

# TURNING THE LEAVES OF HISTORY



**CHINTITO SINCE 1995**  
IN light of the hullabaloo, albeit ludicrous, raised last week by the Pakistan government, here's a sampling of what this column has been saying for the last two decades.

May 30, 1995: Perhaps each trait of the Bangalee has its good and bad sides. But the one peculiarity

amongst some of us that is unpardonable is the short-lived memory, particularly with reference to politics. While the emblematic Bangalee will be envious of the Jews hunting down Nazi war criminals and profusely acknowledging their nationalism, the same Bangalee this far has tried to brush under the carpet any suggestions of bringing to book the culprits opposing our liberation at home and abroad.

December 16, 1996: On December 16, 1971 despite our grief and agony, we celebrated as a nation. From Teknaf to Tetulia; in the refugee camps strewn along the border; in the torture camps of Pakistan; from this corner of the earth to another, we rejoiced the victory of Bangalees. All for one and one for all. Twenty-five years later, everything seems to be spinning in a realm of confusion. There is mistrust everywhere. Each of us has our own version of history, distorted immeasurably over the years. One man's belief is another's object of ridicule. The one nation of Bangalees has been shred to pieces. The *nokshi kantha* has fallen off at the seams.

August 17, 1996: But, perhaps we are no less a Razakar than the gun-toting enemies of the Bengali people; for to this day we have failed to bring to justice the self-proclaimed killers of the symbol of our independence, our liberation struggle, our very existence. Yes, we are but sinners in our own domain!

October 13, 1997: Whereas newspapers in West Pakistan (not in the East) carried pictorial advertisements of their night club dancers; whereas sex, violence and vulgarity were the hallmarks of West Pakistani movies (not of the East), the West Pakistani Muslims had the



audacity to call us in the East 'non Muslims' as an excuse to let loose their barbaric armed assailants on our innocent civilians. And, did we not give them a befitting reply? Our glorious War of Liberation was a *jihad*, yes a holy war, against their blasphemy and non-Islamic demeanour.

April 23, 1997: As the Northern line train of

the London Underground disappeared into the tunnel, I opened the book on our Liberation War that I had picked up on Oxford Circus. In it were pictures of Pakistani atrocities, death, fleeing refugees, hunger, triumphant freedom fighters, joy... I was accompanying a relative to meet one of his distant (Bangladeshi) cousins, Keshtu. On introduction Keshtu looked like a decent guy;

clean shaven, neatly dressed, etc. As a matter of conversation, I offered Keshtu the book on Liberation. He would not even touch it, saying "There was no liberation war". What about the millions of martyrs? The women who were raped in their thousands? 14th December? Did none of these happen? Do pictures lie? These are pictures taken by the foreign media. Keshtu was unmoved and summed up his nationalism with the terse comment, "That was all a propaganda by western journalists".

August 26, 1997: In our War of Liberation we had come across many brutes among the Pakistani officers whose actions would have made Dyer\* tremble in fear. Yes, many of them today lead a cosy life in havens far from the anguish of the dear ones of their victims for whom every new day is to live yet another in pain. Have we not heard of Bangalee children being flung into the air only to test the sharpness of Pakistani bayonets? Have we not been shamed by the rape of our mothers and sisters? Have we not seen the murder of innocent Bangalees, streets and alleyways littered with our soul and body? Yet, have we ever made a concerted effort to seek an apology from Pakistan?

(\*Colonel Reginald Dyer of the British Army, on whose orders 379 unarmed satyagrahis were killed at Jallianwala Bagh, April 13, 1919)

February 13, 1998: Md. Siddiq Khan Kanjoo, the Pakistan deputy foreign minister, said that there was no question of asking for forgiveness for the mass killings during the 1971 war. Well, if he has admitted that mass killings took place, it's a big start because, "Deen kaal ja porche", some Bangladeshi who seem to have lost their memory now sincerely believe that nothing happened in 1971. A Pakistani official also said, "We now need to develop more friendly relations. Bringing up the past will only reflect adversely on the relations." Do we sniff a veiled threat? At whose cost will relations be spoilt? Perhaps the Pakistanis need reminding that whereas a full-fledged military operation of the savagery could not silence unarmed Bangalees, such hollow attempts of frail intimidation could not even tickle us.

