

No more violence in the name of religion



I grew up in a mixed family—my father was a practising Hindu and my mother was a practising Muslim. Even today, if somebody asks me about my religion, I fail to identify as just one of them; I am both, and definitely not one over the other. I grew up in Dhaka city at a time (1980-1990) when democracy was more under threat than religion. So, during my childhood years, I experienced a beautiful confluence of two faiths. My mother's family loved their Hindu *jamai* (son-in-law), and my father's family loved their Muslim *bou* (daughter-in-law). It was never an issue in our household whether we were celebrating Eid or Puja. We had the blessings of celebrating and enjoying both, without anyone raising any complaint about our celebrations.

Growing up in a mixed household gave me enough understanding about both religions, and I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to see and experience the beauty in both faiths. I have many Muslim and Hindu friends in and from Bangladesh, and never in my life have I had the feeling that they had any issue with my religious background. I know the recent violence in Bangladesh on Hindu communities during Durga Puja is a stark opposite of the confluence of religions that I experienced in Bangladesh. Therefore, I feel obliged to write to both my Hindu and Muslim communities.

To my Hindu community

Since 1947, the Indian subcontinent has experienced a lot of religious violence. The "divide and rule" principle of the British rulers worked well on us, and the religious people that had lived together amicably for centuries suddenly found a new weapon to kill each

other. It is indeed sad, but understand that violence is the display of fear and weakness of extremists who just wait for occasions to harm the innocent. Is it okay? No. Should a country like Bangladesh tolerate it? Again, no. However, can it happen? Yes, it can, and it will continue to happen if the majority does not take a stand against it. Statistically, any country will have at least 2.5 percent of the population who lean towards extremism. The 2.5 percent of about 165 million people in

religious crimes and road accidents. Is the risk due to your religion more threatening than the other reasons? No, not at all.

So, please do not consider leaving Bangladesh fearing that your security is compromised because of the recent events. Living in Bangladesh has never been fully safe. I hope no one has forgotten the 2016 terror attack at the Holy Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, which happened in a privileged neighbourhood of the city to an apparent

However, not supporting violence is one thing, and staying silent and not standing up for your Hindu friends is another. Keeping silent is a crime in itself. Bangladesh has long observed and tolerated many crimes against minority groups, and the minority population in the country is decreasing at an alarming rate. If you do not stand up for your Hindu brothers and sisters now, those extremists I described previously will one day come after you. If you want your family to be

the name of religion.

To the extremists

I would say that Bangladesh is now in a far better shape to take action against the extremists. The digitisation initiative by the current government has made crimes and criminals much more visible than before. So, do not even think that you can get away by committing a crime against humanity. Our prime minister has demonstrated her intolerance against crimes and criminals time and again; I believe that she will ensure that justice prevails.

To the general population

Religion is a personal interpretation of an individual. Because there are nearly eight billion people in the world, there can theoretically be eight billion interpretations of different belief systems. If someone has a lousy understanding of religious rules, I don't think it is fair to take it out on the entire religion. Religion itself is generally good; it is always the followers and what they do to follow their own religion that turn it bad. I can safely say that neither Islam nor Hinduism supports violence. Those who support violence are not more religious; they are just trying to diminish the humanity of the majority. It is the need of the hour that we become human first, then a Hindu or a Muslim.

The world has just started to recover from a global pandemic. Covid-19 has shown us that united we stand, and divided we fall. The British left us 70 years ago—we don't need to follow their legacy of division anymore. Let's prove to the world as a nation that breaking walls down should be the new norm, not building them; a fresh reality of harmony, peace, and compassion should be our goal going forward.

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Our identity cannot be limited to our religious beliefs. This photo, of a protest against the recent attacks on Hindus in various districts, was taken in Shahbagh, Dhaka, on October 16, 2021.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh would be more than four million, which is indeed a large number. So, yes, any minority group living in Bangladesh is at relatively high risks. However, I would say the risks or challenges of living in Bangladesh are also high for many other reasons—e.g. non-

majority group by another majority group (as they identified themselves as such).

To my Muslim community

I know the majority of you do not support violence against minority communities.

safe and not be harmed by your neighbours, then please speak up, stand up for your minority friends and neighbours, and say out loud that you are there for them, and they are not alone. It is not the time to tolerate the heinous crimes that have been committed in

A leader, NAM, some concerns and optimism



JOSIP Broz Tito was one of the founding leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). He was undeniably a significant world leader

loved by many around the globe, and was also harshly criticised by many people—especially by the non-Serbs in former Yugoslavia for not doing enough to deter the Serbian hegemonic aspirations, despite anticipating the outcome far ahead.

