

## Another blogger killed!

Where will this take us?

ANOTHER blogger has been killed in the capital in broad daylight on Friday. The casualness and impunity with which the killers entered the house of the victim and walked away after killing Niladri Chattopadhyay is both astonishing and frightening. The killers and the killing must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Niladri is the fifth blogger that the religious extremists have killed and what is exasperating is that the agencies have not been able to arrest any of the perpetrators. The pattern of the killings is familiar and this time the responsibility for the murder has been claimed by the South Asian branch of Al Qaeda, Ansar-Al-Islam.

What is regrettable in the whole affair of the blogger killings is that not only have the law enforcing agencies failed to make any headway into the five murders since 2013, they have failed even to provide the minimum security to the victims. We fail to understand the response of the police when Niladri sought their help. We find it abominably brazen for anyone belonging to the law enforcing agencies to advise a threatened person to leave the country for his safety. The situation brooks no soft pedalling. The agencies must devote all energy to uncover the killers and offer the listed bloggers who have been threatened with all necessary protection.

For those who think they are acting for the greater glory of Islam, we say, Islam never believes killing is the arbiter of differences. Differences with critics should be combated intellectually and not by shedding blood. This is the teaching of Islam, which, regrettably, the perpetrators seem to have forgotten.

## Protect property of minority communities

Investigate allegations, take action

IN a recently called press conference, Bangladesh Hindu Buddha Christian Oikya Parishad (BHBCOP) voiced allegations that property belonging to minority groups is being grabbed by 'influential ruling party men'. A minister, some lawmakers and a coterie of officials are said to be behind attempted or actual takeover of property. It is alleged that ownership of hundreds of decimals of land and a house has been transferred from a Hindu landlord in Faridpur by forcing him to sign a preliminary deed. In the same case, an old temple and Ashram were purportedly demolished. Some members of minority communities have also been harassed with false cases and at times tortured.

These are serious allegations involving the rights of minorities as the credibility of the government is coming under avoidable question mark. Indeed a suggestion has been proffered to set up a separate ministry for religious minorities. The first step is to allay any fear in the minds of minority communities that their right to property is not infringed upon by political opportunist elements. Now a thorough investigation should be ordered into the allegations of dubious property takeover and a strong signal given to persons indulging in such improprieties.

## COMMENTS

**"Blogger killed once again"**  
(August 8, 2015)

**Kaniz Ahmed**

So some sick people think that bloggers deserve to die?! I just don't get how certain people think.

**Shuvonn Rezaa**

Has anyone read his blog? He used to lead a group called 'Biggyan Shongho'.

**Nicholas O'Connell**

Why should anyone be punished in any way for the "slander" of insulting religion? In civilised countries that is protected under free speech laws.

**Yashwant Lodhi**

Freedom of expression is the main pillar of any stable society.

**Rakibull Hassan**

This government cannot protect us.

**Ahmed Farhad Salim**

So this is what we have become - a nation of intolerance. It began with freethinkers and atheists. Eventually, they will turn their attention to non-Muslims and eventually they will target the moderate Muslims as well. Religious fanaticism is a bottomless pit. Regardless of whether one writes for or against religion, in a civilised society it is unacceptable to take a human life.

**Reaz AU**

What did he write against Islam? He supported the war criminals' trial. And they killed him in the name of religion hiding the real reason.

# "We must never have people standing while children are beaten and killed."

Ruthless violence against children seems to have become a recurrent concern in today's Bangladesh. While the extent of the cruelty seems to have taken a different, more horrendous form, the lack of immediate, effective response from the government as well as concerned authorities point toward an unsafe, unfriendly environment for children. Michael McGrath, Country Director of Save the Children, a UK based development organisation which works for children's rights, spoke to Tamanna Khan of The Daily Star about possible ways to fight

Could you tell us a bit about Save the Children's work in Bangladesh in relation to reducing violence against children?

Our biggest programmes are in education, health and livelihoods. We have a substantial programme for working children, providing them with basic education, life skills and vocational skills that will enable them to get out of the poverty trap. Most of the children under our coverage are street children, who face violence from police, fellow street children, from everybody. If you can give them skills to get out of streets, they are less likely to be victims of violence. We also work to prevent child marriage, the form of violence which facilitates illegal activity such as sexual abuse of under-aged girls.

The recent incidents of violence against children have shaken the country. . . When I heard about Rakib's torture and killing I became physically sick. What was shocking is that the person who carried out this act, was not part of a child abuse ring or mentally ill or a hardened criminal. He was a garage owner and he, in the presence of his mother, committed this torture on a child! If a foreign intelligence agency did this, there would be global outrage. How could somebody devise such fiendish torture, destroying someone's organs from inside by blowing up them up? It is the sort of brutality that you would expect from regimes like North Korea or Idi Amin's Uganda back in the 70s. These crimes are not committed by normal human beings. But they are in Bangladesh. We have seen that here and we have seen that in Rajon's case.

Why do you think ordinary people are doing these horrible things?

