

Improvement in FSI: Should we be happy?

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IN the US based *Foreign Policy* magazine, Bangladesh has improved one stage, becoming 25th from 24th. But still there is a question to whether this is good news for us and whether we should be satisfied or not?

It has improved in the ranking not because we have done well but because others have fallen. If we analyse the situation of the countries who did worse in the index, we will find reasons behind it which does not exist in Bangladesh. These countries are facing problems of geographical deprivation, war, massive disaster, civil war, historical poverty, political non-acceptance etc.

For example, Pakistan is 12th, Myanmar ranking 18th and Sri Lanka is in the 29th place. Pakistan is facing severe political problem with the Taliban, Myanmar does not have an all accepted government system and Sri Lanka has recently recovered from a civil war. Bangladesh stands free from such issues and yet is placed 25th.

The index is prepared on 12 indicators among which Bangladesh lies in an alarming situation in some of the sectors such as group grievance (9.2 out of 10), factionalised elites (8.9 out of 10) and uneven development (8.4 out of 10). The countries in the top 10 are Chad, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan Central African Republic and Iraq in the Failed State Index (FSI). There is less inflow of refugee and less external intervention in the country, so, we have scored less in these two cases. In the other 10 sectors, our performance has been frustrating.

It is a big threat for us that our law and order situation is gradually deteriorating our scores in group grievance and factionalised elites indicate this. Outrageous activities of murder and crimes are increasing in such a way that they have become a very common scenario of the country and our policy-makers pay little heed to it.

Criminologists have long contended that crime increases when the economy struggles. But it can never be the only reason behind the increased crime rate of a country. The incident of Rumana Yeasmin shows how an educated and well established woman can be severely tortured by the husband who is also a modern educated man nourished from the top ranked univer-

sity of Bangladesh.

In this incident, I found all the phenomenon of the contemporary negative impacts of modern globalisation or what we can also call modernisation-inactivity: mobile, facebook, accusation of extra-marital affairs, isolation, loneliness, hiding from others and so on.

Committing crime is a result of so many socio-economic and political factors. Experts argue that people commit crimes for some of these reasons: economic, power, greed, anger, jealousy, passion, boredom, fear, peer pressure, opportunity, vandalism, failure of self-direction, lack of moral judgment and character etc. Again, another group of experts believe that people commit crimes when they do not see the benefits of adhering to conventional social values.

In criminology, people's tendency of committing crime is explained through some theories. Among these, the "Rational Choice Theory" says that people generally act in their self-interest and make decisions to commit crime after weighing the potential risks (including getting caught and punished) against the rewards. So, it indicates that people commit crime after a cost-benefit analysis and when they observe no potential risk or threat for committing crime, they go for it.

Again, the "Social Disorganisation Theory" shows that a person's physical and social environment remain primarily responsible for the behavioural choices that s/he makes. It indicates that when there is prevalence of deprivation in the society, crime increases. When people think that they are deprived and they get no promising solution for getting rid of the deprivation, they commit crime.

But, the 'Social Control Theory' could give the answer to me. It says, most people would commit crime if not for the controls that society places on individuals through institutions such as schools, workplaces, churches, families, societies and state. When schools fail to teach the moral lessons, teachers are no longer the icon of principles, anti-religious activities become the symbol of modernity and smartness, senior officials are corrupt, people are very individualistic in families, families are isolated in the society, and the state plays little role in punishing the evil while remaining busy fulfilling personal interest. How then can crimes be controlled?

Again, looking at the statistics of Odhikar from January 1 to March 31, 2011, we are astounded by how a state can proceed even through these! Odhikar reports that in three months, extra judicial killings numbered 44, killings by BSF were 14 when they injured 43

Bangladeshis, killings from political violence were 52, incidents of acid violence were 51, dowry related violence were 180, incidents of rape were 245 and these of sexual harassment were 317.

If a state cannot ensure safety for the citizen, it indicates three things: social change is very drastic and highly unequal, unemployment and so frustration among people is increasing and the government is being run by unskilled or insincere people. In Bangladesh, people are being outrageous as they are not mature enough to adapt to the modern technology and the so-called modern culture.

When the son is killed or when the daughter is raped or is attacked with acid, the parents naturally don't bother about other national issues. The government is the parent and of course there is a social contract between the citizen of the country and the government. The people have given the mandate to the government for ruling the country with condition that it will ensure the citizens' wellbeing and security. But in reality there is a huge gap.

