

ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH?



KAZI AAQUIB SHAMS

Men — we are the embodiment of power, courage, determination, resourcefulness, wisdom. Nay, not just that, we are heroic. We are supreme. We are near divine. We are the epitome of the aptly named, mankind. Such a lofty perch we sit on. From such heights, it was always going to be a rough fall.

I strongly believe that equality does not mean equity. And I am all for equity. The list of critical words or names we call women for choices they make (or do not make) is quite an extensive one. But for all the derogatory terms we throw at women, do we ever hold men to the same standards? "Boys will be boys" is the default answer, almost as if others are to blame if they expect anything more from us men.

However, which boyish attributes do we refer to? Is it the standard-bearing individuals with all the superhuman attributes we like to inflate our egos with? Certainly not. "Boys will be boys" is an overused excuse to dismiss any flagging concerns and any rising expectations for our gender. You can almost hear the heavy sigh in the background when

someone utters the phrase. We are expected to venture down the "wrong" path — the life of indulgence — take a puff or a sip, late night shenanigans, and of course be a ladies' man. We are lauded by our peers and our nudging, winking and smirking uncles, cousins and friends for making these choices. After all, the consensus seems to be that boys must have fun before they eventually settle down with a princess they've "won" or "rescued" from the clutches of her over-protective parents. The world is overwhelmingly setup in our favour but we seemed to have missed the memo saying, "with great power comes great responsibility".

If practice makes permanent, it is easy to see why irresponsible "boys" who have been reinforced to think it's okay to fool around make for permanently poor men and husbands. Religiously or socially, when a man marries, he is still expected to take responsibility for his wife. Too often it appears that this responsibility is only limited to providing shelter, food and money (if even that). It does not encompass being understanding, communicative, loyal, or treating his wife with respect and care. I do not need to know which came first, the chicken or the egg, however, looking at workplaces and men around the city, the issue of straying men is pervasive. Yet society, in Bangladesh and abroad, treats it as a joke. Even in Silicon Valley, the heart of "progressive" America, reports of workplace harassment run amok. But being a high performer is a



ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL MORGENSTERN

guaranteed ticket to ensure that HR turns a blind eye. I have witnessed at close hand how men's terrible choices permanently damage families. Directly or indirectly, we are all victims of this malaise. Consequently, as a business leader, I have swiftly removed men for making those same poor choices that disrupt the workplace (high performer or not).

Nonetheless, the crux of the issue remains — we (men) get a free pass all our lives. "Boys will be boys" stick with us, and our parents, friends and relatives defend and dismiss our poor choices (naively hoping that our questionable choices will eventually

wrinkle out). Yet poor precedent is powerful, and we are so used to having everything our way that we cannot make the sacrifices required to be decent men — as a person and as a family man. Our past frailties deem us rudderless and we succumb to our desires. Do not get me wrong, women are sometimes culpable, increasingly more so. However, women more than get their share of blame. But the world revolves around us men — we are the ones put up on the pedestals, somewhere most of us do not deserve to be.

Considering our free reign from our youth, we act out every time there is the tiniest bit of impediment on

our freedom. We are men after all. And as men our machoism takes over, and our stubbornness take over the steering wheel of our swerving car. We are so adept at picking out masculine traits that work in our favour — working away from home, being stubborn, taking control, not being answerable to anyone, etc. Yet, we completely disregard all the masculine traits that force us to be responsible, ethical, sacrificial and humane. The glorious advantage of being a man.

The buck must stop somewhere. Are our "boys" so fragile that we cannot say no? Are we so distanced from our children that they cannot pick up right from wrong? If men personify traits such as determination, self-control, will-power, wisdom, and courage, how is it that we so easily err and give into our qualms and desires? Why is it that our wandering eyes cannot focus on the bigger picture?

There are no excuses — men now are a parody of the heroic songs of praises we sing about ourselves. To earn back our respect, we must first hold ourselves to higher standards. We cannot break down at every instance and give in to our wishes and desires. "A man's got to do what a man's got to do" and that means compromises and sacrifices to do the right thing — no matter what. That means protecting and taking care of our families. That means coming back from work to show love and compassion to our parents, wife and children. That

means putting others first, no matter how rough our day was. That means truly being role models for the next generation — both inside and outside. Women are like those magnifying mirrors — we make the first move but they will be sure to give the same back but in greater proportions. We can do so much better — for our mothers who we worry sick, for our wives we force to shed tears, and for our daughters who fear that all men are as devoid of loyalty, self-control and guidance as we are. We can be heroic again — all we need is a little more selflessness and determination, and a whole dose of self-control.