Tito was born and raised in the idyllic Zagorje region of Croatia. His mother was Slovenian and his father Croatian. He started out as a locksmith. He first became a member of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia—not to be confused with Slovenia—at a young age, and later joined the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, gradually rising to leadership.

Tito was a popular leader. He mobilised people with socialist aspirations in the territories of Yugoslavia during World War II against the Nazis, fascists and other groups. After winning the war, he led the Yugoslav communist revolution.

In the early years of his leadership, Tito intended close relations, but felt pressure by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. In order to counter Soviet influence, he began to receive outside help, including military assistance from the Western countries. In 1953, he made a tripartite Balkan Pact with NATO members Greece and Turkey, with the aim to act as a deterrent against the Soviet expansion. Although Tito was known to have reservations about the Western influence and pluralist systems as threats to his own ideal communist state, the pact was obviously intended to protect

Yugoslavia from the USSR. The death of Stalin in 1953 would not diminish the looming Soviet threat against the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Sharing the concerns of other countries caught between the two powerful blocs, Tito, together with the leaders of India, Egypt, Ghana and Indonesia, co-founded the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

With the winds of change in the former Eastern Bloc countries, popular demands for transition to a multiparty and more liberal system began to rise in Tito's Yugoslavia as well. Unlike the USSR and other former Eastern Bloc nations, the transition was excruciating in Yugoslavia. The Republic of Serbia, as an "internal hegemonist" of the federation, disrespected legitimate

nationalism through the ethnic Serbian generals. Milošević, who later turned out to be a war criminal, created paramilitary groups by driving thousands of crime machines like Željko Ražnjatović Arkan into battlefields. As the dominant power among the republics of former Yugoslavia, Serbia had constantly violated the basic principles of NAM through its actions. Serbia, during that time, attacked the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other constitutive units, resorted to violence, interfered in their internal affairs, and breached the principle of equality and peaceful coexistence of all people and nations in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Serbia's aggression also sparked wars and humanitarian crises in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Slovenia, Northern Macedonia, and Montenegro were also affected, but they survived more easily than the others. The culture of conflict that prevailed did a lot of damage to the Serbs as well.

More than 20 years have passed since the wars of ex-Yugoslavia. While the Western Balkan countries are prioritising the integration process to the European Union and everyone is expecting a more prosperous future, Serbia is,

unfortunately, signalling new fears again, through aggressive rhetoric and by using Serbian elements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. Taking the actions that can lead to repeating old habits can be the biggest mistake in the Western Balkans.

The current president of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, was an MP from the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party in the National Assembly of Serbia during the Bosnian War. During the Kosovo War, he served as the minister of information. President Vučić, who has never expressed regret for his aggressive rhetoric and damages caused in the past, is now paraded as a "moderate leader" of the Serbs, which is yet to be seen. During the high-level commemorative meeting on the occasion of NAM's 60th anniversary, Vučić pretended to be keeping Tito's ideals alive. Instead, the event turned out to be a propaganda ground by the Serbian leadership, targeting Kosovo exclusively. Serbia, still reluctant to give up its hegemonic dreams, parades itself as the sole inheritor of the former Yugoslavia, when the legacy of Yugoslavia belongs to all its constitutive units, as much as Serbia.

Ideals of living under one federation were destroyed mostly by

those responsible for the murder of more than 150,000 innocent people in former Yugoslavia. Marshall Tito, a leader who earned the hearts and minds of people from many NAM countries, passed away in 1980. His spirit of unity was gradually destroyed in the past 40 years, mostly by the hegemonic ambitions of Serbia. This conjuncture led to the emergence and increase of influence of other nationalist movements as well.

The people of the Western Balkans are virtuous. They will eventually find a way to have good neighbourly relations in a pluralistic and democratic environment. The only solution can be reached by genuinely adopting the values of the modern European Union by all Balkan countries. The European Union, despite some issues, will remain a miracle of the 20th century and a model system for the world. Without repeating mistakes of the past, the leaders of the region—especially of Serbia—could relieve their people of the feelings of hostility, and make them look to a peaceful future. We can only achieve it together as independent states by championing mutual respect and democratic principles.

Güner Ureya is the ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Bangladesh.



