

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Ticking time bombs

Faulty CNG cylinders

THIS paper has run more than one story in the last two months on the proliferation of faulty and counterfeit CNG-conversion of petrol-driven vehicles in Dhaka. The fact that some 300,000 vehicles have been converted to CNG (compressed natural gas) since 2011 and incidents of CNG cylinders exploding at gas stations increasing, the time for action has arrived. We cannot forget that most of the mini buses plying city streets have also converted to CNG. It is disheartening to know that many sedan owners are not aware that many of the workshops doing the conversion are using substandard kits and some are dealing with counterfeit CNG cylinders. Hence at any given time of the day, we are exposed to serious damage to vehicles and passengers need something go wrong.

It is understandable that vehicle owners look around for the best deal in town when it comes to retrofitting their vehicle. Most vehicle owners, at least those involved in the transport business are unaware that every cylinder must be tested for fitness every five years. It is astounding that there are only 11 testing centres to cater for hundreds of thousands of CNG-run vehicles in all of Bangladesh (Dhaka, Gazipur, Chittagong and Sylhet). Even more alarming is the fact that it is not mandatory by law to check fitness on the cylinders.

The time has arrived to empower a government body to check the fitness of CNG-driven vehicles. It is essential that authorised testing centres be set up to cater to the huge number of vehicles plying the roads and also check the quality of CNG cylinders being imported into the country.

Thousands still starving in Thanchi

Why no adequate relief yet?

THIS is the second editorial that we have to write in a space of less than two weeks on the food crisis in Thanchi. It does not seem that anyone in the government is too concerned about what is happening there. Admittedly, it is one of the remotest parts of the country and the upazila in Bandarban has a difficult communication system. But that can never explain the month-long near-starvation of the several thousand locals or the failure of the administration to rush adequate relief. More appalling is the fact that most of whatever relief has been sent to them is awaiting distribution for one reason or the other. And there is reportedly lack of transparency in distribution of relief.

We understand that a similar scenario visits the area every year as the region is dogged by rodent attacks and the absence of any proper warehouse only compounds the problem. The situation is particularly bad this year as cultivation suffered because of heavy rains.

However, food relief is a temporary palliative. The crisis demands a permanent solution. We urge the government, as we have done before, to build up buffer stocks in the remote areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts to meet exigencies. The food situation has to be monitored on a regular basis to make sure that such a crisis does not recur. The government officials, especially the upazila agricultural officers, need to visit the area on a regular basis to render advice and to take stock of the availability of food to these communities.

COMMENTS

"3 more killed in 'shootouts'"

(June 11, 2016)

Nasim Iliasi

The law enforcement agencies should first investigate crimes instead of being engaged in 'shootouts'.

"One year a slave"

(June 10, 2016)

Tarek Mollah

A 15-year-old boy was sold as a commodity and physically, emotionally and sexually abused. An all-out operation should be launched to nab the human traffickers. Then the highest punishment under law should be meted out to them.

"Bangladesh at high risk"

(June 10, 2016)

Zahid Akand

People must use antivirus to prevent cyber attacks and secure the PC/laptops.

Lima

Those who can't afford buying an antivirus should use the free versions of antivirus available online.

Uberisation of Terror



KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

UBER offers private rides in private cars at your own convenience. It means you don't have to wait for the rain to stop; you don't have to queue up; you don't have to be anxious about hours when cab drivers are just going through shift change. Uber service, though controversial in many cities, still happens to be comfortable. Uber, the company owns no cars yet in an instant, manages to pick you up from your location and reaches you to your destination.

Terror is uberised as well. There are just too many incidents of terror all around the world to ignore the common pool of violence. When a terrorist pops up from one corner of the world and screams: Allah is Great, when another surfaces from somewhere and straps a jacket and blows himself up, one wonders how this uberisation of terror is actually working across the globe. It's like the IS is claiming every act of terror to be their own, irrespective of not having any proveable plan or evidence of association. It's almost as if terror is ordered in the name of God which arrives freshly packaged at your doorstep, causing you losses of life or honour. Just like Uber services, without owning any platform, except extreme fundamentalism, terror is easily available in all our neighborhoods.

