

# Cruelty beyond measure and transferred trauma



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APIURBO

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PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

HERE can be two instant reactions to the barbaric murders of three children -- Rakib, Rabiul and Shamim Ahmad -- following Rajon's killing. Your first impulse is to have the perpetrators done to death exactly in the similar manner that they had finished off their helpless preys. But the due process of law rules out instant justice. The ferocity with which crimes are committed cannot be matched by the law because it has to 'take its own course'.

The perpetrators might have applied the rule of jungle, but in the civilised world one cannot meet barbarism with barbarism. There the law is a step behind the commission of grievous crimes.

So, you have State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki talking of an inter-ministerial committee to monitor, at three months' interval, the status on the latest series of cases of child rights violations. The periodicity is a bit too longish for comfort given that the crimes are expected to be fast-tracked through speedy trial court for delivering convictions.

The other reaction you have is about the ironic portrayal of national image where the plus points are sadly negated by unforeseen minuses creeping up through the tiers of an impunity culture. People abroad scrounging newspapers around the world cannot explain the eerie nature of some of our crimes. They consider the phenomenon 'unfathomable' and even we, with all our resilience, can't help the self-questioning: 'Is this

the same Bangladesh we have grown up knowing?' Even Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, which have grown out of the cusp of wars and internal conflicts, might be a stranger to the latest specimens of social crimes we have seen happening in the country.

Usually, you are warned of any grisly footage of a crime or barbaric atrocity before it is shown over the audio-visual media. You are told that there are disturbing scenes ahead and persons of weaker hearts and minds may not be able to withstand them, visually and mentally. So, beware. Even

some pictures would be blurred (pixilated) to avoid shock and protect identity of the victim.

This decency to human sensibilities is mentioned just to highlight the parade of cruelties displayed on children and adolescents in successive bursts of medieval barbarities. Recall Rakib's decimation through a bestial means, Rabiul being hit by a crowbar as his skull fractured and an eye came out from the socket and teenager Shamim Ahmad, hung and tied to a tree, being brutally tortured. Such atrocities, allegedly on the ground of stealing, could not have been spur-of-

the-moment incidents, they are a reflection of a deep-seated multi-fanged social malaise.

Hero worship has been replaced by villain adulation. Positive examples are not asserting themselves, rather retreating before exhibitionism and power play.

Everybody wants to be in charge of events, trying to expand the turf by striking fear in the heart of the weak and vulnerable. In the latest instances, the perpetrators acted as judge-jury-and-executioner, all at the same time.

In recent times, neuroscience research has demonstrated ways that 'the social world gets under our skin, permeating the way our brains process information.'

The social compass misdirected as it is, clearly needs readjustment to meet the contemporary challenges in the mental world. We have to rid ourselves of the circumstances that reduce people's sense of interdependence with each other, leading to anti-social behaviour. For this to happen, the first requisite is we try to genuinely understand each other and not turn our face against one another. Our ability to connect with each other is the first major step towards a change around.

Where we have grown up through the nurturing hands of compassion and fellow feeling, the social and community bonding is sadly at a discount. The value and respect for human lives have touched the lowest ebb. They must be salvaged to their original height through good governance and rule of law.

How relevant are the following words of wisdom: 'Everyone from Thucydides to Thomas Hobbes to John Adams wrote their histories and social theories following a common assumption: government is the necessary restraint on people who -- without it -- would tear each other apart.'

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

# Financing adaptation in the most vulnerable developing countries

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

AS governments prepare to go to Paris in December to finalise the new Paris Agreement on Climate Change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at its 21st Conference of Parties (COP21), there is an emerging consensus amongst all parties, including the developed countries, of the need to provide substantial funding to the poorest and

most vulnerable developing countries. This consensus is aimed to support adaptation actions to meet the adverse impacts of human induced climate change that they are already facing.

However, there is still no agreement on how much and through which channels these funds should be delivered. Based on the previous experience of supporting adaptation finance, I have detailed below a description of the current landscape and then some ideas on how best to go forward.

### Previous adaptation financing channels

There have been a number of modalities that have already been tried both under the UNFCCC as well as outside it, which provide valuable lessons.

1. **LDC Fund (LDCF)** was created as part of the Marrakech Accords agreed at COP7 in 2001, with voluntary contributions from developed countries, channeled through the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Initially, it provided all 49 LDCs with financing to develop the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) which were supposed to identify "urgent and immediate" adaptation actions in each country. The LDCF would then fund the implementation focusing on a project-by-project basis. All the LDCs completed their NAPAs some years ago, and most have received funding from the LDCF for their first priority adaptation projects. However, the fund at the moment does not have sufficient means to finance about 30 approved projects, costing a total of around \$250 million. Since the replenishment of the fund by each developed country is done on an ad hoc basis, the fund cannot ensure a steady flow of money even when it has a pipeline of approved projects ready to be implemented.

2. **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)** was also created at the same time as the LDCF and also based on voluntary contributions from developed countries channeled through the GEF, to support adaptation in non-LDC developing countries. Over the years, a number of adaptation activities in developing countries have been financed from this fund.

