

How civil and safe is our society?

Pessimism grips citizens

There is so much disorientation and waywardness in a section of the teenage boys in the country -- known as "stalkers" -- that parents with grown up daughters feel totally unsafe even within the safe boundary of their houses. In the recent past, in Gulshan, the parents of a girl were stabbed to death by the paramour of their daughter.

Md. ASADULLAH KHAN

Leaders in all segments of the country are drifting like sailors oblivious of the thunderheads piling high on the far horizon. Nobody realises that the country is sliding into a national crisis -- a loss of faith in all. This serious erosion of confidence in the leaders may be fatal for the survival of the fledgling democracy.

The current of unhappiness runs far deeper than the normal ebb and flow of partisan feeling usual in a democracy. This situation is a challenge to the settled order of our politics and inflated expectation it had stimulated in us. The institutions that are supposed to keep the country going seem to be too corroded by corruption, nepotism, cynicism and greed for money and power.

The optimism that was bubbling in every mind has given way to fear for the future and anger at politicians who have seemingly "mortgaged" it for short-term gain. Leaders, whatever their standing may be, have failed to take note that the engines of economic growth that heated up in late the '90s appear to have stopped turning. It seems that a virus of pessimism is spreading across the country -- a sense that we are on the wrong track -- and infecting the whole nation.

The recent incidents of vandalism resorted to by a section of Chatra League and Juba League workers with the blessings of some local AL stalwarts during the recruitment examination of Pabna D.C office staff, and Panchagarh, Pirozpur and Jessore civil surgeon office class three and four staff is an ominous sign. Sajeda Chowdhury said: "These sordid incidents triggered by a section of the ruling party workers is an embarrassment for the government."

Despite the fact that the PM has time and again told the nation that her party was preparing a list of errant Chatra League workers and bring them to book, there has been no positive development so far. People wonder why the Chatra League workers should be so keen to get low paid and low status job instead of aiming high after completing their academic career.

The reason put forward for this disorientation is quite understandable. Whatever little economic growth the country has achieved can hardly ensure employment to a large number of

educated youths. Secondly, the quality of education has suffered most. Very few students coming out with A+ scores can face the challenge of job recruitment.

So much effort has been put to enhance the quality of English in schools and colleges but, to the dismay of all, so little has been achieved. The large scale violence in the educational institutions and elsewhere can be attributed to flawed learning and teaching in schools and colleges. The euphoria over the glory and achievement of what we have been doing in each of our fields of activity may be wearing off.

The dissonance that is evident in national politics today must not be lost sight of. Both the major parties are basking in their past glory, but the world around us has changed so much. The situation confronting us is just like the day after the wedding. -- "everyone is tired and dishes are dirty."

The crisis that has engulfed the nation, spear-headed by the student wing of the ruling party, strikes terror in every heart and runs counter to development and transformation of the nation into "Digital Bangladesh." While countries like South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong that ranked almost equally with Bangladesh till the other day are taking a high-speed train towards progress and prosperity, we seem to have been left behind gasping for breath.

With unemployment topping 40%, prices of food items shooting up, taxes and VAT on the rise, and austerity programmes only looming on the horizon, it seems that a gloom has settled over the country. There is no denying the fact that anyone who is keeping close watch over the nation's march must be sensing a certain fatigue in the citizens over the country's lackluster economic performance, political animosity and partisan conflict.

Perpetual poverty has obliged the people to become fatalists and, with the indications in sight in respect of the power situation, agricultural production often ravaged by flood and other natural calamities, and transportation bottlenecks, there is no way that they can get over it if the present crisis continues.

Every year, a famine-like condition, mainly unavailability of food grains and job losses in farm lands, in Ashwin stalks some parts of Bangladesh, especially North Bengal, and people in these areas have taken this yearly

scourge as a fait accompli.

The politicians, especially of the ruling party, steering the nation's ship through a turbulent sea with a dark cloud looming over the horizon have to show their prudence, charisma, patriotism and commitment to national goals and the aspirations of the people. As things stand today, people have discovered that democratic institutions alone cannot bring prosperity and stability.

