

# Two sides of the reversible popular choice

## Our women police Make their work environment safer

WE can be rightly proud of the fact that Bangladesh is perhaps one of the first countries in the region to induct women in the police when the initial recruitment started in 1974. Although in percentage terms women in the force is less than ten, the absolute figure is substantive when one considers the social constraints that are associated with women doing jobs outside their home, and more so working in the police. Bangladesh also has the distinction of becoming the first Muslim majority country to contribute all-women police contingent to UN peacekeeping. But one wonders whether the work environment guarantees the women members of the force the safety to contribute their best to their profession?

It is shocking to learn that ten percent of women in the police suffer sexual harassment in the line of work. The disturbing data has emerged from a survey report that was launched in Dhaka by Manusher Jonno Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative on Tuesday. Where is the security of the women of an organisation that is supposed to provide security to others?

Policing is a challenging and difficult undertaking in any country, more so in Bangladesh. And there should be no hesitation in admitting that women police lend a humane face in policing. And as such we should have more of them in the force.

While repeating our call for police reform, the recommendations are gathering dust somewhere in the secretariat, we urge the authorities concerned to address the issue of work environment of the women police starting immediately by declaring zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the force.

## Stop incarcerating delinquent children Correct them in a different way

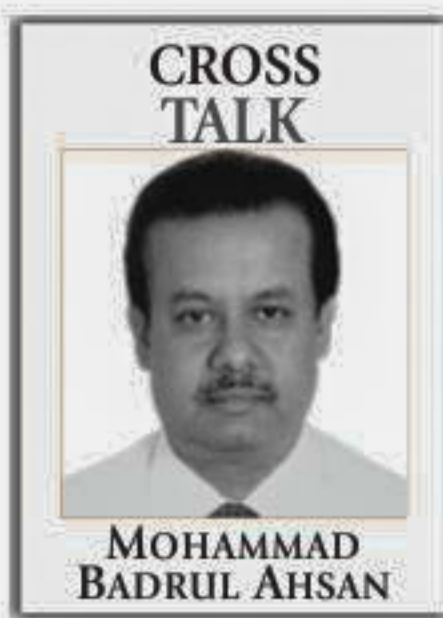
THE National Human Rights Commissioner's statement on how we are handling children accused of having committed a crime should be taken into cognisance. His emphasis on setting free a child even in case of a non-bailable offence, as per children act 2013 in light of international laws, again reaches to the heart of the problem with our current practices.

The only exception when a child should be assigned to juvenile centre instead is if the child is convicted over a severe offence and there is suspicion that further crimes will be committed. The authorities that deal with these issues especially should take this into consideration, particularly given the facilities, or lack thereof, available at our juvenile centres and correctional facilities.

Otherwise, many a young life may be wasted in the days to come, as it is difficult to see how a young child can adjust to life, having gone through the correctional facilities available in our country.

A case in point, as reported in a national daily, is that of two children accused of murdering a third. Deeper investigation revealed gross violation of procedures by law enforcers and alleged torture of the two leading to false confessions.

Surely, a child accused of having committed a crime cannot be treated the same as an adult. They must be corrected in a more human and sensitive way because if, in the process, they are damaged irreparably, an individual will forever be lost to society.



**CROSS TALK**  
**MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN**

THIRTY years after his death in Hawaii, ousted Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos got a hero's burial in Manila last Friday. Russian president Vladimir Putin is said to be pushing an ambition to restore the bygone glories of the Soviet era. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan wishes in his subconscious mind that the Ottoman Empire had returned. And Donald Trump, the president-elect of the United States, is showing the streaks of an autocrat, as he keeps thumbing his nose at democratic traditions. The common thread running through this medley of examples is a matter of concern. There is a growing fascination worldwide for the lust for absolute power.

Marcos' rehabilitation must have been a rude awakening for those Filipino families whose sons and daughters had died in the People Power Revolution that toppled him. A popularly elected president of that country has now defied the people's wish expressed three decades ago. Democracy is a double-edged knife cutting both ways.

As it is, democracy still has a long way to go. The Democracy Index 2015 claims that only 20 out of 167 countries are full democracies, where civil liberties and basic political freedoms are respected and reinforced by thriving democratic principles. Fifty-nine countries are flawed democracies, where elections are fair and free and basic civil liberties are honoured, but political culture is underdeveloped, participation in politics is low, and the functioning of governance is dubious.

