

## Another Dinajpur temple attacked

*The masterminds must be caught*

WE are appalled that there has been yet another attack on a religious gathering in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple in Dinajpur, leaving two people with bullet injuries. This is the third attack on religious minorities in this district within a period of two months. It follows the assault on an Italian priest in Dinajpur town on November 18 and a priest of ISKCON in Ranibandar village on November 30.

It is clear that despite the police's assurances that security had been beefed up after the two previous attacks, Dinajpur is still under the radar of miscreants. The boldness with which the perpetrators hurled bombs at the temple gathering and then shot at people, in the latest attack, is a matter of grave concern. Fortunately, one of the attackers has been caught by local people while trying to escape. It should therefore be easy for the law enforcers to find out who the masterminds behind this deplorable act of terror are and what the motive was behind it. It is important also to see if all three attacks are linked and part of an overall plan to create chaos in the country.

The number of assaults on religious minorities, leaving some victims killed as well as death threats to priests and intellectuals are ominous signs for our country. Whether all this is the work of militant groups or lone wolf attacks is something that law enforcing agencies should work together to unravel. It is the responsibility of the government to allay the fears of religious minorities and intellectuals through vigorous investigation that will result in catching the criminals as well as those behind these diabolic acts.

## Govt rehabilitates the displaced

*Address locals' concerns*

WE are encouraged by the government's move to rehabilitate people displaced by land acquisition for the construction of the Padma Bridge. The government's plan to train those who have lost their jobs, as a result of the land acquisition, to help them find alternative means of livelihood, is reassuring.

According to the project director of the Padma Bridge project, 97 percent of acquisition has been completed and 70 percent of the displaced people, numbering around 3,000 reportedly, have been rehabilitated thus far. The Padma Bridge project has already started showing signs of an economic impact. Housing rent and land prices have shot up in the area, paving the way for increased income for locals; people from other parts of the country, hoping to find work, are relocating near the site of the construction.

However, while many have been able to switch to new jobs successfully, those who were fully reliant on farming, remain jobless. Some farmers have said that they have not been awarded proportionately by the government, i.e. they have lost more land than they have been compensated with. It has also been alleged that Chinese companies involved in the project hired workers from other parts of the country, depriving locals of job opportunities.

In this regard, the government must address the plight of the farmers who, because of their limited occupational labour mobility, need specialised training to acquire other skills. The issue of limited funds needs to be solved immediately and the rehabilitation scheme adjusted accordingly. Authorities must also allay the concerns of displaced locals who are unfairly being left out of the construction project.

## COMMENTS

**"5-yr-old boy dies falling into sewer"**  
(December 9, 2015)

Latifa Akhter

Oh God, it's so sad!

Jannat

This accident wouldn't have taken place had the sewer been covered with a slab.

Pollobi Hasan

The locals alleged that a cover slab had for long been missing. The industries' owners association of Shyampur Industrial Area is responsible for the maintenance of the sewer. It should be checked if there was any negligence on their part.

**"Govt assessing ties with Pakistan"**  
(December 7, 2015)

Rehana

Bangladesh government should cut all its ties with Pakistan until and unless Pakistan accepts their crimes and apologises.

**"Right thinking Pakistanis acknowledge '71 brutalities'"**  
(December 7, 2015)

Samara Khan

At least there is some humanity left.

# Donald Trump's America

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

DONALD Trump, the blustering billionaire who made a name for himself by proclaiming President Obama as a foreign born citizen, entered the Republican presidential nomination race with a thunder. He first lambasted illegal immigrants, particularly Mexicans, whom he called murderers and rapists, and went on to promise that when elected president, he would build a wall between the US and Mexico (that too at Mexico's cost) to stop illegal crossing. He further promised that he would deport all illegal immigrants (estimated at 11 million) back to Mexico or wherever they came from. Most people were taken aback at this preposterous suggestion, and all other Presidential candidates wondered about the sanity of his proposal. But not his diehard supporters, who created a coalition to push Donald Trump to the top of the Republican nomination race, a position he retains even after coming up with salvos targeting one community after another.

