

Capping on mobile top-up

Why opt for an easy way out?

THE recent BTRC decision to put a limit on daily top-up for pre-paid mobiles is undoubtedly a short-sighted and injudicious measure. According to the new directive pre-paid mobile users will not be allowed to recharge more than Tk. 500 per day. This prohibitive measure will create great inconvenience for the subscribers, and will have serious impact on revenues and services. There are also many BTRC approved bundle packages that cross the cap limit. This self-contradictory step will impinge upon sales of these packages and other mobile financial services such as buying tickets online, paying bills and so on.

Regrettably, the telecom authority did not give any specific reason behind this sudden decision. But according to a senior BTRC official it is aimed at controlling illegal termination of incoming overseas calls. We wonder how capping on mobile recharge will curb such unlawful practices. Illegal overseas calls are not unique to Bangladesh. Various countries have invented effective regulatory mechanisms to tackle the problem. Bangladesh should take lessons from them. The government should also take stern action against illegal VoIP business.

According to the BTRC chairman, the daily cap order is on a trial basis and will be revised if necessary after getting market feedback. The telecom regulator should immediately hold all-round discussions with the stakeholders, particularly the mobile operators, and find solutions for the illegal VoIP calls instead of leaping into any such counterproductive measures.

Persons with disabilities more prolific

Provide them opportunities to contribute more

IT is heartening to find that persons with disabilities in our country have better output and are more loyal to their employers than other persons. This very significant fact was revealed at a discussion programme dealing with the training and employment needs of young people with disability organised by Access Bangladesh Foundation and Action Aid. It is worth noting too that the cost of disability due to lost income and lack of schooling of people with disability amounts to 1.7 percent of the GDP.

These findings reinforces the demand, something that this paper has strongly endorsed, that persons with disabilities should not be considered a burden but an asset like any other person, and even better given the foregoing finding. Thus while we are obligated from the social point of view to offer all support to persons with disabilities in all respects, the state should offer them all necessary facilities and opportunities, not out of sympathy or as manna but as their basic right as citizens so that they can contribute even more efficiently and easily to the country's needs. Regrettably, very few persons with disability are having the benefit of the training imparted by the vocational training institutes.

In this regard the suggestions of the discussants at the said discussion merits cognizance by the government. Firstly, it is important to set up appropriate training facilities for skills development of the persons with disabilities and secondly, identify appropriate employers for these people. But before that what is needed is that there should be a countrywide survey of such people and the type of jobs they can perform according to their ability.

COMMENTS

"There might be international incitement"

(December 30, 2015)

Arifur Rahman

There might be international incitement. But the government should take concrete measures to control militant activities.

Merina Jahan

Bangladesh has enough experienced people who can tell us the real stories from Teknaf to Tetulia. People know better.

"Salahuddin says sorry"

(December 30, 2015)

Mahmudul Hasan Raju

Since the day he assumed that post, all we are hearing is big talks...Maradona is coming...Pele is coming...bla bla bla. The standard of our football is degrading day by day and he is travelling around the world.

Alamgir Mahmud

He should not hold on to that position. He is spending a lot of money on travelling. We need a dynamic person who has the ability to foresee the future of our football.

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



Brig Gen
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
ndc, psc (Retd)

IF all those extremists killed and arrested in the last one month belong to the JMB then all those that had written off the extremist group as a non-entity and without the capacity to create problems for the country must be eating their words, and that includes the head of our police too.

It is true that after 2006 when their leadership was decimated, the JMB had gone into a suspended animation, but that was only to reorganise itself. And that the militant group was not totally on the back foot was illustrated by the daring operation they conducted in January 2014 to snatch three of their comrades from a police vehicle on the highway half way between Dhaka and Tangail.

We in 2006 had warned against complacency because it would have been highly misplaced to believe that an ideologically motivated group would subside just with the neutralization of its leadership. Not unless their raison d'être is eliminated through proactive measures including an effective counter narrative can we hope to see the eradication of the scourge of extremism. I am not sure whether we have a proactive approach or are putting out effective counter narrative to combat the extremists.

The extremists have reactivated themselves, and I see little distinction between the twelve or so proscribed groups in the country. They all are of the same feather and I dare say they also nest and work together. One sees a correlation also between their resurgence and the acts of violence, carried out since September 2015 in particular, and the verdict and execution of the verdict in November.

