

Uttara arms haul

Solve the mystery quickly

It was providence, in the form of a lone police man and his family who happened to be near the spot and who warned the police about suspicious activity on the banks of a canal in Turag in Ashulia that helped the law enforcing agencies to recover a large cache of weapons and ammunition on Saturday.

Proliferation of illicit small arms has plagued the country for a long time and, of late, the phenomenon has become extremely severe. The recent catch adds to our discomfort and calls for the agencies to go to the bottom to uncover the owners and the country of origin of the weapons. Unlike the Chittagong arms on April 1, 2004, these weapons, apparently, have been manufactured specifically for use by clandestine groups since it does not bear the mark of country of origin. That notwithstanding, the serial numbers should contain a code which should help in determining the country of manufacture if not the group involved in trading them in the country.

The circumstances of the discovery raise some questions too. It is quite unthinkable that a clandestine group, under pressure to jettison a cache of weapons, as the police commissioner averred, would take the risk of transporting such a large quantity of illicit armaments in broad daylight. That it did so with a feeling of impunity is borne out by the fact that the car carrying the loads was without number plate and apparently passed through several checkpoints. The sooner the police resolve the mystery the sooner will our anxiety be allayed.

The aggrieved are now the hounded

Why should Tonu's family feel threatened?

THREE months have elapsed since Tonu's murder and various State bodies including the police and medical examiners have failed to determine the cause of death. As if that were not enough for the grief stricken family members, allegations have now been raised by the murdered girl's mother that the family is "under watch". Indeed she has also alleged that her husband has been asked not to talk to the media and that there have been attempts on his life.

That CID found evidence of rape but later, the first autopsy on March 21 "failed to find" evidence of rape and could not determine cause of death. The second autopsy likewise could not determine the cause of the death. What are we to make of all this? Will Tonu's death join the growing number of unsolved killings that have been piling up over the last couple of years? We now fear for the mother who has made a bold stand and pointed fingers at alleged perpetrators. The family that demands justice for her daughter's killing is being hounded by unknown people and those responsible for unearthing the facts cannot decide whether she was murdered or not.

Tonu's murder precipitated unprecedented mass protests nationwide. Three months have elapsed and the case appears to be going cold. We feel that as the family of a murder victim Tonu's parent's deserve state protection. We demand also that the case be investigated properly and expeditiously. We must continue to believe that Tonu will get justice because the law serves the people, not just the rich and powerful.

COMMENTS

"Silencing accused for whose benefit?"

(June 20, 2016)

Shaukat Ahmed

I agree with The Daily Star. This guy was a prized capture. He should have been protected at all cost. The home ministry needs to find out which police officers were involved in the shootout.

Ariyan Islam

We want to know the truth behind the scene.

The dangerous 'quick fix'

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

IN the first two days of the week, two key suspects of machete killings, Faijullah and Sharif, were killed in 'shootouts'. Though the government is portraying it as a success, there is a good reason to be worried -- law and order problems can't be fixed by resorting to further infringement of legal procedures.

Both the suspects could have been important sources of information and witnesses in tracking and holding trial of the terrorist networks and their masterminds. Police claimed that Sharif had direct or indirect involvement in all the attacks on secular bloggers, publishers and LGBT rights activists, and was a prime accused in the Avijit Roy murder case. Similarly, another deceased suspect, Faijullah, was a member of Hijbut Tahrir, a new addition to the terrorist killing squad. He could have given more details about the extremist outfit. We wonder what prompted the police force to kill the suspects instead of going through proper interrogation and trial. Did the killings happen to silence the witnesses? Who are being protected by eliminating the sources?

Professor Ajoy Roy, father of the slain writer Avijit Roy, expressed his concern, saying that the scope of gleaning new leads about the murder cases has been stopped in a planned way, thanks to "so-called gunfight". The government owes an explanation to the aggrieved father and the public, as to why its law enforcement agencies failed to protect the prime suspects in their custody and thus thwarted a possibility of identifying those behind the heinous machete killings.

