

# How we have broken down our institutions

# What next?

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

It used to be that law was last the resort of an ordinary man. But that was once upon a time when there was respect as well as fear of law. Stephen Wall, a celebrated journalist who served as *Washington Post* correspondent for India in late eighties and early nineties, remarked in his book *The Grand Trunk Road* that in certain parts of India at that time enforcement of law was shared by bandits and police equally. The business people survived by paying their dues to both, but the common man often fell into a dilemma not knowing who to turn to for protection.

Our situation has to come to this pass that some Indian states went through some twenty five years ago, but with the significant difference that unlike India where other institutions such as the judiciary, civil administration, and legislature functioned and exercised their authorities to intervene, we seem to have none to check this anarchy. Most of our public institutions precede the birth of our country with same traditions that were handed down to their sister institutions in India. But the stark difference is that in India these institutions have bolstered public trust and confidence in them, while in our country we have brought these down to an abysmal level of distrust and suspicion. In India there is a consensus at national level to keep these institutions out of politics and maintain their neutrality. In our country there is a consensus among our political parties to make these institutions venal, ineffective, and highly politicised to serve parochial interests of those who gain power.

The current episodes of abduction, murder, and an overwhelming public fear of more such occurrences perhaps would not have happened if our law enforcing agencies were not

used for political purposes. Our law enforcers get to be law breakers when the authorities who guide them allow the forces to serve their own (authority's) parochial interest first. This happens when bandits become political workers or political workers become bandits, and the law enforcing agencies are asked to collaborate with them in achieving political goals. The agencies have no accountability to the common man since they are beholden to their political masters and their commands.

In most civilised countries institutions are there not only for public good but also to keep a watch on each other so that when one fails the other may intervene. The purpose of civil administration is to ensure that all agencies including law enforcers do their work properly. In our country the civil administration has been brought to an appalling level of inefficiency, sycophancy, and political domination after decades of neglect, abuse of authority, and wrong incentives for performance. Individuals are judged not on merit but on their loyalty to authority, and rewards and punishment are meted out to office holders based on their record of allegiance to the party in power.

One can understand political manipulation of public agencies that are directly under government control since the personnel of these agencies operate under a threat of punishment. But it is incomprehensible when institutions that are deemed to be independent operate in the same manner. Confidence and public trust vanish like snowflakes when institutions constitutionally mandated to operate freely and independently from executive control become servile to the executive branch of government.

No one expects a Seshan (the legendary former chief election com-

missioner of India) to head a similar independent body in our country. But how can you retain trust and confidence in this institution when one of its senior members publicly ridicules an opposition leader for failing to participate in elections? How can you have confidence in this body when it disavows any responsibility for election malfunction?

A cardinal principle of rule of law is that nobody is above law. We actually operate under the opposite concept that some people, particularly those associated with the rulers, are above law. That is why venerable institutions like judiciary, civil service, and all other public bodies that are deemed to serve people are painted with the same brush of suspicion and distrust. Confidence and public trust dissipate when the institution charged with prosecuting persons suspected of massive fraud and corruption cannot or will not act independent of political influence. Confidence disappears when the courts of law seem to be ineffective in upholding law. Our faith in educational institutions vanishes when the educators publicly declare their loyalty to one political party or another and carry banners for them instead of minding their responsibilities to their students.

Some twenty five years ago a Nur Hossain showed us how to restore democracy by sacrificing his own life. Today, we have another Nur Hossain who has shown us how to abuse democracy with an unholy alliance of politics and banditry. This is all because we have broken down our institutions systematically for political goals. It takes years to create an institution but only a few days to break them. There will be many more Nur Hussains unless we take preventive actions now.

The writer is a US based political analyst and commentator.

SHAKHAWAT LITON

All eyes are now focused on Narayanganj city where a volatile situation has been prevailing following kidnap and killing of a city panel mayor, a lawyer and five other people together. Awami League men and some members of law enforcement agencies were allegedly involved in the incident. The people of the city burst into protest, forcing the government to dismiss three Rab officers for their alleged link with the incident and to bring changes in some top posts in the local administration of the district. The Narayanganj incident has further intensified the sense of insecurity among common people, who had already been feeling insecure because of increase in abductions and forced disappearances in many other parts in the country.

