

## Expedite terror attack cases

Delay may be costly

SEVEN years have passed and we are still waiting for the conclusion of the first major case of murder in suicide bombing which was directed at the Chittagong Court building premises that took two lives in 2005. The hit was carried out allegedly by JMB operatives and two cases were lodged by the police in 2008 against two members of the banned outfit, one for possession of explosives and another for murder. While the verdict related to possession of explosives has been passed in 2008, long eight years have elapsed in the case of the latter without any end in sight. The police have dragged their feet in producing witnesses to the court related to the trial for murder, and the manner in which the case had been framed, smack of a serious lack of professionalism. What can explain police inability to produce a single witness in the last two years?

Today, we are confronted with a rejuvenated JMB and other extremist outfits. Should it come as a surprise when militants are snatched away from the police and cases against them flounder year upon year? The message given to these extremist elements over the last decade or so is that they may operate with impunity. Terrorist attacks cannot be dealt with in the same manner as other criminal cases. It is time to ensure that legal procedures in cases related to terrorists are conducted without undue delay and that witnesses are made to feel may feel safe to come forward to testify. The State has to demonstrate a zero tolerance policy towards militancy in Bangladesh soil.

## CCC gives city hill dwellers the short shift

Fulfill the promise

THE refusal of the Chittagong City Corporation to hand over apartments to 161 poor families is patently unethical. In 2013, under a laudable project initiated by the then-mayor, the CCC started the construction of a seven-storey building by evicting 33 families living in the city's Batali Hill area assuring them that they would be the owners of the apartments upon meeting the terms and conditions of payments. Taka 10,000 was taken from each family as down payment and they were supposed to pay Tk 6.10 lakh for each unit in a monthly installment of Tk 2,500. The families happily agreed. But now the CCC has changed its mind, questioning the ability of these families to pay the installment. This is reprehensible.

How has the new administration assessed that these families would not be able to pay a paltry amount of Tk. 2,500 a month? Or are there some other factors at play here? The incumbent mayor, reportedly, said that the building would be used for other purposes without giving further details. May we ask what better purposes there could be than allotting them to people the apartments have been built for?

Building low-cost housing for slum-dwellers results in improved health and education outcomes. Construction of a seven-storey building for them in Chittagong was a good initiative, the proposed beneficiaries of which are facing the risks of being shortchanged by the CCC. The mayor should not go back on the city corporation's word. He should put things straight and make sure that the affected families get what was promised to them.

## COMMENTS

**"MAHASWETA DEVI NO MORE"**  
(JULY 29, 2016)

Mostak Ahmed

Her "Hajar Churashir Ma" was one of my favourites. I will never forget the brilliant storyline of that book.

Kinvara

Feeling so sad! She was such a great writer. May her soul rest in peace.

# CHILD LABOUR and its violent outcome

MD ABDUL QUAYYUM and OLI CHOWDHURY

THE horrific story of the murder of Sagar Barman, aged 10, was published in the front page of The Daily Star and other leading dailies of the country on July 25, 2016. Perpetrators seemed to have followed the same pattern of torture as seen in the murder of 15-year-old Rakib in Khulna last year. The victim allegedly died after some workers pumped air into his body through the rectum at a factory. Memories of this horrific crime at Khulna have not faded from people's memory yet. And now, we are witness of the savage murder of Sagar, a young child worker, carried out in an eerily similar manner allegedly by some management officials of the factory where he worked.

Bangladesh is one of the earliest signatories of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has expressed its commitment to ensure the rights of children in international forums. Like other human rights conventions, the right to life has been highlighted in Article 6 (1) of the CRC. Article 16 (2) further dictates: "States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child". The Convention defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years and spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere should enjoy, including the right to protection from economic exploitation (Article 32) and the right to education (Article 28). It is also worth mentioning that Bangladesh ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

On July 8, 2015, Samiul Alam Rajon

(13) was tortured to death in Sylhet. The video clipping of Samiul's torture went viral on social media, causing outrage at home and abroad. Trials of the perpetrators were thankfully quick. On November 8, 2015, the Sylhet metropolitan sessions court sentenced four of the accused to death, and seven

priority, and all stakeholders must be involved to develop a child protection mechanism.

