Rampant crime: Strike at the roots of the torment

The real challenges lie within the society itself. The government needs to step up the battle against drugs and crimes

and work out ways to distribute wealth more equitably. More money should be poured into education providing more

opportunities for the young. Youngsters need to know that society cares about them. And above all, parents should

take a long hard look in the mirror. For, the values of today's youth are merely magnified reflections of their elders.

N an ideal world, there are some stories we we'd love to avoid: those with an excess of blood and gore. Some of us may find watching films based on such themes entertaining and then go away from the TV screen or movie house with the reassurance that it was all fiction. However what is on the silver screen is coming far closer to our neighbourhood than we would have thought. There is a general sense of alarm across the country -- aroused by a recent spurt in crime involving the young and including everything from extortion to robbery to arson to murder. The revelation is that crime and youth make a heady and potent cocktail.

Reports of gruesome murders published in the newspapers in the recent past reinforce our belief about the horrendous crime situation in the country. Of late these were --Bashkhali: eleven of a family burnt to death followed by five butchered in Pabna. Newspapers carrying reports of such gory incidents chill our bone. Some ghastly incidents of the recent past will illustrate as to how youngmen in the age group 16-25 are slipping into crime wave. Some of them in the meantime have become so notorious that even when public can identify them, law enforcement people cannot. And with such patronage they have been receiving from the police, they have turned into dreaded criminals. Reports have it that Yakub Ali Eku (25). a member of gang leader Zisan was driving through Khilgaon area in a motorbike when his rival ex-gang members shot him to death. Police sources now say that Eku was killed as a sequel to feuds relating to sharing of extortion booty. The irony is that police couldn't nab him earlier even when he was spotted in many places. Paradoxically, Yagub Ali Eku was involved in the killing of two D.B. Inspectors, Nure Alam Shikder and S.I. Alamgir Hossain in the Sunrise International Hotel at Malibagh.

Despite mobilisation of strike force at strategic points in the city in the month of Ramadan, extortion bid by such young deviant youths resulting in injury and even death has not abated. Two young men, Rony and Saikat, identified criminals in the Babubazar area of the city, got seriously injured by mob beating while collecting extortion money from businessmen on Novem-

It won't be enough to describe the situation in the country as just sickening. Much to our embarrassment and shock, we will find that youths aged 18-25 years are striking terror all over the country. There are armies of gangsters on police records who have a finger in every pie of economic transactions -- district goods movement by trucks, tender dropping in any state-level works, or transfer of land ownerships. The cult of warlordism that began in early 1980s in this poverty ridden country especially in the Dhaka city area has now spread throughout its length and breadth. Crime has now engulfed the entire administration and political systems. None of the major political parties has proved to be immune to the contagion. Most of the murders committed these days in the country relate to either drug sale or drug money sharing other than ruthless measures resorted to by addicts. Reports have it that in the Tutpara area

of the Khulna town Aminul Islam Nira

(35) a drug peddler was killed by his

associates over sharing of the drug sale

money on November 3 last. Mansur

(25), a drug dealer at Palpur village in

the Kuchai union of Sylhet, was killed

by his neighbours on November 4, as a

sequel to past rivalries. Earlier newspa-

pers headlined a gory report on August

12 last that abductors slaughtered

Polash, an eight year old boy, at

Phulpur village in Mymensingh. The

four abductors, two of them college

students, all aged between 18-20,

kidnapped Polash for a paltry sum of

Tk. 20,000/=. Most astoundingly,

Kabirul who kidnapped and killed

Polash enjoyed board and lodging in

Polash's house. This country is no

stranger to violence and atrocities. But

any one will find it impossible to

explain the abominable ferocity of

killing a minor boy for ransom money.

This Phulpur barbarity or Rajoir killing

of minor boys some days earlier has

breached the line between human and

Undeniably true, we live in violent

times. Political infighting, revenge

killing, extortion, rape and murder are

now committed by those perceived as

the most innocent -- the young. Sadly

true, these youngsters who suddenly

turned into criminals operating indi-

vidually or in groups seem to come

from affluent, well-connected families

and the crimes they commit seem to be

more vicious and widespread than ever

times, also keep rising. Sakina Khatun

(16) a newly wed wife at Ramgati.

