

Menacing rise in sexual crimes and brutality Can't we stop this barbarity?

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TRAUMATIC, humiliating and frightening. For victims of sexual abuse, the experience can be all this and more. But as the cases surfacing in the newspapers indicate, there is no dearth of men -- precisely speaking, villains and monsters-- willing to target or, so to say, humiliate women at all places in Bangladesh now. Perhaps there are no devils left in hell, they are all here now. In the couple of months ending February, newspaper reports indicate that 280 people were murdered, 56 women and children were raped. Among the raped, 29 were minor girls including one 4-year-old. 25 teenage girls were gang raped and eight of them were murdered after rape. Activists and Human Rights organisations like IDR (Institute of Democratic Rights) sources say that this is only a fraction of the crime situation in the whole country and only the most glaring cases come to light. Economic compulsions and fear for their reputation force most victims to sweep their cases under the carpet, especially when the perpetrator is an affluent or influential member of the society or a political party. Almost six months have rolled by since the present 4-party led coalition took the reins of administration and sadly enough the decrepit, defunct and ineffective machinery of governance that it inherited remains exactly as it was. You only need to sift the pages of newspapers of the past few weeks to recognise this gloomy truth. Do we have to believe that the nation is on the move as touted by some over-zealous politicians? If you have read or examined the details you have realised that most of the achievements were bureaucratic exercises in doing nothing. There is almost no development going on in the country, because the government seems flat broke. Sure enough, if the 4-party led coalition government was chosen by people, it is because they wanted change in the way the

country is governed. Even illiterates recognise there is something inherently wrong in a system that has failed to meet their basic needs: jobs, food, clean drinking water, roads, schools, housing and terrorism free society.

Why it is hard for the government to understand that serious administrative reforms are essential if we are to have even a semblance of good governance? If we examine the way in which ministries function, we may discover that most of the departments have become so irrelevant that they could be closed down without anyone noticing except the officials who live off them. It may be officials of this kind who

are confined to seedy back lanes, but it has moved swiftly to opulent areas. Crime now, as it appears, can creep up anybody's front door. Precisely told, there is a climate of criminality. Citizens feel more vulnerable than before.

But the concerned ministry's response at best has been to ignore the crime graph or shuffle police officers. As for the police, they seem to be running out of alibis. "It is only the people's perception that crime has increased", says one high ranking police officer in a TV interview. The overriding feeling is that the city is policed by a beaten force. But it is not as if the police are taking it easy. Apart from the grueling

The government proposes to frame new laws to curb violence, criminality and corruption. People only hope it must not be an exercise in black humour. Other than banning polythene, believed to be a menace for environmental degradation, track record is not anything inspiring. For a government that assumed office with soaring expectation, the fall or decline has been precipitate. The euphoria over just concluded election victory has all but dissipated and been replaced with exasperation that is fast turning into anger. It is not enough that policy directives are framed, it is important that these are implemented and complied with by the administration without mal-

ice after being gang raped by three human monsters. In such cycle of incidents, Mahima, a 15-year old girl in Rajshahi committed suicide after being gang raped. Fifteen year old Sabina of the Poalshura Daripara village in Gurudaspur thana of Natore district was also gang raped on February 28 and then murdered to erase the last traces of criminality. We are not totally unfamiliar with incidents of other nature of crimes in other countries. Not even the innately evil and pathologically delinquent could commit such crimes even in the most rustic and vicious society or place on earth. Then why were they so emboldened to behave so recklessly? The

that torture and repression on women increased alarmingly in the last year. Reports indicate that of the 1,14,191 crimes registered in different thanas in the country, 13,339 cases relate to women repression and this include a shocking number of 3189 cases of rape other than 153 incidents of acid throwing and 381 incidents of child abuse. About 9,265 women received grievous assault because of torture mostly in dowry related cases. The increase, the report says, is about 14 per cent.

