

Eid under painful circumstances

Time to uphold the spirit of the occasion

We are celebrating Eid this year in the backdrop of a tragedy that has shaken the nation, a time our most happy festival comes on the occasion of grief. It is indeed a moment for sombre reflection and prayers. We share the agony and the pain of those who have lost their loved ones and pray that the Almighty bestow His choicest Blessings on them.

It is a time also to call out to those who have chosen the path of terror that violence is an anathema to the very religion they claim they are fighting for. For their sponsors and the supporters of such ideology, we ask what the lives of these 20 innocent people have done to further their cause. Killing of innocents is abhorrent to Islam; we call upon the derailed youths to shun the path of violence.

It is also time to reflect whether we have been able to imbibe the true spirit of the holy month in our lives. The teaching of Ramadan should be reflected not only for a month of the year but in our day to day life too.

Unfortunately, some of us do everything to transgress its true meaning like hiking prices of essentials irrationally and by ostentatious and wasteful expenditure. Such acts, we believe, do little to espouse the true spirit of Islam.

Let us turn our celebration into introspection as to why such a tragedy befell us and how to prevent such an incident from repeating in the future. It is also time to embrace one another forgetting all differences and ill-feelings in the spirit of brotherhood, which should be the stepping stone towards forming a broad-based national unity against terrorism.

Eid Mubarak to our valued readers and well wishers.

Rush for home ahead of Eid

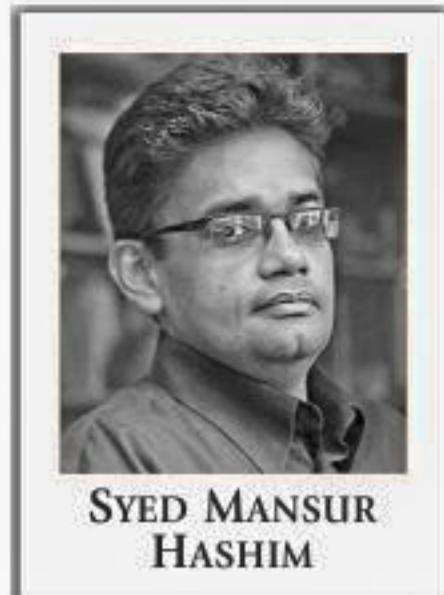
People's safety should come first

As the rush for going home outside Dhaka starts, the first signs of likely disaster are already showing. On Sunday, a reporter saw launches taking on passengers beyond their capacity. Earlier in the week we also heard of battered, unfit buses being given facelifts to evade authorities. Only yesterday, five people were killed and ten injured when a Dhaka-bound launch crashed into a steamer in Kirtonkhola river.

While the buses were given facelifts to avoid the police, our report on Monday shows the overloading of passengers was being done while members of the Bangladesh Inland Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the police were present. The BIWTA, however, maintains that all necessary steps are being taken to check overloading.

Eid holidays are when the largest number of people in the country is on a rush to go home. In this situation, it is the responsibility of the authorities like BIWTA, BRTA and the police to make sure the officials are doing their job properly. The responsibility lies too with the transport owners who, to make the most of the Eid demand, are being seen to neglect safety and compliance. We ask the government to make sure that the checks are in place to stop overloading and plying of unfit vehicles, both on the road and waterways. We also urge the people in rush to get home to consider the risks they take when knowingly getting aboard unfit and overloaded vehicles in order to get home faster.

When kids become monsters



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

We have been attacked as never before. The facts do not need to be repeated. The savagery with which 20 hostages were slaughtered need not be retold. Islamic terrorism has arrived in Bangladesh with a bang and it has shaken us to our foundations. The relative peace we lived in while the world around us disintegrated in the face of onslaught by extremist outfits such as the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda and other similar outfits across the length and breadth of all continents is now not news anymore, merely a fact of life.