Noakhali was killed by her husband

Zahir because of her parent's inability

to meet the dowry demand. Rehena

Dowry related murders in recent

animal behaviour.

under Lakhmipur upazila was killed by her husband Ismail in dowry related conflict. But the tragic killing of a young house wife and her 11-month old son Tarigul by her husband at Netrokona for failing to meet the dowry demand overwhelms us with shock and grief. Statistics are damning. In past one week or so 10 persons including four housewives and one child were killed in seven districts as per newspaper reports and on a certain day in August last eight persons were killed by the conclusion that can be drawn from these ghastly incidents is that the perpetrators of these crimes are all

youngmen soaring with ambition but

bursting with greed and lust for ready

money and quick success. It is the

brutality of these crimes that has

awakened the country to the beast that

The Crime Records Bureau in its

latest report states that young people

belonging to 16-25 age group are

responsible for 80 per cent of all crimes

committed in the country. More

shockingly, about 60 per cent of those

involved were young first timers. In the

Dhaka city robbery, extortion and

docoity have escalated sharply with

youngsters accounting for 80 per cent

of such crimes. Police records reveal

that 90 per cent of all crimes committed

this year have been by young men

trying their hand at crime for the first

time. According to police sources as

well as newspaper reports, everyday in

the cities like Dhaka, Chittagong,

Khulna and Rajshahi some rich busi-

nessmen get robbed or kidnapped on

ransom bid, commuters get mugged

on highway buses, railway stations and

bus terminals, women get raped or boy

friends posing romeos throw acid on

school and college going girls. Most

shockingly, in most cases women in the

age group between 16-30 are living

under constant threat to their lives and

in several cases, wary of the humilia-

tion, they have chosen to end their

taken a new shape. For well-known

criminal gang leaders, a generation of

cheap labour becomes available. Hired

goons in the age group 16-25 are now

doing the most atrocious jobs ripping

apart the age-old societal norms and

value systems. Crime dossiers and lists

of bad characters -- the foundations of

In recent times crime pattern has

runs loose in young people.

majority of criminals are young novices and new recruits. Quick money seems to be the new mantra. With family values already under stress and job market squeezing up, crime suddenly seems to be an alluring option. For

How could this youngmen, sensible and educated in most cases, be killing so dispassionately? Experts offer a raft of reasons but hasten to add that generalisations are difficult because each case is unique -- each young criminal has his own genes, his own family background and his own response to the many forces in modern society that encourage violence. But

the most common factor is: the present

generation is going through one of

those plastic moments in history --

where old, known value systems have

crumbled and new ones have not

Unfortunately the pleasures, com-

fort and luxuries of modern life with its

dazzling display on media permeated

into our life style and the idealism that

once illuminated educated or even the

rustic rural life took severe knocks and

materialism wore them down. The

voungsters -- those born in the late 70s

and right through 80s -- grew up in a

world full of scams and corruption

They are not interested to know what

happens to others, but in what they

want to change their own life styles -

ready money, unbridled life with all the comfort and luxuries and they believe they can use any means to get it.

Inspired by the ostentatious living they see next to their door, most children or youngsters to-day prowl tirelessly for a better deal that will free them from the restraints that their parents faced. Ambitions soar and image of making it big, say for example, owning luxury, cars, dazzling home appliances, dinner and drinks in posh hotel and rendezvous with socialite girls constantly play on the mind but when failure strikes, most can't handle

Sadly true, most of the youngsters

these days are drawn to crime for

reasons that are our own making. Even

after going through all the struggles

and securing the university degree or

technical qualification most desirable

for a job when he moves from door to

door for a job the lack of opportunity

frustrates him. And soon the tremen-

dous pressure to survive and to suc-

ceed builds up anger and leads him to

astray. Sanity blinks or so to say totally

evaporates and the result is: they jump

into horrendous crimes, some through

circumstances, some through peer

pressure and there is no coming back.

