

Waterlogging can be solved

Invest in infrastructure and stop the grabbing

THE picture published in yesterday's paper portrays a menace we are all too familiar with: canals blocked by garbage. The inevitable waterlogging that causes immense misery to the city dwellers has also become part of our urban scenario. A World Bank study predicts a cumulative financial loss of Tk 11,000 crore in the next 35 years, if waterlogging and urban flooding is not addressed.

The study says that an investment of just Tk 270 crore to improve the city's drainage system could cut down the damage by a third. This means investing in storm water drainage pumps and drainage infrastructure proposed in the Detailed Area Plan and Sewerage Master Plan. But it also means recovering canals and other water bodies that have been clogged up with garbage or blatantly grabbed by the influential. Even the mayors of the city have expressed their frustration about the illegal occupation of water bodies.

The immediate step to reduce waterlogging, therefore, would be to evict all illegal occupation of water bodies. This only the government can do as many of the encroachers enjoy the indulgence of the authorities concerned. The mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has promised to recover all grabbed canals but has admitted that it will take time as there are many cases against canal grabbers pending in court. These cases must be disposed of quickly so that the canals are free again to hold the extra water during rains.

By assisting the two mayors in clearing the water bodies of garbage and encroachment and making the small investment in infrastructure suggested by the WB study, the government can bring about a revolutionary change in a city regularly paralysed by waterlogging.

No compensation yet for Tazreen victims

Retailers, brands cannot avoid responsibility

IT has been three years since the Tazreen fire incident which left some 112 dead and hundreds more injured due to smoke inhalation and fire. We find the lack of progress in compensating the victims disturbing and utterly reprehensible. Victims have received no meaningful financial assistance despite the formation of a Trust Fund where the retailers and brands were supposed to make contributions, but have refrained from doing so. What does that say about corporate social responsibility of these foreign brands and their commitment to a safe working environment for workers who produce these garments for the international market?

We are informed that what little compensation victims received ranged from Tk 50,000 to Tk 150,000. This can hardly be construed as meaningful compensation when taking into account the cost of treatment and loss of livelihoods for those affected. While the Rana Plaza incident caught the international media spotlight and much has been done to do the right thing, one cannot say so for the Tazreen factory fire victims. Are the lives of these workers worth less than those who suffered a similar fate in the Rana Plaza incident? Why the double standards?

How long must workers continue to die or get injured because of errant factory owners and their supervisors? Who will enforce the laws that have been enacted to bring the criminals to book and set examples of them? These are questions that demand an answer because although much has been done in the last few years to improve safety at the workplace, the issue of compensation appears to have taken a backstage. Just because the spotlight is no longer on the Tazreen tragedy does not mean we can forget about what happened there.

COMMENTS

- "Arrogance, their middle name"**
(November 22, 2015)

▼

Anita Bose
Our country experienced one of the worst genocides in the world because of people like them.

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Hamida Khan
Not only arrogance, but "ruthless and brutal" should also be their middle name for what they did during 1971's Liberation War.
- "HANGED, TOGETHER"**
(November 22, 2015)

▼

Papri
Both of them truly deserved it.

▼

Anis Khandkar
Justice has been served after so many years.

▼

Khaleda Mahmud
They were the collaborators of the Pakistani occupation force and made Bangladesh their killing field. Their ruthless killing sprees can never be forgotten.

▼

Zaman Ul Hashem
The government should remain alert so that the Jamaat-Shibir miscreants can't carry out destructive activities in the name of protesting these Razakars' execution.

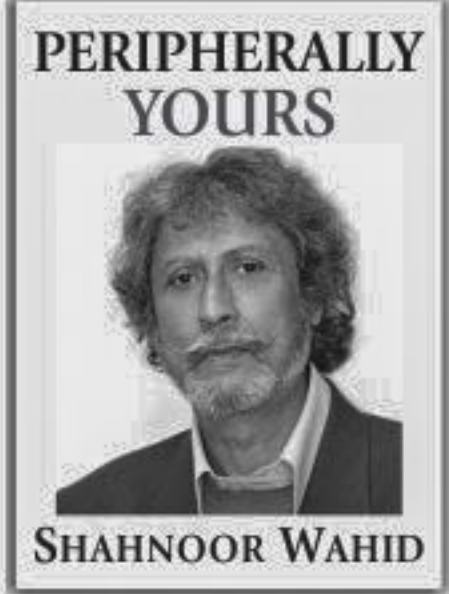


KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

WHEN you are a non-resident Bangladeshi living ten thousand miles away from where you were originally born, you are most torn between being yourself and being the one you once signed up for. So, anything worrying happening in Bangladesh triggers an extra nerve pain. You shudder and then call "home". The first phone call that we received post-execution of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was from a brother living abroad: "Are you all ok? What about hartals? Reactions? Vandalism? Violence?" It took us a while to calm him and tell him that we were all fine and all was well with the world and that nothing would ever go wrong again, like before and that the whole nation had stood in silence, seeped in memory, watching the news till about 1:00 am of November 20, 2015. Many tweeted, failing the Facebooking option. Many placed regular calls to loved ones in place of Viber and WhatsApp. Many even blogged. I just tweeted and rested.