The mass media have been extensively covering the happenings in Narayanganj city, which have overshadowed some other major incidents that took place in the previous months. For example, people and media seem to have forgotten what happened in the recently held upazila parishad elections. Unprecedented rigging by AL men has damaged the electoral system, eroding people's confidence in the Election Commission and the administration. Now, there is almost no discussion on it in the public domain or the media. The reason is that the people want to know about the developments in Narayanganj. Has the Narayanganj incident offered the government some respite as the people are not discussing the ruling party men's unprecedented rigging in the upazila polls?

The way the Narayanganj incident has overshadowed the upazila polls scandal shows us how the widespread rigging in the upazila elections made us forget the controversial parliamentary elections held on January 5, one and a half months before the beginning of the upazila ballots.

The new government formed through the voter-less election promised to work for establishing good governance in the country. But the way the things are developing shows that the government has little control over the members of law

enforcement agencies. Moreover, unruly activities of the cadres of Bangladesh Chhatra League have created unrest in some higher educational institutions.

The way the new government has been running the country has made many political analysts and security experts afraid that more unwarranted incidents may take place in the coming days, which may overshadow the incident in Narayanganj. The political situation still remains calm as the opposition parties are refraining from enforcing any major programmes against the government. But many political analysts fear that the situation may deteriorate after the opposition parties-led by BNP start enforcing agitation programmes to force the government to go for an early general election. If they do so, the government will have to use strength to deal with the opposition's movement, which will cause deterioration in the law and order and political situation.

The AL, in its electoral pledges before the one-sided January 5 polls, had promised to take steps to build national consensus among all political parties, classes, professional organisations and civil society, irrespective of groups and opinions, on basic issues such as upholding democratic process and ensuring uninterrupted development. But there is still no move to begin a process to achieve this goal. Neither the government nor the AL is saying anything about the pledge. Then when will the government take steps to forge national consensus among all for the public interest?

The way the leaders, ministers and the AL have been blasting and accusing the opposition for almost all the untoward incidents will only intensify animosity between the AL and the BNP camps. They have also demonstrated little tolerance towards dissenting voices. All these will make it impossible to forge national consensus on any crucial issue. The end result will not be comfortable for the government, which may finally be left more isolated because of its go alone strategy.

The writer is Senior Reporter, *The Daily Star*.

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# Buddhism and humanism

SUKOMAL BARUA

The sacred Buddha Purnima is celebrated on the day of the full-moon of Vesakha. Gautama Buddha was born in the Lumbini Garden at the foot of the Himalayas (563 BC); attained Enlightenment under the Bo-tree at Gaya (528 BC); and Passed into Mahaparinibbana at Kushinara (483 BC). The day has great significance for universal love, peace, happiness, harmony and purity as the most blessed day for humankind.

Buddha's teachings are very simple, very pragmatic and realistic. The main teachings of the Buddha may be summed up in three words -- Sila (moral), Samadhi (concentration) and Panna (wisdom).

The Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths: there is suffering; there must be an origin of suffering; there must be cessation of suffering; and there is a way for cessation of suffering. The Noble Eight-fold Path is most essential for eradication of suffering. The eight factors are -- Right understanding, Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right concentration.

The conception of Sila is very broad. Unless and until man's body, speech and mind are free from ebullition and perfectly guarded and controlled, and until the purity of his actions is ensured, the attainment of Sila is impossible. Buddha says: "Unless purity of thought, feeling and will are made certain, it is impossible to make

any progress." Based on this splendid behaviour, the mind goes on developing and sheds itself of vestiges of impurities and non-meritorious traits.