sum of 500 taka, they can loot a beg-

gar's scanty earning of Tk.£100/= as it

happened in Manikganj town in this

They can kill people even for a paltry

month of Ramadan. Two youngsters riding a motorbike swooped on a beggar while he was counting the day's earning in a central crowded place in town. Hardly any study about the behavioural nattern of such deviant youths in our country has been done.

nals come from upper middle class families or middle class families where parents have little time for them. A generation of latch-key children have grown up with loosening parental control. Absentee parents mean they don't get the nurturing, guidance or supervision necessary to instill a set of values or a proper behaviour code. Studies have revealed that it is the youngsters ensconced in the security of their middle class homes who commit crimes because they feel they can get away with it. On the other hand, government and theoreticians are pitching for more stringent laws, more effective and more swift judicial system. But that's like shooting at the moon.

Md. Asadullah Khan, formerly a teacher of Physics, is

As said earlier, most of these crimi-

The real challenges lie within the society itself. The government needs to step up the battle against drugs and crimes and work out ways to distribute wealth more equitably. More money should be poured into education providing more opportunities for the young. Youngsters need to know that society cares about them. And above all parents should take a long hard look in the mirror. For, the values of today's youth are merely magnified reflections of their elders. They need to discover all over again values like receptivity, kindness and tolerance. This may sound nauseatingly obsolescent in today's world of violence. But they are the only ingredients of peace.

The Night of Honour

Significance of observance

HERE is no Book in the world in whose service so much talent, so much labour, so much time and money have been expended as has been the case with the Quran. A mere glance at Imam Sutuy's (d. 911 H) 'Itiqan' or Haji Khalifa's (d. 1059 H) 'Kash Fuzzunun' will show the encyclopedic volume of the Quranic sciences in their day.

"Ouranic literature is so voluminous that no single man can compass a perusal of the whole. Besides the extent works, there were innumerable works written for special groups of people or form special points of view or for special purpose which have perished. And more works are being added everyday. The activity in this line has never been greater than it is now."

Thus observed the world renowned commentator and translator of the Holy Quran Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali while translating this Holy Book some seventy years ago from now, that is, in the year 1934. So, this is the position of the greatest of all Holy Books including all Revealed Books. It may be stated here that our very existence as Muslim is directly linked with revelation of the Holy Quran on the Night of Honour or the Lailatul-Qadr. Al-Quran was revealed by Almighty Allah unto the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) on the 27th Ramadan night i.e. August 16, 610 AD when he was 40 years and six months of age. After the Messenger of Allah was honoured with Prophethood by the Lord Creator while meditating in a small cave called Hira at Mount An Noor he started preaching and propounding the principles of Islam. the chosen religion of Almighty Allah. Consequently, not only the people of Arabia entered the fold of Islam, gradually people of many other countries also embraced Islam. And there was a time when our revered forefathers too entered the fold of this religion of peace, and they accepted Islam. So, our embracing of Islam is very much connected with the Night of Honour or

Now we may turn our undivided attention to all the five Ayats (Verses) of Sura Oadr of the Holy Ouran in which Almighty Allah declares:

Ayat: 1 "We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Honour" Ayat: 2 "And what will explain to thee what the Night of Honour is?"

Ayat: 3 "The Night of Honour is better than a thousand months."

Ayat: 4 "Therein come down the angels and the spirit by Allah's permis-

Ayat: 5 "Peace...

While commenting on Ayats 3 and 5

of the aforesaid Sura Night of Honour (i.e. Sura Qadr) of the Holy Qur-an the same commentator of international repute Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali has

"A thousand (nights) must be taken in indefinite sense, as denoting a very long period of time. This does not refer to our ideas of time, but to "timeless time". One moment of enlightenment under Allah's Light is better than thousands of months or years of animal life, and such a moment converts the night of darkness into a period of spiritual glory." (Commentation on

"When the night of spiritual darkness is dissipated by the glory of Allah, a rity arise in soul. And this lasts on until this life closes, and the glorious Day of the new spiritual world dawns, when everything will be on a different plane. and the chequered nights and days of this world will be even less than a dream." (Commentation on Ayat 5).

