

Trump's call

Juxtapose it with his past utterances

LAST Sunday in Riyadh, the US President had called upon the leaders of as many as 55 Muslim majority countries, present at the Arab Islamic American Summit, to take the lead in stamping out extremism without waiting for American power to crush these forces. The concept is nothing new; many in the Muslim countries have been calling upon their silent majority to stand up to the pernicious phenomenon which had nothing to do with Islam. And we also believe that, if force was the only riposte to extremism, the US would not still be engaged outside its national border grappling with it.

However, one has to juxtapose Mr Trump's speech with his long-held opinion about Muslims and Islam, and the fact that at one time not long ago he had suggested that all Muslims be barred from entering the US till the US could sort out "what's going on" and later "ordered" ban on travel, initially from seven Muslim-majority countries. Nevertheless, while we welcome the US President's commitment to root out extremism we cannot but offer a few opinions of our own in this regard.

To talk about purging a phenomenon without reflecting on the drivers of the phenomenon is ridiculous. Regrettably, there was no mention in Trump's 33-minute homily of the causative factors that have spawned extremism, and which, unfortunately, most of the Muslim countries are having to endure in varying degrees of intensity. If he had, he would have had to confront the truth that his country's policy, in the Middle East in particular, especially in Iraq, has had much to do with the spike of terrorism and extremism around the world.

It is surprising and disappointing too that the Palestinian issue has been successfully sidelined. Otherwise, how does one explain the fact that except for King Abdullah's remarks, there was no mention of Palestine and Palestinian rights in the Summit Declaration, a summit attended by a very large number of leaders from Muslim countries?

We are also alarmed by the attempt to isolate Iran, a policy that will be deleterious to the interest of the Muslim world. The Shia-Sunni schism appears to have been formally established through this meeting and acquiesced by all the other participants. That is indeed disappointing.

Buses unfriendly towards women

Safety and attitudes are major barriers

A study by ActionAid found that 56 percent of women commuters avoid public transportation due to lack of proper seating facilities. Further, 25 percent women commuters found safety to be a major issue. Cases of sexual harassment are rampant with one in five facing it and this comes from co-passengers and helpers. The general attitude towards women travelling by buses is that they are a nuisance. The reserved seats that are mandatory in every bus for women are generally occupied by men who often refuse to vacate them when a woman boards the vehicle. Since the people who are supposed to enforce this rule—the helpers and drivers—too are generally ill-disposed towards women commuters, the findings of the study do not really come as a surprise.

As we have become used to flouting rules in our everyday lives, it appears that many men believe it is their God-given right to harass women when they choose to board a bus to commute. So what is to be done? BRTA needs to conduct regular drives to check for errant buses which flout the rules regarding reserved women's seating and make that a regular feature. Bus owners, drivers and helpers need to be made accountable for their actions.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The menace of Chikungunya

The Aedes mosquito has been creating much sufferance in the city by spreading the Chikungunya fever among the city dwellers. It appears that despite our best efforts to keep our houses clean, we are in an individual capacity no match to fight the infiltration of these mosquitoes. Unless the mayor of the city (South) arranges for anti-mosquito spray to be sprayed in the surrounding areas, we can't prevent more and more people from becoming afflicted with the virus. We hope the mayor will take the initiative as soon as possible.

Sirajul Islam
Former Resident Manager, Padma Oil Co Ltd.

Inadequate death compensation

The article titled "Bangladesh labour compensation laws - Need for an upgrade", published on May 20, 2017, brings to the fore the important issue of death compensation. The current death compensation stands at a paltry Tk 20,000 as prescribed by the Insurance Act 1938.

The relevant authorities appear to be out of touch with the reality by ignoring the present socio-economic conditions of the country and sticking to age-old scale of compensation. Compensation levels are reviewed from time to time in many countries to reflect current economic conditions, costs of living, inflation, etc. The current level of compensation appears to be hopelessly inadequate.

It is hoped that the appropriate authorities will review this matter and upgrade the compensation level in keeping with the times.