As a result, people have begun to recognise that what they need today is not a messiah but leaders with acumen who can make a fledgling democracy perform to their benefit. As political impasse lingers, boycott of parliament continues, and dithering over national issues goes on, the nation is sliding into a chaotic situation which is fatal to growth.

All concerned must realise the truth that if the problem of distribution of wealth and elimination of poverty is not solved there is no way one can expect to reduce the violence creeping up day in and day out.

The problems confronting the country must not be glossed over. The country's antiquated tax system has to be in keeping with the advanced countries of the world. The government effort to stimulate the economy and smooth out taxation and bring about reforms in the banking sector has hit the middle class,

salaried people, pensioners and retirees most.

Although the economies in countries like Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore are booming after recovery from the global meltdown, in our case the sunny forecast which should have proved to be true has given way to despair and pessimism, a free-falling economy and disarray in the country.

Social order, family ties, relationships with each other have broken down suddenly. The recent murder of Ibrahim, an AL worker, SI Gautam killing, and shootouts between cops and extortionists, make it clear that terrorists are far better equipped with weapons and tactics than the law enforcers.

Unhappily, there is so much disorientation and waywardness in a section of the teenage boys in the country -- known as "stalkers" -- that parents with grown up daughters feel totally unsafe even within the safe boundary of their houses. In the recent past, in Gulshan, the parents of a girl were stabbed to death by the paramour of their daughter. Evidently the prime need of the hour is to build a crime and corruption-free society, and, to that end, our leaders must rise above self-interest and partisan consideration.

Md. Asadullah Khan is a former teacher of physics and Controller of Examinations, BUET
E-mail: aukhanbd@gmail.com



Growing demand: Stalkers must be stopped

Recruitment: Make it just and fair

The services of the Republic belong to the country's people, not to politicians or parties in power. The recruitment to civil services is therefore based on meritocracy guided by certain rules framed by the government from time to time.

DHIRAJ KUMAR NATH

The unpleasant occurrence that took place on 17 September at Pabna during the recruitment examination of some staff for DC Office has generated strong resentment among the members of the civil society and bureaucracy as a whole since some unruly persons wanted to foil the process of recruitment to get their entry in the services of the Republic by force. The motive behind baffling the examination was obviously blaming the administration with a bad name like indulging in question leakage while most examinees firmly opined the accusation as untrue and intentional. Even the Deputy Commissioner, Pabna openly denied the allegations as baseless.

For the last few months, abundant instances are observed in almost all departments influence of money and muscle, party and politics during recruitment of officials and supporting staff like health assistant, primary school teachers, family planning workers, so on and so forth.

In fact, the value system is at a collapsing situation particularly in case of recruitment to

the key posts of services of the Republic. Sometimes it is very surprising to hear that a poor candidate is paying few lacs of taka for an ordinary job of class iv status, most of the time, at the instigation of some touts who allure innocents to become rich within short time through 'serving the public'.

The reason for such greed is surely to indulge in naked corruption to blemish the whole public administration system. None should undermine the role of a member of lower subordinate services (MLSS) to bring a disastrous situation for the administration in case of land record, procurement of goods and services and jeopardizing the total security system at the key points of installations. Thus there is every reason to get alarmed in case of recruitment of any undesirable and incompetent person in the services of the Republic.

The culture of corruption in terms of personal gains and naked partisan acts for party or politics might create an environment which shall dismantle the very fabric of conscience of the citizens and heritage of the nation.

Thus any type of manipulation in terms of

question leakage, replacing answer script or marking high during oral interview etc must be stopped for the sake of justice and equity to establish trust and credibility in the governance system of the Republic.

The services of the Republic belong to the country's people, not to politicians or parties in power. The recruitment to civil services is therefore based on meritocracy guided by certain rules framed by the government from time to time. In China, which can be traced as far back as Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC) during the recruitment in the Imperial Bureaucracy, merit was the answer. In modern Brazil, civil servants are hired through competitive entrance exams conducted by the University of Brasilia through a process very transparent and acceptable to all for its value system and thus Brazil emerged as a very promising developing country at present.

Bangladesh Public Service Commission has been established as a quasi-judicial body to act as an independent entity under the Articles 137 to 141 of the Constitution.

