

Don't 'desertify' Gulshan

Avoid knee-jerk reaction

FEAR, along with the government decision to close down so called illegal establishments in Gulshan area as a reaction to the unfortunate killings in Holey Artisan has helped create the eerie character that Gulshan has taken on today.

It is very difficult to see the government's rationale in drawing a correlation between illegal commercial establishments in the area and the terrorist killings. What if the establishment had government approval? Would that have prevented the attack and the killings?

However, it is quite another matter if the issue is of 'unauthorised' commercial establishment per se in a non-commercial area. But even here the government has a few questions to answer. How come these so called illegal entities came to be there in the first place? And how come most of these are running for decades without the relevant authorities taking note of it?

We cannot also overlook the fact that these shops and eateries and places for get-together for all ages and hues had lent a cosmopolitan character to Dhaka city, and without which any semblance of a modern city that one attaches to the capital would be lost.

The government should decide once and for all that there should be no more commercial establishments in residential areas including Gulshan. It should then deal with those that have actually encroached on public space and caused public inconvenience. Then there are those that are well established over a long period of time which should not come under a blanket order of removal because these commercial ventures have added to our economy by creating thousand of jobs, closing down of which will have a serious impact on the lives and livelihood of many.

Bauls under attack

The intolerance of tolerance

IN yet another cowardly attack in two weeks, two bauls were assaulted and humiliated and their abode set to fire in a remote village in Chuadanga. We denounce such mindless acts of violence against some of the most non-violent members of society who convey the message of love, harmony and peace through their songs and lifestyle. This is, however, not the first time bauls, the followers of Lalou, a nineteenth century mystic minstrel revered by ordinary men and women of Bengal as well as great poets in the likes of Tagore, Nazrul and Ginsberg, were under attack. Last year, 'unidentified' criminals killed a baul fair organiser and a year before, six bauls were beaten up by a group of people in the same district.

The beauty of Lalou's music is that it a great equalizer that refuses to conform to the conventions of the class-conscious Bangalee society. It is about brotherhood that transcends politics and religion. It is part of our heritage. No baul is known to have hurt the sentiments of others, religious or otherwise. Therefore, attacking these peace-loving, plain-living people, we feel, is an evil design by the perpetrators to create religious disharmony.

The baul community in the area has, reportedly, complained that inaction from the police has emboldened the criminals to carryout the assaults with impunity. The culprits should be caught immediately and punished under law. But more importantly, resistance against such elements of the society should come from within the society itself.

COMMENTS

**"Trace and punish the
masterminds"**

(July 29, 2016)

Humayra Farha

The people who brainwashed these young people are very clever. They find young men who have suffered some loss. We should support our family and friends in depression. Mental health recovery should be the key aspect in the eradication of terrorism. But as usual, we play the blame game after every terrorist attack and think our responsibility is over.

Suhel Ahmed

I would like to differ. There are tens of thousands of people who are depressed and/or mentally ill. All of them are not becoming militants. Not just the depressed ones but anyone can be vulnerable to trained manipulators. That's my point here. Educated people like doctors and engineers are also being lured to join IS.

Cost of terrorism on the economy



MACRO MIRROR
FAHMIDA KHATUN

LIFE can change at any moment. On July 1, 2016, life changed for us Bangladeshis. Security has become an even higher priority for the country. This

has brought changes to our individual and national lives in many ways. The prospect of any imminent terrorist activities following attacks in Gulshan and Sholakia has prompted the government to beef up security measures across Dhaka city by several folds. Vulnerable and important places have tight security, and members of law enforcing agencies are stationed on main roads, checking vehicles, passengers and passersby. I myself face at least six such security checks on a given day during my commute. The windows of my car are rolled down, my laptop bag is opened and sometimes, I have to disclose my destination. This exercise is reassuring for me, as it gives me a sense of confidence about my safety, even though it creates temporary traffic congestion. So after every checking, I thank the person for performing his/her duty diligently. Sometimes they just look at you and let go. I guess they use their judgement on determining who could be a prospective terror and who would not. While such judgement could be dangerous I also feel it is a tiring and monotonous job. Not all check points have places to sit or get shelter when it rains. Such security measures are a new phenomenon, and it will take a while to improve checkpoints with a proper setup for more effective inspection.

As part of maintaining high security, movements of rickshaws, buses and other public transports have been restricted in and around Gulshan and Baridhara. Certain roads have been blocked for them. Thus, while ensuring security, this has also created problems for the residents of the area, as most people have to rely on public transports. Rickshaws, auto-rickshaws

and buses are the only way for low income and lower middle income people to commute from one place to another place. Now people have to walk longer to avail public transport. Moreover, public transport fares have gone up conveniently at this opportune moment. The suffering becomes acute when an emergency patient has to be taken to hospital at night, but no transport is in sight in the area.

