

## Punishing children at home

### Eye-opening statistics released

IT is jarring to note that up to two-thirds of the country's children are subjected to some kind of beating by their parents. In a front page report on Monday, Prothom Alo highlighted this less known and perhaps least discussed parental high-handedness on their children. Being based on UNICEF-assisted Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the revelations are as authentic as they are instructive in terms of behavioural norms. 'Child disciplining' involves making the children attentive to studies, their taking meals on time and complying with other parental instructions supposedly for the good of the wards. Rather than being persuasive with words, many parents still tend to employ the hackneyed adage, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child'. Out of every three mothers, one believes that in order to teach rules to a child, it is necessary to apply physical punishment. Equally, if not more, worrying is the finding that 74.4 percent of the children are imparted discipline by exerting mental pressure on them.

Around 73.6 percent of three to four-year-old toddlers fall victim to physical punishment at home. Rural children are more vulnerable than their urban counterparts. Physical punishment of the kids can morph into violent adolescent behaviour; the victims may even take to criminal behaviour in the future.

Further research is needed to authenticate the findings on a national scale. However, a serious issue has been flagged off and as a signatory to the international child rights conventions we have to discourage all kinds of child unfriendly attitudes and practices. How are we going to stamp out corporal punishment from educational institutes if at home it is in vogue in one form or the other?

## Still no arrests of sexual predators

### Official waffling over the matter disappointing

THE contradictory remarks of the state minister for home and officials of Rab and police, regarding the arrest of sexual assaulters during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations, are both perplexing and disappointing. The state minister has stated in parliament that law enforcers have arrested several of the identified culprits, and assured that the others, who are at large, would also be brought to book. But high-ups of the DMP and Rab have said that they are yet to arrest anyone in connection with the April 14 sexual assaults.

It seems the state minister's assurance is a mere placatory move. This is in the backdrop of allegations of the police releasing two of the culprits after they were handed over, inaction of the police on duty, denial of the incident by law enforcing agents right after the incident and then admittance that it did take place after an entire month. The release of blurry photographs taken from CCTV footage of some of the alleged attackers and the announcement of one lakh taka bounty on each for information leading to their arrest, has achieved precious little. According to a report in this paper the police arrested seven people who looked like the ones in the photographs of the alleged attackers, but they were released as they turned out to be the wrong suspects.

The wishy-washy attitude displayed by the authorities, regarding this grave crime, seems to indicate an attempt to let the matter go off the radar. For the people, especially for women and girls, this reluctance to carry out a diligent investigation, is a huge let-down. The government must put pressure on its agencies to arrest the real criminals.

## COMMENTS

**"Middle-income status in 3 yrs: PM"**  
(July 3, 2015)

Abu Bhuiyan

Development cannot be sustained without controlling corruption.

Nurul Alam Anik

That's not a realistic estimation. Even if everything is fair and square, it will still take more than 3 years to reach middle income status.

Ahmad Hussain Abir

Bangladesh has everything that is required to be an economic powerhouse. We have the manpower and the drive to produce anything and everything. It's just a matter of effective leadership that we are lacking. Sky is the limit for us. We are just shackled by the inept and corrupt leadership.

Hanif Repon

Not impossible if the ruling party can control its own thugs along with other culprits.

Wahid Hossain

Status will not feed the hungry, nor shelter the homeless; it will just increase benefits and bribes for politicians.

**"Faulty vessels given facelift for Eid trips"**  
(July 2, 2015)

Shumon Itat Mamoon

Again people will die by drowning in launch capsizes.

# Power of NO

KNOT SO TRUE



RUBANA HUQ

fun doubled when they nodded their heads and said No. As years went by, I tried understanding whether their approvals and disapprovals had double meanings and if they could actually get away from appearing positive yet being negative, and vice versa. Little did I know that in many occasions, a definite YES would turn to a NO and that the power of No would continue to soar in the world...

A "No" campaign took place in Chile. After fifteen years of military dictatorship and increasing international pressure, the government of Chile asked the public to vote in the national plebiscite of 1988 on whether General Augusto Pinochet should continue to be their leader for another eight years or whether there would be a new President the next year. The "No" campaign gained momentum with 27 nights of television advertisements and finally Pinochet was ousted.

A Russian Foreign Minister for the longest time possible, Andrei Gromyko was known as Mr. Nyet as he vetoed the most as the UN ambassador. Known as Mr. Grim Grom, nobody saw him smile, ever, and needless to say he was one Foreign Minister who was skillful and a professional practitioner of the diplomatic trade. And what he did mostly was say 'No.'