At around noon on the 22nd, a bright young lady, in response to my tweet, wrote: "Where has all your compassion gone?" To make things even harder for me, she quoted another tweet from an acquaintance that read, "Hate cannot drive love." I stopped for a minute and wondered if I should explain to the young lady that I had lived through 1971 as a young kid and had watched friends, brothers, fathers, cousins leave for war never to return. On November 20, 2015, at a lunch, amongst friends, Shimul Yusuf, the actor, breathed heavily and said, "Yesterday was a long night for me. I was awake the whole time." When asked, she pointed to her sister (wife of late Altaf Mahmud) and said, "We are waiting." Needless to say, that many like Shimul, Nasiruddin Yusuf Bacchu and their sister, have waited a long time for the 22nd to happen. For many like them, it was the longest wait ever.

For the brother who had called from abroad, instead of explaining the local situation, I ended up expressing my sympathies to him about the multiple trips he would have to make in the next couple of months from New York to various cities in Europe. Securities in those cities were super heightened and opening and reopening bags, belts, laptop cases, iPads, and jackets were serious hassles. Carrying a Muslim name lately has been raising alarms for many of them leading some to even slightly alter their names to anglicised tangents. The terrorists have just made life difficult for Muslims



PERIPHERALLY YOURS
SHAHNOOR WAHID

AS the smell of gunpowder slowly recedes from the air over Paris, many questions start to crowd the minds of analysts across the world, from "what happened?" it is now time to ask "how did it happen?" Was such an attack coming France's way since France joined the western coalition to take part in air strikes on IS strongholds in Syria? With the memory of the bloodbath at Charlie Hebdo not yet totally faded, it was expected that the French intelligence would install the best possible monitoring system available in the world to take preemptive action against terrorist groups targeting France. But, all such assumptions were proved wrong with the attacks in Paris on November 13.

What baffles us is, how could about a dozen heavily armed terrorists drive all the way to Paris from Belgium or some other place near the capital without having been checked at any point by the security personnel on either side of the border? Against the background of heightened security alert with the rise of

NO TEARS

instead of making their point. For the brilliant young woman who ended up questioning me on my compassion, I ended up sharing with her that I had no regrets, no remorse of having written: "Done, SQC. Done, Mujahid." I ended up sharing with her that the portrait of Rumi, hanging in the living room of late Jahanara Imam, at her Elephant Road residence opposite the Aero plane Mosque, with a quote from Jibananda Das, "Abar Ashibo phirey ei Banglay" (I will return to Bengal again) haunts me till date. As much as I currently appreciate these young people not carrying any burden of the history of blood, and for moving on as fast as they can, for their own lives and livelihood, I

The same night, a private television channel was quick to air a few bytes from SQ Chowdhury where he had said: "I am proud to be the son of Fazlul Quader Chowdhury and yes, he did not believe in the independence of Bangladesh." That byte was, perhaps, the last reminding nail in the coffin for many of us. That one could deny Bangladesh, defy 1971 and still be a minister in the free soil of this country, and that collaborators, killers, conspirators, from time to time, have taken turns and have all ridden in high might, hoisted our national flag in their cars and have enjoyed heights in this land of ours, stand as a mark of shame that we ourselves have to bear and remedy.

So, to our children, the message stands

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for one, cannot betray the emotion of a seven-year-old, who watched war from the lens of a full grown adult, changing three houses in nine months, and living on potatoes and toast biscuits.

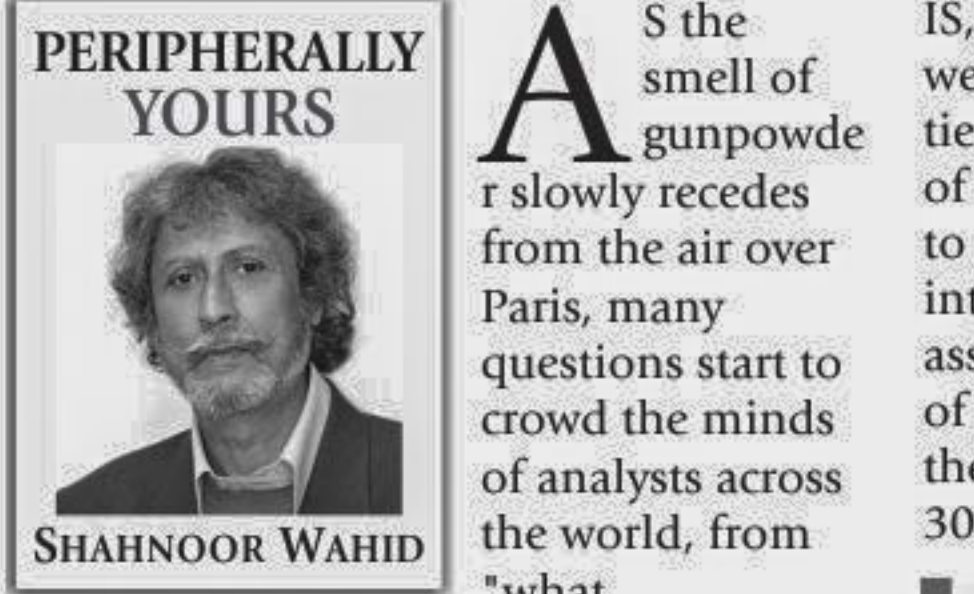
For Shimul Yusuf, silently I only had memories to share. I had ridden on her husband, Bacchu bhai's shoulder, wearing a black and white dotted frock, singing: "Moder gorob, moder asha, amori bangla bhasha." (Our pride and hope, Bangla language will live forever). For the rest present in the lunch, including Minu Billah, a freedom fighter herself, I had the same old feeling, in unison, charting all their hopes and history through the execution of the verdicts.