3. **The Adaptation Fund (AF)** was set up after the Bali Action Plan at COP13 in Bali, Indonesia in 2010 and had a separate Adaptation Fund Board (AFB). It was initially based on the Adaptation Levy, which was a 2 percent charge levied on all transactions made under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). However, since the near collapse of the CDM market, the funding from the levy has almost dried up and it now also depends on voluntary contributions from developed countries. It pioneered the system of "Direct Access" of funding for developing countries, without having to go through intermediaries to receive funding.

4. **Pilot Programme on Climate Resilience (PPCR)** was set up under the World Bank in 2010 with a combination of loans and grants and focused on a set of ten selected highly vulnerable countries in Africa, Asia, South America and two regional projects in the Pacific and the Caribbean. These funds were channeled through the Regional Development Banks in each respective region.

5. **Bilateral Development Funding Agencies.** In addition to the major multilateral funds mentioned above, many developed countries also financed adaptation in self-selected developing countries through their respective bilateral development assistance agencies, often double counting Official Development Assistance (ODA) with Climate Adaptation Finance.

### Green Climate Fund (GCF):

The GCF fund, initiated in 2013, is expected to be the main channel to deliver the promised \$100 billion a year, starting from 2020 onwards to support all developing countries to tackle climate change both through mitigation as well as adaptation. It is also meant to mobilise considerable private sector investments as well as utilise contributions from developed country treasuries. The board has already had a number of meetings and have decided to allocate 50 percent of their funds to adaptation and also to prioritise the most vulnerable countries, such as LDCs and small island developing states (SIDS). It has received its first funding contributions from the developed countries and has identified a number of adaptation projects in a handful of LDCs.

### How best to channel adaptation funding in future?

Firstly, it is important to note that while using public finance to leverage private finance to invest in tackling climate change is a reasonable strategy to pursue when it comes to mitigation actions in large developing countries such as China and India, it does not work when it comes to financing adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries. Hence, developed countries will need to look to public finance for adaptation and cannot leave it to the market.

Secondly, the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries demand, and in my view deserve, to be provided with grants for adaptation financing and not loans, however concessional they may be. The recent statements and responses by the GCF Secretariat towards some LDCs submitting adaptation projects for financing has been to offer low interest loans instead of grants, which is quite troubling. The GCF Board needs to make a decision on rules for concessional finance clear, and do so quickly.

Thirdly, what is to be done about the existing adaptation funds, namely the LDCF, SCCF and AF? Should they be terminated, or allowed to continue (if so for how long?) or should they be absorbed into the GCF (if so how?). My personal view is that the LDCF in particular deserves to continue with a significant post-Paris replenishment by the developed countries in order to both support the immediate implementation of approved projects (which will require an immediate replenishment of at least \$250 million). Also in the medium term (up to 2020), it should be guaranteed sufficient funds on a regular basis to finance the full pipeline of adaptation projects from their respective NAPAs (which will probably require around several billion dollars over the next five years or so). In addition, the COP could decide to develop the criteria for inclusion of countries to bring in other vulnerable countries (such as SIDS) within the purview of the LDCF. At the same time, some current LDCs would graduate out of the eligibility over time.

In the case of the AF, it may be best to think of ways in which it could become the Adaptation Window of the GCF given its expertise in supporting adaptation in developing countries through Direct Access.

Fourthly, while prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries, the various funds also need to pay attention to allocating funds to the poorest and most vulnerable communities within each country. Better monitoring and reporting of funds to countries as well as within countries needs to be done. The latter being primarily the responsibility of the recipient countries themselves.

Finally, it would be best for developed countries to provide funding for adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries through the established channels under the UNFCCC rather than through bilateral channels. While bilateral ODA should certainly be made "Climate Smart" and be used in synergy, rather than parallel, with climate finance on the ground, the double counting of ODA with obligations under the UNFCCC is at best confusing and at worst, morally questionable.

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# VATman Forever

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

I demand to know what happened to all the money I got as Eidi when I was a kid!

Now that I am a parent, I know. The power, or should I say the misuse of it, of recycling. Here's my silent message to all the other parents, if you have more kids than I do, please don't give my kids any Eidi as it is a negative gross margin on my part to reciprocate. If you have fewer kids than I do, then fire away by all means as I can stash away the excess. After all, those days are over when, to get into the world of tertiary level education, all you needed was a pen.

Now there are coaching centers to train you to get into a coaching center that gives you a shot at life. Should you not quite make it, there is unfortunately nothing left but the lost kingdom. There really is no middle ground as we live in a totally binary society - the 'us and them' of George W. Bush-ism. And hence, we part ways from the very early days of our lives - English vs. Bangla medium, Bangla version vs. English version, Science vs. Humanities, public vs. private schools/universities, government vs. private sectors, Awami League vs. BNP, bloggers/atheists vs. fundamentalists and when it comes to tertiary level education, live or lose.