Again, according to Ayat 4 of Sura Sajda (Adoration) of the Holy Quran we further learn that "a Day does not mean a day as we recon it viz. one apparent course of the sun round the

The term 'Lailatul-Qadr' or 'Shab-e-Qadr' is not only very known to and popular among the young and old, it is equally known to and popular among the small children also. The other day one of my grand children (a student of class II) told me eagerly and enthusiastically and also with all the emphasis at his command: 'Grandpa! 1 will observe fast on the following day of 27th Ramadan, that is, the day following Shab-e-Qadr." It is not only the case with my grandchild, millions and millions of such children living in the whole Muslim world beseech their affectionate mothers every year during the holy lunar month of Ramadan to allow them to observe fast at least on the day following the Night of Honour (Lailatul-Qadr).

This is the holy lunar month of Ramadan and we must not be oblivious of the great importance and significance of Lailatul-Qadr. Muslims all over the world will celebrate this auspicious Night with due solemnity and fervour. We in Bangladesh should also observe this sacred Night in a befitting manner.

We all know rose is a very beautiful flower and is liked by all and sundry. It is the queen of all flowers. In the sane way Night of Honour or the Lailatul-Qadr is the night of all nights. It is also the queen of all nights. Its direct association with Revelation of the Holy Ouran, and Praises of Benign Allah showered on it, makes it glorious and



Attaining good governance

Needed enhancement of accountability

HE people of Bangladesh cannot or do not assert their right to good economic governance because of ineffectiveness of the constitutional and political structures that regulate accountability. Generally speaking, the government agencies are subject to weak accounting controls. There is no performance standards to inform public servants about their responsibilities. The agencies are unresponsive to people's needs. People have little access to information about government processes and decisions. No effective means to check exists when officials abuse their power. Such lack of accountability may be seen at every level of government. It reaches upwards to their political

Accountability is a vast subject. It may, therefore, be appropriate here to discuss in brief only the most important elements, in the following para-

Increasing Capacity of Constitutional and Statutory Oversight Bodies: Though in a democratic system parliamentary accountability is a basic need it has not worked well in Bangladesh so far because of too much power for executive, incomplete adjustment from a presidential to a parliamentary system and inadequate debate (because of peculiar behaviour of major political parties) on policy and legislation in parliament. Though the standing committees are supposed to perform many of the important parliamentary oversight and legislative functions they have proved to be ineffective.

As accountability is vital for good governance all concerned should make special effort to increase its effectiveness and raise the status of parliament in national life. It may be worthwhile if the government considers the following suggestions: Adequate office and research facilities to MPs; Strengthening the system of standing committees; Parliamentary approval for key appointments (both judicial and executive positions); Permanent parliamentary support and

oversight agencies; and Establishing an Ombudsman's office.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG): The chief responsibility for financial monitoring lies with the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General in Bangladesh. This office is responsible for verifying expost that all public expenditures conform to administrative, legal and legislative requirements. Although he

tion of the ministerial budget submissions, summarisation and passage through the parliament to its final publication. Development budget converts the annual development programme prepared by the Planning Commission. Among the existing weaknesses of the budget system are: Budget preparation procedures are not easily accessible and contain too

cannot monitor the overall effectiveness of public spending. There are excessive expenditure targets without due consideration to physical achievements. It does not evaluate projects systematically.

Enhancement of Transparency: Transparency and openness are regarded as foundations of accountability in governments. The wide

dissemination of information on

Powerful politicians and bureaucrats are never prosecuted while in office. Though there is an Anti Corruption Bureau it is largely ineffective. A systematic effort to attack the source is urgently needed. Generally speaking, we may get good result in curbing corruption among public servants if the scope for graft raising can be reduced, level of ethical standards can be raised through espirit de corps based on service practice and increasing compensation.