Perfect concentration and advancement of the mind help acquire the four noble or exalted states of love, compassion, rejoicing and equilibrium of the mind. Upon this concentration or Samadhi, the light of Panna (wisdom) begins to shine and he realises that behind the phenomena which are subjected to birth, death, disease, defilements, impermanence, there exists the ineffable, never-changing and incomparable safety of Nirvana.

His rebirth is over, his holy life has been properly lived, his duty done, and there is no further mundane existence for him. He attains what may be described as "unshakable emancipation of the mind." Thus Buddha gave to the world his compact plan of ethical and mental development and progress and termed it as His 'Dhamma,' or the Law. His discovery of the Law of Causation and the Law of Karma are the triumph of Buddha's genius. The Enlightened teachings exercised profound influence on the social, moral, political, intellectual, religious and aesthetic sides of human life.

Politically, the Buddha favoured representative institutions, and His Sangha or monastic order is an example of the democratic way in which the affairs of the monks were managed. It was called the "Sangha of the Four Quarters." Every qualified member had to take part in all the meetings of the Sangha; a question



was raised and discussed, and decided by majority of votes. He also encouraged republics and never entertained the idea that big kingdoms should be formed at the expense of smaller and less powerful federations.

Socially, Buddha wanted to reconstruct the society of His times on a different basis. He first gave a rude shock to the Brahmanical doctrine, declaring that the division of the society into four castes was illogical and against the natural integrity of humanity. He said that the Brahman or the Vaisya or the Kshatriya or the Sudra is to be determined by the work or Karma and not

by the birth or Jati. His Sangha is an ideal example of a classless society, where the Brahman as well as the Pariah find a place for self-expression and development. His declaration in this respect was a great advancement at that time. In fact, He brought about a social revolution.

Buddha's doctrine of the equality of man paved the way for moral basis of life as the only criterion of success or duty. His scheme of ethics sounded the death knell for the life of ritualism, dogmatism, and mere external purity. He emphasised the fact that purity from within was the main thing to be achieved. Immoral acts were condemned in no unmistakable terms. Social grandees were given the same status as courtesans like Ambapali. He could convert a highway robber like Angulimala without using a weapon. His doctrine is summed up as "not doing evil, attainment of good, and purification of the mind." His religion was neither metaphysical nor speculative, but based upon psychology and ethics starting with the mind of man. He analysed the various mental processes and divided them into Dharmas or states of consciousness, and showed how to develop the mind so as to include good thoughts.

Intellectually, Buddha always disapproved of speculative views in philosophy. During His own days the subjects that were discussed concerned the first cause, the world and its finite or infinite charac-

ter, life and soul, whether a man exists or does not exist, or both exists and does not exist. The 62 heresies or speculative views about the soul are described in the Brahmajala Sutta. The Buddha had tried to prove that they were questions which would not lead to the edification of man. In the Sutta Nipata he had given views of sectarians and shown their love for mastery over others.

Buddhism is a progressive religion, and in its passage it has traveled from intellectual analysis and the ideal of the Arahant to the building up of emotionalism on the universal level, which paved the way for the ideal of the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta vowed that he would forgo his claim to Nirvana as long as there was a single person suffering in this world. This attitude of an all embracing love for creation began with Asoka's Dharma and paved the way for the humanitarian and altruistic message given by the Buddha. In fact, this is the bedrock upon which it is possible to build up the edifice of Universal Religion. Buddhism tries to raise the standard of life of humanity by elevating the less privileged ones and bringing them on a par with those who are already developed.

Let us realise and understand that Buddhism is not a religion but a true code of life, and it is a fully humanistic religion for mankind all over the world. *Sabbe Satta Sukhita Hontu* (May all beings be happy. May peace prevail on earth).