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Dhaka

Leaks and Lessons



KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

TOO many leaks are happening these days. White House staffers have been leaking information. What Potus says within the protective walls is almost instantly picked up by *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*, just to become breaking news within the next few hours in almost all liberal news outlets. Leaks are making news and becoming revelations

later. The latest leak has been about the Potus asking a top FBI official to exclude him from being investigated for collusion with Russia during his election campaign. *Lesson: Even the White House blue curtains have ears.*

In other words, leaks are getting serious now. After Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the then head of the International Monetary Fund, was accused of assaulting a maid in New York, the hotels in New York provided the maids with panic buttons. This time, it's John Joseph Boswell, the chief executive of the world's largest wine-and-whiskey barrel manufacturer. A Trump supporter, Boswell patted a woman's back in a hotel right before the president was being sworn in and got arrested in DC. *Lesson: Anyone can decide on a tell-it-all.*

A few weeks ago, Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, had a tense dinner meeting with Theresa May after which he felt that it was more likely that Brexit talks were doomed to fail now, if Britain refused to pay the "divorce bill" and that Britain shouldn't treat EU as a "golf club." Weeks later, Juncker said that he thinks the "leak" of that meeting was a "mistake" as it could very well damage the potential of a collaboration. Well, that's it. *Lesson: Some leaks lead to revelations, some don't.*

Bangladesh, as a country, also isn't lagging far behind with regard to active leaks. We too have successfully leaked SSC question papers, BCS question papers ever since 2005 and now we have also begun leaking bank test papers. Agrani Bank just cancelled their recruitment as their questions were allegedly leaked.

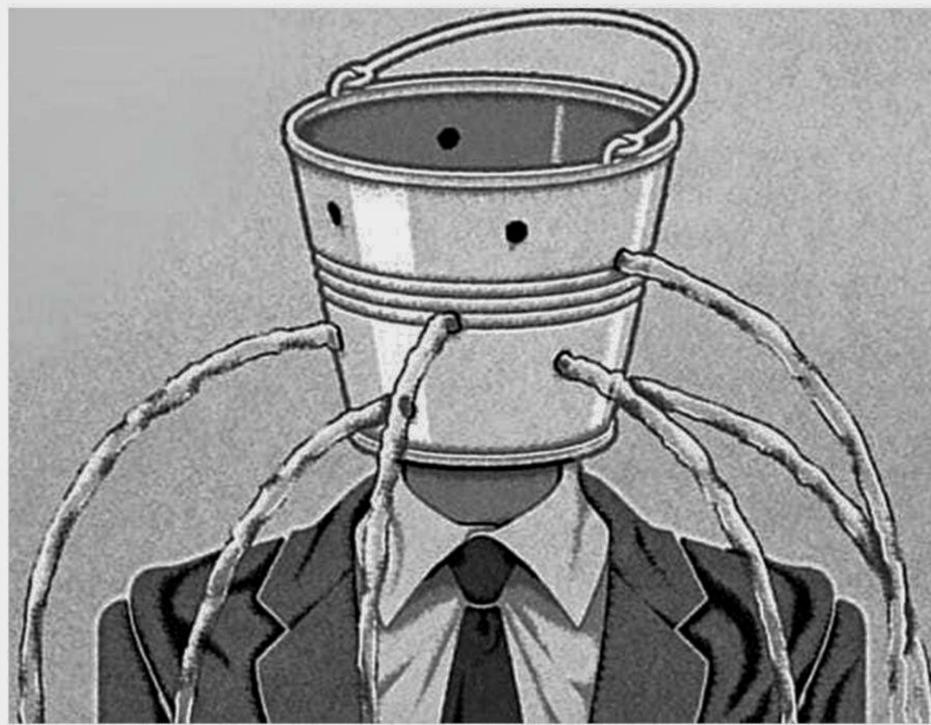
Amidst all the leaks that affect us, the most damaging leak was associated with the Banani rape survivors. This leak didn't threaten presidency, a Brexit discourse or a career plan. This leak destroyed lives. Photos of the girls raped in Banani were leaked in social media. Videos went viral, pictures surfaced and the damage was done. In spite of the blurred video, people familiar with the girl's face were able to recognise it. The stills were clear and telling. As a habit, I try being the other person on a daily basis. So in this case, I tried being her mother in my head. I was shattered. In my head, I was crashing against the waves on an unfriendly shore and bleeding. How would I ever hold my girl's hand and take her out for a walk amidst the jungle packed with wolves? A single leak has shattered my daughter's life. A single social