is appointed by the government the constitution provides for its independ-

The reports of the CAG do not reflect proper ex-post checks over spending agencies perhaps due to (a) weak staff skills, (b) outmoded concepts and procedures, (c) inadequate coverage of reports, (d) dual responsibility of accounting and auditing, (e) delay in issuing reports, (f) lack of comprehensiveness and poor quality of reports, (g) inadequate attention to follow-up action, (h) lack of adequate number of professionally qualified staff. To alleviate these problems the CAG, Planning Implementation Units and implementing agencies may be allowed to (i) recruit directly audit firms on the basis of market rates of remuneration, (ii) strengthen the training programmes (both domestic and foreign), (iii) separate audit and accounting functions, (iv) initiate action for moving toward outputoriented accountability, (v) improve the quality of external audits of SOEs and (vi) prepare a model audit scope

 $tional\,Auditing\,Standards\,Board.$ Centralization of Government **Budget:** The budget is presented in two parts, the revenue budget and the development budget. The revenue

using guidelines given by Interna-

many documents; Budget calendars are too long and time for analysis too short; Lacks a medium-term expenditure and revenue frameworks Very little or no special pre-service training for qualification of budget staff; and the Revenue and Development budgets, prepared separately, are exogenously driven. Revenue budget is largely driven by historical factors and the development budget is influenced by the availability of donor funding and increasingly by likely savings after meeting the recurring expenditure under the revenue budget. This results in unpredictability of funds: Neither the minister nor the secretary is fully involved in the preparatory stages of the budget; and there is little attempt made to identify ministerial objectives and to provide funds on that basis. Monitoring and Evaluating Devel-

opment Projects: The implementation, monitoring and evaluation division (IMED) is responsible for all routine monitoring of projects and for preparing quarterly and annual overviews of expenditures and the attainment of physical benchmarks. It also carries out inspections to verify information provided by the implementing agencies. Its various weaknesses are, very briefly, discussed below: Because of the narrowness of its mandate it

government policies provides for public debate. It also helps to improve policy design, facilitates acceptance and ensures effective implementation. In Bangladesh very large number of activities remain outside the public purview. Bureaucrats are obsessed with secrecy and have deep misgivings about freely providing any information. Three major reasons can be identified for this attitude: (a) lack of professional knowledge of civil servants; (b) existence of specific laws and rules which explicitly make it a criminal offence for civil servants to disclose various kinds of information without authorisation (Official Secret Act, 1923) and (c) the bureaucrats believe that revealing too much information undermines the trust and confidence between the civil servants and their political masters. Many countries such as USA, New

Zealand etc now recognise that secrecy reduces efficiency and the quality of decision making and most importantly, it compromises democracy. In view of the trend for openness the government may consider practicing the following: announcing a public policy on transparency; establishing a task force for public sector transparency; publishing the earnings and tax payments of all elected officials as

reported in the tax returns; publishing a list of bank defaulters; enhancing dissemination of information and

Fighting Corruption: Corruption thrives in Bangladesh mainly because (i) there is discretion and monopoly, (ii) weak accountability and (iii) poor pay of public servants. Apart from these, other important causes are: (a) nature of regulatory environment, (b) lack of transparency in government, (c) influence of powerful business interests, (d) weakness in legal framework and (e) self-sustaining cycle of

Bureaucratic corruption cannot exist in isolation. In fact it is a reflection of prevailing behavioural patterns and cultural mores in society. It is sustained only by the participation of many people in the private sector and the business community. Political leaders are also to blame. Political corruption is the source of funding for political parties which have failed to develop broad-based system of elicit-

Successive governments have condemned corruption and taken isolated punitive actions, but they have failed to tackle the underlying structural issues. The tendency to view corruption as a personal misdeed has led to an excessive reliance on punishment. This may have some deterrent effect, but has not addressed the root of the problem.

