

Rejuvenate health and education

State must make substantial investments in these sectors

EXPERTS have voiced concern on the deteriorating state of health and education in a high level meeting of the Bangladesh Development Forum 2015 held recently in Dhaka. For Bangladesh to develop and grow at a satisfactory level, it is imperative that the necessary investments are made to have a healthy population that is also educated. As remuneration for teachers is low, the profession is no longer able to draw meritorious graduates and that has a chain effect. Without a good grounding in science and mathematics, it is very difficult for students to take advantage of the information technology revolution that has become a pillar of development. While primary school enrolment has reached nearly 98 percent, what is often overlooked is that about 20 percent of them drop out before completing primary education. Enrolment may have increased, but there is widespread scepticism about the quality of students. That budgetary allocation for education has actually dropped to 1.8 percent leaves a lot to be desired.

While Bangladesh has made commendable progress in health, large numbers of children continue to suffer from malnutrition and deficiencies in overall health resulting in millions slipping into poverty. Policymakers need to look at drawing from own resources to supplement budget for health and education. There is need to make ministries more proactive in addressing governance problems that plague educational and health institutions. We are disheartened to see that like education, health is also not being prioritised. Without a healthy and educated population, attaining middle income status by 2021 will be challenging.

Protecting indigenous peoples' land rights

ILO conventions need to be implemented

WE fully endorse the call for implementation of the ILO convention 107 to protect land rights of the indigenous peoples of the country. Speakers at a roundtable titled "Indigenous and tribal peoples and Adivasis in the plain land" organised by Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS) on Tuesday strongly urged the government to take immediate steps to put this Convention into action.

ILO Convention 107 states that indigenous peoples' right of ownership, collective or individual, over lands they traditionally occupy shall be recognised. Therefore, according to this Convention, though indigenous peoples do not have any land related papers their use of land for generations bestow them ownership right; and denial of this right is in contravention to the ILO Convention and a violation of human rights. The government has ratified the Convention but it is yet to be implemented. Experts at the programme opined that implementation of this Convention is instrumental in solving the existing land related problems of the indigenous peoples. This remains one of the major obstacles to resolving the land issue and fully implementing the CHT Accord.

Convention no. 169 is another important ILO instrument which calls for recognition of the cultural and other specificities of indigenous peoples. The government has not ratified it. To ensure rights of the indigenous peoples it is important to recognise their distinctive cultures as the country is home to diverse groups of people. In line with the speakers we also urge the government to ratify this ILO Convention immediately.

COMMENTS

"Obama vows to eliminate IS"

(November 16, 2015)

Shama Shafiq

Just make sure that doctors, patients and civilians are not targeted.

"Tutul won't stop"

(November 16, 2015)

Labina

And he shouldn't. Don't let the extremists win.

Rumana Alamgir

Don't compromise with your commitment.

Fahrin

I wonder why the law enforcement agencies haven't been able to catch anyone yet.

"Now Hasan Azizul gets death threat"

(November 16, 2015)

Wahida

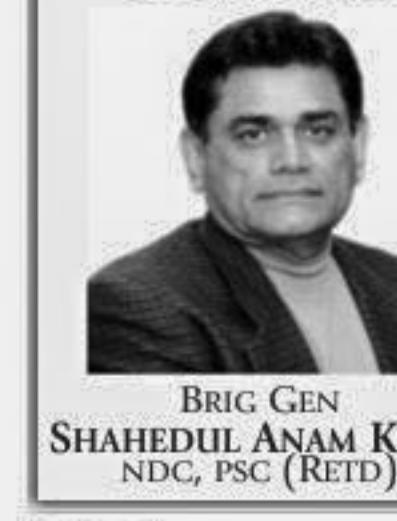
It is unbelievable how daring the extremists are becoming.

Lima

A few days ago, following the killing of the publisher, death threats were also given to Professor Anisuzzaman. Is the government so helpless that they can't trace any of the culprits?