The closure of unauthorised commercial establishments including restaurants, clinics, schools, shops and offices in the residential area is a positive move. They have overcrowded

how these newly unemployed people will be accommodated in the job market. Obviously, private security companies cannot accommodate all of them! This could hamper our efforts towards poverty eradication and may give rise to crime and violence.

In view of security threats, additional measures have also been taken at offices, factories, schools, shopping malls, mosques and other establishments. These additional expenditures will be borne by consumers of services at various levels. For example, schools that have bought bulletproof buses for children, or hired

macroeconomic effects of terrorism could be reflected through a number of avenues. Higher public investment on security means diversion of resources that could be invested otherwise, e.g. for infrastructure, productivity improvement, education, health and social protection. Foreign investors may want to shift their investment to safer places. Foreign companies and organisations will have to pay higher salaries with added risk allowances. This would increase cost of their operations and could lead to downsizing of their operations. Some offices have already done so. There is also the risk of higher capital flight and lower capital inflow. With the new dimension of terrorism, insurance companies may hike their premium, making business costlier.

Strong and larger economies can withstand terrorist attacks without the evidence of much effect on their economies. They have a more diverse and developed economy with a larger basket of export goods and larger size of gross domestic products. However, economies such as Bangladesh, which has a smaller GDP and is tied to only a very few export items such as readymade garments, manpower, frozen food and leather, is vulnerable, as its foreign exchange earnings and employment depend on them. In the end, these will have an impact on the economic growth of the country.

Therefore, effective measures need to be taken in order to restore the confidence of people both within and outside the country. Not only are appropriate fiscal and monetary policies needed to address the emerging situation, institutions will have to be well-developed and effective. Reforms and capacity building of all types of institutions – economic, political and judiciary – are long due. Government initiatives to reduce the risk of terrorism would be far more successful if people across the board are included.

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Restaurants in Gulshan where people had to queue up to get seats just a month ago have been running almost empty since the terror attack on July 1.

the use of public utilities which were designed only for a certain number of people. They have also risked the safety of the area. But these organisations also created employment for hundreds of poor people who migrated from villages to the city for a better livelihood. Shutting off these establishments and the exodus of expatriate families from Bangladesh due to the terror threat will render these poor workers unemployed. As employment generation is already a challenge in the country, it is truly worrisome to consider

a larger number of security personnel at the school gates and installed metal detectors and security cameras in schools, are mostly likely to hike their fees. This burden will ultimately fall on the parents of the students. Offices and factories will have to allocate a higher budget for the appointment of private security guards, which implies a cut in their profitability. Shops will also pass on their extra costs for security on buyers, making things costlier for them.

In addition to impacts at individual and household levels, the

WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 2016

There is no substitute

SADRUL HASAN MAZUMDER

TO observe the World Breastfeeding Week, which is marked around the world from August 1-7 since 1992, the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) has declared this year's theme to be "Breastfeeding: a key to sustainable development" August 1-7.

Breastfeeding is in many ways linked with nutrition and food security, health, development, survival, and the achievement of full educational potential and economic productivity. Breastfeeding is an environmentally sustainable method of feeding compared to other substitutes. Linking breastfeeding with sustainable development is relevant and inclusive, as it enables the breastfeeding movement to connect with many other development issues over the next fifteen years to create greater impact globally.

This year, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Institute of Public Health and Nutrition (IPHN) and Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF) have organised a series of events at the national and local level, involving a wide range of stakeholders. This includes but is not limited to influencing policy stakes and creating awareness involving government and non-government agencies, which will be inaugurated on August 02, 2016 by the Honourable Minister of the MoHFW as the chief guest.