What took many of us by surprise is that three of the dead terrorists turned out to be students of elite English medium educational institutions like North South University and Scholastica School (as identified by friends when pictures were released on social media). This blows apart our perception that the marauding hounds of hell who constitute Jihadi outfits in Bangladesh are all, essentially, products of madrasas. So, why on earth would the children of well-to-do parents end up wielding automatic weapons and other weaponry be on a suicide mission? What has happened in Dhaka is big news for us, but it is hardly news. The world has been witnessing young people of similar backgrounds from Europe signing up to fight the Jihadi fight in Syria and Iraq under the banner of the IS.

Things did not come to this state in a day. Although this article is not a lesson in history, we do have to look to the past in an effort to try and understand why bright young men decide to throw away their lives in the false belief that it is alright to take the blood of innocents to gain martyrdom. Every major religion has its zenith and its decline. Islam had its heyday. Hegel defined the rise of Islam as the revolution of the east. Following a few centuries of unparalleled growth that allowed space for rational debates that ushered in a glorious civilisation, rich in science and the arts, the Muslim world witnessed the creeping in of rigid orthodoxy by the 12th century. With strict indoctrination crept in corruption, ignorance and inept governance. The decay was many centuries in the making but by the time Europe entered into the industrial revolution in the 18th century; the Muslim world had fallen far behind.

Unable to match the West in terms of technology and challenged intellectually, it was impossible to stop the flow of ideas from an alien world that ushered in liberal thoughts that threatened the orthodoxy from which the Muslim world could not recover. New fangled ideas in the guise of nationalism and socialism attacked and overturned the set order of things in the Muslim heartland of the Middle East. Westernisation was inevitable and it ripped apart the spiritual and the cultural identity of the Muslim world as the young rose to challenge the old. Colonialism in its many manifestations threatened to engulf and perish the Islamic Order that had recoiled from learning from other civilisations and was stuck in the past. Modernism was frowned upon but could not be stopped. Nation States were carved out of the old Order by colonial powers

and Muslims were relegated to second grade citizens in a world where they had wielded considerable influence and prestige.

In the midst of this onslaught orthodox Islam spread its wings in the form of "exporting" madrasas globally which taught young men a strict version that was known as the Wahabi school of thought. The world came to know of this when the United States and its allies sought to contain its erstwhile cold war adversary, the Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan. The Mujahideen were recruited from the madrasas in neighbouring Pakistan and fighters adhering to radical schools of thought globally flocked to the training camps to form an army to fight the "infidel" Soviets.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Afghan campaign, the world was left with thousands of battle-hardened fanatics with no war to fight. But there is always a war to fight and that came when Saddam was toppled and Iraq disintegrated into a battleground where the Sunnis lost overnight their right to rule. Saddam's army was disbanded and thousands of former soldiers found that they had lost their purpose. The Sunni populace lost their homeland and were relegated to

One question that is not often asked is why distorted interpretation of Islam is able to draw in people from different backgrounds, with varying educational qualification. The answer simply is this: Islam in principle, allows for inclusivity. That is why over 14 centuries, Islam has spread to all continents and why today a Bangladeshi and an American Muslim can relate to each other on the basis of faith. The seeds of today's scourge whether it is the IS or one of the several local extremist movements that exist in our country were laid by the West in the camps of Pakistan many decades ago. The use of Islamic zealots to fight their wars have now come back to haunt us all. Today thousands are perishing the world over for bad political decisions.

So what do now? We have chosen to ignore the warning signs despite repeated killings by such elements over the last year or so. Free thinkers, members of minority communities and other sects have been killed with impunity - all the while the State claiming that we are insulated from these forces. We have heard talk about uniting to defeat these forces of darkness who kill and maim in the name of religion.



second class citizens by Baghdad where Shiites ruled supreme - and their country which they believed was theirs to rule turned into a wasteland. Reaction was inevitable. Insurgency crept in, as did radicalisation. Former officers merged with guerrillas from the Afghan campaign and beyond, birds of different feathers united in their common goal - fighting under a banner that promised death to "infidels" and the resurgence and re-emergence of Sunni dominance.