The index also shows that hybrid regimes exist in 37 countries where elections aren't free and fair. These nations have non-independent judiciaries, widespread corruption, harassment and pressure placed on the media, and anemic rule of law; their governments also apply pressure on political opponents. The remaining 51 countries are authoritarian regimes where infringements and abuses of civil liberties are common, elections are not free and fair, the media is controlled, and the judiciary is not independent.

In total, only 8.9 percent of the world population is living in truly democratic

conditions, which is also getting squeezed. The Olympus has fallen since the rise of a demagogue in the United States on November 8, belying that country's image as the seedbed of dignity and freedom. Donald Trump's victory has left the world shell-shocked as it struggles to reconcile how the liberal-minded American people, nourished by the world's largest democracy, could choose a whimsical man as their president.

The answer to that paradox is

tyrants. When things get worse, even the learned amongst us become angry and antsy. They support lunatics who would never attract a crowd in normal circumstances.

And that's exactly what has happened in the United States 83 years later. Even after Donald Trump agreed to pay USD25 million to settle the civil fraud lawsuit against Trump University, a clear admission of guilt, there's little to no reaction to this shameful episode. Trump wants to hand over his business empire

the Americans look the other way. Many years ago, the holy men of Afghanistan had made a similar mistake. Frustrated with the king, they welcomed a bandit named Habibullah Kalakani to the throne.

When people have their back against the wall, they have the reflex of a cornered cat. In that reflex, even the most sophisticated voters give way to crude judgment. Countless future autocrats waiting in the wings of political stages around the world must feel animated.



Supporters for then Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump react as early results come in.

embedded in the German example. In the 19th century, this country was supposed to have the best education system in the world. After World War I, German university enrollment soared. By 1931, it reached 120,000 versus a maximum of 73,000 before the war. Yet, this highly educated nation embraced a madman like Adolf Hitler in 1933.

That means the educated people make good democracies up to a point. If bad policies cause economic, military and political hardships, it's open house for

to his children instead of a blind trust. His wife wants to live in New York instead of the White House. He's packing his administration with people from unsavoury backgrounds.

The Americans are bending to his wishes like fawning parents giving indulgence to whiz kids. They're willing to overlook Trump's many indiscretions, because they're right now a very nervous nation. Worried about the economy, immigration, the extremist menace, and shrinking power of white nationalism,

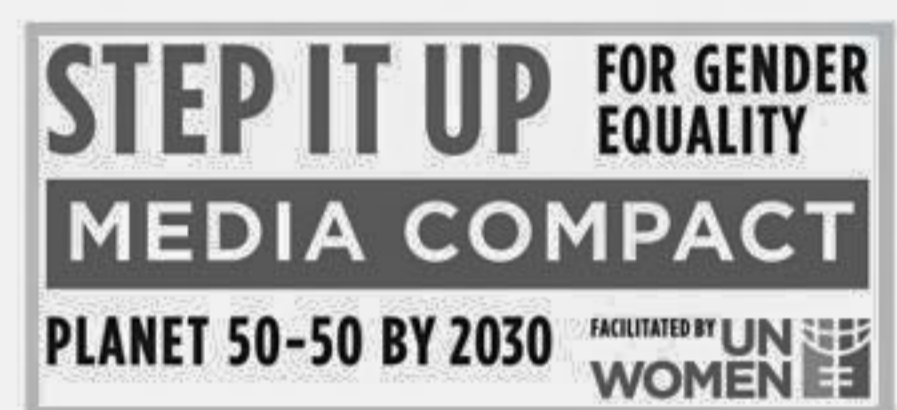
The government by the people backfires when the people are divided by the government. Deceitful politicians play one side against another and nationalist leaders behave like colonial rulers, dividing to rule and ruling to divide. Democracy and dictatorship are two sides of a reversible jacket. Which side is out depends, at times, on people's choice.

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## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

# Orange the World

Robust funding critical to ending the pandemic of violence against women and girls



GLOBALISING global attention and action to end violence against women and girls, led by UN Women under the 'Orange the World' umbrella, starting this week, a host of public events will draw attention to the pandemic that impacts one in three women worldwide. From marches in Uganda, Serbia and Timor-Leste, to a public rally on motorbikes in Pakistan, people will take to the streets to say no to violence.

Despite growing recognition that the pandemic of violence against women is a gross human rights violation and a serious obstacle to development, concrete efforts on preventing and ending violence against women and girls continue to be a low priority on the international development agenda, with inadequate funding. Achieving the ambitious targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, which emphasise ending violence against women and girls as a core objective, demands innovative solutions and the forging of new partnerships to mobilise funds from all available sources - including national governments, overseas development agencies, private sector, philanthropic bodies and individuals.