God-willing, I will be a father to a baby girl in two weeks' time. Sure enough, she will be held to all the stringent expectations that society holds of women, and then some more. But if a son eventually comes along, he will have no concessions. In fact, he will be subject to even higher standards, so that one day, he earns the right to be called a gentleman. Perhaps we alone cannot change the world, but we all can be better examples so that we instill higher expectations and better discipline to raise the men of the next generation. Our boys will be men before long, but only if we teach them the true meaning of what being a man is all about.

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Revolution 4.0: Challenges to inclusive growth



DO LE NGOC BICH

THE pervasive sentiment of Asian financial leaders and economists who gathered for the ADB's 50th annual meeting in Yokohama in the past few days was optimism about Asia's prospects. They expressed confidence that the region would continue to lead global economic growth, despite some political instability and indications of protectionism seen elsewhere.

The optimism appears justified given that 95 percent of the Asia's population now lives in middle-income economies, while as recently as the 1990s, more than 90 percent of Asians were low-income earners.

The region's rapid transition and current robust growth also encourage the economies to look forward to a higher stage of development — to become high-income countries. However, the transition is expected to be more challenging and might take longer.

In fact, the number of the poor in the region substantially declined mostly thanks to Asia's large populous countries such as China, India and Indonesia. In many other developing countries, poverty and inequality are still challenging governments seeking to sustain inclusive growth.

The challenge will likely be more stubborn under the circumstances of the ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution that is already fundamentally changing the way people live, work and connect to each other by eliminating physical boundaries and overcoming technology limitations.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution or Revolution 4.0 — a concept first put forth by Klaus Schwab, the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) at the Davos economic summit in 2016 — might hurt developing economies rather than create a promising future, for the following reasons.

Job losses

First, it could cause more unemployment. According to Schwab, the Revolution 4.0 is characterised by developments of a range of new technologies such as genetic engineering,

artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology and biotechnology. The resulting job displacement would likely occur in labour-intensive industries.

The WEF's "Future of Jobs" report in 2016 shows that on a global scale, by 2020 the "Manufacturing and Production" job family will see a decline of 1.63 percent in employment growth rate, led by labour-substituting technologies, more resource-efficient sustainable production use, lower demand growth in ageing societies and threats to

lower than in others groups.

The ASEAN region now has 9.34 million people working in manufacturing and production jobs, 3.6 million people in the computer and mathematical job group, and nearly 2.2 million employees in the architecture and engineering family of jobs.

The prediction is understandable as most ASEAN economies are pursuing an export-led, labour-intensive and natural resource dependent growth model. From both objective and subjective perspectives, this model

Asian countries, are not sufficiently persuasive and representative to prove that developing Asian countries would probably be more negatively affected by Revolution 4.0. This is especially true given that debates over whether the revolution will create a net job growth or a net job loss are continuing. The second reason explained below might make the argument invalid.

Rising inequality

On the cusp of Revolution 4.0, income disparity could grow, especially in a region where the income gap and inequality in opportunities to access education have been persistent.

Cyn-Young Park, an ADB economist, wrote in an opinion piece "Inequality in Asia: the case for inclusive growth" for the East Asia Forum in June 2016 that "The [Asian] region remains home to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor living on less than USD 1.9 a day, with evidence pointing to deteriorating income inequality in recent years."

Clearly, the displacement of workers in more sophisticated manufacturing and production sectors results in a strong increase in demand for high-skilled engineers and specialists. As a result, talent and intellectual white-collar workers would obviously be offered higher salaries and benefits, compared to less educated and low-skilled labourers, intensifying the income gap.

The WEF Human Capital Report 2016 assesses the effectiveness of countries' investment in education and human capital usage. Among the indicators used in the survey, one shows the ease or difficulty of finding skilled employees in each economy.

According to the report, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam are among one fifth of 124 countries ranked at the bottom. Notably, countries ranked high on this indicator like Malaysia (4th), Singapore (20th), Japan (23rd), and China (27th) are those classified as high-middle income or high-income nations.

To some extent, the large gap in the ranking among the Asian countries reflects different stages of education development in various countries, and income inequality is the

direct consequence of the skill premium shortage.

It should be noted that income disparity occurs not only between countries in the region but also within countries because of the unequal provision of education services, especially between rural and urban zones.

Therefore, as long as changes in education do not catch up with the advancements of technologies, the skill-biased technological transformation will affect people with insufficient or unsuitable education, perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty and inequality.

More human resource investment needed

The solution to the negative impact of Revolution 4.0 on countries' path to inclusive growth is none other than increasing investment in human resource development. Particularly, inequality in opportunities to access education, usually between rural and urban areas in developing countries, needs to be addressed.