While Hillary Clinton calls it "radical Islamism", whether Obama just calls it "home grown terrorism", or whether Donald Trump tweets, "I was right. When are we going to be tough and vigilant?", the whole episode of terror in Orlando is just another tragedy for the beautiful religion of Islam in the month of Ramadan. What can be more horrific than to watch the whole world being divided on Islam? What can sadden one more than to watch all the vigils around the world along with Sydney's Harbour Bridge, Auckland's Sky Tower and Eiffel Tower being lit up in rainbow colours in grief? A few minutes back, on a television screen, the breaking news of Mateen, the Orlando gunman flashed. Apparently he had visited Disneyland before the killing. Right before that, a friend of mine had just Whatsppd me: "The world will not remember Orlando for Disney anymore; people will only talk about the Pulse Club." Apparently all these killers and suicide bombers are 'regular

Joe's', dutiful sons, great brothers, and yet they are radicalised.

Let me share how terror impacts me. While packing my bags, I came across a few cards of people from different Islamic centres that I had just met in the South East a few weeks ago. I disappointed myself deeply and remain ashamed that I tore up all the cards in fear of them being discovered in the airport the next morning when I cross the security checks. This is what these acts of terrorism are doing to regular people like us. I can't afford to be singled out at airports, restaurants, or malls. I can't afford to be spotted as a woman in eastern attire, trying to travel across the world and be

Al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility for most of the remaining victims. In between January and April of this year, police has reported a total of 5,417 unnatural deaths. In the last seven years, the figure in the same category had been 12,000. In the last three years, 11 bloggers and activists have been brutally killed. On February 22 this year, in Panchagarh's Debiganj upazila, the murder of Jogeswar Ray, a Hindu teacher, was claimed by IS. On March 23, this year, in Kurigram, Ali, a Christian convert and freedom fighter, was hacked to death. On April 23, Professor Rezaul Karim Siddiqui of Rajshahi University was murdered in the

unnerved me, and I haven't regretted the decision ever since, specially because we ARE living in dangerous century, where there has been over a nine-fold increase in the number of deaths from terrorism, rising from 3,329 in 2000 to 32,685 in 2014. The sombre repetitiveness of terror attacks is crushing our morale and no matter what we say and how we say it, it is becoming difficult to walk as a Muslim today. Truth be known, no matter how we push our rhetoric of a terrorist having no nationality, the major part of the world maps us, the Muslims, as aggressors. For a religion as old and as beautiful as this, it is shameful that we should walk with heads bent because of