Bangladeshis are good, honest, moral and caring people. It is not a country where people are evil or hard-hearted. I think there are different things happening in the society here. There is a process, perhaps, of breaking down of social bonds. Traditionally, Bangladeshis lived in villages and had obligations to everybody, stronger and weaker, be it family members, neighbours, village leaders, adjacent villagers or people in mosque. They had to carefully manage those relationships and nothing could be allowed to break. Otherwise the whole harmony would be destroyed and they could not afford to do that in a small village. With a move to the cities, it seems like people are forgetting their basic humanity and they are concentrating just on the people closest to them, what happens outside is none of their concern. Maybe that is how an employee or the mother of a garage owner can stand by or assist.

Besides, when things are tough - everybody is struggling for their survival - the strong dominate the weak. I see this happening everyday --- the rich treating the poor cruelly, rickshaw passengers beating up rickshaw drivers, the powerful oppressing the weak. The weakest in our society are the children. People feel that they can bring out their frustration and anger on a child. That's the rule of the jungle. That is where we lose our humanity.

So what can be done?

People have to exercise greater responsibility. They have to know they have a responsibility to others, meaning they need to intervene and stop it, when



Michael McGrath

somebody is beating his wife, or harassing a girl. We must never have people standing while children are beaten and killed. We have to take responsibility for the actions of others. Otherwise we will all be at risk. If we do not reintroduce kindness and courtesy into our society then the social bonds will break down.

This is not a jungle. This is a human society where we have to respect and care for the weak, be it old people, the disabled, children or women. So there are two things here. First, we have the obligation to stop evil by others and secondly, it is the obligation of the powerful, the rich and the well-endowed, to cherish the weakest in our society. By bringing these two together we can protect our children.

Where do we start?

If you allow small evils then big evils

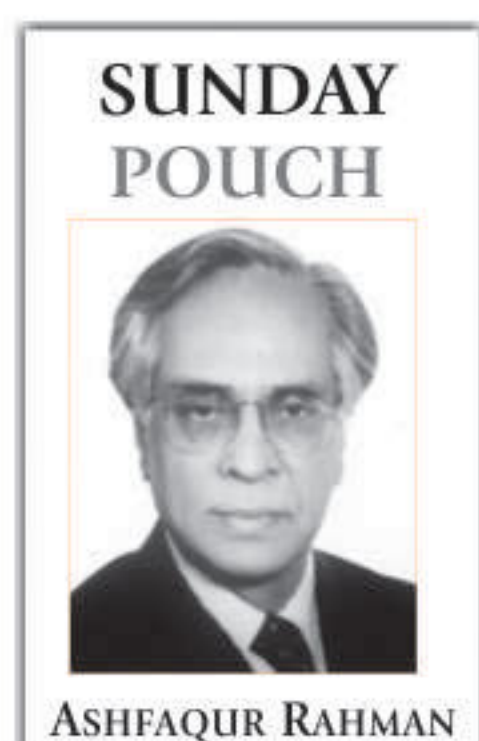
will grow. If it becomes acceptable to cause pain to children in some context then it becomes acceptable in other context. So as a parent, if it is okay for me to hit my child so hard that they are in pain, then chastising children through pain becomes okay. I then must accept when a teacher does the same thing, or the next day when a garage owner puts an air hose up a child's rectum. It is only a small distance from one to the other.

We have got to stop the idea that it is okay to cause pain to children, be it your own child, pupil, employee or even a suspected criminal. If you stop that from the outset then you will stop the acceptance.

I call on the prime minister, because she is the leader of the country and she really has children's welfare at heart, to say that the most basic right of a child is not to have to physically suffer. No person should cause physical suffering to a child, not a parent, a teacher, an employer, a policeman or a bystander. It does not matter what the cause of violence is, nothing justifies violence against children. And the prime minister should say that.

Can you suggest any specific actions? We need a police officer -- appointed specifically for women and children -- in every police station. This should be part of a trained cadre of police officers, whose job would be to actively go out and stop offences. I have seen this work in Indonesia. They have desks, special training and responsibility. They are often quite senior and have the authority to command a small taskforce of police to go out and investigate. They build database and gather knowledge about the causes of these problems and their solutions.

# A roadmap for Bangladesh



SUNDAY  
POUCH



ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

As we observe the 40th anniversary of the shahadat of the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, several thoughts crowd our mind. No doubt in these years, the country has moved forward. But in many aspects of our national life, we have regressed. Historians will be able to delineate the contours correctly in the future. But those of us who lived through the war that led

to the birth of this great nation can assess how we fared and where we faulted. A dispassionate study of the fault lines may help us in the future.

Bangabandhu was an overarching figure. It is he who taught the Bangalis to dream. It is again he who urged us to excel where we failed in the past. He inspired us to be an independent nation. The shackles are just constraints that we need to break through. We should be self effacing yet self confident at the same time. Slowly and surely, we are becoming so.

We have been independent for 43 years now. There are many areas where we have succeeded. But we have detractors who point out our many failures. We must not ignore their markers. We must strive to overcome these setbacks in the near future.