Some concrete steps need to be taken to save the country from deterioration. Political employment should be stopped first in the sectors which are responsible for uplifting the rule of law.

Criminals should be addressed on a daily basis and the verdict for them should be made public through media.

And most importantly, the government needs to retain the faith of common people so that this can inject hope in people's mind for doing something constructive rather than committing crimes.

And above all, sincerity of the government is the utmost important thing that can ensure maximum prevalence of law and order in the country.

Finally, I would say that we are far behind in our goal as a nation but still not too far away to be pessimistic. We have the potentiality to struggle and to overcome hardship and we are able to change the scenario with our patriotism, honesty, hard work and sincerity. We have a long way to go and we really do need change.

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Delving into our sub-continental politics

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THE much hyped about Teesta-deal between Bangladesh and India ultimately fell through in deference to the sentiment of Ms. Mamata Banerjee who viewed the proposed deal technically flawed.

While the fundamental objective of politics is to achieve peace, progress and fulfilment of its people and play positive role beyond territorial bound, to help create a just world-order for the whole mankind, the ground realities in this region are none of the above.

Till today the region is replete with abysmal poverty, hunger, disease, death, discrimination, deprivation, prejudice, acrimony -- leading at times to deadly arm-conflicts.

Political thinkers are of the opinion that today's pattern of politics is the consequence of the same of yesteryears.

The origin of such kind of politics relates to an epoch of incidents that bedeviled the entire sub-continental political mind-set, created endless mistrust among communities, altered geographical landscape brought about by very highly accredited political personalities of this sub-continent.

Let me retell the tragic tale in brief for recollection of our esteemed readers:

The sagaciously-structured British cabinet mission plan-1946 to grant freedom of India with provisions for safeguarding legitimate aspirations of all segments of population regardless of provincial, religious, linguistic and numerical considerations, provincial autonomy under Federal system of government, special status for princely states, affirmative action policy towards minorities and scheduled tribes, preservation of unity of India was offered to the nation under subjugation for response.

The cabinet mission plan envisaged inter alia all provinces to enjoy complete autonomy except only for 3 subjects -- defence, foreign and communication remaining under Federal Control.

The mission classified provinces under 3 categories towards smooth execution of the plan:

Category A: Comprised of Madras, Bombay, U.P, Bihar and Orissa where Hindus form majority of the population.

Category B: Comprised of Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and British Beluchistan where Muslims form overwhelming majority.

Category C: Comprised of Bengal and Assam where Muslims form slim majority.

It is evident from the above that in 5 provinces out of the total 10, Muslims in general would play greater role in governance.

Astute politician of Jinnah's stature wasted no time to weigh 1940's Muslim League's Lahore "Homeland" resolution vis-a-vis British tailored Cabinet mission plan and decided to give league's consent to the latter. India's territorial integrity and intercommunal harmony remained unscathed -- peace and tranquility

descended all over India.

The then congress party President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad with Gandhiji's blessing, and close friend Jawahar Lal Nehru's support, steered clear the cabinet mission plan in the congress working committee meeting on June 26 as future ideal road-mapped towards India's independence notably securing precious nod from political stalwart like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, an ultra-nationalist congressman.

The plan was also endorsed in the full AICC session on July 6 the same year. India roared in jubilation. But this euphoria was very short-lived.

Serving relentlessly as the longest ever congress-party president from 1939-1946, Azad finally decided to hand over charges of the presidency to his closest friend Nehru with conviction that he (Nehru) would not detract from his policy-path. But it was proved otherwise and also fatal.

In a land-mark press briefing at Bombay on July 10, newly indited congress party President Jawahar Lal Nehru's idiosyncrasy concerning party-approved cabinet mission plan brought forth apprehension and

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suspicion in different political hubs about its proper and full implementation. On a reporter's question regarding the terms of the plan, Nehru emphatically said that his party was under no obligation and free to amend/alter the said plan if deemed necessary.

Congress-president's view on this "closed subject" provoked instant reaction from the Muslim League camp. League swiftly walked back from the Cabinet mission to their party crafted "Pakistan-plan."

Rest of the story is well known.

It was an instance of colossal recklessness on the part of an eminent congress party-giant triggering history's one of the worst human tragedies all over the sub-continent.

It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of victims are ordinary men and women of both the divide.