clear. Memories are to be passed on to you. What we have seen and gone through must not trouble you but they must all become a part of you. Whether you question the trial, the proceedings, or the witnesses is for you to judge, but it is also upon us to share with you tales of our nights of watching shells killing our neighbours, of our homes turning into ashes, just because ugly birds flying up in the skies had decided to kill us all. Since there cannot be any refuge from memory, live partly through us and decide whether it is ever worth siding with those who have today surfaced as post-modern apologists for brutality.

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The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

PARIS ATTACKS

Massive intelligence and security failure?



AS the smell of gunpowder slowly recedes from the air over Paris, many questions start to crowd the minds of analysts across the world, from "what happened?" it is now time to ask "how did it happen?" Was such an attack coming France's way since France joined the western coalition to take part in air strikes on IS strongholds in Syria? With the memory of the bloodbath at Charlie Hebdo not yet totally faded, it was expected that the French intelligence would install the best possible monitoring system available in the world to take preemptive action against terrorist groups targeting France. But, all such assumptions were proved wrong with the attacks in Paris on November 13.

What baffles us is, how could about a dozen heavily armed terrorists drive all the way to Paris from Belgium or some other place near the capital without having been checked at any point by the security personnel on either side of the border? Against the background of heightened security alert with the rise of

IS, that many people with assault weapons, explosives and suicide belts tied around their waist entered the heart of Paris, walked into a café and stadium to carry out the mayhem seems like an intelligence and security nightmare. The assailants had to fire hundreds of rounds of bullets, changing empty magazines in the process, to kill 128 and injure over 300 hundred people, most of whom had

What if about a hundred of them came with a similar mission? If we analyse the nature of the attacks and their near-perfect execution, we are inclined to believe that the level of preparedness of the French intelligence and police on the ground has been dismal.

been running wildly or taking shelter under tables, chairs and behind doors. Those were not easy targets to fire at. So, how long does it take to fire so many rounds of bullets at moving targets? Where were the armed policemen all this time? Why did they come only after so many casualties?

More questions come to our minds as

we try to analyse the tragic events that unfolded that day. At least two men in all black went scarily close to the stadium where the president of France was watching a football game, and they detonated the suicide bomb. Here again the question arises: where was the Presidential special security squad? If most of them were inside the stadium, where were the rest? Were not some of

them positioned outside?

Some reports and analyses appearing in international media inform us that French intelligence agencies have been monitoring the movements of some suspicious groups – possible terrorists – expecting some kind of attack at any time. We believe this readiness has been reinforced after the attack at Charlie

Hebdo last January. But, when a dozen young people with arms and explosives approached them, they failed to intercept before they could pull the trigger.

Yes, most of the assailants had been killed by the police eventually, but that was possible because they came with a one-way ticket. What if about a hundred of them came with a similar mission? If we analyse the nature of the attacks and their near-perfect execution, we are inclined to believe that the level of preparedness of the French intelligence and police on the ground has been dismal. The intelligence agencies have reports that nearly 4000 trained IS commandoes have entered Europe in the guise of refugees. That is not comforting news for countries that are involved in air strikes over IS strongholds in Syria and Iraq. If true, surely the commandoes have not gone there to watch a game of football! They expressed their bloody intent, possibly as a sample, in the Paris attacks on November 13. World leaders will have to recalculate the pros and cons now without losing much time, especially the threats already issued by IS about attacking other targets in Europe and America.

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The writer is Special Supplements Editor, The Daily Star.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Nepal crisis

This refers to the report, "UN urges end to Nepal blockade" (November 22). India's relations with Nepal face a new challenge as Nepal has promulgated a new Constitution which has made Madhesis living in border areas with India, insecure. This community blocked trucks carrying fuel and food from India to Nepal. The UN's call to end the blockade should be heeded to bring an end to this situation.
Deendayal M. Lulla
On e-mail

Football wins

The recently held Sheikh Kamal football tournament in Chittagong highlights the fact that football is still a very popular sport in this part of the world. About forty thousand people gathered at the stadium to watch the final match between Chittagong Abahani and East Bengal of Kolkata. Much to the delight of the home crowd, Abahani beat their opponents 3-1. It reminded me of the eighties when tickets used to be sold out when a major game took place. Nowadays we give so much emphasis on cricket but this recently held match proves that football deserves its due attention.
Zabed Wali
Chittagong