We should thank heavens that the police and Rab have been successful in

anticipating these groups and have been able to nab them before they could carryout their plans. No doubt they were preparing to come in, in a big way, considering the quantity and type of explosives and weapons and equipment recovered during the raids on their dens.

However, there are some confusing aspects whose satisfactory answer has proven elusive, as in the case of bombing of Ahmadiyya mosque in Bagmara. While soft targets are natural objectives of the terrorists and extremists, why expose and risk their lives on 'insignificant' targets, in terms of size, in a very remote area of the country when substantive targets, in terms of size and character, are available in more significant places. It would thus not be wrong to assume that there is more than one group trying to exploit the situation but not quite working in harmony with the others. It also defies logic that IS, which has claimed responsibility for the Bagmara attack, should choose a far flung area of Bangladesh to perpetrate an attack –

dissipating effort is not a tactical option for the terrorists. They cause violence to create effect as well as news.

But there are also some disturbing pointers from the busted dens and the captured weapons and equipment.

Coupled with captured weapons and equipment and the attacks on mosques inside the Chittagong naval base the picture suggests a long term plan by infesting the armed forces through penetration. In the past for example, the military, particularly the army, was heavily infiltrated, for a short time though, to exploit, the political vacuum caused by the instability eventuating from Bangabandhu's assassination.

The extremists have also acquired high velocity long range small arms, the type of which is used by special forces in a handful of countries only, with specific purpose, and the security agencies can well deduce what they might have been up to had they been able to put those into effect. Acquisition of army combat dress is also indicative of a sinister

design to carry out subversion within the army posing as soldiers.

That they are also not strapped of cash is evident from the fact that the microbus used in the waylaying of the police vehicle in Tangail was new costing at least three million taka. Who paid for it? That the extremist groups possess sophisticated weapons indicates well linked external supply source.

While not wishing to be an alarmist, one must acknowledge that there may be sinister designs to precipitate a situation by going after a variety of targets including the law enforcing agencies and security forces. One must not be led astray by red herrings like the argument over presence or absence of ISIL or the extent of foreign links with the indigenous extremists groups. It is therefore essential to hone all the resources and formulate concrete modus operandi to thwart their plans as well as neutralise these groups permanently.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

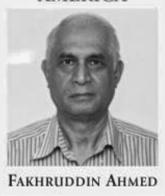


Powerful firearms, huge ammo, explosives, military suits and Jihadi books were seized at Aminbazar in Hathazari of Chittagong on December 27, 2015.

PHOTO STAR

What makes Donald Trump and his supporters tick?

LETTER FROM AMERICA



FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

recently on MSNBC, "If the people knew what the Republican Party really stood for, nobody would vote for them." According to Ronald Reagan, that is why Republican politicians communicated with their base through dog whistles and subliminal messages.

The problem for the Republican establishment now is that Donald Trump is shouting at the top of his voice publicly, what they used to whisper privately. Trump's xenophobic, misogynistic, racist and fascist utterances resonate perfectly with his base. The more outrageous his pronouncements, the higher are his poll numbers.

The Trump phenomenon is rooted in Trump's history. Donald Trump's German immigrant father, Fred Trump, was a real estate developer in New York. According to his sister, Donald Trump was a "brat." He was so difficult that his father shipped him off to a military school where he stayed until graduation. After two years at Fordham University, Trump transferred to the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School to study real estate development. Trump joined his father's firm in 1968, and took over the reins after his death in 1999.

"Ruthless," and "without scruples" are words his business associates use to describe Trump. No one should be surprised that Trump has brought the same malevolence to his politics.

Trump responded to tough questioning by Fox News' Megan Kelly

in the second Republican debate by suggesting that she was menstruating. He described Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina's face as "ugly." He made vulgar jokes about Hillary Clinton's bathroom break during the last Democratic presidential debate, and used a dirty Yiddish word for a male organ to describe Hillary's defeat at the hands of Obama in 2008.

Calling most of the 11 million illegal Mexican immigrants rapists, drug dealers and criminals, Trump advocated their deportation. "Black Lives Matter" protestors are regularly beaten up at Trump rallies. Although the media has found no evidence to corroborate his claim that "thousands and thousands of Muslims" cheered the collapse of the twin tower on 9/11, he continues to peddle the lie. He believes in collective punishment for Muslim Americans for acts of terror committed by Muslim terrorists, and wants to ban all Muslims from entering the US.

