

Dhaka's dying canals

Restore them to their original

GIVEN the importance of canals to a city's infrastructure, it is beyond comprehension that Dhaka's canals are all but destroyed. One example makes the situation of the canals today very clear: that of the Baunia Canal. Once called Kahor Doriya, literally meaning 'huge waterway', the canal is said to have been as wide as a river. Today, illegal encroachments have shrunk it from its former glory.

Encroachment is just one side of the problem. Mismanagement and lack of maintenance by the authorities and unchecked dumping of solid waste by residents have all added to issue. A recent report in this paper show that of the 50 running canals in the 70s and 80s, almost half have disappeared.

It is also worthwhile to note that Wasa has the mandate to preserve the canals, and despite efforts on paper in the last 20 years, there has not been any progress. Sludge from factories, tannery waste, and dumping of household waste has only made the situation worse over the decade. On top of that, residents say that waste is not collected regularly from some areas, and cleaning efforts are only at the surface level.

It is imperative to realise the importance of canals in Dhaka lie beyond the scenic. The Wasa and the two city corporations must take immediate steps to recover the 26 canals that they claim to be recoverable. The solution lies in maintenance and in checking illegal encroachment and dumping of waste, and these need to be checked before the all the city's canals breathe their last.

Exorbitant CNG fare in Chittagong

Enforce government directives

AS reported from the port city, the drivers of the CNG run three-wheelers are not only refusing to run on meter, they are also charging passengers exorbitant fare. And this is being done despite government directives. This situation is not unique to Chittagong but is fairly representative of the situation, unfortunately, of all over the country.

Unfortunately, meters have become a show-piece, and one is a very lucky passenger who can get the driver to agree to go on meter. Even those that do agree haggle for extra 15 or 20 percent over what the meter would show.

And there is always the frequent complaint from the drivers that the daily deposit of the owners is high. In this regard, we understand that the owners, at least in Chittagong, are charging less than the rate of daily deposit by the auto-rickshaw drivers fixed by the government. It has also set the fare meter rate taking into account all the relevant factors including the cost of natural gas, and that must be strictly implemented.

It is the passengers that come out the worst in the tussle between the auto-rickshaw owners and the drivers. The matter we understand has been made even worse by a large number of unregistered three wheelers on the streets. And the law enforcing agencies must come in to ensure that the passengers do not become hostage to the situation. Strict action must be taken against the errant drivers as well as those owners who disregard the official directives in this regard.

COMMENTS

"Bail blessings for radicals"

(July 18, 2016)

Jamie Au

It's a dangerous precedent. No militant should get bail.

Joyanto Ray

There is no coordination between the home and the law ministry.

Raihan Al-Beruni

Those who kill or want to kill innocents should not get bail.

Masculinity in crisis and the rise of extremism

HABIBA NOWROSE

PEOPLE in Dhaka are yet to overcome the shock they experienced after the Gulshan Attack. Detailed reports of autopsy and backgrounds of the assailants are still pouring in. The popular image of militant Islamism has been tarnished after the identities of the assailants were disclosed. The perception that only poor, exploited young men from madrasas turning to militancy as a 'revolt' against the starkly stratified society based on class, is no longer valid. This concept of 'victimhood' does not apply to these young men who came from powerful, wealthy families with prestigious academic backgrounds. Thus, at least for a few of these militants, the question of using Islam as a political tool to revolt against the oppressive class does not apply. None of the assailants claimed to have such political views as well.

A video was released after the attack where three young men praised the Gulshan attack. One of them was identified as a son of an army official. One of the assailants of the Gulshan attack was the son of prominent politician of Bangladesh Awami League. Experts have given their opinions that parents should have a strong bond of love and communication with their children in order to prevent them from embarking on the path of radicalisation. I would like to add that fathers have a crucial role to play in the positive upbringing of their children. The families of the assailants were solvent, where fathers held significant social and political power over the society. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the model of masculinity these young men saw is made of wealth, political power and dominance. Drastically changing status and roles of women in the society is a big threat to this model of masculinity. It demands its ultimate authority even if it is gained through violence. Violence to these misguided people is not only the means of asserting their masculinity, but also exhibiting how a 'real man' should be.

This model of masculinity thrives through violence and criminalises everyone who is not like them. This explains why female victims of the Gulshan attack reportedly bore more severe marks of torture by the assailants of the Gulshan attack when compared to the male victims.

in our society.