media 'share' had obliterated her entity, violated her, perhaps no less than those eight harrowing hours. How would I ever become a mum again?

To make matters worse, a few days later, I read, re-read, read, re-read a piece of news: Women should lower their eyes and stop free mixing and never mention the word "rape". Are we being serious here? My head spun and my vertigo was finally at its worst. I could almost collapse in disgust. The very next day, I was addressing nurses who have dedicated their entire lives to serving others. In an attempt to "inspire" them on Nurses Day, I mentioned the first Muslim nurse's story, 1,200 years ahead of Florence Nightingale. Her

sanitary napkins made from jute and water hyacinth. The cost of the napkins came down to less than Tk 2. While I congratulated them and found an opportunity for readymade garment workers to use them, my heart sank when they shared their on-ground experiences of speaking to women who weren't yet prepared to talk about intimate hygiene issues. I realised that throughout our lives, we end up being shy of our own flesh and spirit. For most of us, most feminine occurrences are marked in private folders and never to be read in public. There we go. *Lesson: Men dictate and decide the feminist discourse, women don't.*

Few critical issues related to women remain under



SOURCE: GREATER DIVERSITY NEWS

name was Rufaia Al-Aslamia. During the Battle of Khaibar, she sought permission from our Prophet (PBUH) to take part in the war along with her team. Prophet (PBUH) agreed and after the war was over, Rufaia got equal share from the spoils of the war, as much as the soldiers. If our Prophet could have a woman nursing the soldiers and then give her equal rewards, where is the suggestion of a separate workplace and so-called "modesty" coming from?

A week ago, I was lucky enough to watch two dozens of brilliant innovators flaunt their prototypes. Amongst them, two girls stood tall with their discovery of

covers while ironically a few are spiced up to favour the news space in social media.

Truth is, women are as much private as public. Whether we withdraw to the corners and decide to weep on our own, or whether we focus on exposure, let us at least teach our daughters the correct lesson: *RAPE must be pronounced in all CAPS, women must look up and women must mix freely as ever before. Neither is womanhood born out of shadows, nor should it be expected to thrive in one.*

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Stay the course with Rouhani

ROBERT HARVEY

HASSAN Rouhani has won re-election as Iran's president in a landslide, meaning that it is he who will be dealing with an antagonistic US President Donald Trump. What will their relationship mean for the 2015 international agreement that has, for now, frozen Iran's nuclear ambitions?

The Iranian nuclear deal was the culmination of a decades-long pas de deux between the United States and post-revolutionary Iran – a push and pull, in which every step forward was seemingly followed by a step back. During US President Jimmy Carter's administration, when the Shah fell and the US embassy staff was held hostage for more than a year, the two sides were hopelessly divided.

Under US President Ronald Reagan and his vice president and successor, George HW Bush, the situation was complicated further by the Iran-Contra scandal, in which Senior Reagan

Then the tables turned. When the moderate President Mohammad Khatami took office in 1997, it was the US that was headed in a more hardline direction. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the US, President George W Bush denounced Iran as part of what he called an "axis of evil." And yet, by invading Iraq in 2003, the US under Bush gave Iran its greatest historical opportunity for westward expansion. In 2005, the renewed dream of Iranian regional hegemony helped bring to power President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who pursued the nuclear programme with vigour.

In 2013, Ahmadinejad was replaced by Rouhani. With President Barack Obama already in office in the US, conditions were ripe to take a few steps forward. After nearly two years of tortuous negotiations, the agreement to halt Iran's nuclear programme, in exchange for the gradual lifting of economic sanctions, was concluded.