Urging governments and international actors to back up agreed international commitments, this year's "Orange the World" initiative, will focus on raising money to end violence against women and girls. Activities will be carried out during the civil society-driven 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which runs from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, until December 10, Human Rights Day.

"Women and girls who experience violence have their rights trampled on,

they live in fear and pain, and in the worst cases they pay with their lives. Yet, still in many countries, the laws and services are inadequate, or unavailable, and the criminal justice system is remote, expensive and biased in favour of the male perpetrators", said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. "Change to these elements has a cost, yet the price of no change is unacceptable. Even relatively small-scale investments that are timely and well

the immense cost of violence against women and girls on many levels, with significant threats to the household's economic welfare both in the short and longer term.

A recent study estimated that the cost of intimate-partner violence accounting in 2013 could be as high as 5.2 percent of the global economy. Evidence also illustrates how even relatively small-scale investments that are timely and well targeted can bring enormous benefits to



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (left) and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women during a special event entitled "Orange the World: Raise Money to end Violence against Women," commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November).

targeted can bring enormous benefits to women and girls and to their wider communities," she reiterated.

Of all women who were victims of homicide globally in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members. Not only does violence against women and girls have negative consequences for those who experience it, but also their families, the community and society at large. Available evidence shows

women and girls and to their wider communities. A recent multi-country study in Southeast Asia found that the cost of delivering a minimum package of essential services (over three fiscal years) for women and girls who experience violence amounted to 0.31 percent of GDP (in 2015) for Timor-Leste and 0.25 percent of GDP (in 2015) for the Lao People's Democratic Republic - a fraction of the cost of the consequences of violence.

The United Nations commemorates the International Day today with an event convened by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been a champion at the highest levels for women and girls, including through his UNITE to End Violence against Women campaign.

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women celebrated 20 years of grant-making to vital work around the world at a fund-raising gala co-hosted by UN Women Executive Director and Oscar-winning actress and Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman.

Global events marking the 16 Days of Activism this year will include lighting major landmarks in orange - the colour chosen to symbolise a bright and optimistic future free from violence - from the New York City Mayor's Gracie Mansion and City Hall to the European Commission Headquarters Building in Belgium; the Panama Canal Administration Building and the Presidential Palace in Ecuador; Uganda's Parliament building, as well as seven municipalities in Italy including Trieste, Pisa, Venice and Naples, and more than 30 buildings and landmarks in Istanbul. A range of activities will support the awareness raising efforts from public rallies to creative endeavours including a new song on the issue by the famous Egyptian rapper Zap Tharwat, to artists producing comic strips, short films, photo and art exhibitions and contests in the Dominican Republic, Cambodia and Kazakhstan. In New York today, First Lady Chirlane McCray and NY Police Commissioner James O'Neill are to be recognised by UN Women for the city's commitment to preventing domestic violence. In other efforts, bus drivers in Paraguay and truck drivers in Brazil will engage in awareness raising.

This story was replicated from the UN Women website. The Daily Star is an official partner of UN Women's Step It Up! Media Compact, an alliance of media organizations committed to playing an active role in advancing gender issues within the framework of the SDGs.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Public transport must be systemised

Every day, commuters of all ages and genders fight to board buses at the risk of their lives. The city authorities mentioned plans to replace the old shabby-looking buses with 500 new ones, with a gradual increase in numbers depending on the arrangement of the company. These bus owners would receive shares of the profit, thereby reducing the fights that break out while competing to attract more commuters. They would also pick up passengers at specified intervals based on peak and non-peak hours from different spots.

The Premier Bus (AC) service which used to run from Uttara to Motijheel even attracted many private vehicle owners into taking public transport. But it couldn't continue for reasons unknown. BRTC buses are not very old, but they tend to suffer from poor maintenance.

The concerned authorities could provide cash incentive to workers and staff to improve performance and maintenance of the public transport system. Moreover, odd and even number plate vehicles could be made to run alternatively five days a week. These things would largely ease traffic congestion, lessen pollution and also save fuel cost.

Sirajul Islam, Padma Oil Co Ltd.

### My gratitude to street cleaners

Every morning while driving to work, I notice workers sweeping and cleaning the streets. It is a thankless job made more difficult by people mindlessly littering the streets.

I really hope the government is taking care of these people, while also providing them with enough incentives to continue to keep our cities clean. I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to them.

Aminur Rahim, Mohakhali