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Because of the media role, women these days are emboldened. The result -- more and more such cases are coming into the open. This is not a revolution. Rather there is an awareness that sexual harassment or abuse or violation or rape is not anything that should go unchallenged anymore. But despite the awareness fear of a social stigma drives most women to silence. Fahima's mother wanted to take Fahima away from Dhaka and bury this unhappy episode but Fahima had chosen the other way.

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are responsible for preventing politicians from doing anything that would alter the system they have so carefully nurtured. It is a system to help them more than it helps the people.

The country's crime graph has climbed alarmingly with almost ten murders a day. Add to the tally of dacoities, robberies and other non-recognisable crimes. It tots upto the 12,000 registered crimes for the last few months in Dhaka city. The city has seen 14 per cent increase in murders compared to the corresponding period last year. Only in women repression the figures made public by ODHKAR, a Women's Rights Organisation are as follows from 1st January, 2001 to February, 2002:

Acid victims	=	297
Repression for dowry	=	43
Murder for dowry	=	136
Suicide for dowry	=	6
Rape victims	=	720
C h i l d	r a p e	
=		171
Other cases of torture	=	150
Murder and rape are no longer		

hours policemen put in, special squads are being formed to check crime but all these policy formulation have hardly yielded any result. There is largely a feeling that criminal-police-politician nexus has fuelled the crime scene in the country.

The police department's problems are legion: resource crunch, shortage of weapons, poor working conditions. Policing, actually, is closely linked with governance. The party in power always use and abuse the police. "The government has to address the totality of policing, not suggest short term measures", says one high ranking retired police officer. Today criminals have changed their tactics. An important one, says one senior officer, is their wider reach.

The distressing crime scene calls for some introspection on the part of the government and long term solutions. Never before has the government faced so harrowing a time with so much of criminal actions jeopardizing governance, development, initiative and vigour.

ice, fear or favour, and of necessity without delay.

Nowhere is the disappointment as being profoundly felt as within the ruling party itself. Watching the rise in sinister crime graph one gets a shock to discover that while the rest of the world is making fast progress, we in Bangladesh seem to be moving inexorably backwards -- in the middle ages. How else can we explain a rape victim in Rajshahi being inflicted with 25 lashes plus a fine of Tk. 1500/= whereas the perpetrator of the crime, an influential UP member escaped unhurt? More atrocious and shocking, the alleged rape, torture and subsequent murder of Elapi Rishi of Raghunathpur village in Mymensingh is a story one would not have heard at all. In a country that we proudly call cultured, civilised and its people imbued with religious, ethical and moral values, such ghastly incident of rape and subsequent murder put a stigma on our collective psyche.

Thirteen-year old Fahima Akhtar in Mirpur area of Dhaka city took her

answer is obvious. Like merchandise, recourse to law in this country is eminently negotiable depending on your pocket, your status and your connections. For every undertrial languishing in jail, there are believably at least 10 to 20 big wigs who know they can escape punishment for more serious offences. Precisely true, Bangladesh operates on a simple principle: Show me the person and I'll show you the law. Everybody from the humblest policeman in the thana to the highest official in the government, knows it. There is no equality before the law. Consequently there is no effective law. And there is no deterrence either. Otherwise how could all these nefarious crimes be committed with such alarming frequency? Sure enough, none of our leaders are able to control a handful of hoodlums who seem determined to impose their medieval barbarity on us all the time!

More revealing, in their Annual Report published recently, Bangladesh Police made it public

Initiating automation via customized software

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TO meet the demands of doing more with less, many companies of our country are implementing customized software programmes to automate such business practices as permitting themselves to do the day-to-day tasks in more efficient manner. Automation is a laboursaving solution that can be effective in freeing up staff time from routine work in favour of providing faster, accurate, and more personalized services to business organizations. This trend is most likely visible in the private sector of our country as because this particular part is seriously output oriented. On the other hand, the public sector or government organizations are still lagging behind with their backward manual system and with their stereotyped thoughts.