Post-invasion Iraq is the place where modern day radical Islam found a breeding ground for growth. A once proud nation that had been humiliated to the point that mass despair set in; millions unemployed and thousands dead - it provided the perfect setting for extremists to plan, organise, recruit and execute a long campaign that would give birth to outfits like the IS. A global Jihadi movement was born that would draw in the disaffected and the disenfranchised in their thousands, not just the madrasa students but the sons and daughters of the elite, educated in the best institutions, but radicalised by their perception of being relegated to 2nd class citizens for being Muslims - by the West.

That is tall talk where political dissent has been effectively quashed to the point of extinction and the vacuum created has been filled up by Islamic radicals. These elements are drawing their "soldiers" from the disenfranchised, the millions of unemployed, but they are also drawing them from the elite - because at the end of the day, the success of IS in holding territory and fighting it out with global powers and surviving, sends a very powerful message, however distorted, to millions of young Muslims worldwide that there is a 'fight' worth fighting for.

In Bangladesh, we have to wake up to these realities. As radicals join a pan Islamic movement to propagate global jihad, there is a counterbalance to that in the form of other nations that have fought the scourge for decades. These countries have developed counterterrorism techniques and outfits that have tackled radical outfits which cannot be tackled by conventional law enforcement. When will we get our heads out of the sand and admit we have a problem and we need help from friendly nations?

The writer is Assistant Editor, *The Daily Star*.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The limits to green growth

LILLI FUHR, THOMAS FATHEUER and BARBARA UMMÜBIG

In recent years, the push to build a "green economy" that can deliver the world from continual environmental and economic crisis and usher in a new era of sustainable growth has been gathering force. But the push has been a source of unexpected controversy, with many predicting little more than business as usual with a coat of green paint. Will reconciling environmental and economic imperatives be harder than we think?

In a word, yes. The mainstream perception is that the green economy will enable us to break free from our dependence on fossil fuels, without sacrificing growth. Many argue that the shift to a green economy can even spur new growth. But, as appealing as this idea is, it is not realistic, as we show in our new book *Inside the Green Economy*.

To be sure, it is possible for a genuinely "green" economy to be prosperous. But the model that prevails today focuses on quick and easy solutions. Moreover, it reasserts the primacy of economics, thereby highlighting the depth of the transformation that is required.

Instead of rethinking our economies with a view to adapting their functioning to environmental limits and imperatives, today's green economy seeks to redefine nature, in order to adapt it to existing economic systems. We now attach a monetary value to nature and add it to our balance sheets, with the protection of "natural capital," such as ecosystem services, offsetting environmental degradation, gauged by the global abstract currency of carbon metrics. New market-based mechanisms, such as the trading of

biodiversity credits, exemplify this approach. None of this prevents the destruction of nature; it simply reorganizes that destruction along market lines.

As a result of this narrow approach, current conceptions of the green economy have so many blind spots that the entire enterprise should be regarded as largely a matter of faith. The most powerful talisman is technological innovation, which justifies simply waiting for a cure-all invention to come along. But, though new ideas and innovations are obviously vital to address complex challenges, environmental or otherwise, they are neither automatic nor inevitable.

Innovation, particularly technological innovation, is always shaped by its protagonists' interests and activities, so it must be judged in its social, cultural, and environmental context. If the relevant actors are not working to champion transformative technologies, the results of innovation can reinforce the status quo, often by extending the life of products and systems that are not fit to address society's needs.

Consider the automotive industry. Though it produces increasingly fuel-efficient engines, it puts them in larger, more powerful, and heavier vehicles than ever before, eating up efficiency gains through the so-called "rebound effect." And it faces the temptation to spend more energy learning to manipulate emissions readings, as Volkswagen did, than on developing genuinely "green" vehicles.

