soon.

Ben Carson and the bliss of ignorance: Retired neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson operates in the fact-free zone. His outlandish comments/observations leave the informed speechless, and his supporters ecstatic! Devoid of political experience, Carson has built his candidacy around his biography, especially his "integrity." The press is allowed only to accept his narrative, not question it.

The Christian Evangelical right finds Carson's biography compelling, and are his primary supporters. Supposedly,

Carson was a violent youth, who once attempted to hit his mother with a hammer, and stabbed a schoolmate with a knife (a waist belt saved the poor victim). Then he found Jesus, became a Christian, and now sports a painting of himself with Jesus! Nothing is sweeter to the Evangelicals than the story of redemption. The problem is: CNN investigated Carson's claim of stabbing; no one corroborated it. And Carson's mama said that it was she who tried to hit Carson with a hammer!

Carson claimed in the last debate that Chinese military is operating in Syria, drawing a sharp rebuke from the White House. He also claimed that the pyramids were built by Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) to store grains! No Dr. Carson, I have been inside a pyramid; it is 99 percent solid, with a narrow passageway leading to burial chambers for the kings, who hoped to ascend to heaven!

In the third debate Carson denied having any relationship with Mannatech, the company that sells supplements consisting of aloe vera and tree bark, which the scientific community calls junk. Carson claimed that the supplements cured his prostate cancer, and admitted to giving paid speeches for the company. Carson was caught on video hawking their products for ten years. "Ever since I have been using the product I have not been sick," claimed Carson. This is like touting the medicinal benefits of roshgolla by claiming, "Ever since I have been taking one roshgolla per day, I have not been sick!" Dr. Carson, for 10 years you hawked Mannatech products. If this is not a relationship, what is it then? A one-night stand? Every time Carson speaks, he sounds like a quack doctor!

Marco Rubio, the Neocon: Just like the neoconservatives who had hijacked President George W. Bush's presidency, Senator Rubio wants to use American military power to achieve its foreign policy objectives. Like the neocons of the Bush era, many of Rubio's supporters are Jewish and supporters of Israel, e.g. Sheldon Adelson (who founded Israel's largest-circulated and pro-Netanyahu newspaper, Israel HaYom (Israel Today)). In every debate, Rubio pays tribute to Israel. The problem for Rubio is that he is a member of the bipartisan "Gang of Eight" that co-authored a comprehensive immigration bill in 2013; an anathema to the Republican base. Although Rubio now opposes his own bill, that may not be enough to assuage the base.

Ted Cruz, the Bomb Thrower: Elected in 2012, Senator Cruz single-handedly shut down the US government in 2013. He wants to disrupt, not govern. He has offended just about everyone in the Senate. He too, is a pro-Israeli, anti-Muslim hawk. The problem for Cruz is that like Rubio, he is a Latino who opposes immigration reform -- the top priority among the Latinos, 71 percent of whom voted for Barack Obama in 2012. Besides, the Republican base will have to hold their nose to vote for a Latino.

Jeb Bush, the Establishment candidate: Oh how the mighty has fallen! The presumed nominee is barely hanging on. The Republican base is fed up with the establishment candidates. That is why political novices like Trump and Carson lead the field, and newcomers like Rubio and Cruz are polling far ahead of Bush. Unless the Republican establishment devises devious schemes to cheat the nomination away from the top four, Jeb Bush is cooked!

.....
The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

Dreams to come into reality

I would like to see the following things happen in my lifetime:

The governments of Pakistan and India and the people of these two countries have realised the futility of endless violence since October, 1947. Both sides have ceased all 'armed' operations and diverted the funds spent in pointless military engagements towards education, health services, infrastructure, social

welfare etc.

2. ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabab in Somalia and Al-Qaida and other extremist outfits have been decisively defeated. Peace has returned to Middle East.

3. Israel's violence and aggression against Palestine has come to an end.

4. Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar and China have been linked by roads and railways paving the way for enhanced cooperation in trade,

commerce, tourism etc.

5. Satellite townships have been built around Dhaka and they have been connected with the capital by roads and railways.

6. Dhaka metro railway system has become the main means of transportation and traffic congestion has significantly been reduced.

7. Bangladesh cricket team has beaten all the cricket playing countries and has been ranked among the top three.

Dr. SN Mamoon
Dhaka

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Bihar election and BJP's defeat?

- This refers to the article, "BJP thrashed in Bihar" (Nov. 16). There has been development in Bihar by the Nitish Kumar government. The winning spree of BJP is over and the Bihar loss will also affect the equation in the Rajya Sabha. BJP should keep in mind that India's strength lies in tolerance and respect for diverse opinions.
- Deendayal M. Lulla
- On e-mail