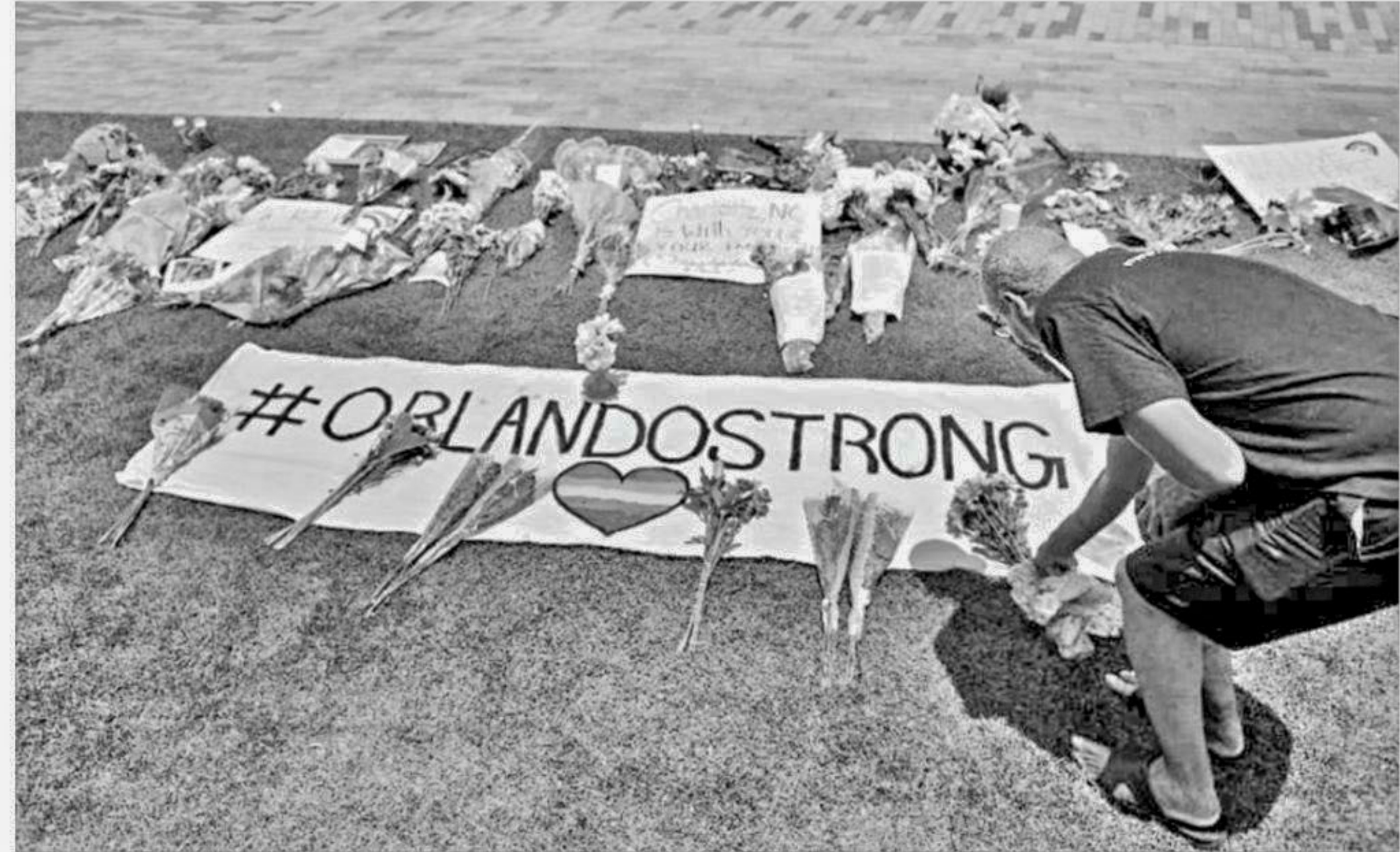


PHOTO: AFP

stopped in every trip just because I look incredibly Muslim.

But how does terror impact me at home when we hear of the killings of two Hindus, one Christian and the wife of an anti-terror official last week? Targeted attacks on Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and atheists have left the country reeling in shock. So far 48 killings over the past 18 months have been blamed on radical Muslims. IS, without any substantially proven base in Bangladesh, has claimed responsibility of more than half of the killings, including the recent hacking to death of a Hindu priest, a Hindu monastery worker and a Christian grocer. According to the US based SITE intelligence Group,

same fashion and manner, on account of being progressive and a cultural activist. The responsibility of his death was claimed by IS via a twitter message. Just a day before Professor Siddiqui's murder, a sadhu was knifed to death in Tungipara. Just a day later, on April 24, an LGBT activist and USAID employee, Xulhaj Mannan and his friend Mahub Tonoy were axed to death in Mannan's residence in Kalabagan.

I remember having sacked an old guard of ours once just because I discovered that he was donating part of his salary to a political organisation. The fact that he barely earned enough to keep his family together and yet took a cut for the sake of his religious beliefs

a handful of transgressors. The terrorists who strike our nation today with audacity may have targeted to destabilise the current administration. If so, then we must remind ourselves that these cowards do not have the courage to take to streets and call for democracy. Their diction of piety equals sneaking up on an innocent passerby at an ungodly hour, murdering him/her and fleeing the crime scene on a motorbike. You don't call them Muslims. You call them infidels who have no faith in life. And if they can consider killing the minorities, LGBTs, bloggers and activists, a political ploy, then they can kill us all.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

Brexit and its economic fallout

DR. ABDULLAH SHIBLI

THE United Kingdom is now in the midst of a Shakespearean dilemma, "to stay or not to stay". Voters will decide in a referendum on June 23 whether to stay in the European Union or to break the four decades old relationship they forged, i.e. opt for "Brexit" as it is popularly known. If the majority decides to leave, it will have implications for Britain across the spectrums, political, economic, and social. While in the last referendum on this issue in 1975, an overwhelming 68 percent of the electorate had decided to stay, this time the margin will be narrower, one way or the other. Britain's departure from the EU will also undoubtedly set a bad example for advocates of Customs Union, an economic arrangement of sovereign countries set up to facilitate trade and economic integration through trade.