Before the dust could settle on the Mexican immigration controversy, Trump launched his next salvo, this time on the Muslims. The opportunity was given to him by the tragic incident in Paris in November, when militants claiming loyalty to the Islamic State of Syria (ISIS) killed 130 people. He first demanded that the US not allow immigrants from Syria for fear that some of them might be terrorists (calling them the Trojan Horse), but he later expanded it to say that Muslims in the US also needed to be kept under surveillance and mosques suspected of fomenting radicalism should be closed. Trump kept on his bluster against Muslims, even though the other Republican presidential candidates thoroughly disapproved of these suggestions, and the Muslims in US expressed their protests. He concocted a story of Muslims cheering the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York, even though he never produced any evidence in support, and other politicians and journalists flatly denied such happenings. Donald Trump remained defiant and continued to stand by his outrageous comments that were denounced by the media as racist and bigoted. He was undaunted because his poll numbers derived from the frequently conducted surveys of the Republican leaning voters kept him at the top of the presidential nomination seekers. To boot, his supporters cheered and rallied behind him in gatherings of the diehard faithfuls every time he launched his choice invectives against the imagined enemy.

Emboldened by his false popularity in the sample polls (at 30 percent, these represent only one third of all Republican voters), Trump launched his most

virulent attack on the Muslims this week. He not only suggested a ban on travels to the US by Muslims from abroad, he went on to suggest that the ban would apply also to travels by Muslims outside the US. This, he claimed, would be a way to prevent future terrorist attacks. When pressed about the legality and constitutionality of such a discriminatory act, Trump arrogantly stuck to his demand claiming that it would be a temporary measure until a more permanent fix to containing terrorism in the country can be devised.

Trump's latest onslaught on the Muslims in general

and ignorance of history, he has disregarded the contributions that immigrants, including Muslims, made to make this country great. He has ignored, either deliberately or through lack of knowledge, that US became a great power not by exclusion but by inclusion, and that its future strength lies in combating terrorism by facing it with unity and not by division.

The rabble rousing and hate mongering rhetoric that Trump is using will not help him in his ultimate quest for US presidency. The United States of America and the majority of the people of this great country do not have a penchant for his narrow minded views of the US



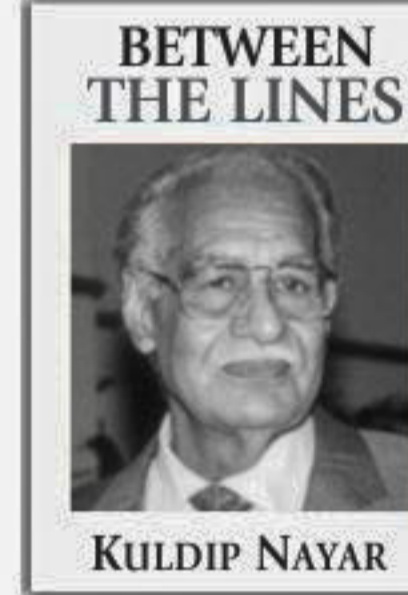
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

and Muslims in America has not only shocked most Americans, but has also greatly annoyed the Republican establishment. His outlandish statements and outrageous rhetoric are not just fear-mongering but also illegal and unconstitutional. By relying on a segment of paranoid and politically disenchanted Republican voters who are driving his poll numbers, Trump appears to have lost touch with reality. He is riding on a wave of fear of immigration, terrorism, and more and more diverse United States than some of his supporters would like to see. In his blind faith in transient poll numbers

of the world. He can trounce a community or some people because his supporters are giving him a platform, but he cannot trounce either the Constitution or the moral and political values of this country. Trump is surfing on a wave that will surely break soon against the vast shore of values of liberty, equality, and religious tolerance that this country stands for. This country will never be the America that Donald Trump wants to turn it into.

The writer is a political commentator and analyst.

## Keep Britain Out



BETWEEN THE LINES

KULDIP NAYYAR

I LIKED the idea of a museum on partition. There was a lot of enthusiasm for it. But I find to my horror that the partition museum would be a branch of the British Museum, which would also supervise it. The whole purpose is defeated because the British are the ones to blame for the partition that resulted in the killing of one million people and the uprooting of thrice that number.

The partition was a parting kick by the British before they quit. They drew the line on the basis of religion which got institutionalised in the shape of Islamic Pakistan and not-so-certain secular India. True, India has adopted a secular Constitution and has the word secularism in its preamble. But what cannot be denied is that in the same India, the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992 and thousands of Sikhs were killed in 1984. Secularism seemed a farce.

Secular India could not prevent two wars against the Islamic state of Pakistan and a misadventure at Kargil. On top of it, both sides have nuclear weapons which may be serving as a deterrent but the fringe elements on both sides use the possession to threaten each other. Against this background, the partition museum will not serve the purpose.

Even otherwise, no museum can depict the real happenings if it does not show the horror that people went through. Any picture or painting depicting what happened at that time may reopen the wounds. Already, the two countries, or for that matter the Hindus and Muslims, are not at the best of terms. In their endeavour to establish a separate identity, the two communities talk more of what divides them than what can unite them.