Michel Foucault said that the self is the site of multiple practices. Men who exhibit a violent form of masculinity also carry the potential to possess nurturing, care giving qualities. It is this possibility of non-violence and care giving that we should work on to stop radicalisation.



PHOTO: TRUTHDIG.COM

The militants' exhibition of violence has had worldwide audience. The image of one of the killers intrigued and shocked people at the same time. It is because according to popular notion, "he looked nothing like a killer". Thanks to the racist and elitist beauty standard of a post-colonial society, he soon gained a female admirer, who claimed to have a 'crush' on him. This model of masculinity successfully gained its legitimacy, not only from radical Islamists who are heterosexual men, but also from a heterosexual woman. It will not be surprising if experts discover that young women fantasise of this violent model of masculinity premised on radical Islam and want to serve as their subordinated counterparts. We can already see signs of

Fathers should not only be 'role models' in the sense that they display their power, wealth and dominance. Instead, their model of masculinity should be grounded on the premise of care giving and non-violence. By shifting the core of masculinity in this direction, we can expect future generations of young men to be able to choose the masculinity of non-violence and care giving over the masculinity of violence and power. The upward mobility of women's status and changing role would not be seen as 'threatening to their masculinity' if these young men are taught that real men do not commit violence, real men are pacifiers.

South Asian films have a long history of glamourising sexual violence against

women. It is accepted even among the section of the society who does not support Islamist radicalization. Their accepted model of masculinity is also premised on violence. Popular media has historically shown their reluctance in promoting models of masculinity based on care. Care giving, pacifying men are portrayed as effeminate individuals, who are not "real man". It's time that films and literature deconstruct this radicalised, violent model of masculinity and hail the care giving model.

I fully recognise that international politics and economy plays a crucial role in shaping the politics of radical Islam. But this should not exempt us from taking responsibility for Islamist radicalisation at a personal and local level. While the neo-liberal economy integrated a large number of women into different industries, it has also purportedly taken away the sense of power and authority from men who were taught to see the world with a patriarchal view. Without recognising this crisis of masculinity, we will not be able to fully understand the philosophy of religious radicalisation.

As I said before, experts have pointed out what parents should do to stop radicalisation. We must remember that working mothers often have to cope with the double burden of full-time paid work and house work. Even the stay-at-home mothers have the back-breaking responsibilities of repetitive house work and full time child care. If the responsibility of preventing radicalisation falls only upon women, we will only be adding to their miseries. Moreover, it will leave the core of radicalisation untouched. It is high time for men to take responsibility of child care and children's moral education. If men in general fail to recognise the importance of their role as non-violent care givers, we will keep on witnessing many more successful attempts of religious radicalisation of young men in the years to come.

The writer is a freelance photographer.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The British leadership disease



LUCY P. MARCUS

ETHICAL political leadership is in short supply worldwide, from the United States to Turkey to the Philippines. But perhaps the most striking instance of dishonest leadership has been in

the United Kingdom, where the Brexit referendum and its aftermath have caused more instability than Britain experiences in a typical decade.

In just the first couple of weeks after the referendum, David Cameron, the prime minister who brought about the vote, resigned, and his Conservative successor, Theresa May, appointed a new Cabinet. Though some of the Brexiteers – most notably former London Mayor Boris Johnson – are now in the government, none of those who led the campaign to leave the European Union are ultimately responsible for carrying it out. May herself supported the "Remain" campaign.

Meanwhile, the opposition Labour Party has fallen into disarray. Almost the entire Shadow Cabinet has resigned, having lost confidence in party leader Jeremy Corbyn, and efforts to challenge him have been exceptionally acrimonious, with Corbyn supporters even throwing a brick through the window of one of his rivals' constituency office.

And the post-referendum turmoil runs deeper. The number of reported hate crimes since the referendum has soared by 500%, amid a lowering mood of social, political, and economic uncertainty and discontent. More than £100 billion (\$131 billion) was wiped off the FTSE 100 in the first ten minutes of trading after the result was announced, while the pound has

plumbed a 35-year low against the US dollar.

One of the most striking lessons of the British case – and many others – is that promising efforts to hold business leaders to account and ensure that companies behave ethically have not carried over to our political systems. Our elected leaders, often among the first to demand sound strategy, succession planning, and accountability in the private sector, have spectacularly failed to practice what they preach.