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## Banishing Terrorism from Bangladesh Now and Forever

C. RASHAAD SHABAB

**T**HE so-called Islamic State, in the latest edition of its online propaganda magazine, has declared that it is preparing to "rise and expand" in Bangladesh. The recent spate of anti-secular killings underscores the seriousness of this threat. Intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies and our leaders must all play their part in addressing the immediate threat. But over the longer term, we must address the underlying causes that have made the Bangladeshi people ripe for exploitation by terrorists.

The seeds of terrorism that have already been sown in Bangladesh's fertile soil must immediately be rooted out. The intelligence necessary to accomplish this aim must be gathered at the grassroots. Covert agents must be dispatched to all regular [so-called] religious gatherings in far flung corners of the country with the mandate to report back any and all attempts to incite violence at these gatherings.

If we are to stand any chance of eradicating terrorism from Bangladesh, law enforcement agencies must be given the prerogative to follow the evidence gathered by these and other intelligence operations, and catch the true instigators. This prerogative is hampered when our leaders baselessly declare each other to be guilty of these crimes. They must stop doing so, because it is essential to our national security that these investigations are not hindered by any political influence whatsoever.

If Osama Bin Laden's death has demonstrated anything, it is that catching the leaders of terrorist organisations, while clearly necessary, is



not in itself enough to end terrorism. In the longer term, to keep Bangladesh secure, we must make it a less fertile terrorist recruiting ground. To achieve this, we must address both the current state of our education system, and the sense of disenfranchisement that terrorism thrives on.

While every investment in education has its merits, at this juncture, we must assess the costs and benefits of the madrasa systems that have been allowed to flourish in Bangladesh without sufficient regulation and oversight. We must launch a public

inquiry into what is being taught at these institutions, and whether or not this education aligns with the national interests of a secular Bangladeshi state. If it does not, immediate steps must be taken to subsume this within the mainstream educational system.

None of this is to argue that Bangladeshis need to become "less" Muslim. To the contrary, the spiritual vacuum that has allowed terrorism to take root in the majority Muslim country must be filled with the real Islam. There must be a concerted effort by the ministries of education, cultural

affairs and religious affairs to present precisely such a vision in our textbooks, mosques and festivals. With a view to fostering tolerance and secular values, these materials must deliberately present other religions as being a part of the fabric of Bangladeshi society.

In a Muslim majority country such as Bangladesh, terrorism can only flourish when sincere Muslims fail to take Islam's message of peace and tolerance to their wider communities. This failure to communicate with those who are less privileged and who are exposed to various intolerant

interpretations under the banner of Islam sustains the spiritual vacuum and a sense of disenfranchisement that terrorist ideologies exploit to further their own agendas.