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One Punjab, One Bengal were cut into two pieces. Another unprecedented catastrophic human tragedy trailed along behind the creation of an independent, sovereign Bangladesh long after a quarter of a century within the battered territory of Pakistan.

After 30 years of death, declassified part of

Maulana Azad's book *India wins freedom* revealed that his choice of Jawahar Lal Nehru as the president of Indian National Congress during that volatile, explosive and extremely tense time, to his (Azad's) own estimate, was a deadly mistake ever committed during his long political career.

Gandhiji termed the "choice" a mistake of size of the Himalaya.

Azad's book further revealed that saintly Gandhiji intuited Patel for the post but never came out in open in deference to "my choice."

Azad's own confession was that had he chosen Patel for the post at least for the sake of India's territorial integrity only Patel would not have detracted from path laid down by "me."

Indecision, flip-flop-policy of the then colonial power, myopic vision and arrogance of majority party, main player in Indian political scene -- National Congress tendency to serve the interest of only a small vested group by a coterie of some all powerful league members under the garb of religion in the party's helm in tandem precipitated this sordid and pathetic consequence.

Eminent historians of both the divide are of the opinion that almost all Bengali Muslim political leaders save a very few self-seekers working under whatever banner, dedicated themselves wholly for economic emancipation of overwhelming majority of common people irrespective of caste, colour and religion, struggled to free them from social injustice and deprivation. They never dreamt of such kind of partition, least Bengal and its business, literature, art and cultural hub -- Calcutta.

Hussain Shaheed Shorwardy, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haque, Mawlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Abul Hashem, Mohammad Ali, Nowabjada Hassan Ali, Abul Monsur Ahmed, Maulana Ragib Ahsan, Kamruddin Ahmed, Shamsul Haque, Sheikh Mujib, Dr. M.A. Malik were among many of those prominent personalities.

Great sons of Bengal -- Shaheed Shorwardy, C.R. Das, Sarat Bose, Kiran Shankar Roy and many such fought tooth and nail to prevent the partition of Bengal. What they wanted was to establish a sovereign independent Bengal as a truly welfare state happy abode for all.

The issues like demarcation of land/maritime boundary, exchange of enclave under adverse possession, easy connectivity of people to people between Bangladesh and India, Kashmir, Siachin height, river-water between India and Pakistan, territorial dispute between China and India in North-west, dangerous conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan are all nemesis for wrong-doing of our past generation.

That is why the great saying shall never lose its meaning: We only read history, never learnt from it.

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Research Institute for exploring mineral resources

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GEOLOGISTS and relevant scientists have been urged by the PM to conduct extensive research for the exploration of mineral resources. While inaugurating the Institute of Mining, Mineralogy and Metallurgy on January 22, 2012 in Joypurhat in the northern region of Bangladesh she declared a national interest in such research.

This is the best of all the initiatives taken by Sheikh Hasina's government since they have been in power. The institute should have been established just after liberation war 40 years back. Had it happened then, the overall scenario of Bangladesh would have become different but undoubtedly positive. Citizens of an independent country have every right to know what natural and mineral resources they possess. Accordingly, relevant scientists of the country should propose the government on how to utilise the national resources.

In 1971, the total population of the country was seven crore and now that number has reached to sixteen crore or even more. The percentage of the scientifically educated persons were very small at that time and were not allowed to participate in decision-making matters or in raising scientific problems of the country. In many cases, they were treated as if they are mad or they lacked social knowledge.

It is a matter of great happiness that scientists and technologists are going to be recognised for national interest, for patriotic scientists can bring prestige for the nation. There are huge natural and mineral resources in this small country and more importantly thousands of scientists in the relevant fields have been produced among the Bangladeshis with full potential to be utilised for the national interest. Someone needs to ignite them.

Sheikh Hasina said in her speech that technology is the change-maker of the 21st century, it is important to ensure the best use of technology through research and reach its benefit to the common people: "We cannot depend on others for technology. We need our own technology. We can also successfully adapt to others' technology in our own ways."

The people expect the real implementation of such a well-observed statement. It is worth mentioning here that the four party alliance made commitment to the nation in their election manifesto in 2008 that they will utilise Zircon if they come to power.

Zircon is one of the most valuable mineral resources in the country but Zircon is unknown to most citizens in the country. It seems that the current government has taken the initiative to make them happy. I believe this amazing national project will solve most of our problems -- financial, social and political.

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