OF HAMMER AND NAIL

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

"To all those who have seen these awful things, I want to say we are going to lead a war which will be pitiless. Because when terrorists are capable of committing such atrocities they must be certain that they are facing a determined France, a united France, a France that is together and does not let itself be moved, even if today we express infinite sorrow."

THOSE are the words of a person who has been deeply hurt. President Hollande rightly expresses the feeling of a person seeking immediate retribution of deep pain inflicted upon his nation. And that is exactly what begs the question.

Commentators have queried soon after the Paris attacks whether La Republique has the answers to the problems it is facing. François Hollande's immediate response and some of his other actions that he has proposed to the French Parliament on Monday, consequent upon the terrorist attacks, does not suggest that the severity and character of the crisis that France has to deal with, a crisis that stems not only from some of its internal policies but also its participation in wars against terror in recent times, has been really grasped. On the other hand, it does remind one of Abraham Maslow's comment: "If you only have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."

Like any other world leader invested with unrestrained power to act, every problem posed by Islamic extremism to France, and indeed to the Western world, appears to be a nail. The propensity for a kinetic energy approach (as an Indian security expert aptly described) in such a situation, rather than a more sober and perhaps more efficacious and long lasting chemical energy approach, is manifest in the reaction.

The IS phenomenon must be combated and its raison

d'être must be defeated, but is a 'pitiless war' the answer to a problem, one that has been created entirely by the monocultural, lopsided, biased and double standards approach of the West, particularly of countries like France and the US? President Obama speaks of 'eliminating terrorism totally' without him or his bevy of advisors having any idea of how to go about it. And the reaction of Polish foreign minister following the Paris attacks betrays a pulverised mind. Remember President Bush brandishing (later retracting) the threat

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of Crusade after 9/11. What the world is enduring today is in great part the result of Bush's shortsighted strategy.

President Hollande calls it an act of war by IS on the French people. It indeed is. Nothing of this proportion has been unleashed on the French since WWII. But the irony of the matter is that the act of war has been committed by the very group that the West and France have sponsored against Assad.

While in no way justifying the senseless attack on

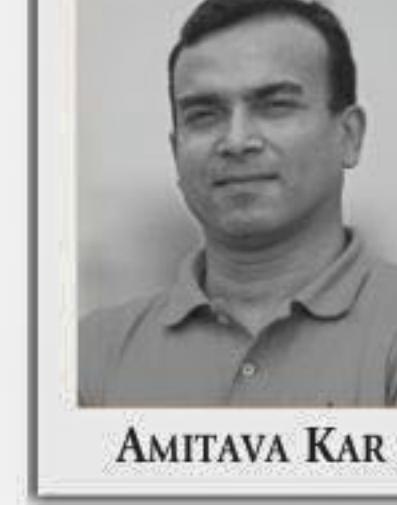
civilians and the killings, for the Syrians and the IS, France has been already at war with them since the commencement of bombardment by the coalition air forces of Iraq (against IS targets) and Syria. And as the IS claims, the Paris attacks are in response to the French bombing of IS.

And if we believe terrorism to be the weapon of the weak, the IS has sought to achieve an equilibrium, since it cannot indulge in open hostility, at least at this particular point in time, by targeting the soft targets - the civilians - which for them are collateral damage, just as the unfortunate civilians in those countries bombarded by the West in their action against the extremists. As an aside, air campaign alone is not the answer to IS; one wonders whether the air campaign over the period of the last one year has in any way degraded IS capability to carry on with their strategic and tactical agenda.

The purpose of the foregoing comments was to highlight the ineffectiveness of the strategy of the West of combating a peril which the faulty policy of the US and West has in the first place spawned and which their equally contradictory and self defeating policy in Syria has helped to sustain. And whose dire consequences the rest of the world is suffering.

For the rest of the world the IS has become the greatest threat, and it is not for the US or the West to combat it alone. Terrorism cannot be totally annihilated through a 'pitiless war' only. Those who think in those lines are unaware of what they are dealing with. It needs collaboration, more so of Muslim countries, who stand to suffer as much, if not more, than the others in the ongoing struggle of ideas and scampering for strategic resources. Moderate minds must come together cutting across national divide, beliefs and taboos, to combat this phenomenon.