After all, the two communities lived together for centuries before the British

introduced the separate electorate; Hindus exercising their vote only in favour of Hindu candidates and Muslims for the candidates of their own religion. Even though after independence the separate electorate was abolished, vote bank politics has taken its place, thus, resulting in little difference.

During the drafting of the Constitution, the then Home Minister Sardar Patel offered reservation to the Muslims. But their leaders at that time said that reservation on the basis of religion had led to Partition and therefore, any step that creates divisions between the Hindus and

of the majority. What has happened over the years is the stopping of social contact between the two communities. They meet as traders, businessmen and industrialists, but never as neighbours or normal human beings.

I recall when there was a communal riot in Kishangaj mohallah in old Delhi where I lived among Muslims to experience their hardships and apprehensions. What I found was that they were living in a world of their own and had developed such fears which were difficult to allay. I negotiated with the then government and was able to get a large track of land where they could

happened during the Mumbai riots. The fact also remains that there is an increasing tendency among Hindus to keep Muslims at a distance.

Against this background, how would the proposed museum depict the Partition. Pakistan has done a better job by establishing a Punjabi cultural centre instead of a museum. The centre was essentially the idea of the progressive poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. He collected old folk songs, doors from village houses and recorded old music that was used during wedding as well as death. This centre near Islamabad is frequented by thousands of people, especially the young, to connect with their roots.

The supporters of the partition museum can build upon what has been done in Pakistan, to recreate the fabric of old culture where both the Hindus and Muslims lived like human beings and pursued trade, business and industry together. Even today, the best solution for amity between India and Pakistan is to have joint ventures and investments in each other's country so that they develop mutual trust.

If this takes place, the chance meeting between the prime ministers of the two countries in Paris will be replaced by regular contact between the two. One side will be able to pick up the telephone at any time and share their problems and predicaments. The recent meeting of the two National Security Advisers in Bangkok would not have been viewed as something extraordinary, even though it lasted for four hours.

Whenever the proposed museum takes shape, we should keep the British out of any kind of participation. Theirs was not a benevolent rule but that of cruelty. India opened more schools within one year after independence than the British did during their 150-year rule. True, they have laid the railway network but this was essentially to haul the troops to suppress those engaged in the independence struggle. The idea of a museum is welcome, but British association in any way is not.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

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Muslims would again take some shape of partition.

Today, community leaders are demanding reservation because, as the Sachar Committee has pointed out, the plight of Muslims is worse than that of the Dalits. However, the Sachar Committee itself did not propose reservations and asked the government to take affirmative steps, as the US had done in the case of Blacks, to provide jobs and admission to top educational institutes.

Look from any point of view, there is no go for Hindus and Muslims except to integrate. Any concession on the basis of minority character is a mole in the eyes

resettle. They insisted on a mosque. The government agreed to it.

Yet ultimately, the Kishanganj inhabitants felt that they were more secure behind the iron gate of their mohallah than elsewhere. I vainly argued with them that it did not take much to break open the gate. Yet, my pleas fell on deaf ears and they preferred slum-like conditions to the open space which was there for them to choose.

Today the situation has worsened because the Muslim population has grown at that very place. The community is afraid of staying in a mixed locality, lest they should be singled out as it

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### A deaf ear

I attended the University of California at Berkeley in 1970. At that time, the Vietnam War was going on and Berkeley was the hotbed of radical resistance. I was supportive of the civil disobedience that led to the Bangladesh Liberation War and independence in 1971. After independence, the new state endured poverty, famine, political turmoil and military coups. The restoration of democracy in 1991 has been followed by relative calm and economic progress.

At the end of the nine month-long war, India directly helped Bangladesh to liberate it from the Pakistanis. And at that time, America turned a deaf ear and blind eye to the sufferings of the oppressed Bangladeshis. They supported Pakistan. The number of Bangladeshi refugees was around 1 crore. Their sufferings knew no bounds.

And now that it is the month of freedom in Bangladesh, we wish the country prosperity and success.  
Ted Rudow III, MA  
CA, USA

### Let's all stand beside the mayor

Recently the Dhaka North City Corporation mayor Annisul Huq conducted a drive to free the roads in Tejgaon area (occupied by illegally parked trucks) so that the commuters can commute hassle free. But during the drive, he faced strong resistance by the truck drivers and owners. It is obvious that the grabbers are very powerful and that's why they dared to show such audacity at the time of eviction. But the mayor did not step back and continued the eviction drive.

We, the city dwellers of Dhaka, should actively stand beside the mayor if we really want our city to be organised, clean, and jam free. We cannot be mere bystanders who do nothing, suffer and criticise everything later.

Khandaker Zia Hasan  
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