In Bangladesh powerful politicians and bureaucrats are never prosecuted while in office. Though there is an Anti Corruption Bureau it is largely ineffective. A systematic effort to attack the source is urgently needed. Generally speaking, we may get good result in curbing corruption among public servants if the scope for graft raising can be reduced, level of ethical standards can be raised through espirit de corps based on service practice and increasing compensation. Good governance will remain an ever elusive dream if the corruption among public servants cannot be reduced drasti-

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In the grip of crises

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

HE present coalition government headed by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has completed two years after assuming power in October 2001. It is perhaps high time to assess its performances. The BNP in its political manifesto made pledges to the voters that if voted to power, it would bring reforms in the administration, remove corruption and control lawlessness in the country, apart from separating judiciary from the administration and establishing independent anticorruption commission. We have been watching with dismay and alarm that corruption has permeated into the very fabric of society to such an extent that a telephone line will not be in operation unless and until pockets of the lineman is lined!

Waterline will remain suspended unless 'proper authority' is 'pleased' adequately. Similarly, until meter reader of electricity supply authority is satisfied with his demands, ghost electricity bill will land on the desk of the consumer. In this connection, reference may be made to a news item appeared in The Daily Star with regard to gas meter reader, who slashes out one crore taka in charity every year. No file in the secretariat or in the Department of Roads and Highways will move unless proper authorities are duly buttered up. This is real picture of the state of affairs in the country. We do not have to see the state of affairs through the prism of international transparency. The government is fully aware of this unhealthy situation but remedial or punitive action has not vet been initiated against any one concerned so far.

Killing and extortion have become rampant. Kidnapping of business people has added a new dimension to the present unhealthy chaotic situation in the country. The government as of now has not succeeded in rescuing kidnapped business personalities, which shows failure of the administration in maintaining law and order. Exporters and importers are also having problems with customs officials. Without parting with a piece of the cake no clearance is given to export

or import consignments, which in fact

hamper the interest of business people and thus deprives the government of revenue in the form of tax. The petty business people are generally suffer-

Recent statement to electronic media by the State Minister for Home Affairs that the crime situation has improved is diametrically opposite the picture that we receive, during holy Ramadan, about the killing spree including that of activists of the ruling BNP and vandalism by unruly garment workers at Narayanganj, not to speak



and order also lies with the separation of judiciary from the administration. There should not be any interference in judiciary by the administration to bring the criminals to justice. Judgement of the court should be executed as promptly as possible without any grudge.

of Bashkhali and Pabna carnage. The law and order situation has deteriorated alarmingly in the country, surpassing the record of previous Awami League government. The voters cast their valuable votes in favour of BNP in 2001 only because of its pledges to get rid of corruption and for improvement of law and order situation. But alas! The people have to become frustrated

The entire country is today passing through unprecedented crises -- price hike of essential commodities, lawlessness, mal-administration, corruption and smuggling. The life of the general masses is at stake. The people ridden with problems and poverty are now at a loss what to do in such situation hitherto unknown to them.

The law and order situation will continue to deteriorate unless main problems of youth community are dentified and addressed properly and

judiciously. Presently, it seems the society is been divided into two groups: the haves and have-nots -powerful and powerless. Dhaka city itself presents a glaring example. Skyrise residential buildings and shopping malls in posh areas surrounded by shanties, and of slums not very far away. The gap between the rich and the poor is increasing every day. Majority the youth community feel deprived of job opportunities. The scope of going abroad in search of job has also been shrinking. No measure has been adopted by the government to re-employ young and energetic workers the shut down mills. Absence of good governance, rise of lawlessness and of continuing political instability are holding back investment in the country which has caused economic stagnancy.

Workers, on the other hand, are being exploited by corrupt political elements to meet their selfish interest Trade union leaders are also exploiting innocent and uneducated work force to get wealthy themselves. Politically exploited work force in the mills and factories are, by and large, responsible for making the industries losing con-

The administration should have dealt with this menace duly instead of pampering them to seek their votes and line up in the Paltan Maidan to raise their voices in favour of the political leaders. Regrettably, we have noted that both the major political parties have miserably failed to deliver goods to the country.

This is one side of the story. The improvement of law and order also lies with the separation of judiciary from the administration. There should not be any interference in judiciary by the administration to bring the criminals to justice. Judgement of the court should be executed as promptly as possible without any grudge. It is a constitutional obligation to separate judiciary in the interest of the people.

Some one should take a lead to make the country free from corruption, nepotism. The people are looking forward to welcome only those who can run this country honestly and

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