While there are many issues relating to the current mood of disillusionment with Britain's ties with EU, they are not all economic. The most important ones are: immigration, excessive EU regulations, budgetary contributions, loss of sovereignty, and EU social policy. However, all of them have economic side-effects, including the non-economic ones, immigration and EU's regulatory influence. Prima facie, Brexit appears to be a dramatic move; nonetheless most analyses show that the most important long-term impact could be minor in terms of GDP and unemployment rate. As one meta-analysis points out, the decision to leave the EU appears to be mainly a political consideration about sovereignty and self-determination.

From the policymaker's perspective, the most important lesson is that the forecasts on GDP are very uncertain. Nine out of ten economists surveyed indicate that in the short-run the economy will experience a downward adjustment, but the loss of income is small. But in the long run, there is a potential for greater loss, and the risk of bigger

losses is large.

Fortunately, Britain is not in the same shoes as Greece, since the former has its own currency - the pound sterling - and has not embraced the Euro. It has also been doing much better than its EU partners in recent years. However, EU is Britain's most important

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trading partner, accounting for half of all UK exports and imports. UK exports to the EU correspond to almost 15 percent of national output (GDP). Eurosceptics, i.e., those who believe that membership in EU is hurting the UK, counter that "membership of the single market imposes too many regulations on

Britain in exchange for too little opening of European markets and that Britain's trade with countries outside Europe would be higher if it left".

Unfortunately, should Brexit occur, the UK will need to negotiate a new trade relationship with the EU, and outcomes will depend on the terms of the subsequent trade arrangement and the regulatory framework that it adopts once it is free of EU's regulatory framework. And there are many alternative trade regimes that have been circulating in the research and media world to capture the short and long-term economic impacts in the post-Brexit world. A sampling of these include joining the European Economic Area (EEA, like Norway), entering into a Customs Union (like Turkey), negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (that eliminates export tariff barriers, like Canada), and the Swiss model (continued bilateral negotiation). Some of the core metrics include GDP growth, trade volumes, inflation, household spending, employment, property values, and assets prices.

A quick survey of economic forecasts based on quantitative models indicates that Britain might benefit or lose from breaking up with the EU. However, the most important conclusion seems to be that the magnitude of the economic impact is hard to predict. Any divorce lawyer will tell you that. Most domestic relationships don't go sour for economic reasons, rather due to social or personality conflicts. But, any breakup affects both parties and other family members. Britain's mood until June 23 is captured by a song "Should I Stay or Should I Go" by the English punk rock band The Clash written in 1981. The latest opinion poll indicates that there is a greater than even chance that the Brits will decide to leave, unless Prime Minister Cameron can get the voters out in droves.

The writer is an economist, and writes on public policy issues for this newspaper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Extremists are spreading their tentacles : Aftermath of the Orlando shooting

We are completely dumbfounded by the killing of police officer Babul Akter's wife Mahmuda Khanam Mitu in front of her six-years-old son. What is going on in our country? No one is safe anywhere, anymore. Over the last three years, extremist militants have attacked and killed writers, publishers, university professors, bloggers, foreigners and members of minority communities. We shouldn't let this trend continue.

We urge the government to bring an end to militancy and do whatever is necessary in this regard.

Juel Rana
University of Dhaka

I understand what will ensue; all who are sane and with a Muslim background are choking and gasping for breath and feeling the pangs of guilt and bracing themselves for the backlash. I felt all that and whilst I feel nothing but anguish and pain for those who perished in Orlando, I will no longer feel an iota of responsibility for Mr. Omar S. Mateen's actions. ISIS and their ilk are about as Islamic as the KKK is Christian and the murderous IDF is representative of

"Jewish" values in the truest sense. Religious labels like all labels are subject to indiscriminate cut and paste and in the case of Mateen, to nefarious end-use. Those in high places in the US of A - time to hit the underlying issues. And yes, I hope against hope that my name isn't dragged into another quagmire of bloodshed, though that already feels like a battle lost. KTA
Gulshan, Dhaka