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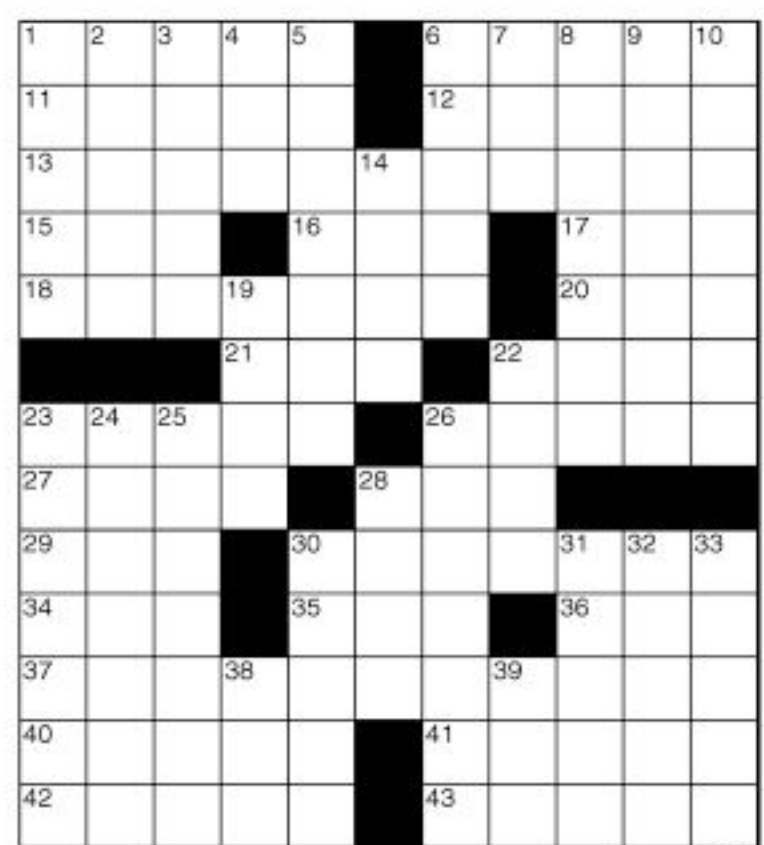
## QUOTABLE Quote

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                 | <b>DOWN</b>                           |
| 1 Pointy                      | 1 Tatter                              |
| 6 Almanac fill                | 2 Abode                               |
| 11 Whetstone user             | 3 Queen - lace                        |
| 12 Hawaiian greeting          | 4 Game caller                         |
| 13 Try to get a city hall job | 5 NFL all-star game                   |
| 15 Language suffix            | 6 Re-nowned                           |
| 16 Pollen collector           | 7 In the style of                     |
| 17 Tolkien baddie             | 8 Phoenix NHL Team                    |
| 18 Tutu of South Africa       | 9 "Walden" Writer                     |
| 20 Hot brew                   | 10 Cutting humor                      |
| 21 - Jima                     | 14 Nevada city                        |
| 22 Neptune's domain           | 19 Bearing                            |
| 23 Whoop it up                | 22 Football play start                |
| 26 Briefly                    | 23 Jason of "All the President's Men" |
| 27 Store sign                 | 24 Food fancier                       |
| 28 Genetic stuff              | 25 Monopoly avenue                    |
| 29 Storage site               | 26 Entomology subjects                |
| 30 Exhibit                    | 28 French designer                    |
| 34 Play division              | 30 Plummets                           |
| 35 Sturgeon eggs              | 31 Flat                               |
| 36 Seventh Greek letter       | 32 Worried                            |
| 37 Seek safety                | 33 Rushing measure                    |
| 40 Slump                      | 38 Watch chain                        |
| 41 Sneaker feature            | 39 -Pronobis                          |
| 42 Some Europeans             |                                       |
| 43 Sea dogs                   |                                       |



**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
GOIV RVF IBVZH CVPZAIV NTVL TZQV IURVTOFX NU IZL; DUUKI CVPZAIV NTVL TZQV NU IZL IURVTOFX.  
- BKZNU