This is not only to make a fair recruitment but also to safeguard the interest of the public servants for which no major penalty could be imposed to a cadre officer without the recommendation of the Commission.

No state of any extent can be ruled without a bureaucracy with merit and visionary ideas to understand problems and resolve those with prudence. The efficiency of the government depends on its officials who are in charge of executing programmes and projects in per-

spective. To build up an efficient and capable bureaucracy, recruitment must be fair and ideal to respond to the need of the hour.

The government has drafted the Civil Services Act with the provision of building an acceptable bureaucracy capable of implementing the vision 2021 and translating the charter of change into actions. Equally the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules framed in 1979 should be reviewed to make them more responsive to the democratic norms with changed attitude and demeanor to the public and politicians. The Government Servant (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985 now in force is not adequate to impose major punishment for which government takes the shelter of compulsory retirement rules to get rid of an unwanted person after rendering 25 years of service. For the sake of justice and equity, this is against the fundamental right and not tenable in the eye of the law.

As regards the recruitments of sub-ordinate staff, Ministry of Establishment has issued many orders almost for each post but most of them framed during the regime of autocratic governments need review to suit the present situation, particularly the democratic climate prevailing now in the country. If these are not reviewed urgently there will be contrast and conflict of interest in recruitment of public servants at the district and Upazila level and most departments in near future which will surely tell upon the image of the government.

Dhiraj Kumar Nath is a former civil servant.

SOLAR PANEL

A portal for higher standard of living?

MOHAMMAD IFTEKHAR HASAN

Earth is the third planet from the Sun. Because the Sun gives energy, we call it aditya, as a part of our myth, the sun god. In a way, all the energy on earth, transmutable, are parts of solar energy because earth was itself part of the sun. On earth, life prospered through propagation and multiplication, which in turn consumed all basic kinds of energy to sustain the living jolt. Human does use energy as trees do. However, the energy conserved by the trees is transformed to fossil fuel, and used by us, the humans, and is expendable.

In Universe, energy is basically divided into two forms -- static and kinetic. As of those two jargons, potential energy means energy created by increasing potential difference between two opposite nodes. Whereas, kinetic energy means an attribute of object in motion.

Furthermore, these two forces ramify into other genre of energy named according to their sources. For example, the energy unlocked from the nucleus is called nuclear energy, and so on.



nature, photosynthesis, transforms the carbon-dioxide to sugar.

Humans, our civilization has learned to harness the light and the heat, part and parcel of solar energy. There are two kinds of solar energy. One is primary and the other, is secondary. Solar radiation, along with secondary solar-powered resources such as wind and wave power, hydro-electricity and biomass, constitute the larger portion of the renewable energy. Only a minute amount of this energy has been derided.

Electrical generation has seen the rise on heat engines and photovoltaic. In fact, solar energy's uses are limited only by human ingenuity. A par-

tial list of solar applications includes space heating and cooling through solar architecture, potable water via distillation and disinfection, daylighting, solar hot water, solar cooking and high temperature process heat for industrial purpose. To harvest the solar energy, the most common way is to use solar panels.

Solar panel is what uses the photoelectric effect of physics and uses the particle nature of photon:

"The structural (load carrying) member of a module can either be the top layer (superstrate) or the back layer (substrate). The majority of modules use wafer-based crystalline silicon cells or a thin-film cell based on cadmium telluride or silicon. Crystalline silicon, which is commonly used in the wafer form in photovoltaic (PV) modules, is derived from silicon, a commonly used semi-conductor (Wikipedia).

In Bangladesh, the solar architecture, accorded with the voltaic cell panel might be the thing of future. Ever since inception of solar panel and its introduction in the market, there have been three generations of them. First generation are the larger, silicon-based, photovoltaic cells that still dominate the solar panel market. These solar cells, which use silicon wafer makes up the majority of the solar market.

Second generation cells are made out of thin-film solar cells, and are cheaper. Especially because the second generation is lightweight, it can be alloyed, in aesthetical manner, on rooftop and in other places.