We expect business leaders to plan for the certainty of uncertainty and to manage risks properly. In the past year, companies big and small in the UK, elsewhere in the EU, and around the world have held countless meetings and high-level planning sessions to prepare for a Brexit vote. When the results came in, it seemed that the only people who hadn't planned for the "Leave" campaign's victory were those who led it. Indeed, according to a recent report by Parliament's foreign affairs select committee, Cameron's "considered view not to instruct key departments including the Foreign Office to plan for the possibility that the electorate would vote to leave the EU amounted to gross negligence."

The only UK political leader who quickly stepped forward with a clear and decisive strategy was Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon. Her plan is to hold another referendum on Scottish independence and rejoin the EU.

And it was an unelected Canadian, Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, whose authoritative reassurance helped to calm the markets. In 2015, Carney came under fire for forming a committee to carry out forward planning for the possibility of Brexit. And in early July, he was called to testify before the House of Commons Treasury Committee, accused of leaning toward "Remain" in the run-up to the referendum, simply because he presented a bleak (and

accurate) assessment of the economic consequences of a Leave victory.

When Nigel Farage, one of the Leave campaign's most vociferous and extreme leaders, decided to step down as leader of the UK Independence Party on July 4, he said, "I want my life back." If that sounds familiar, it is because Tony Hayward, then-CEO of BP, used the same phrase when talking about the impact – on him – of the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

When Hayward said it, the condemnation was swift. His words conveyed a complete lack of empathy for

command the respect of his leadership team, he can't lead the company to success, even if most of the employees think he's great. The same is true of political parties, though they often take longer to act, causing the enterprise – in this case, the UK – to flounder.

With very few exceptions, the Brexit vote has brought out the worst in Britain's leaders. If a CEO lied to investors and consumers as much as Farage, Johnson, and Michael Gove lied to UK voters, the consequences would be swift and painful, both from regulators and the market. They could not simply resign and move

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the people who were actually affected by the spill. Likewise, Farage, having helped drive Britain to disaster, blithely walked away when the destination was reached. As mortifying as it is to see Johnson appointed Foreign Secretary, given his history of lying, xenophobic statements, and insulting remarks about other world leaders, at least he will bear the stain of Britain's catastrophe publicly.

The deeper problem in the UK is that there is no alternative. The Labour Party is simply too divided to take power. If Corbyn were a CEO who lost the confidence of his entire executive team and board, he would be forced to resign or be fired. If a CEO can't

on, much less receive a future role in the organization (and certainly not a senior post). They would be fined (or worse), professionally ostracized, and sent packing to Florida.

When we can hold our business leaders to account more effectively than we can our elected political leaders, we should worry for the future – and not just in the UK. If it can happen here – in the homeland of Edmund Burke and Tony Benn – it truly can happen anywhere.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Terrorism in the name of Islam

Islam is the religion of peace, mercy, tolerance and forgiveness. But it is a matter of great regret that some unscrupulous people are resorting to terrorism and spreading panic in the name of Islam to serve their own interests. Terrorist groups do not embody the values of Islam. We urge Islamic scholars and imams to spread out the true message of Islam to dispel the misconception extremists have created about our holy religion.

Juel Rana
University of Dhaka

Earthquake in and around Dhaka city

I thank Dr. Badrul Imam of Dhaka University for his valuable remarks regarding the probabilities of earthquake in Bangladesh especially in Dhaka (in his article published in The Daily Star on July 15, 2016). Based on historical records and geological characteristics, I would like to give my own point of view regarding this calamity.

Even though Kathmandu sits almost on the main boundary thrust fault with many other faults in and around, a 8+ magnitude earthquake could not bring

down high rise buildings made of concrete with iron structures (mostly old structures were destroyed). People were killed in thousands and not in millions there. Dhaka city is not situated on any of those kinds of proven geological faults. Considering the thickness of semi to consolidated sedimentary rocks (which is about 12 km) and infrastructure that were built during the last 50 years with modern technologies, the destruction, as revealed by the research, is not likely to be as

devastating as we think.

I therefore request the residents of Dhaka city not to panic, especially when earthquake itself is a poorly understood scientific phenomenon, and cannot be properly predicted even with modern instruments and knowledge.

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