A total of 38 categories of work have been identified as hazardous in Bangladesh. According to the Labour Law, it is prohibited to employ children under 18 in these sectors, which include

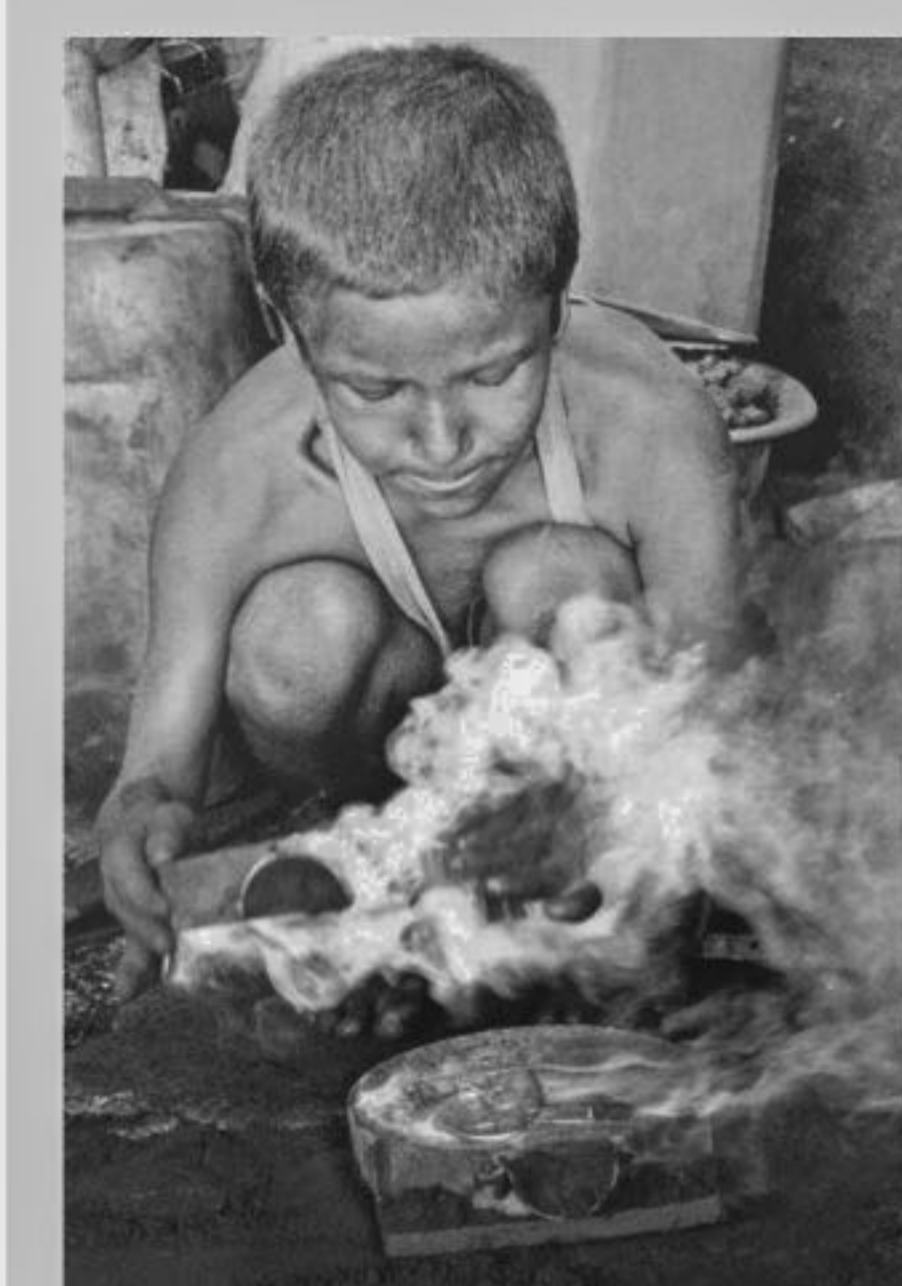


PHOTO: STAR

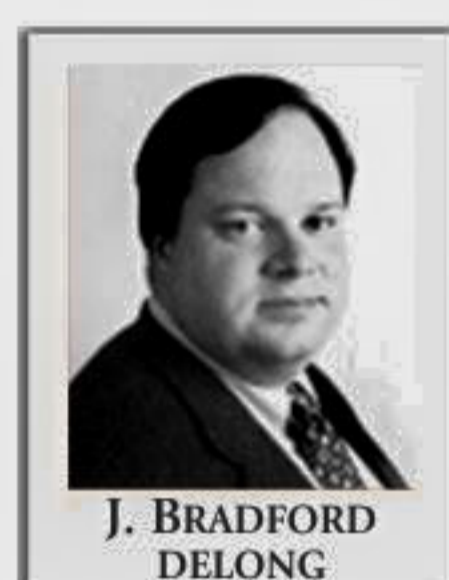
*The grim truth is that a total of 1.7 million children are involved with child labour in Bangladesh. At the same time, despite the list, even today around 1.2 million children are employed in hazardous work.*

others to imprisonment of varying terms for killing Rajon. On the very day, the Khulna Metropolitan Sessions Court sentenced two to death in the murder of Rakib. However, the recent murder of Sagar proves that punishment alone cannot be sufficient. Elimination of child labour must be a

biri-cigarette factories, butcheries, tanneries and chemical factories. A guideline for domestic workers was also formed in 2015. The Bangladesh Labour Law 2006 prohibits employment of children under 14. Though children above 14 could be employed, they cannot be employed in hazardous labour.