A man looks at the monument of late Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito in Podgorica, Montenegro, on December 18, 2018.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Both the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence of the Sino-Indian Agreement in 1954 and the Bandung Principles inspired the foundation of NAM.

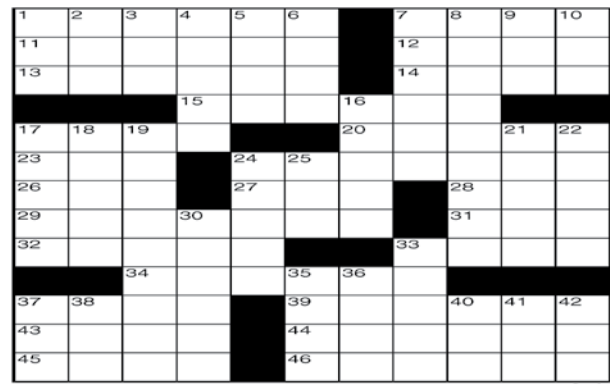
After the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, many things changed in the international arena. Although many countries were progressively reformed, some took the opposite direction. The economic reliance of many NAM members, especially on the West, was the new trend in the international order after the Cold War.

demands of other constitutive units for peaceful breakup of ex-Yugoslavia and undermined peaceful transition. Serbia saw the transition as an opportunity to expand its borders.

Slobodan Milošević's Serbia shattered the spirit of coexistence from the Tito era and tried to replace it with Serbian domination and nationalism. A seemingly socialist regime would make the Serbian Orthodox Church the mouthpiece of Milošević's hate speech and propaganda, while the Yugoslav Army a guardian of Serbian

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Station worker
 - 7 Yokel
 - 11 Baltimore player
 - 12 Burden
 - 14 Holds title to
 - 15 Deli buy
 - 17 Stretched tight
 - 20 Series test
 - 23 Roadhouse
 - 24 Desdemona's husband
 - 26 Fiddling need
 - 27 King of France
 - 28 Wedding words
 - 29 Uplifted
 - 31 Zero
 - 32 Stylishly
 - 33 Historic times
- DOWN**
- 1 Cacao holder
 - 2 Metal source
 - 3 Vault part
 - 4 Breakfast bread
 - 5 Snow queen in "Frozen"
 - 6 Stagger
 - 7 Dorm sharer
 - 8 Reluctant
 - 9 Frank holder
 - 10 Twisty turn
 - 16 Rose pest
 - 17 Rome's river
 - 18 Battery end
 - 19 Oblivious
 - 21 Nostalgic song
 - 22 Shop equipment
 - 24 Hunter in the stars
 - 25 Sock part
 - 30 Curtain feature
 - 33 Brat's opposite
 - 35 Play group
 - 36 Opposed
 - 37 Impress greatly
 - 38 Young one
 - 40 Athena's symbol
 - 41 Sheltered side
 - 42 Say further



MONDAY'S ANSWERS

G A F F E C A R A T
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 R I S E T O P O W E R
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 L E T O N
 Y A L I E R O M P S
 A H A B M O A T
 P A G E S T A W N Y
 L U R I D
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Date: 25/10/2021

Tender Notice
 Tender Notice No. 01/2021-2022

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works as stated below:

SL No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID No.	Tender method
1	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2019-20/W2.01719	Construction of additional classroom Dattapur GPS under PEDP4 (2nd time Tender)	621783	NOTM
2	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2019-20/W2.00821	Construction of additional classroom Rugampur GPS under PEDP4 (1st time Tender)	621774	NOTM
3	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAI/2019-20/W2.00820	Construction of additional classroom of Uttor Sojan Nagor GPS under PEDP4 (2nd time Tender)	621792	NOTM
4	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2019-20/W2.01717	Construction of additional classroom Monoharpur GPS under PEDP4 (2nd time Tender)	621790	NOTM
5	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2019-20/W2.01718	Construction of additional classroom Isapur GPS under PEDP4 (2nd time Tender)	621782	NOTM
6	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2020-21/W9.207	Repair & Renovation of Balaganj UEO (1st time Tender)	620379	NOTM
7	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/BAL/2019-20/W17.01102	Major Maintenance of Kaliganj Govt. Primary School (3rd time Tender)	621794	NOTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited through online at any branches of registered bank upto 10/11/2021 14:00. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The Tender Notice will be available on the website: www.lged.gov.bd

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