Focus: The focus of my study is towards the decision maker personnel of both profit and non-profit oriented organizations of our country. The aim of my study is to make them aware of automation via customized software and its blessings in the long run.

Boundary and market analysis: What sort of automation can be more efficient and effective in initial

Automation via customized software offers scopes to organizations for minimizing operating cost in the long run. But lack of awareness still prevails and people are not yet appreciably willing to spend for customized software. The cost/benefit analysis is an intelligent tool that can help in improving this situation positively.

stage? This type of questions may arise in our mind. Let's find out what actually the word Automation stands for in respect of Information Technology. In general, automation refers to automating any task via customized software and other IT enable services. Besides these, any sort of network (for example LAN, Radio Link, Internet, etc.) can be included within automation in business organizations. The boundary of this study is limited particularly within Automation via Customized Software.

Now the question in mind will arise like what is customized software? I often face exceptional experiences while convincing probable clients for customized software. Some says, yes we are already using customized software. We are using MS Excel. Another probable client said we are already using customized accounting software. The example of customization he gave was like the report header contains their company

name and logo. These are the situations of some very reputed organizations of our country and from these sorts of experiences I found that, decision makers of organizations are confused in between Package Software and Customized Software. The example of Package Software can be Tally or Fact which are famous Indian software packages for accounting solutions. These kinds of package software are often equipped with mostly used options which the customer often requires. But while marketing this software, some marketing people confuse customer introducing their package software as customized software. Other way round, the customized software is fully tailored according to the business pattern or exact requirement of the customer. I'm not against the package software, but I will positively say that, Customized Software is far more efficient than the Package Software.

The development of customized

software is divided into two parts. Front End and Back End. The mostly used front end tools are Visual Basic, Visual C, and Developer 2000. And the commonly used Back End Database is Access, SQL Server, and Oracle. The cost of the software partially depends on these. For example: the cost of developer/programmer is high for Developer 2000 and Oracle than the cost of programmer of Visual Basic and SQL server; SQL Server provides better security and administrative options, on the other hand, Access provides so called security. So, the cost of customized software with SQL Server will generally be higher than the cost of customized software with database Access. Thus, till now software with Back End Oracle is more costly and powerful than others. But, the major cost of any customized software depends on customer's requirement. How much customization does the customer want? How many combinations of reports does he/she want to generate? Required software needed to run in Stand-alone PC or in Distributed Environment; number of required users and type of security required; etc. Answer to these questions is vital while making the costing for any customized software. But the funny thing is, most of the probable customers ask for the price/cost of the customized software before providing the detailed requirements.

Scope of automation: There are some identifiable parts in business organizations where automation can increase efficiency promptly in the first phase. These are Accounts, Payroll, and Inventory/Store Management. Every business has these divisions and planned automation in these parts via customized software can raise efficiency dramatically. Whether the company is product oriented or service oriented, existence of these divisions are positive. Automation in these sectors is specially suggested for those companies who are in the initial stage regarding adopting customized software. Besides these, there are demands for other efficient softwares like tracking system, marketing software, attendance software, billing software, and many others depending on the function of organizations which already proved very efficient and productive.

Cost/benefit analysis: In case of any kind of investment, we use to realize the benefit/profit that we call Return on Investment (ROI). Buying or paying for software is obviously an investment. Here we need to calculate the time when the gained utility of that software will be equal to the cost of software. This is known as Payback Period. For instance, Mr. 'X' wants to buy Payroll Software which should be customized as per his current manual operation. A software company 'S' takes the requirements and after proper analyzing quotes the price of that

software as Taka fifty thousand only. Why Mr. X will pay the quoted amount for his required software? Yes, at that time the company will describe him the cost benefit analysis. Here Mr. X will need to calculate the payback period of ROI. This can be like this: In the present manual system, there may be four employees working for Employee Salary Administration. But after implementing the customized payroll software, the employers can cut off the expense. Because the service or utility the software will provide is enough to do the task more efficiently and that can successfully replace that of two employees. Besides these, software can also free staff time, can minimize the hassle of manual tasks, energy, etc. that cost a lot.