Three mornings away, while the Greeks went to vote, I laughed the loudest when one of my friends, completely disconnected from the world of economics, commented how Greece had

DURING my insensitive, immature childhood years I used to be hugely amused when a few of my South Asian friends from the South of India would shake their heads from left to right, saying Yes. The acted like many of our rich businessmen, and in the process, overspent and defaulted. In an extra serious tone, she also recollected how her father used to remind her to safely put away money for the next day's expenses before spending the day's budget. So much for regular wisdom... What however continued to bug her was the fact that Greece was a great destination to visit and a great "free" land for tourists. Little did she know that in spite of the failure to repay €1.6 billion to IMF, and in spite of what the nation had gone through, good hotels were still expensive and they were all demanding cash. However, the ground reality, which was seriously dismal, did touch her. Her face fell as I told her about the reports on scenes of panic in northern Greece where pensioners had reportedly fainted outside banks in Salonika. The picture of a week-old panic outside banks, supermarkets and petrol stations touched her even faster. The news of pensioners, waiting outside closed banks in Salonika, and collapsing when it became obvious that the lenders weren't going to open shop and they would not be getting their monthly allowances, made her cringe even more. However, later that evening, what ended up mattering most to me was the victory of NO. Pushed by the final "take-it-or-leave-it" proposal by Greece's creditors — the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF, 10 million Greeks chose to vote NO in the decisive referendum on July 5, 2015. Turns out that the Greeks didn't quite believe that ticking the Oxi (No) box meant a Grexit from the Eurozone and little did they understand that while the public coffers were empty, this referendum meant an approximate cost of €100 million, just to test Greece's standing in Europe, and not so much about a non-existing proposal that has already expired. So Greece, this minute as per IMF Managing Director, Christine Lagarde, is in arrears straight away...



And all this happened as Alexis Tsipras led the charismatic NO campaign aided and inspired by his ever charming (recently ex) Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, who while leaving his formal shirts untucked, riding town on a Yamaha motorbike, tweeting seriously with more than half a million followers, accused France and Germany of "economic terrorism", described austerity measures as "fiscal waterboarding", called IMF, European Commission and European Central Banks as institutions built on "rotten foundations", and termed the outcome of the referendum as Greece rising against "debt-bondage". And now for Greece, IOUs or "scrip" in place of cash will possibly be its answer while it faces its debts of around €315 billion (\$340 billion)—175 percent of its GDP. Yet, the people of Greece had said No to the rest of the European Union.

Saying NO takes a lot of courage and conviction. And for your columnist, NO continues to be an extra special word because of a longstanding historical relationship with the word...

I was often told that women could just sit indoors and enjoy the fruits of the labour that the men in the family would put in. I said No. I was told that giving shares to the girls in the family was a mistake as they would eventually get married and leave their paternal homes. I said No. I was told that a few areas were best left to the men in the family. I said No. For years, saying No has been a rewarding struggle. Every time I said No, an extended phase of discomfort had followed. But at my end, the habit of saying No has continued. Over the years, I have continued saying No to every issue that unsettles my conviction, when gender is looked upon as a utility tool to further equality objectives, when being counted as a female is turned into a data crunching exercise.

As people, as a nation, let's continue to say NO when a YES looks suspicious; let's also say NO when freedom is impinged upon and let's say NO when and how we want to.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

## GREECE'S DEBT CRISIS A Failure of the Eurozone

AHMAD IBRAHIM

ON July 5, Greek citizens voted 'no' on a referendum to agree to a bailout plan that was put forward by the country's creditors as the nation flirts with defaulting. The message, one that was vocally backed by the leftist government party, Syriza, was loud and clear—the Greeks are tired of being dragged through austerity measures that have crippled the country's economy. Any bailout plan that will be agreed upon will be have to be on its own terms.

But even as the voters celebrate in Greece, the problems facing them are very severe. Currently, unemployment stands at 25 percent and child poverty at 40 percent while the banks remain closed, limiting people to cash withdrawals of €60 per person at ATMs. Greece's debt-burden stands at a staggering €323 billion and they missed their most recent payment of €1.6 billion to the IMF, leading to the Europe-wide fear of Greek default and the subsequent referendum. Before analysing the options available to Greece at this disastrous juncture, it's important to understand, historically, how this crisis came to be. Understood from a heterodox perspective, Greece's debt crisis is not only unsurprising but also entirely predictable as a macro-stage failure of the Eurozone and its regional markets.

