

Victims of apathy and neglect

BITTER TRUTH



Md. ASADULLAH KHAN

BIDS survey conducted in the recent past says that 75% of the 10 lakh children roaming the streets of Dhaka spend their nights on the streets and pavements of Dhaka, mostly without food. According to a baseline survey conducted by the Labour Ministry and Unicef in recent time, the number of child workers engaged in hazardous jobs in the country is about 79 lakhs with 15 lakhs working in urban areas. Tragically, against the backdrop of the World Day against Child Labour, a survey conducted by Unicef points out that that 3 lakh children below 16 years are working as domestic help in the capital city alone.

Although the number of children enrolled in primary schools ranges up to 75%, almost 60% of them drop out, mainly due to poverty. Only 40% can somehow cross the primary stage of schooling. The number of street children in the country eking out a miserable existence without food, nutrition, and shelter, as revealed by Unicef, is 18 lakhs. Child labour, is closely associated with poverty and denies children their right to education.

In Bangladesh, many poor families depend on the contributions of a child to the household's income, and place more importance to work than on education. When

a family has to make a choice between sending either its boy or girl to school, it is often the girl who loses out.

While other countries in the world talk about the need to invest in their youth, much of Bangladesh has converted its youth into a pernicious capital investment: too many children are working in different fields, and most dreadful jobs. In a host of small scale factories and work houses, it is children who dip match sticks into phosphorous, mix the gunpowder for fire crackers, roll bidis, and weave the carpets.

Despite the fact that child labour has been withdrawn from the garments sector following international pressure, there are reports that many child domestic workers live and work under conditions that are oppressive, exploitative, abusive and the pay worse than what adults would accept for the same work. These are the children who are working either to support themselves or their families. The number of children doing odd and danger-



S SARWAR DRIKNEWS

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ous jobs far outnumber those 10,000 children withdrawn from the garments factories.

Despite sanctimonious pronouncements by the government and existence of tougher laws, child-sex industry is booming in the country. Grim accounts of poor girls under 14 trafficked outside the country continue to pour in.

The spurt of violence against minor girls in the country is alarming. We learnt with trepidation incidents of rape in the country. One wonders whether the society and the government have done anything to protect the minor girls. The report carried by Human Rights section of ODHAKAR said that 299 adult women and 473 tender aged girls were victims of rape in 2012.

Regretably, international and national summits and seminars to address the issue remain confined to taking agenda. Recommendations made to the policy makers year after year in the National Child Domestic Workers (CDW) convention about empowering chil-

dren economically as well as arresting other forms of exploitation, creating job opportunities for parents and enacting laws to protect child workers from abuse and exploitation are fine on paper but implementation of the recommendations seems to be a far cry.

A silent revolution resulting from the simmering discontent that is brewing up, may in no time throw us in the web of danger. Children who assembled in the Osmany Hall in 2010 responded in one voice that they would never like to work as domestic workers as they miss their parents, and cannot have food and breakfast as provided for the children of their employers, and have none to share their emotions. These children also mentioned that if their parents had enough opportunities to work in the village they would never have come to the city to work as CDWs.

Although international law prohibits child labour under 14, it flourishes on a rampant scale in the country. How do we fight shy of the problem that warrants our attention most?

Political leaders and people belonging to all shades of opinion must realise that the time for reckoning has arrived. If the country has to prosper, it should not have a lackluster education system that denies rights of this neglected section to education. It should not have children belonging to the under-privileged class being turned away from hospitals or dying on the street of drug overdose or becoming victims of random crime because they were at the wrong place at the wrong time.

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ACROSS

1 TGIF
4 Bing's buddy
7 Block the flow
12 Just out
13 "Hall"
14 Become one
15 Meadow
16 High-flying tourist
18 S dispenser
19 Soviet cooperative
20 Genius
22 Decorate Easter eggs
23 Boast
27 Discoverer of cry
29 Weaken, in a way
31 Nary a soul
34 Star in Orion's left foot
35 "Now" or "never"
37 Drench
38 TV dinner veggies