Hence the proposition of getting into a university comes with its own value proposition. And so, there is the value added taxes on tuition fees. The ruckus is on that for private universities. Yes, there can also be a VAT on public universities. But that won't fetch much for the state coffers given that I paid nothing (and actually got a scholarship) to earn a four year degree from BUET (ok, so it took six years to earn it, thanks to session jams...that's my VAT - Valued Added through Time).

Even at my public school, I paid Tk. 11 per month for lunch - and that too a pretty substantial one of paratha and vegetables (extra helpings courtesy of the be-friended class captains). And no, I'm not that old to have played ludo with Nawab Shirajuddowla.

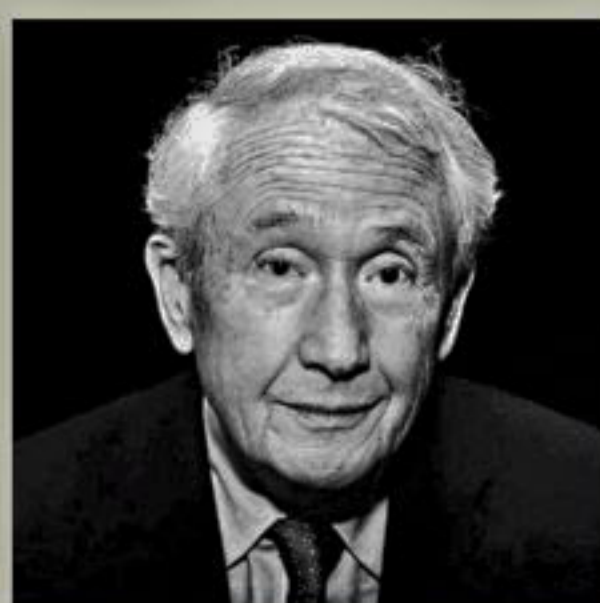
But this VAT in education is no stranger to us. There already is VAT on English medium schools. Cap on annual fees at those schools? No problem. Just re-label the excess desired as 'Annual Maintenance Fees'. I guess the international language of choice and desire doesn't come for free. The choice is ours to make - pay the taxman or pay S@ifurs.

Well, the VAT on tuition fees is there to stay. With 7.5 percent VAT added to private university tuition fees, the students can perhaps demand an automatic 7.5 percent added to their final CGPA upon graduating.

And don't expect a concert for reprieve - The Beatles have already sung Tax Man. But perhaps there may be a VATman Forever...

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# QUOTABLE Quote



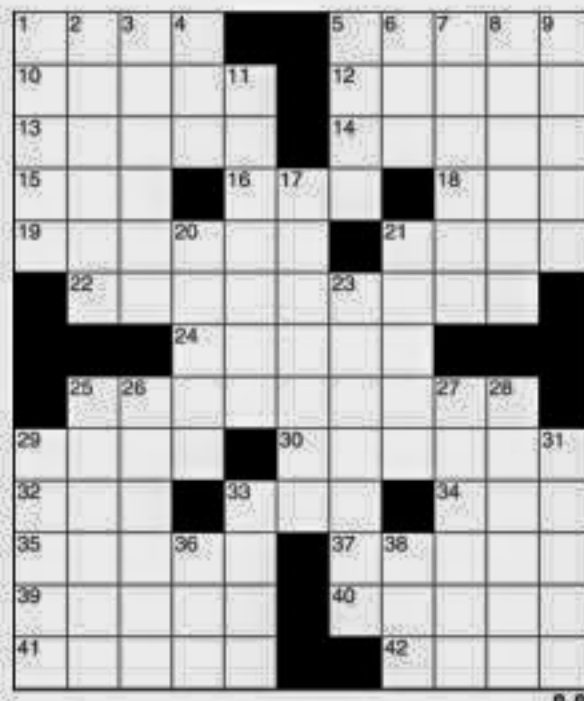
FRANK MCCOURT

Pulitzer Prize winning author

YOU MIGHT BE POOR, YOUR SHOES MIGHT BE BROKEN, BUT YOUR MIND IS A PALACE

# CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- Octavia's husband
  - Skating category
  - Find darling
  - Tablecloth material
  - Screen dot
  - Bandleader Shaw
  - Seventh letter
  - Hostile
  - Low digit
  - Bach work
  - Commotion
  - Artist Frederic
  - Showy flower
  - Guru's forte
  - Melt base
  - Media magnate Murdoch
  - Pendulum path
  - Taxpayer's ID
  - Watering hole
  - "Gladiator" star
  - Peach or Plum
  - Asian peninsula
  - Corporate division
  - Lovable
- DOWN**
- Physicist's amount
  - Scruffs
  - Paper worker
  - Cyano's love
  - Mine material
  - DVR button
  - Melody
  - Completely
  - Control
  - Insolent look
  - Snobby sort
  - Synagogue figures
  - Iowa community
  - Get naked
  - Breaking and entering, e.g.
  - Newsman Edward R.
  - Concert bonus
  - Interstellar cloud
  - Vineyard harvest
  - Headings
  - Lock
  - Plane fixture
  - Petite
  - Flock father



Yesterday's answer



# BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



# BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