Trump is not only against allowing Syrian refugees in, he promised to deport those already here. If Trump were in power in the 1950s, we would not have Apple computers, iPads or iPhones, because Steve Jobs' birth father was a Syrian Muslim, who fled persecution in Syria ("Jobs" is Steve's adoptive father's name).

Donald Trump launched his presidential campaign in 2011 by siring the "Birther" movement. 66 percent of Trump supporters believe that Obama is a Muslim while 61 percent believe that he was born in Kenya, thus claiming that this makes his presidency illegitimate. Donald Trump embodies white identity politics and is a hero for the KKK and other white supremacists.

Before Trump, there was a consensus among political pundits that to be acceptable to the public, an idea had to be within the "Overton window." Joseph Overton theorised that "an idea's political viability depends mainly on

whether it falls within the window, rather than on politicians' preferences." Trump gives lie to the "Overton window" and thrives outside it.

Trump's supporters are angry, middle-aged whites who have lost the narrative of their lives. Life has changed dramatically for them since the 1970s. Even with a high school diploma, they could get well-paying jobs at steel mills and factories, and raise families back then. Now the steel mills are in China and the factories are in countries like

Americans vote for hope, not fear. Barack Obama's campaign was based on hope. Bill Clinton launched his campaign in 1992 from Hope, Arkansas, his hometown. Donald Trump's fear mongering may not work in the long term.

Vietnam and Cambodia. The new generations are worse off than their parents.

With the loss of income came the loss of self respect. Their life's expectations have fallen apart. Because of the browning of America, demographically, they are becoming less dominant. The percentage of whites in America has dwindled from 80 percent in 1980 to under 70 percent now, whereas the Latino population has skyrocketed from 5 percent to close to 15 percent. A black

family in the White House represents a change they loath. With a black man in the White House, they feel unsafe.

A large segment of working class whites, aged 40 to 50, are dying at an alarming rate from substance abuse (oxycodone, heroine and alcohol), accidental overdose of medication, and suicides. (This trend does not impact Latinos, blacks or other minorities.) For generations, they have been loyally voting for the establishment Republican Party, but received nothing in return. They do not want nuance; they want simple solutions. Donald Trump's rightwing populism offers them plenty of that. Trump offers them a moment of catharsis.

Americans vote for hope, not fear. Barack Obama's campaign was based on hope. Bill Clinton launched his campaign in 1992 from Hope, Arkansas, his hometown. Donald Trump's fear mongering may not work in the long term.

The instinct of the Trump supporters is right – they are losing the demographic war. Latinos, blacks and other non-white minorities now constitute 33 percent of America's electorate. Trump has offended them all. If 85 percent of them vote against Trump, assuming he is the Republican nominee, that will give the presumed Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, 28 percent of her total vote. Barack Obama won 40 percent of the white votes in 2012. If Hillary Clinton wins the same (she will certainly win more) support from the whites who constitutes 67 percent of the population, Hillary will receive another 27 percent of her votes from them, making a total of approximately 55 percent - far exceeding Obama's showing in 2008 and 2012.

If, God forbid, there is another terrorist attack of the magnitude of 9/11 or San Bernardino before the election, all bets are off!

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Unbearable traffic jam

In Chittagong commuters who use the Asian Highway have to face huge traffic gridlock all the time. A flyover stretching from Muradpur to Lalkhanbazar is under construction. The middle of the road remains totally occupied with construction materials. Vehicles ply only the

narrow strips of the road on both sides. So from morning till night the road remains congested with all types of vehicles. Something must be done to alleviate the sufferings of the pedestrians and commuters.
Zabed Wali
Chittagong

Unacceptable!

It is shocking that eight months into the incident of sexual assault on women during this year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations, police could not identify any of the culprits. Police submitted the final report in the case on December 24, 2015, saying that none of the culprits could be identified. In the evening of Pahela Baishakh

(April 14, 2015), at least 20 women were sexually assaulted on Dhaka University campus for over an hour. We do not understand why the law enforcement agency failed to find out the assaulters. In our society anyone can get away scot-free even after committing the most gruesome crimes. This culture of impunity must end.
Hasna Begum
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh