

Pecuniary punishment against defaulting tanners

This should end the farce

At last the High Court has ordered errant tannery owners to pay a hefty fine per day for every day of delay in shifting their tanneries to Savar. The entire matter has assumed a farcical character. Given that it is more than 13 years that the idea was first mooted, to this point in time in 2016 when some 154 tannery owners are still seeking time for completing the shifting of their tanneries, the most stringent measures is needed to move the deliberate sluggards to act on the court's orders.

The final deadline of 31 March 2016 has also expired. And we wonder why the relevant ministries have been unable or unwilling to take punitive measures against the tanners. In fact all the threats of action against the defaulting tanners so far by the ministry have turned out to be only sound and fury signifying nothing.

Shifting the tanneries from their present location had become indispensable considering the most deleterious effect of these factories on the Buriganga. The tanners had missed more than a dozen extensions including the one granted them by the court. But that deadline of 2013 was also disregarded. The ministry had, on its own part, failed to provide all the necessary facilities, particularly the effluent plant, in due time.

We hope that the shifting will be completed very soon, albeit six years behind the time originally fixed by the High Court. To hear the tanners say that it would take another six months to complete the relocation since more work need to be done, that too after good three year's grace given by the High Court, is absolutely unacceptable.

Mystery behind the three killed in Jessore!

Further investigation needed

THREE bodies were found killed and dumped in Jessore's Jhikargacha on Wednesday. According to police, the three were robbers who were killed in a mob beating while trying to commit robbery. Locals on the other hand claim no such incident took place and the bodies were dumped there after being killed elsewhere. This is further strengthened by the local ward councillor, who says that he had heard nothing about a robbery in the area.

Fact remains however that three people were killed and dumped there. In a strange case reflecting film stories, there are conflicting reports of what really happened. Questions arise about how the police came up with the story of the robbery, especially when villagers say they know nothing about it. What was the line of investigation followed?

We urge that proper steps be taken to investigate the incident. Post-mortem report of the victims to show how they died, and follow-up investigations are called for. To claim without further investigation that it was 'mob violence on robbers' would be to absolve the police of their responsibility to determine how these three people came to be killed.

Even if the three were killed due to mob violence, it is the duty of the police to make sure that such vigilantism is not the norm and to arrest the guilty. Lastly, given that earlier in the week the Assistant Sub-inspector of Wapda area of Jhikargacha was stabbed by robbers, the law and order of the area seems to demand scrutiny. Is the police unable to check the activity of robbers in the area, and are the villagers losing trust in the ability of the police to curb crimes?

COMMENTS

"Crackdown a money spinner for some cops" (June 14, 2016)

Moslem Uddin

Police are detaining many innocent people without any charge and demanding money from the detainees' families to release them. This cannot go on in a civilised country.

"A good initiative to protect people" (June 14, 2016)

Mozahidur Rahman

Engaging the common people to counter the incidents of targeted killing is a good idea. We appreciate this very much.

M. ADIL KHAN

THE terrible massacre that took place in the Orlando gay club Pulse, which killed 50 and injured another 50 or so, must be condemned in no uncertain terms. The killer, Omar Mateen, who happens to be a Muslim and was shot dead by the police, was apparently a psychopath and a homophobe.

Reactions to this horrific incident have been quick; some cautious, some not so cautious, some outright irresponsible. For example, even before the deaths of Omar Mateen's killing spree were counted, the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump took to Twitter and claimed that the massacre was the work of "radical Islamic terrorists" that he argued are endangering the American way of life, and reiterated his now familiar fear mongering campaign demand that Muslims in general are a threat to America and thus should be banned from entering the county.

President Obama has been prompt in denouncing Trump, and said that Trump was peddling a "dangerous" mindset. Arguing that Omar Mateen was no different than other American lone gunmen that perpetrated similar killings in Bernardino, California, Ford Hood, Texas, Obama said that focusing on the faith of one particular killer and asking for differential treatment for the entire community which belongs to the faith of the Orlando killer is not only an affront to America's democratic values but something that is likely to make America "less and not more safe".

Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate also criticised Trump for his reckless comments, and echoed Obama, terming the mayhem as an "act of terror" and demanded greater security for America against threats from both home and abroad. She further specified gun control as key to stopping such mindless mayhem by lone lunatics in future.

Bernie Sanders, the Democratic nomination contender, has reacted strongly by saying that Trump is "unfit for president".

These responses illustrate just how varied, if not "confused", the political response have been on the issue. In this

regard, The Guardian contradicts Trump and the right wing US media, suggesting that "Whatever else this is, it's not about immigration".

Omar Mateen, the killer, was born in America and thus, "Whatever compelled him to commit such a terrible act cannot be laid at the border of a foreign nation," as his "hatred was home-grown." Incidentally, that there were 330 such killings in America last year alone indicate that something rather deep-rooted in the way the American society operates may have something to do with lone mass gun killings in that country.

One thing is clear; such killings cannot

lots of things. And the bolder the claim that it is about any one thing, the more vulnerable it will be to contradiction and qualification".

Joe Brewer in his article, "Connecting the Dots between Terrorism and Mass Shooting" (published in medium.com) looks at the phenomenon from a very different perspective. He argues that "Our media fails to connect the dots between an exploitative global economic system and violence around the world" and criticises the US media's efforts to link the mass shooting in America which is in "epidemic" form as part of "global terrorism". Brewer argues that, "Terrorism

democratic political norms such that political systems are now regularly manipulated by the wealth hoarders to become wealthier (the gun lobby is a good example and as they both represent Wall Street, the choice of Hillary and Trump as presidential candidates is no exception either) at the cost of others, have coincided with a steady rise in terrorist acts both by the state and non-state actors, in a cyclic motion. Thus in many ways, the rise in global conflicts and killings in many parts of the world where both governments - local and international - and non-government actors kill each other on a daily basis are nothing but manifestations of self-seeking policies of political elites that, on the one hand, organise killings to suppress opposition to "extractive capitalism", and on the other, force the suffocated people to resort out of desperation to acts of terrorism of many kinds.

In the globalised world of terrorism, governments go out and kill dissenting voices without any justice. Foreign drones and bombs dropped from above the sky kill hundreds and thousands in many countries. Religious terrorists posing themselves as crusaders of religious purity kill each other without remorse. Killings are happening all around us without reprieve. We try to remedy killings by more killings, and the result is obvious - a bonanza of killings.

Thus in order to stop the repetition of all forms of killings, mass or targeted, that are perpetrated by both non-state and state actors, we must look at the issue more holistically, and not confine ourselves to one particular country or group. Instead, we need to go beyond the superficial and start looking at causes that connect the "dots between terrorism and mass killings", which on the one hand manipulate the system to kill to keep its control on wealth accumulation, and on the other and as result, create the conditions for desperate acts, such as witnessed in Orlando recently. If we keep on going the way we are going and not reflect, no one will be safe.

The time is for pondering, not populism.

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PHOTO: AFP

be attributed to one single reason. As far as Orlando is concerned motivation is not necessarily Islamic injunctions against homosexuality though that seems to get more media space (homophobia has existed in other religions including Christianity), nor is it an act of 'Islamic terror' (terrorist killings are not unique to Islam and are happening all over the world on a daily basis, of which only very few are 'Islamic') and neither is it due to lack of gun control in the US, though this is an important concern (in France gun control is stringent, and yet acts of terrorism have become quite regular in the country these days). The Guardian says, "The truth is it is, most likely, about

and mass shootings are intimately connected to global architecture of wealth extraction" and that "I am sick and tired of Islam being blamed for harms arising through the combination of Western Imperialism abroad (yes, the invasion of Iraq really was about oil) and the gutting of social infrastructure at home (tax cuts = wealth transfer from working people to the top echelon of financial elitism)".

These are valid points. Indeed, the rise of neoliberalism since mid-eighties has witnessed the rise and dominance of profiteering morally bereft rich that are contributing to gross inequality, marginalising people and denting

ADVANCEMENT IN THE POWER AND ENERGY SECTOR

Timely Project completion is the key

KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM and MUNTASEER KAMAL

FINANCE Minister AMA Muhith proposed a Tk. 340,605 crore budget for FY2016-17 in the National Parliament on June 2, 2016. The significance of power and energy sector has been reiterated in the budget speech. Efforts to further the progress of this sector is evident from the national budget. However, whether the actual progress is keeping pace with the government's plan is a matter of concern. The following analysis is based on the immediate reaction on the proposed National Budget for FY 2016-17 by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

A total of Tk. 15,035 crore was allocated for the power and energy sector in the budget for FY2016-17. This allocation is 9.5 percent lower than that of revised budget for FY2015-16. The key driving force behind this reduction is lower allocation for development projects, particularly in the power sector. Compared to FY2015-16, development allocation for power sector saw a 19 percent decline in FY2016-17. Consequently, the share of power and energy in total budget outlay reduced to 4.4 percent in FY2016-17 from 6.3 percent in FY2015-16. However, the allocation is still heavily concentrated to the power sub-sector - about 87 percent of total allocation of the sector will go to the power sub-sector, while only about 13 percent will go to the energy sub-sector. Given the growing demand for gas for industrial activities, more and targeted allocation is needed for the development of the energy sub-sector.

The power and energy sector constitutes about 13.5 percent of the total Annual Development Programme (ADP) for FY2016-17. Sixty nine projects are associated with power sub-sector while fourteen projects are related to energy sub-sector. Out of the sixty nine

power sector projects, only five are new (Ghorashal 4th unit repowering project; Land acquisition, rehabilitation, EIA, and feasibility study for the 2*600MW ultra super critical coal power plant in Pekua, Cox's-Bazar; Aminbazar-Maowa-Mongla 400KV transmission line; Replacement of 70,000 overloaded transformers under REB; Establishment of supervisor control and data acquisition system in DESCO areas). The newly approved projects involve power generation, transmission and distribution (T&D) and data acquisition. Among the unapproved and unallocated projects, seven are related to power production, five are concerned with T&D, and two involve rural electrification. Given the growing demand for better transmission and distribution, relevant projects need to be completed quickly.

Twenty four out of the sixty nine power sector projects are listed to be finished by FY2016-17. However, even with full utilisation of allocated resources up to FY2016-17, only two are likely to be completed. Those projects are: Land acquisition, land development and protection for Paira 1320MW thermal power plant and Sustainable energy for development project. Maximum possible completion for the remaining twenty two projects lies in the range from 11.4 percent to 88.6 per cent. Timely completion of nine projects (out of the aforementioned twenty four) concerned with power generation would have added 1745MW of electricity to the national grid. Nevertheless, maximum possible completion of these projects up to FY2016-17 range between 12 per cent and 62 per cent.

Three projects (Matarbari 2*600MW coal power plant, Bheramara 360MW combined cycle power plant and Ashuganj (east) 400MW combined cycle power plant) were identified to be critically important for the supply of electricity over

the medium term. However, implementation has been poor till now. Maximum possible completion up to FY2016-17 of these three projects is 8 percent, 66 percent and 7 percent, respectively. This sluggish rate of overall project completion would some way undermine the claim made in the budget speech of raising electricity generation by additional 16,086 MW by 2021.

In the budget speech, the finance minister emphasised the improvement of transmission and distribution systems along with reduction of electricity pilferage and system loss. It was mentioned that only 70 percent of electricity that Bangladesh is capable of generating can be supplied to consumers. But the completion status of T&D projects does not present a very optimistic picture. Eight related projects out of the aforesaid twenty four are likely to have a maximum possible completion of 11.4 percent to 70.7 percent within the deadline. Hence, it must be mentioned that transmission and distribution of power is becoming a growing concern day by day.

In the ADP for FY2016-17, fourteen projects are related to oil, gas and mineral resources. Out of these projects, twelve are concerned with gas production and distribution; one is related to oil. However, five are carry-over projects. The Hatikumrul-Bheramara gas transmission pipeline construction, and evaluation, development and controlling gas ejection of the Titas gas field are the only two projects scheduled to be completed within FY2016-17.

The government has decided to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) with the aim of meeting the increasing demand for fuel in the country. Early steps have been taken to construct a Floating Storage and Re-gasification Unit (FSRU) - based LNG terminal at Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar to store the imported LNG. However, Maheshkhali-Anoara gas

pipeline project - an integral part of LNG terminal project and scheduled to be finished in FY2015-16 - could not spend a single taka up to March 2016.

As mentioned in the budget speech, the government has taken steps to augment gas reserves by expediting the exploration programme. BAPEX plans to dig 53 exploration wells, 35 development wells and 20 workover wells by 2021. It is expected that 943 to 1,105 million cubic feet gas per day can be produced from these wells. Despite the government's commitment to expedite such exploration programmes, only one relevant project (Exploration for mineral resources in the north-west region of Bangladesh) is found in ADP, but it is still in 'unapproved and unallocated' status.

During April 2016, the government had announced the reduction of the administered prices for fuel in three phases. The prices of diesel and kerosene were reduced by 4.4 percent (from Tk. 68/litre to Tk. 65/litre), whereas the prices of octane and petrol were reduced by around 10 percent in the first phase. The main users of kerosene and diesel - the marginal people and farmers - could not reap much benefit from this decision due to its scale and timing. Unfortunately, no clear specification of the phases or scale of future fuel price reduction was provided in the budget for FY2016-17 which might have been very beneficial for the people of Bangladesh.

Overall, the budget for FY2016-17 gives us glimmers of hope regarding the power and energy sector, alongside a number of concerns. Time and cost effective implementation of relevant projects is necessary for further advancement of this sector.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Unhygienic handling of iftar items

During Ramadan, lots of iftar items are sold everywhere and the way these foods are handled contaminates the foods and very often causes illness to the people eating them. In many roadside stalls and restaurants, employees are regularly seen serving foods to the customers with bare hands. They are seen touching the door, furniture, jugs, money, dirty cleaning towels and even scratching their bodies and then handling food items with the same dirty hands.

Food servers need to be trained on hygiene. The authorities concerned should make it mandatory for employees in hotels, restaurants and roadside stalls to wash their hands properly and use gloves and suitable utensils like spatulas, forks etc. for handling and serving food items in order to avoid food-borne diseases.

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A visit and some questions?

This refers to TDS' back page news titled "No arrest yet in Ananda murder case" (June 09, 2016). It was stated that two Indian High Commission officials visited the victim's family and assured them of providing financial support. Though it was indeed very heart-warming for the bereaved family who has lost their beloved one in the hands of extremists, it raised some questions in my mind:

1. Did the Indian HC show any concern such as this for the 40 plus similar murders by extremists this year of people

of other faiths? Does one have to be of a particular faith to receive the sympathy of the Indian HC and assurance of monetary assistance?

2. On the other hand, did any official(s) from the Bangladesh High Commission in India visit any Muslim family who lost their beloved ones in the hands of extremists for eating beef or for being cattle traders and so on?

A baffled citizen
 Dhaka