Opponents argued that the deal was technically flawed and would not actually prevent Iran from

fooled, international pressure, if not a shared interest in a safer world, gives countries a powerful incentive not to try.

Countries such as Germany or Japan have the financial and technical capabilities needed to acquire nuclear-weapons capabilities in a matter of months. Dozens of others could get there within a few years. But countries from South Africa to Argentina and even Libya have indicated that they will not take that step, by signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). North Korea, which has so far refused to capitulate to international pressure, has paid a heavy price as global pariah, choked by economic sanctions.

For Iran, escaping economic sanctions – which are being eased only so long as it respects the deal – remains a potent motivation. Indeed, so far, Iran has kept its promises, though its leaders do have a tendency to push the limits, such as when it conducted a test of medium-range ballistic missiles in January.

Unilateral US abrogation of the agreement would not be easy. After all, the deal was the result of negotiations involving six major powers, including, unusually, China and Russia. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom – America's principal European allies, none of which is likely to re-impose sanctions without good reason – also participated. Even Saudi Arabia, representing other Arab countries, grudgingly approved. The US Congress, initially resistant, has largely come around.

Most of the world seems to recognise that this is one of those cases where the perfect is the enemy of the good. And make no mistake: the agreement is, on the whole, a good thing. Its collapse would trigger a nuclear arms race in the world's most unstable region.

Iran's bitterest regional enemy, Saudi Arabia, would move rapidly toward a nuclear capability, using abundant petrodollars and Pakistani knowhow. Others – Turkey, Kuwait, Egypt, and Algeria – would not be far behind. To bet that these countries, having acquired such weapons, would behave responsibly would be a high-risk gamble.

Compounding the threat posed by US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran is currently beset by uncertainty. When Rafsanjani, the patriarch of Iran's moderate forces, died in January, his funeral was the occasion for one of the largest demonstrations in the Islamic Republic's history. With the elderly Khamenei suffering from cancer, the battle to choose a new supreme leader is not far off.

The current dominance of the moderate faction of Khatami and Rouhani remains precarious, and their many hardline rivals – including leaders of the Revolutionary Guards, the Quds Force, and the Iranian militias – are eager to secure power. With the economy already desperately weak, the resumption of sanctions could empower the extremists.

In short, the world cannot afford the breakdown of the Iran nuclear deal. If Trump attempts to resume America's pas de deux of the past with Iran, the result may be a dance of death.

The writer, a former member of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, is the author of *Global Disorder and A Few Bloody Noses: The Realities and Mythologies of the American Revolution*. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2017. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)



How will Iran's nuclear ambitions be affected with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office and President Hassan Rouhani's re-election victory?

PHOTO: IRANIAN PRESIDENCY WEBSITE/AFP

administration officials secretly facilitated the sale of arms to Iran between 1985 and 1987, despite an arms embargo. As a result, when the relatively moderate President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani took power in August 1989, ended Iran's war with Iraq, and put out feelers to the US, Bush's hands were tied.

Rafsanjani eventually relaunched Iran's nuclear programme, with recovery from the war with Iraq facilitating progress. But it was the hardliner Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had succeeded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as Supreme Leader in June 1989, who steered the country in that direction, by plunging relations with the US into a near-total freeze. The efforts of President Bill Clinton's more pliable administration to bring about a thaw were repeatedly rebuffed.

continuing to develop nuclear-weapons capabilities. But the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – the body empowered with verifying Iranian compliance – was convinced, and approved the deal.

Nonetheless, Trump has vowed to scrap the deal, with his advisers citing the same arguments that emerged during the ratification process. But, with the exception of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's government and its supporters, virtually no one supports such a move.

In fact, the expectation that Iran will continue its march toward nuclear breakout ignores the entire logic and experience of nuclear non-proliferation. Even if IAEA inspectors – who have proved remarkably effective and thorough so far – could be