The complex connectivity of capital in global finance often means that economic disasters in one part of the world spreads itself out over several different continents. And so it was, for Greece; the financial collapse of the US economy in 2008 triggered low investment trends in Greece and the government entrenched itself in more and more euro-debt to continue the functioning of the economy (i.e. payment of salaries, grants,

pensions, etc). This money came mostly in the form of the euro from the European Central Bank since the move to the euro meant that the government was no longer responsible for the supply of the currency. By 2009, the Greek government came out publicly stating that it had been underreporting its deficits and that the deficit had reached such astronomical levels that a default was

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imminent. In market economies, a default occurs when the borrower is no longer able to pay the lender the amount it has borrowed, especially for the fact that the original amount is multiplied by the amount of interest that is also required as payment. In cases of a default, the creditors aim to reach a new agreement with the borrower on improved terms which make it possible

for the latter to pay the money back. In Greece's case, the IMF, EU nations and the European Central Bank got together to provide more money to keep the economy functioning while putting on harsh austerity measures that would make the repayment of the debt impossible.

As with any case of austerity politics, the biggest losers were the working class, as conditions of free market investment benefitted the capital-owning class. These harsh measures eventually led to mass unemployment and underconsumption and as a result the economy suffered even more, worsening Greece's plight. It was at this critical juncture that the Greek proletariat organised themselves against the market-oriented incumbent government and the hard-left party Syriza came to power. Their philosophy based itself loosely on Karl Marx's ideology of a state-governed economy that looked after the interests of the working class. However, even as the situation got better for the working class, the government was still in massive amounts of debt and even more money was being borrowed every day to keep the economy functioning.

In reality, this kind of scenario takes place fairly regularly in market economies, where regions become saddled with debt and have no choice but to default on its loans. The reason why Greece's case has been in the public eye is because it is a globally recognised country that is facing a meltdown. This is where the failure of the EU as a united entity comes to the fore. There will always be poorer and richer regions in capitalist economies. However, the difference between the Greece debt problem and the financial meltdown in the US is that the Greeks cannot simply print and throw money at the problem like the US did. Only the European

Central Bank can provide the Euro currency that is required at this point. The EU was thus doomed for failure from the very beginning because its constituent countries do not have control of the currencies but are in charge of setting the tax and interest rates in their sovereign states. This makes the poorer regions fundamentally incapable of facing crises that are endemic to market systems without taking on a burgeoning debt load. In that regard, the Eurozone is designed to benefit only the traditionally capital-heavy countries such as Germany. In order to keep up, the poorer members such as Ireland, Portugal and Italy have no choice but to operate with strict austerity measures that end up hurting the lower classes of these countries the most.

Analysts may point to the overconsumption and the low amounts of tax revenue generated in Greece as the reasons for the debt-crunch but these kinds of micro-analyses miss out on the bigger picture of cycles of crisis that market economies naturally face. Furthermore, these explanations are in contradiction with the empirical evidence of shortage of funds and the poverty and underconsumption that has plagued the Greek economy. The solutions at this point for Greece appear few and far between. However, they will return to the negotiating table no doubt bolstered by the show of support from its citizens about their refusal to be bullied into austerity measures again. This writer prefers the 'Grexit' where Greece leaves the Eurozone and introduces a new drachma that will be circulated instead of the Euro. It's time the Eurozone leaders understand that the working class will not always take their exploitation lying down.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Give RMG workers' salary-bonus before Eid

The biggest religious festival of Muslims, Eid-ul-Fitr, is around the corner. RMG workers are supposed to get their wages and bonus before Eid. But every year, we read news of RMG workers not getting their wages, let alone bonus and other incentives. This year, we hope the authority concerned will take necessary measures to ensure the rights of the workers.

Another point to consider is: most of the RMG workers come to Dhaka from different districts. They are granted leave at the last moment. They should be given vacation at least one week ahead of Eid so that they can leave the city early. It will help reduce traffic congestion on the highways.

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PHOTO: STAR

### Burning money and buying poison

The other day, I met an eight-year old boy named Sweet. He was selling cigarettes before the gate of Novo Theatre at Bijoy Sharani. He knew how to read and write, making it easier for him to conduct his business. I came to know from Sweet that he sold cigarettes worth Tk 5000 per day. "It's more in the holidays," he also added.

People of Bangladesh waste huge amount of money every day by puffing cigarettes. Smoking kills, affecting not just our health, but also the economy. It is high time for us to cut back this bad habit of smoking and use this large amount of money in productive sectors.

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