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# A brief history of (in)equality



J. BRADFORD DELONG

THE Berkeley economist Barry Eichengreen recently gave a talk in Lisbon about inequality that demonstrated one of the virtues of being a scholar of economic

history. Eichengreen, like me, glories in the complexities of every situation, avoiding oversimplification in the pursuit of conceptual clarity. This disposition stays the impulse to try to explain more about the world than we can possibly know with one simple model.

For his part, with respect to inequality, Eichengreen has identified six first-order processes at work over the past 250 years.

The first is the widening of Britain's income distribution between 1750 and 1850, as the gains from the British Industrial Revolution went to the urban and rural middle class, but not to the urban and rural poor.

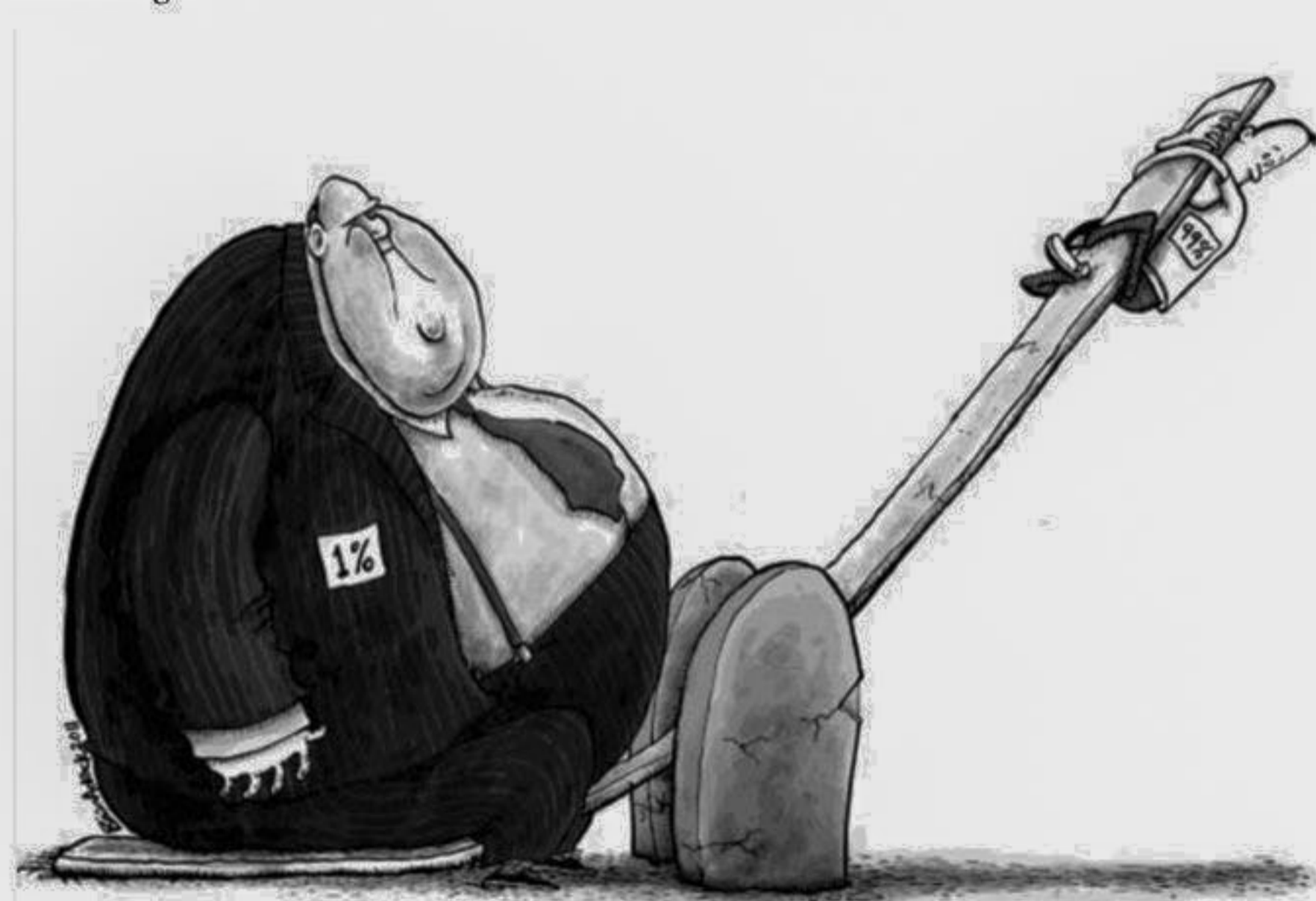
Second, between 1750 and 1975, income distribution also widened globally, as some parts of the world realized gains from industrial and post-industrial technologies, while others did not. For example, in 1800, American purchasing power parity was twice that of China; by 1975 it was 30 times that of China.