Does it not also show that the law enforcing agencies themselves do not have confidence in the justice system? Trial in the court of law is the prerequisite of dispensing justice. Killing of suspects in custody obstructs the trial process and erode people's confidence in the justice system, and thus creates further lawlessness. In a recent landmark decision, the Supreme Court upheld the rights of arrested persons in custody and ruled out custodial torture. It also recommended that interrogation of arrestees by the police should be conducted only in the presence of their lawyers and relatives in a glass walled room at the jail gate, until the government developed such glasshouses for interrogation elsewhere. In Faizullah's case, he had been produced before the court on June 18, and the Court allowed a

10-day remand. But the next day he was killed in 'crossfire' and the dead body appeared to be handcuffed. Does this act of police not constitute a violation of the HC directives? Doesn't it reflect a sheer disregard for the constitutional pledge that "no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law" (Article 31)? How can one differentiate between a criminal and a law enforcer if

existing criminal justice system, they should go for further enactment and amendment of the anti-terrorism laws.

The tendency of bypassing legal procedures shows the weakness of counter-terrorism efforts. The ad-hoc anti-terror drives and crossfire of the suspects can't be more than a thriller show to garner applause. The fight against extremism requires regular concerted efforts to quell the sources of



both of them are guilty of flouting the law?

The law minister has said that the extremists can be tried under the existing legal framework. There are provisions of forming a special tribunal for speedy trial of terrorists in the Anti-Terrorism Act 2011. On February 16, 2012, the Parliament passed an amendment to the Act that legalised capital punishment for domestic acts of terrorism. If the government thinks that there are still loopholes in the

terrorism. It is not just about eliminating few terrorists, rather uprooting the ideology behind such extremist activities should be the goal of any counter-terrorism effort. Ensuring proper trial of the terrorists is vital in this regard because it can establish the most effective defenses we have against extremism: a commitment to human rights, fairness and equality.

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AN EASY READ OF THE BUDGET

How it promotes growth



BIRU PAKSHA PAUL

WHILE people in developed nations pay little attention to their annual budgets, it turns out to be the most influential document for citizens from all walks of life in a developing nation like ours. Hence, its simplified narration may help people get engaged in the government's developmental intent and directions. This piece attempts to be an easy description of the budget for the fiscal year 2016-2017 and its big numbers that work to promote economic growth for the nation.

Let us assume that the budget of Tk. 340, 605 crore (USD 42.58 billion) is equivalent to Tk. 100. Then the total revenue of Tk. 242,752 crore turns out to be Tk. 71, suggesting a shortfall of 29 percent. The other way of seeing this financing gap is to say that the budget deficit is 5 percent of GDP because the revenue constitutes 12.4 percent and the budget or the total spending makes 17.4 percent of GDP. The deficit of Tk. 97,853 crore or USD 12.23 billion is supposed to be met by both domestic and foreign financing at a ratio of 63:37, respectively.

Simply, Tk. 18 will be drawn from domestic sources and Tk. 11 will be taken from foreign sources to meet the deficit of Tk. 29 in the budget of Tk. 100. Tk. 11 through bank borrowing and Tk. 7 from nonbank sources, such as sanchayapatra, are supposed to form the total number of domestic borrowing of Tk. 18. Tk. 9 from foreign loans and Tk. 2 from foreign grants will constitute the total of Tk. 11 under foreign sources in deficit financing.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) collects Tk. 60 and Non-NBR revenue stands at Tk. 11 to make the total revenue of Tk. 71. Roughly

income taxes will give Tk. 21 and Value Added Tax (VAT) Tk. 22. Import duties plus other minor sources are supposed to give Tk. 17 to make the total NBR contribution of Tk. 60. Let us look how we spend Tk. 100: Tk. 56 for salary, interests, and current spending, Tk. 34 for development purposes, and the rest Tk. 10 for other items.

If we assume that the development budget is implemented by 85 percent, the spending behind development becomes roughly equal to our total deficit of Tk. 29. Thus, the budget would be self-sufficient if we hadn't had any spending for development.

Inflation, on the other hand, is already slightly below 6 percent. So, the main challenge remains in attaining high revenue targets, ensuring quality private investment, and enforcing greater implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in a timely fashion.