Among our greatest failure is achieving a satisfactory system of a peaceful changeover of government. Every five years, when the term of an elected government ends, the nation is kept guessing whether it can elect a new government freely and fairly. Although our two major political parties almost always come to power alternately, we are still kept guessing about what trouble will grip the nation until an acceptable government comes to power. This disrupts progress and interferes with governance -- a prime challenge for the country.

There is also the need to clear the backlog of judicial cases pending in various courts of the country if we want to see improved governance. While many might consider this to be a common incident in many coun-

tries around the world, in the case of Bangladesh the backlog often affects ordinary citizens who are stymied in their efforts to break free from this paralysis and make things work. Two aspects need to be looked into. First, how to reduce the numerous steps of the judicial process before a case can be determined. The other, is how to ensure that the judicial system quickly discerns the chaff from the kernel. Unnecessary delay in determining a case could lead to infraction of delivery of justice and could perpetrate malfeasance. The judiciary is a highly competent corpus but our system is in many ways outdated. Alternate dispute resolution is the only way out, perhaps. Rapid computerisation of the judi-

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ciary is another way out. Singapore has successfully adopted modern methods to curb wastage of time and money. We need to rethink and introduce better and quicker procedures as well.

The third aspect of our national life that needs to be addressed is corruption. Unfortunately, it prevails in high offices as well as in lower echelons of governance and other sectors. It's commonly seen that those who are corrupt can get away easily with malfeasance. Recently, several agencies of the government have been computerised. This has improved several areas of governance. Yet in many major areas, corruption continues to be a way of doing business. What we need is to institute a broad and deep sense of accountability. No pub-

lic servant - be it a minister of the government or a policymaker - should be allowed to get away with law-breaking. Even politicians and public leaders should be accountable to the national conscience for their words and deeds. No one - be it in the public or private sector - has the right to play with honest and good citizenship. We are yet to accept the fact that an honest and patriotic citizen is superior to fellow citizens who are deviant and proven dishonest. Why should corrupt functionaries of the government and the private sector be made to feel that they have the right to be corrupt? A free and honest society is more valuable than a corruption ridden polity.

A major challenge before Bangladesh in the coming decade is how to quickly modernise the nation to become a science-based society. It's true that in the last five years Bangladesh has catapulted into the digital age. But is this enough? With rapid digitalisation, we are on track to be a savvy society. This is in keeping with a rapidly growing young population. We can use existing talent and modern technology to save time and money. This is gradually happening in the agricultural sector. Tractors and machines are increasingly being used in our farms with greater impact.

When a population of 165 million turns tech-savvy and is able to be innovative and use technology in all spheres of life and living, how much more can we achieve in less time and with little resources? This will catapult us ahead of all nations. We, Bangladeshis, are rich in culture and in the arts. Imagine how affluent and resourceful a nation we can be if we use science in our daily lives. Digital Bangladesh has enabled us to dream again. The nation is rising again. Let us shift gears and surge ahead.

Rabindranath Tagore, a Bangali, conceived the concept of microcredit. Dr. Yunus, a Bangladeshi and another Nobel Prize winner, used microcredit to uplift the poor, the hungry and the hopeless, and taught them how to create wealth where there was none. Let us rethink our life's assumptions, let us change the parameters of our limitations. We deserve to be better.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Scanty rainfall hampers farmers

This refers to a photo published in TDS on August 5, 2015. The photo along with the news depicted the horrifying site of an aman field which became dry due to shortage of rain during the ongoing rainy season. Insufficient rainfall severely hampers the cultivation of aman paddy in vast areas of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh. I wonder what will happen in the winter or dry season. It's time for both the government and local people to figure out a solution and ensure food security.

**Shafkat Rahman**  
BIAM Laboratory School, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

### Nuclear weapons--a curse to humanity

On July 16, 1945, the USA detonated the first atomic bomb in the barren desert of New Mexico. Less than a month after this first explosion, it dropped two atom bombs on the heavily populated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. This first usage of the horror bomb indiscriminately wiped out more than 100,000 civilian women, children and old people--and condemned many others to a very slow and painful death. Others were horribly maimed, burned and scarred for life. There were horrors the US wouldn't even let its own people know about, wouldn't allow pictures in the newspaper.

Since WWII, the explosive power of the combined nuclear arsenals of the US and the Soviet Union has grown to the equivalent of over 300,000 Hiroshimas! The 8,500 warheads and bombs in the US arsenal alone have a combined explosive power of more than three billion tonnes of TNT. Dr. James Muller, a Harvard heart specialist and secretary of the Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, Inc., brought this out when he said, "At some point deep down inside, people know the world could explode tomorrow." Yet some people are just talking about it calmly as though it is the natural thing to expect--that we are going to destroy each other and the world! Do we even still remember what nuclear explosions do? Does the post-Hiroshima generation still appreciate the horror of nuclear weapons and the dangers posed by the prospect of a nuclear conflict?

**Ted Rudow III, MA, CA, USA**