The third process is what is known as the First Age of Globalisation, between 1850 and 1914, when living standards and labor productivity levels converged in the global north. During this time, 50 million people left an overcrowded agricultural Europe for resource-rich new settlements. They brought their institutions, technologies, and capital with them, and the wage differential between Europe and these new economies shrank from roughly 100 percent to 25 percent.

This mostly coincided with the Gilded Age between 1870 and 1914, when domestic inequality rose in the global north as entrepreneurship,

industrialisation, and financial manipulation channelled new gains mostly to the wealthiest families.

Gilded Age inequality was significantly reversed during the period of social democracy in the global north, between 1930 and 1980, when higher taxes on the wealthy helped pay for new government benefits and programs. But the subsequent and last stage brings us to the current moment, when economic policy choices have again resulted in a widening of the distribution of gains in the global north, ushering in a new Gilded Age.



Eichengreen's six processes affecting inequality are a good starting point. But I would go further and add six more.

First, there is the stubborn persistence of absolute poverty in some places, despite the extraordinary overall reduction since 1980. As the UCLA scholar Ananya Roy points out, people in absolute poverty are deprived of both the opportunities and the means to change their status. They lack what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin called "positive liberty" – empowerment for self-actualization – as well as "negative liberty," or freedom from obstacles in

one's path of action. Seen in this light, inequality is an uneven distribution not only of wealth, but also of liberty.

Second is the abolition of slavery in many parts of the world during the nineteenth century, followed by, third, the global loosening over time of other caste constraints – race, ethnicity, gender – which deprived even some people with wealth of the opportunities to use it.

The fourth process consists of two recent high-growth generations in China and one high-growth generation in

economic history. This complexity implies that any adjustments to our political economy should be based on sound social science and directed by elected leaders who are genuinely acting in the interest of the people.

Emphasising complexity brings me to a final factor affecting inequality – perhaps the most important of all: populist mobilizations. Democracies are prone to populist uprisings, especially when inequality is on the rise. But the track record of such uprisings should give us pause.

In France, populist mobilizations installed an emperor – Napoleon III, who led a coup in 1851 – and overthrew democratically elected governments during the Third Republic. In the United States, they underpinned discrimination against immigrants and sustained the Jim Crow era of legal racial segregation.

In Central Europe, populist mobilisations have driven imperial conquests under the banner of proletarian internationalism. In the Soviet Union, they helped Vladimir Lenin consolidate power, with disastrous consequences that were surpassed only by the horrors of Nazism, which also came to power on a populist wave.

Constructive populist responses to inequality are fewer, but they should certainly be mentioned. In some cases, populism has helped in extending the franchise; enacting a progressive income tax and social insurance; building physical and human capital; opening economies; prioritising full employment; and encouraging migration.

History teaches us that these latter responses to inequality have made the world a better place. Unfortunately – and at the risk of oversimplification – we usually fail to heed history's lessons.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### International Day of Friendship

International Day of Friendship is celebrated every year on July 30 to raise awareness about friendship that plays a vital role in our lives. It is a United Nations day to encourage governments, organisations and community groups to organise events, activities and initiatives that helps to promote mutual understanding among people.

Nowadays, true friends are really hard to come by. One must learn to respect the value of friendship. One must also avoid the company of bad friends; they do more harm than good.

Sanaullah Samad  
On e-mail

### "Clinton makes history"

Securing the Democratic Party's nomination for US president, Hillary Clinton has become the first female to be picked by a major political party to run for the White House. We wish her all the best to work to make the world a better place for all.

Chandro  
On e-mail



### Conservation of Gharials

Gharials are one of the most endangered species of crocodiles from the Indian subcontinent. They are in urgent need of captive breeding, after which they should be returned to their natural habitat. This fish-eating species had gone extinct in the past in its former range across Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar and are currently holding on to survival in fragmented parts of Northern and

Central India and in Nepal (in the upper riparian habitats). The species is not found anywhere else in the world and has a significant role in the maintenance of a healthy river ecosystem. Joint cooperation and coordination is hence essential between countries in saving this unique species. The SAARC platform can be effectively used for conservation of wildlife.

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