Let's refresh our memories by looking through the legislative journey which promotes, protects and supports breastfeeding across the globe including Bangladesh. On May 21, 1981, the thirty-fourth world health assembly recalled that breast-feeding is the only natural method of infant feeding and that it must be actively protected and promoted in all countries which had adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, which aimed to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of breast-feeding, and by ensuring proper use of breast-milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through ideal approach of marketing and distribution. Following the international commitment, the Government of Bangladesh has been the first of the countries to ratify the code and promulgated the Breast-Milk Substitutes (regulation of marketing) Ordinance, 1984, aimed at promoting breast-feeding by regulating marketing of breast-milk substitutes. In continuation, the

RECOMMENDATIONS

- > Introducing counselling services for parents in general and pregnant women in particular on breastfeeding from the early stages of pregnancy.
- > Preventing discrimination against mothers and women at workplace and home.
- > Creating safer space and protected time for mothers to express (pump) milk at workplace.
- > Setting up child friendly infrastructure like breastfeeding corners and day care centres wherever required.
- > Introducing awareness sessions for doctors, nurses and other concerned health professionals.
- > Setting up 'milk banks' like blood banks in hospitals and clinics to preserve breast milk.
- > Increasing budgetary allocation for effective implementation of BMS Law 2013.
- > Engaging private and non-government stakeholders creating facilities for promotion of breast feeding practices.
- > In regulating breast-milk substitutes, we expect an urgent call from the Prime Minister for
 - o All formula labels and information to state the benefits of breastfeeding and the health risks of substitutes;
 - o No promotion of breast-milk substitutes;
 - o No free samples of substitutes to be given to pregnant women, mothers or their families; and
 - o No distribution of free or subsidized substitutes to health workers or facilities.

Ordinance got amended in 1989 with provision of mandatory registration of breast-milk substitute including formation of an advisory committee to oversee compliance issues of International Code of Marketing of breast milk substitutes. Abolishing the said Ordinance, Breast Milk Substitutes, Baby Foods, Commercially Manufactured Complementary Baby Foods and its usable Accessories (regulation of marketing) Law 2013 was enacted which aimed at protecting children between zero to five years of age with full embargo on advertisement of breast milk substitutes, baby foods, children's food supplements and its equipment.

Given the legislative history, if we look at the breastfeeding practice, where the 2014 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Statistics (BDHS) shows that 55 percent of infants under age 6 months are

exclusively breastfed, which is proportionately lower than the 2011 BDHS reported 64 percent and much lower than the WHO recommended target of 90 percent.

A BRAC study, on the implementation of BMS Law 2013, shows that most important stakeholders such as the doctors, nurses and other health professionals are not aware enough to ensure exclusive breastfeeding. In addition, there is insufficient information about the benefits of breast milk, which has been maintained by social myths, traditional, cultural and superstitious beliefs. The BRAC study also shows that benefits of colostrum feeding were commonly perceived by mothers as the "first vaccination of child" but in practice, mothers often cannot manage to feed colostrum to the newborn baby because of misconception and lack of knowledge. It has been proven that around 95 percent of the caesarean babies are excluded from exclusive breastfeeding as their mothers remain in post-operative care after birth. In addition, many mothers who return to work abandon breastfeeding partially or completely, because they do not have sufficient time, or a place to breastfeed, express (pump) and store their milk. Mothers need a safe, clean and private place in or near their workplace to continue breastfeeding. Enabling conditions at work, such as six months paid maternity leave, part-time work arrangements, on-site crèches, facilities for expressing and storing breast milk, and breastfeeding breaks, can help in this regard.

Breast milk contains all the nutrients needed by children in the first six months of life. Supplementing breast milk before six months is discouraged because it increases the likelihood of contamination, and hence risk of diarrhoea. Beyond the immediate benefits for children, breastfeeding contributes to a lifetime of good health. Adolescents and adults who were breastfed as babies are less likely to be overweight or obese. They are less likely to have type-II diabetes and perform better in intelligence tests. Not only children, breastfeeding had also benefited mothers. Exclusive breastfeeding is associated with a natural (though not fail-safe) method of birth control (98 percent protection in the first six months after birth). It reduces risks of breast and ovarian cancer and postpartum depression. Let's echo with and promote breast milk - the first food the first right on earth.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Singling out a particular institution

From the upsurge of recent terrorist attacks within the country (where the majority of the attackers belonged to well-to-do families and were found to be from English medium schools), it is quite difficult to figure out what triggered such violent acts by these young men. Therefore, singling out a particular educational institution will do no good in preventing these deadly attacks. Proper education and precautions must be ensured in all educational institution; be it Bangla medium, English medium or Madrasa.

Muhtashim Uddin Ahmed
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Planting the seed of humanity

Unfortunately, institutions and our society as a whole are not doing enough to spread the word of love and tolerance. Instead of planting seeds of inspiration, kindness, love and self-awareness, the world today is bombarding the young minds with hate and confusion.

Educational institutions should start offering classes, programmes and courses to teach kids how to be kind, responsible and compassionate, and find purpose not by destroying but by creating. Parents and teachers should not waste any time and start teaching children how to nurture human qualities.

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