Third generation solar cells are the latest on the market. For third generation, technology has moved on from the silicon to other variety. Generally, third generation cells include solar cells that differ from traditional semiconductor, silicon-based cells. Third generation uses nano-crystalline cells, and dye-sensitized solar cells. The possibilities of more innovation in this field loom quite closer than any other time.

As for solar panel in Bangladesh, the last caretaker government, at its last phase, made a plan to lighten the villages, suburbs and cities through solar panels. As a part of the plan, the government made a suggestion towards decrease in tariff and taxes of the pertaining, imported material.

Grameen Shakti and a few other enterprises have endeavoured on spread over the peripheral area, and gradually to the city as well.

As a result, if every bit of the plan goes well, Bangladesh might be linked to the better quality of life like the rest of the world. Only then, solar panel might prove itself to be portal to the new quality of life.



A column about endings

Many people think murdering their parents is a bad thing. In general, it's a lifestyle choice which gets a bad rap.

The issue never popped up in my mind at all, except for the 40 or 50 times when I was being punished as a small child. A teacher once told me I would eventually "irritate someone to death." But despite my prodigious skills in that area, I failed to kill a single person by this method. (Not for want of trying.)

A grim topic for this usually light column, but we have to take life as it comes. The above memory popped into my head recently when my beloved 88-year-old mother, known to the family as Granny, summoned me to her bedside and announced that she had enjoyed a good life and was ready to be dispatched to heaven.

Horrified, I scolded her for being so morbid and set up an exhilarating, life-enhancing experience for her, i.e., a thrilling game of Scrabble with me. (This is more exciting than it sounds, because I cheat a lot, making up words like Xqmjzx to raise my score, and throw massive tantrums if I don't win every single round.)

But afterwards she repeated her request.

Consulting an expert, I learned that this was extremely common, and not at all a sign of unhappiness. "You'll make the same request when you are 88," a wise man from the academic world told me.

Granny kept repeating the request. What to answer? And how would one "arrange" such a thing anyway? I raised the issue at a famed forum at which intellectuals gather (the back table of the Quite Good Noodle Shop). "You just go to the shady part of town and hire a contract killer," said a man eating laksa. "They're not even that expensive these days what with the recession."

Other diners fiercely opposed this option. "It's messy and you'll traumatise the dog," one said.

My fellow diners clearly "did not get it." The only wise comment came from an udon-eater who said nature would take its course. God/ destiny would handle it. Granny's vital systems, such as digestion or breathing, would consciously or unconsciously be shut down, and her wish would be painlessly fulfilled.

I'm being typically flippant, of course, but this is actually a serious topic. A quick Google of the newspapers revealed that a debate about how best to achieve a respectful, humane life-ending is going on all over the world, as mothers of the baby-boomer generation become elderly. It's been huge in Europe, with a place in Switzerland specifically offering ideal send-offs. A couple from UK who used the facility made front-page news in their home country.

This is a real issue that we all have to face eventually. If you want to go to London, you go to London. If you want to go to Heaven/ Nirvana/ oblivion, what do you do?

It's a far more important step, but there's nothing you can do about it. You can't even talk about it without stupid people like me scolding you for being morbid.

The dilemma reminded me of Old Mrs Adamson, who lived opposite me when I was a child. She had a "farewell to life" party when she was 66, another at 67, a third at 68 and so on. By her 10th deathbed party, at the age of 76, she was hopping mad. "I've been ready to die for ages but I am still waiting," she thundered at God. She eventually died, furious, at 96. (I would not have liked to have been St Peter at the gates of heaven that day.)

Then last week, at our home, Granny suddenly fell ill.

Terrified, we raced her to hospital, Doctors rushed her into surgery for an operation.

Biting our nails, we soon got to know the hushed corridors of the intensive care unit.

Days later, doctors emerged and explained: Granny's digestive and breathing systems had failed, but a risky operation to fix them had proved successful.

We celebrated, of course: what else can one do? We didn't want her to go. But who was she saved for? Herself or for us?

These are questions with no easy answers.

When I got home, my heart still beating at double-speed, I told my kids that when I got old, they should get a contract killer to polish me off and divide up their inheritance among themselves.

One of them reached for her mobile phone. "not now," I said. "When I get OLD."

Honestly, you have to be SO careful with what you say to kids these days.

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