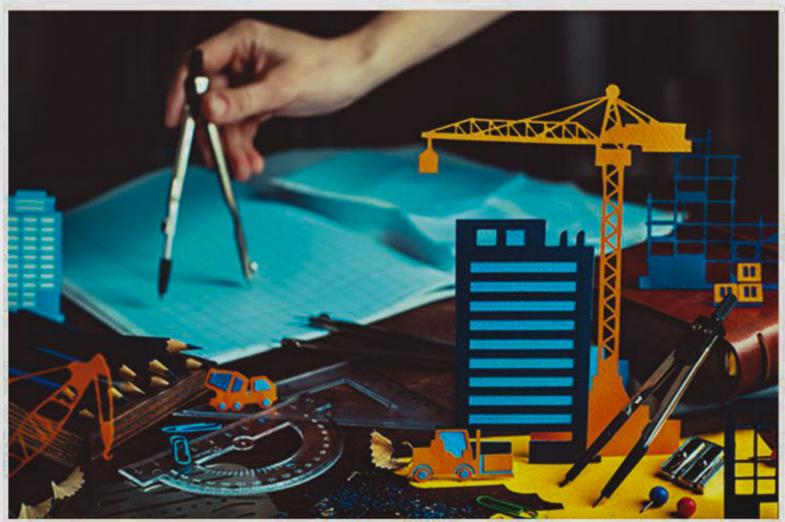
In order for the next generations to be fully and equally prepared for the technological revolution, increased education spending is an essential condition.

Amid the rapid change in technologies, it is critical for businesses to take part in education and training of the current workforces through reskilling and upskilling as they cannot wait for the next generations to mature. They must change from accepting ready-made human capital to designing their workforce on demand.

Governments should cooperate with businesses in making up an innovative and creative education environment and create favourable conditions for talents to live up to their full potential.

In short, it might be a little bit early for low-middle income countries in the region to think of leapfrogging to a higher stage of development, but it is not early for them to make a shift in human capital investment. Their ability to take advantage of the positive aspects of Revolution 4.0 for productivity improvement and growth promotion in the future totally depends on their actions today.

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global supply chains due to geopolitical uncertainty.

On the other hand, the "Architecture and Engineering" jobs will experience a growth of 2.71 percent, driven by the demand for skilled workers able to use 3D printers or robotic systems, and the employment rate for "Computer and Mathematical" jobs will grow by 3.21 percent.

The report, issued in early 2016, also forecasts a negative employment outlook in ASEAN countries. The employment rates in all three job groups mentioned above are predicted to decline, even though the number of employees in these sectors is already much

would not be easy to shift to a technology-driven one overnight.

Let's take Vietnam as an example. The country has a strong textile and garment industry using cheap labour as a comparative advantage in global trade competition and integration, and most of its revenue is export generated.

However, a recent report of the International Labour Organisation predicted that robots would replace 85 percent of workers in the Vietnamese textile and garment sector in the next few decades.

One might argue that the figures of job loss in ASEAN, which comprises only ten

QUOTABLE Quote

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY
CHILEAN-FRENCH FILM AND THEATRE DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER.

Birds born in a cage think flying is an illness.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Political crime
- 6 Parking pro
- 11 Pathetic person
- 12 Place for a game
- 13 Basalt, for one
- 15 Ruby of films
- 16 French article
- 17 Shoe part
- 18 Gofers' work
- 20 TV plugs
- 21 Sgt., e.g.
- 22 Writer Harte
- 23 Play part
- 26 Boy, slangily
- 27 Sound quality
- 28 Game cube
- 29 Museum stuff
- 30 Take back
- 34 Negative link

DOWN

- 1 Move smoothly
- 2 "Message received"
- 3 Ed of "Up"
- 4 Clinic cost
- 5 Clobber
- 6 Bud holders
- 7 Timetable abbr.
- 8 Dancer's garment
- 9 Like some
- 35 Battleship letters
- 36 Put into words
- 37 Radio format
- 40 "Adam Bede" author
- 41 See 19-Down
- 42 Yellow-gray
- 43 Oxen connectors
- 10 Likes instinctively
- 14 Take apart
- 19 With
- 41-Across, "Wag the Dog" costar
- 22 Funeral stand
- 23 Positions
- 24 Flower part
- 25 Board the Limited
- 26 Taste-lessly artistic
- 28 Lucy's husband
- 30 Out of practice
- 31 "Put - in it!"
- 32 Secret store
- 33 Little kids
- 38 Turf
- 39 Old auto

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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A	C	H	E	P	I	E		
F	R	E	N	C	H	B	R	E
T	O	P	R	I	B	A	P	E
A	B	O	D	E	L	E	G	A
N	A	P	E	S	E	L	E	C
T	E	N	T	S	I	R	E	S