Biofuels are not the answer, either. In fact, the use of biomass wreaks ecological and social havoc in developing economies, while de facto extending the lifetime of an obsolete combustion technology.

Clearly, the automotive industry

cannot be blindly trusted to spearhead the radical reorganization, away from private vehicles, that is needed in the transport sector. And that is exactly the point. If we are to decouple economic growth from energy consumption and achieve real resource efficiency in a world of nine billion, much less ensure justice for all, we cannot let the economy lead the way.

Instead, we must view the green transformation as a political task. Only a political approach can manage, through genuinely representative institutions, differences of opinion and interest, guided by the kind of open debate, engaging civil society, that is vital to a pluralistic democracy.

Of course, not all countries are pluralistic democracies. In many that aren't (and even in some that claim to be), those who campaign for a more socially, economically, and ecologically equitable world face severe repression. If they are to fulfill their indispensable role in driving forward the transformation that is needed, democratic countries must put respect for basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, at the top of their foreign-policy agendas. These basic rights are the normative foundation upon which transformative strategies will have to be negotiated.

After all, the biggest obstacle to the socio-ecological transformation that the world needs is not, in the end, technological; much of what is required, from organic farming to networked mobility systems that don't rely on private vehicles, is already within reach. The real problem is the lack of political will to implement and scale up those innovations opposed by vested economic interests. The challenge is thus to overcome these minority interests and ensure the

protection of the broader public good - a task that is often left to civil society.

Some might argue that calling for radical transformation, rather than incremental change, is inappropriate. At a time when the world faces so many pressing challenges, from economic stagnation to political upheaval to massive refugee flows, any progress toward sustainability should be viewed as a victory. Pragmatic, politically feasible solutions to the environmental crisis should be celebrated, not criticized.

But this view implicitly underestimates the seriousness of the environmental crisis that the world faces, and assumes linear change when the needed transformation will be non-linear. While some features of the green economy - resource conservation, the transition to renewable energies, specific technological innovations, and effective economic incentives, such as taxes - are undeniably important, they do not add up to the large-scale change needed to protect the interests of present and future generations.

The task that the world's democracies face today is to continue the project of modernity, embracing the latest knowledge about planetary boundaries, while advancing broad democratic participation and reducing poverty and social injustice. This is no small undertaking, and requires passion and tenacity. But it is not beyond our capacity. The first step is to recognize the constraints that the "green economy" places on thought and action.

Lilli Fuhr heads the Ecology and Sustainable Development Department at the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Thomas Fatheuer, a former director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Rio de Janeiro, is a social scientist and philologist. Barbara Ummübig is President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2016. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

COMMENTS

"Latifur Rahman's grandson killed"

(July 3, 2016)

Tazul Islam Johnny

May Allah save us all from terrorists.

Jeni Luby

Profound sadness at the loss of such a wonderful young man.

"Trapped by Facebook" (June 30, 2016)

Sohan Ahmed

It should be a lesson for everyone to be more careful using the internet. Parents should monitor what their children are doing on the computer.

"Six-year-old's wait for father ends in trauma" (July 3, 2016)

Aftab Ahmad

The whole world needs to unite against terrorism.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Causes of terrorism

The terrorist attack on the Gulshan cafe has left us numb with fear and sadness. We never imagined this kind of an attack would take place in our country. We convey our deepest condolence to the families of the victims.

Over the past few years, all sorts of crimes have increased at an alarming rate. We hope good sense will prevail and Bangladesh will be saved from destruction.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

National integrity and solidarity needed

We are completely dumbfounded by the unprecedented and brutal terrorist attack at Gulshan, Dhaka. The people of Bangladesh did not experience anything like this before. This incident has created great

anxiety, fear and uncertainty among the common people. We strongly condemn this cowardly act of terrorism.

It is high time we all united against terrorism avoiding the blame game. In this situation, national integrity

and solidarity are essential. There is no alternative to working together to defeat this evil force and protect our country.

Juel Rana
University of Dhaka