Modern world has become very competitive. These days, companies need to think for scopes of cost minimization instead of profit maximization. Thus implementing automation in business organizations will incur some cost at the beginning, but this initial investment will definitely minimize the cost in the long run both directly and indirectly. Here, savings from the employee cutoff and gained utility from software are the direct benefits. On the other hand, the software will relief the employer from manual hassle, tension, etc. and enable the managers to go for quick decision making, which are considered as the indirect benefits of automation via customized software.

It has been seen that some private business organizations established an IT department along with their other operational departments. Answering to the reason of this practice some company said that they don't want to be dependent on any software/IT company. This practice enabled them to work with their in-house developed software independently whenever necessary. But this kind of step incurs a huge cost. Extending a department will cost space, equipment, organizational infrastructure, skilled human resource, etc. all of which is obviously a fixed cost. How many customized software your company needed to develop for in-house purpose each year? If the yearly utility that you may get from your in-house development team is higher than the yearly incurred total cost for maintaining that in-house development team instead of outsourcing the task to any software/IT company, then you can positively go for it. Otherwise, this won't be a wise decision.

Recommendation: Although the trend of awareness among the customer group is positive, still people are not willing to spend much on software. One major reason behind this may be the availability of pirated software. People often do not hesitate to spend lacs of taka for office decoration. But in most cases, when the question of buying customized software for business operation arises they feel constrained! Isn't it surprising?

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Politics not working

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THE political culture is passing through a phase which might be classified as a form of political sadism. The words revenge and vengeance come to mind. Tit-for-tat is the prevailing attitude. This is a form of social intolerable in the political society; for which the leaders of the mainstream society cannot be excluded. They have to share the blame to some extent, because the neutral observers and critics do not command respect, most of the intellectuals and thinkers are taking political sides, or keep mum or are very mildly and obliquely critical. There is this subjective weakness to be in the good looks of the establishment -- where power lies [pun intended].

Sycophancy is weakening the nation. When a political regime changes, we see the other side of the coin. The public get none the wiser, because neutral criticism is missing. 'Be with us, or you are out'. This is the perverted Bush doctrine, which created numerous bush fires in poor Afghanistan, without the instant solution expected. Like fast food, there is no fast war (the fallouts are radioactive for years).

Politics dominated by two major parties does not work in Dhaka, as experienced by the people so far. Charismatic leadership is also not working at the practical level of achievement, due to wrong grafting at the top. The nation's vision is based on idealism (past), which is not suitable for a fast changing world in this information age. The leaders of the society (not only politicians) have to be more pragmatic in approach, and overlook minor contingency gains of the moment. The political leaders do not accept tutorials. Why should they?

The bilateral competition and hate campaigns have created a vicious circle, from which the nation is not getting any benefit. Some sort of public, non-political movement is necessary now to get the right type of politicians into the playing field. This is difficult in a densely populated nation, where each and every individual has unlimited ambition, not supported by reality. Today there is no physical and mental space for manoeuvring. There is too much cramming, and too many items on the priority lists. The queues are too long, and the waiting periods too high.

Vendetta politics is the bane of this new nation. This intolerance factor in politics can be explained to some extent: due to the political gap for 15 years when the politicians could not defend their own citadel, for reasons which have been adequately analysed by the experts all these years.

There is hunger for power everywhere, and the target is money (by any means). One disease identified and catalogued is the massive bank-loan defaulter culture, which has mushroomed through the decades. It is a topic which is 'untouchable', and no regime so far been able to penetrate deep into this dense forest. What is seen is some marginal 'shows' from time to time. The reason is clear enough: tainted reputation of some members of the investigating fraternity who represent the government or the political parties. One's own branch has to be cut to bring the hanging issue to the ground level. This earthly reality is missing in the disciplinary actions contemplated. What is sacrifice if one is not willing to suffer?