But that is not going to work for growth. Simply meeting the current expenses is not the practice of even an ideal family. It has to spend for building a house, buying a car, and investing behind skills and knowledge to have a better life in times to come. The development budget, which is almost one-third of the total budget to the tune of Tk. 117, 027 (USD 14.6 billion) will play the vital role in promoting growth via capacity building in a 215 billion dollar economy like ours.

The two prime targets of the budget are economic growth of 7.2 percent and inflation of 5.8 percent. None of

the targets seem challenging for the Fiscal Year (FY) of 2017. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has primarily estimated the growth rate for the FY2016 to be 7.05 percent, leaving a task of adding another 0.15 percentage point growth to the existing number. Inflation, on the other hand, is already slightly below 6 percent. So, the main challenge remains in attaining high revenue targets, ensuring quality private investment, and enforcing greater implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in a timely fashion.

ADP implementation by only 50

percent at the end of 10 months and 62 percent at the end of 11 months in the FY2016 does not ensure a healthy progress of development projects. Infrastructure quality is not likely to be optimal. Let us rethink the style we are following in ADP implementation. Can't we think of more outsourcing with definite deadlines -- a style many Asian Tigers followed to ensure faster infrastructure buildup? Our concept on the market economy is heavily opportunistic and flawed. We may endorse outsourcing as long as it doesn't take away our businesses. Inefficient domestic builders lobby to block competition and outsourcing.

Could countries like the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia come to the stage that they are now, without massive outsourcing of developmental mega projects? We do not need our own bureaucrats or project directors in all cases -- a fashion that holds back the desired progress of all projects and dampens our growth. All we need is to ensure the quality and the deadline, which we often fail to ascertain. It doesn't matter who makes what, it matters who owns it. And that is us.

If the budget is Tk. 100, we expect our GDP to be Tk. 576 in June 2017 from a current level of Tk. 508. This additional amount of Tk. 68, which mainly incorporates growth and inflation, must be generated in the economy through greater employment, investment, and technology. Apart from the development budget, current revenue spending, which we still erroneously call 'non-development expenditure,' also contributes to growth.

Since growth is the change in GDP, a positive change in any element of the output equation, such as consumption, investment, government spending, and exports, may contribute to growth. While imports are supposed to reduce output in any current year, imports of capital machinery, raw materials, and intermediate goods are good to promote growth for the subsequent years to come. Thus, the development budget alone cannot claim to bring in development, because development is the accumulation of growth numbers year after year. And growth can also come from the current expenditure on consumption. Thus, economic growth is attributable to the entire budget although spending on capacity enhancement is more effective than wasting resources behind unproductive and anti-environment activities.

The writer is chief economist of Bangladesh Bank.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Do people matter?

Politicians of our country constantly say how much they care about the people and how much they are concerned about their welfare. But I think there is wide gap between what some of them say and what they actually do. Actions speak louder than words.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

"The Krishnachuras in Cambodia"

The above captioned article by Faisal Ahmed published in TDS on June 1, 2016 is one of the most enchanting pieces I have ever read. While extolling the beauty of Krishnachuras in Cambodia, he traversed back to his teens in Dhaka when he laid his father to rest near a Krishnachura tree, and after a long time, while visiting Dhaka in 2015, how melancholic he was to see the tree gone. What a coincidence that he was in Dhaka while artist Khalid Mahmood

(who held his painting show of Krishnachura in Chicago, America) met his end under the fall of a Krishnachura in Dhaka.

The article is so mellifluously written that it gives the savour of a long poem on memories and reflections that we all have. Genocide committed in Nom Phen also got cited. I expect the writer to continue to contribute to TDS.

A. H. Dewan
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Ramadan—a month of restraint, not gluttony

Gone are the days when iftar meant only a glass of water, fried chickpea, *piaju* and *muri*. Hotels, restaurants and temporary shops on the streets have started displaying hundreds of thousands of iftar items as if we, Muslims, remain hungry for the entire year to feed ourselves during the holy month of Ramadan. Fancy restaurants and luxury hotels post pictures of

Ramadan delicacies in front of their establishments and advertisements in daily newspapers with prices ranging from Tk 1,500 to around Tk 5,000. Obviously they get a lot of customers; otherwise they would never get a chance to make iftar an occasion of gluttony.

Luthfi Ali
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