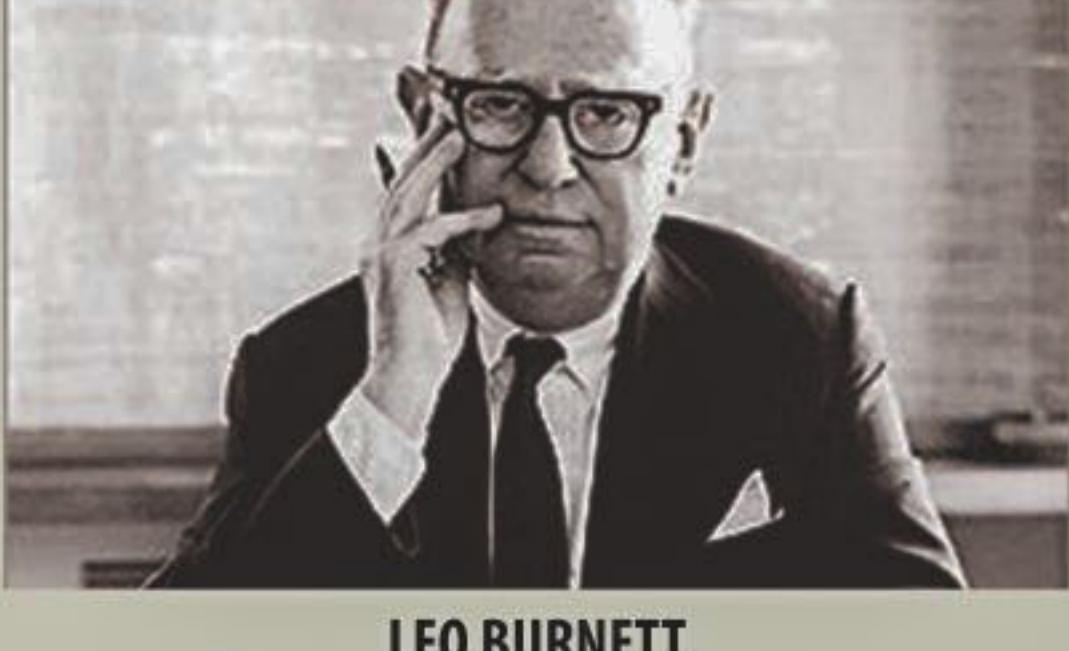
To overcome these failures, tolerant Muslims must meaningfully engage with their brethren in every far flung corner of the country. They must take Islam's message of peace and tolerance to the cesspools of violence and bigotry that have been allowed to accrete on Bangladeshi soil, in the name of Islam. They must have the courage to publicly contradict the perversions of Islam that are being promoted by terrorist ideologues.

Bangladesh has the capacity to root out the immediate terrorist threat, by sound intelligence gathering, thorough and independent police work and sensible leadership. We must also take steps to prevent the nation from becoming a future hotbed of terrorist activity. These include bringing disenfranchised children into the fold of our mainstream education system and launching a concerted effort to promote a peaceful, tolerant vision of Islam that is consistent with a secular Bangladesh to the people. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, tolerant Muslims must engage with communities that are less privileged in the teachings they have been exposed to under the banner of Islam. If we can address the spiritual vacuum and sense of disenfranchisement that terrorism feeds on, terrorist organisations, such as IS, will find no quarter in Bangladesh.

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### QUOTABLE Quote



LEO BURNETT

American Advertising Executive

Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

#### ACROSS

- 1 Artery problem
- 5 In the know
- 10 Volcano flow
- 11 Trombone parts
- 12 Oscar winner
- Guinness
- 13 Dome-shaped homes
- 14 thanks-giving dinner choice
- 16 Sofa for two
- 20 Give in
- 23 Big galoot
- 24 Code name
- 25 "-- luck!"
- 27 Genesis woman
- 28 Not as bright
- 29 Reporter's specialty
- 32 Have a gun
- 36 All told
- 39 Writer Ferber
- 40 Thanks-giving staple
- 41 Bike part
- 42 Spirited horse
- 43 Savvy about

#### DOWN

- 1 Not nude
- 2 Refrain bit
- 3 Finished
- 4 Guards' neighbors
- 5 Pond growth
- 6 Loses freshness
- 7 Bustle
- 8 Old auto
- 9 Snaky shape
- 11 Flour separator
- 15 Style
- 17 Has dinner
- 18 Cathedral area
- 19 Eye drop
- 20 Reply from the pews
- 21 Intel
- 22 Ship's staff
- 25 Pipe problem
- 26 Active
- 28 Wooden duck
- 30 Wheel part
- 31 Restrained
- 33 First place
- 34 Med. sch. subject
- 35 Edible root
- 36 "a Wonderful Life"
- 37 Fruitcake bit
- 38 Uno plus due



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C	A	V	E		H	E	A	T
O	P	E	R		T	U	R	B
U	P	S	E		A	M	M	A
G	E	T			H	A	R	P
H	A	R	D	E	N	S	N	E
L	Y	I	N	G	R	E	D	
A	W	L			A	S	O	N
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R	H	O	N	E				
D	E	L	T					

### BEETLE BAILEY



### BABY BLUES