The writer is Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*.

WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY 2015
What does it take to move the human heart?

AMITAVA KAR

HERE was a time when public discussion was awash in meta-questions like: What is our purpose? What is right and what is wrong? What matters most?

There is less moral conversation in the public square now.

Intellectual authority has drifted away from theologians, poets and philosophers to economists, psychologists and "experts". And the more they talk, the more confused we become. Public debate is overpoliticised. Everything is controversial. We agree on nothing. We respect no one. We are no longer defined by the content of our character but by what we own. Truth, goodness and beauty are passé. Where do we go from here?

One way of escape is by philosophical contemplation. But the 'practical man' sees philosophy as having little value to him. And who is the 'practical man'? One who recognises only material needs and is completely oblivious to the goods of the mind, of course.

Such a life is meaningless in this interdependent world. Unless we can so expand our mind as to include the whole outer world, we remain like a fortress surrounded by thick walls. "In such a life there is no peace," Bertrand Russell says, "but a constant strife between the insistence of desire and the powerlessness of will."

The study of philosophy makes us citizens of the universe, rather than those of a walled city that is at war with the rest. It teaches us that it is irrational to expect peace at home while people elsewhere die for freedom. This citizenship of the universe liberates us from the prison of hate and prejudice, making the point that it is not sufficient to confine our benevolence to those we find congenial - to our own ethnic, national or ideological group. We must have what an ancient Chinese sage called *jian ai* - "concern for everybody."

Like all other studies, it aims primarily at knowledge. "It aims at knowledge that

gives unity to the body of all knowledge," Bertrand Russell says. For example, it makes clear at once the scope and the limitations of scientific knowledge. Some people are so impressed by what science knows that they forget what science does not know. They tend to think that skill - which these days include the ability to kill or sing a song - can take the place of wisdom.

It is the morality of philosophy that reminds us that keeping each other alive by old-fashioned methods like empathy and compassion is more important than killing each other by the latest

bubble of 'efficiency' and 'success', heading meekly to an unknown destination, good at what they are doing but with no idea why they are doing it. What good is knowledge if it fills our pocket but empties our mind?

Philosophy cannot offer any definitive answers to these fundamental questions and probably never will. "Your search for answers may not always be successful but you will learn many things along the way," says Dr Abdul Matin, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Dhaka University. "It is also worth learning why the universe is mysterious. It is also worth

American CEOs studied philosophy at university. Damon Horowitz, philosophy professor and serial entrepreneur has two jobs at Google: in-house philosopher and director of engineering.

Young people, raised in today's hypercompetitive environment, are desperately looking to find ideals that will give meaning to their lives in an interconnected, intercultural world. UNESCO, by celebrating World Philosophy Day each year, on the third Thursday of November, recognised the enduring value of philosophy for



PHOTO: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Female passengers' sufferings



PHOTO: BANGLA CHOKH

Female passengers often suffer while travelling by bus. They are often sexually harassed by men. Clearly, there aren't sufficient BRTC buses for women. We request the authorities to introduce more buses for women on the roads, especially in Dhaka city.

Intaz Ali
Bangabandhu Hall, University of Dhaka

Family no more a trusted institution!

Family is an institution which regulates the socialisation process of children. In a family, every member shares emotions and shoulders one another's responsibilities.

Nowadays the family scene has remarkably changed. Family members feel less about one another and are becoming self-centric and even selfish. Trust, the main strength of family bond, is diminishing.

Housewives are frequently subjected to torture by husbands for dowry and other

illicit purposes. Everyday both print and electronic media carry stories of breach of trust by husband, wife, children of the family.

I strongly feel that families should return to the old moral values when our family unit was strong. Family based on trust and mutual understanding can bring happiness and prosperity to the family members.

Professor M Zahidul Haque

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