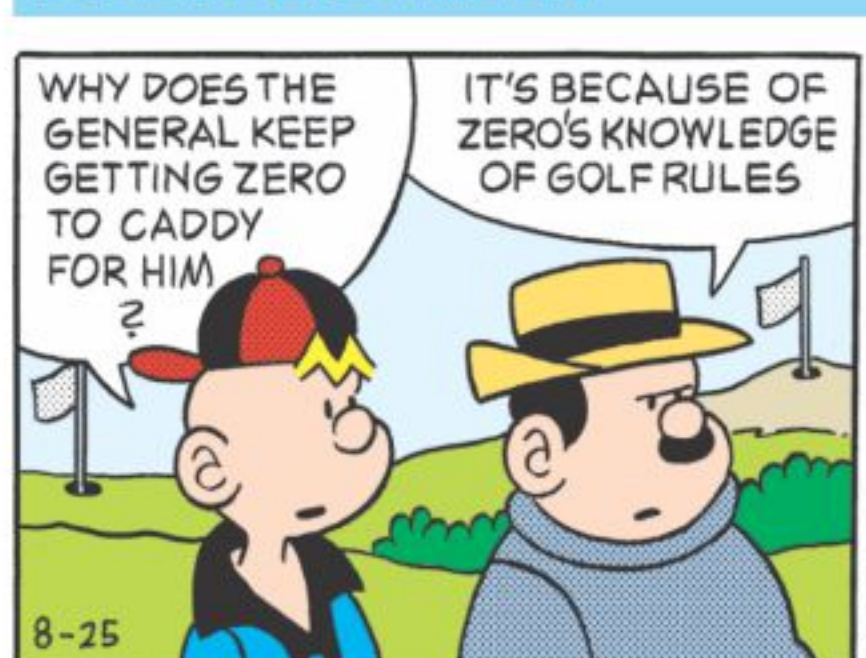
Previous day's **CRYPTOQUOTE**:  
DON'T QUIT. SUFFER NOW AND LIVE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AS A CHAMPION.  
- MUHAMMAD ALI

## Yesterday's answer

L A B E L A M I S  
A G I L E L A T H S  
P A N I C P O S I T  
U T E A S H O V A  
P E T E R P A R K E R  
L A T H E T R Y A A R E  
A R E A A P I N C E  
D I A N A P R I N C E  
L E S G E O O R A  
E T H E R P A L E R  
S T O L E O F T E N  
A P S E S T E P S

**A XYDLBAXR is LONGFELLOW**  
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

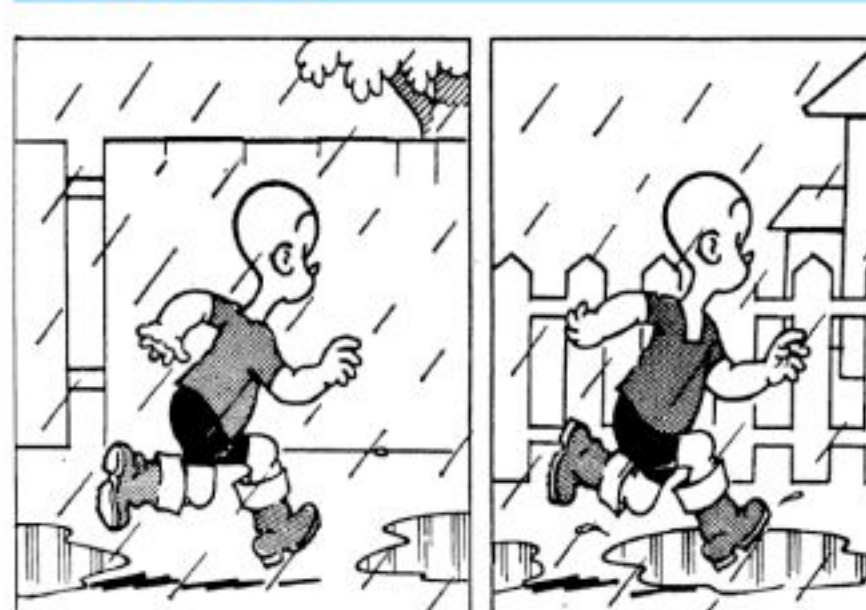
## BEETLE BAILEY



## by Mort Walker



## HENRY



## by Don Trachte