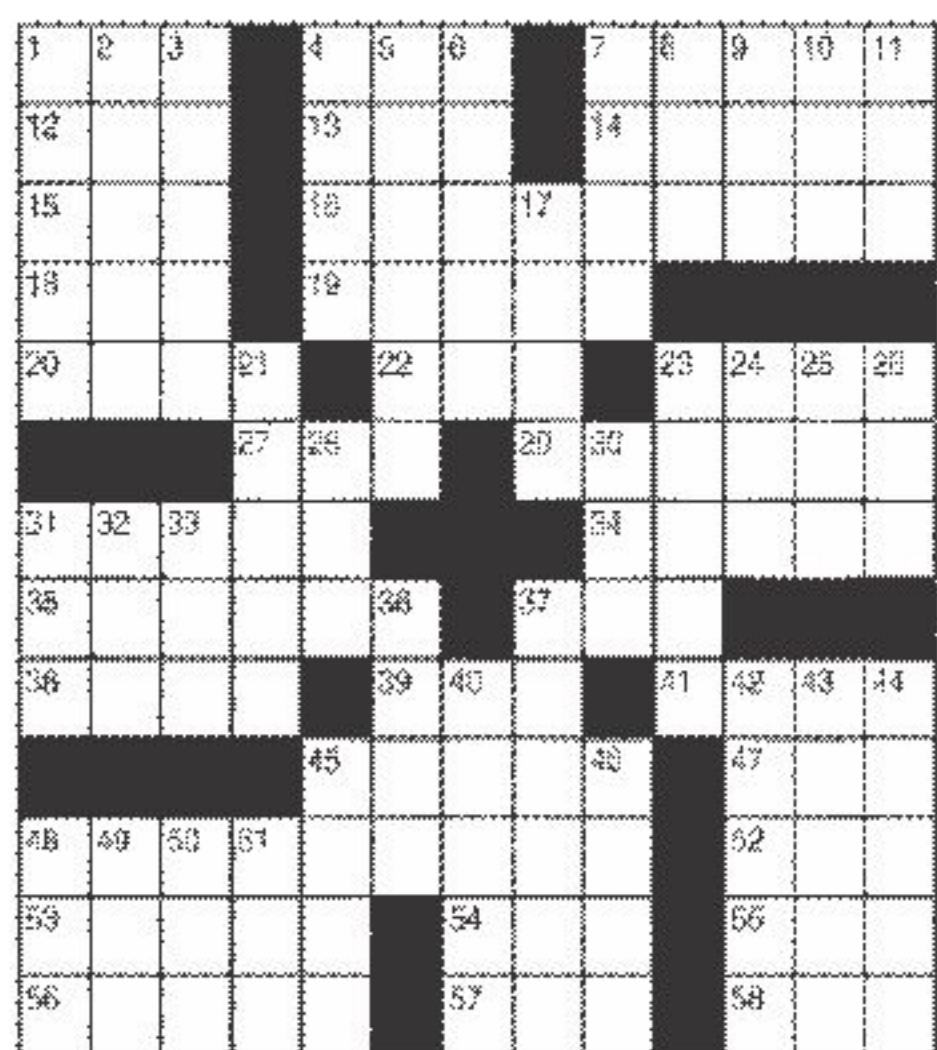
DOWN

39 "Go, team!"
41 Wild and crazy
45 Rescues
47 "The Raven" writer
48 TV show for entrepreneurial hopefuls
52 Transgression
53 Asian nation
54 Hockey surface
55 Superlative
56 That is (Lat.)
57 "Ben-Hur" author Wallace
58 Vast expanse

11 Apiece
17 Start a garden
21 Regions
23 All-out attack
24 Carpet
25 Consumed
26 Solidify
28 That woman
30 Anger
31 Siesta
32 Praise in
33 Eggs
36 Unruly kid?
37 From what place
40 Use
42 Church recesses
43 Din
44 Busy-body
45 Old card game
46 Distort
48 Tackle moguls
49 Scuttle
50 Exist
51 Scale notes

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 5-10



CRYPTOQUIP

CYAWDEV H WB ZVRAJHCRT
EVOVIWU ZHQVJVVRX EIDRZ
EKEXVB OWJHVXHVE, H
EDFFIEV H'B EXVIVI XKFIHT.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: UNHAPPY THAT THE WOOD WASN'T DYED ENOUGH, THE CARPENTER IN CHARGE ISSUED A RESTRAINING ORDER.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals M

BEETLE BAILY



HENRY



by Mort Walker

by Don Trachte

QUOTABLE Quotes

"I believe there are three keys to success. For me it is keeping my priorities in order: It's my faith and my family, and then the business."

Kathy Ireland

Erdogan's legacy

M. ARIF IQBAL KHAN

ANYONE who has been to Istanbul in the last few years will likely testify Turkey as a role model state for Muslims or for any other denomination. Scenes of firefighting on the streets of Ankara gives a feeling of betrayal mixed with curiosity. It is really a shame that scene at Taksim Square should remind one of Tahrir Square. Irritating it must be for a country aspiring greater leadership in the region.

Admirers of the Turkish people, culture and history comment, "This should not have happened here, the government should have softened up, Turkey is not Egypt or Syria, and Erdogan is no Mubarak or Assad." The last point demands a closer look. No other leader since Kemal Ataturk was both as successful and as admired as Erdogan. Adnan Menderes won 3 consecutive elections in the 1950's before he was removed in a coup. It was Erdogan who brilliantly united the political, economic, social and international policies under his stewardship and paved the way for the republic's superior standing in the region and beyond.

During the transition stage in Egypt, one newspaper ran a headline, "Lend us Erdogan for a month," hinting at his legendary ability to get things done efficiently. Political analysts in the Middle East believed Erdogan could resolve many problems in the most turbulent region in the world. Back at home Taksim Square has brought an unwanted prospect to the legendary premier.

The protests which started out for environmental protection have turned into an anti-Erdogan, anti-AKP movement due to the heavy handed actions of the police. This comes at the worst possible time for the administration. Turkey's position on Syria has created a complex situation as the ups and downs of the Syrian civil war has complicated Erdogan's position domestically and internationally.

Turkey threw its weight behind the rebels in a bloody civil war that may have taken up to 80,000 lives already. Did Turkey do the right thing by supporting the rebels in Syria? While an average person would like to see the end of Baathist control in Damascus, very few in fact know about Syrians' choice for leadership. The other side of the story is the militant group's loyalty was purchased by secretive monarchies fearful of mass uprisings in other Arab capitals. The civil war, if this hypothesis is true, would be a proxy war at others' behest. This puts Syrian lives in the line of fire for the sake of the region's self-seeking administrations. This does not go well with Turkish civilisation. Turkish people, historically famous for their invincibility, strength and bravery, will not compromise on this all important matter of being partly responsible for the loss of Syrian lives. Turkey is providing food, shelter and medicine for refugees at the Syrian border.

Western media is talking about Erdogan's replacement by 2015. Under AKP's rules Erdogan can't run for a fourth term. There are three names going around, among them are, foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu, whose popularity runs beyond not only AKP but also beyond Turkish borders. Davutoglu is said to be a favourite in Tunis, the birth place of the Arab Spring. Deputy Prime Minister Arinc is also

believed to be eager for the next role.

Ali Babacan was previously Minister of Economy in the 58th cabinet from the Justice and Development Party (AK Party). On August 29, 2007, he was named Minister of Foreign Affairs of in the cabinet of re-elected Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Babacan succeeded Abdullah Gül, who became President.

Babacan, unlike most populist politicians, keeps a low profile, preferring to build his own political elevator through an intelligent mix of efficiency, loyalty, vision and delivery. Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by premier Erdogan provided the bedrock for a steady political course to chart through what used to be a turbulent path. Post Arab Spring North African governments have in one way or another tried to fashion themselves as Muslim democracies based on the AKP model. Ali Babacan was one of the co-founders of AKP.

While Dovutoglu enjoys a popular support base in and outside Turkey, the responsibility for taking over from the most successful modern leader of the Republic may fall on the hands of an extra-ordinary, quiet, efficient minister of Economy. An important reason for this may be his international reputation amongst the world's most influential people.

Since the fiery days of 2011 Arab Spring stability has been remote. The current situation in the Middle East and Africa is gasping for a fresh breath of air. A lot is depending on the outcome in Syria where regional powers have taken positions which look impossible to reverse without a miracle.

Assad's forces are on the counter offensive after resting Qusayr from the rebels. Assad looks all set to take control over the strategic region of Aleppo. Furthermore, Assad is

better positioned after the hugely damaging report about the use of poison gas "sarin" by the rebels. Earlier it was assumed Syrian forces had used chemical weapons. Assad and his international supporters now have a case in hand. Rebels' use of deadly chemical weapons has severely damaged any chance of imposing "No Fly Zone" strategy, although this position could be temporary.

Premier Erdogan had taken a strong stand against Bashar Al-Assad. If Bashar wins, one must assume, his rivals will logically loose. More importantly, those who had supported the rebels will need to answer why they provided support and shelter to militants who used chemical weapons on civilians. States backing rebel groups could be accused of helping fuel the rise of another armed militant insurgency in the region.

For Erdogan this sort of accusation will not fit in at all with his legendary status. Under his leadership, Turkey became debt free from IMF. AKP's political and social framework was admired and promoted as a role model for the greater Muslim world. Premier Erdogan's statesmanship, leadership and vision has a confirmed place in Turkish history. His legacy should not come to an unceremonious end. It would be a loss for the republic and its admirers.

The writer is Director, Financial Excellence Limited.

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