

Dhaka, Bangladesh: The police in Dhaka have arrested an artist who they say is the creator of the much-talked-about graffiti series "Subodh," along with his two alleged collaborators. The suspect, whose identity has not yet been revealed by the police, faces a number of serious charges, including vandalism, sedition and conspiracy, which could award him many years of jail time.

The "Subodh" creator was subsequently accused of "instilling terror into the public's mind" through his artwork. "Someone is trying to inject fear in people's mind," a security expert was quoted by a newspaper as saying. "It's propaganda—a strategy to elicit fright among the mass people."

Many compared "Subodh" with the works of Banksy, a graffiti artist known for his depiction of the political

establishment in a "defamatory and scandalous way". No-Evil, the special team commander, describes Banksy as "probably the ideological leader" of the Indo-Bangla graffiti network. "He's the bin Laden of graffitiists," he added.

Last month, a new graffiti depicting "Subodh" surfaced on Dhaka's wall, in which the protagonist was seen with a little girl asking him when the sunshine would break. In a simultaneous

"subversive" graffiti, a rooster was seen screaming at the trademark caged sun.

Interpreting them as works of an anarchist element trying to destabilise the country by calling for a break from the status-quo, the police reportedly formed a special team and increased surveillance to catch the mastermind behind the graffiti.

No-Evil says, "We set up a task force to identify and then monitor the city's walls that had the potential to be used as the newest venue for his subversive activism."

"After days of surveillance, we noticed suspicious activity by a group of

| SATIRE |

# "SUBODH" ARTIST ARRESTED

NAZMUL AHASAN

The prosecutor of the case, MA Jaal-il, also brought an additional charge against the suspect under section 57 of the ICT Act, alleging the suspect "create[d] possibility to deteriorate law and order."

Despite the fact that the suspect's alleged offences occurred offline—that is to say, on the street walls—he "instigated others to republish his arts on Facebook walls," the prosecutor alleges.

"After days of investigation into the matter, we have made this breakthrough," See-No-Evil, the chief of the police team that spearheaded the operation, announced last night. Calling this a "serious blow to the transnational 'paintterrorist' network," he declared that the group was dismantled once and for all.

Meanwhile, sources in India tell us that the Indian police intend to dispatch a special team to Bangladesh to learn how to detain the graffiti "vandalists" who replicated "Subodh" on the walls across Jadavpur University of West Bengal.

On social media, however, some supporters of the artist treated the news with scepticism. *Star Weekend Satire* could not independently verify the contesting claims. This reporter hasn't had access to the suspect despite repeated attempts.

"Subodh", the graffiti series, rocked the capital in February when it appeared on several walls in Dhaka. Presumably named after its protagonist, it is a tale of a downhearted man who is advised to run away—a call that reportedly antagonised the nation's security apparatus.

"At a time when the country sees the highest-ever growth in every possible sector one can possibly imagine, calling someone to run away from the country is indeed suspicious and nefarious," said the public prosecutor in February when the graffiti series first emerged.



Manipulated image



Manipulated image

individuals in a place near Dhaka University. We instantly deployed our special agents. Our brave agents caught them red-handed when the mastermind was about to bring dangerous tools like paintbrushes and colour pots out of a small bag to paint on a nearby wall. Our team successfully thwarted an attempt to cause harm to the country's stability."

When asked how many personnel have been placed and how much taxpayers' money has been spent on the entire operation, the commander replied, "We do not disclose operational details." The journalist who asked the question has not been seen since.

After the press briefing, the reporters present were supplied with a copy of the National Broadcast Policy, with a specific line highlighted, which roughly read: "Publishing images or videos that could tarnish the image of law enforcement agencies and armed forces is prohibited."

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| ENTERTAINMENT |

The slow but steady permeation of American and British TV into the lives of millennials and post-millennials has been ragged at by living-room social scientists ever since Ross and Rachel found out that going back and forth in a relationship before marriage makes for good television. In response, millennials and post-millennials regularly lash back at these living-room social scientists, otherwise known as parents, by pointing out that they're not saints either, not with their imported-from-Kolkata TV shows where a single day can last half-a-year and characters often go to bed with a full ensemble of makeup, jewellery and other adornments. Amidst this struggle for cultural dominance, only a handful of people will recognise the true motivations behind people's preferences for a certain kind of TV as opposed to others.

For most teens and young adults, the golden age of the sitcom is over. The attraction of watching a bunch of friends slumming it in the big city, tackling the various pitfalls of life and relationships, finding the truths of life in an over-extended coming-of-age story has died



Cult classics like *Twin Peaks* cemented the genre of extended murder mysteries, which would later be picked up by shows like *True Detective*, which went to great lengths to explore the psyche of the small-town native and the effect of isolation on unstable minds.



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down with the ungainly conclusions drawn by sitcoms like *How I Met Your Mother* and the dragging on of the over-rated "comedy" pushed by the likes of *The Big Bang Theory*. Gone are the sets that'll incite irrational thoughts of moving to New York, even though you can't afford it and you're too old to make new friends anyway. Replacing them at the top of the popular pile are dark mysteries and shows that shed light on the intriguing but simple lives led by small-town folk, and their struggles at persevering against incredible odds.

Setting aside the fantastic abnormality in the TV show landscape that is *Game of*

*Thrones*, most of the shows that have risen to astronomical popularity in recent years revolve around a rag-tag bunch of small town folk finding their inner strength to defeat the forces of evil. It's not anything new—cult classics like *Twin Peaks* cemented the genre of extended murder mysteries, which would later be picked up by shows like *True Detective*, which went to great lengths to explore the psyche of the small-town native and the effect of isolation on unstable minds. Shows like *Mindhunter* are delving even deeper and gaining audience approval to a great extent.

# STRANGER THOUGHTS

SHAER REAZ

Perhaps no other show has captured the imagination of TV watchers in recent times like *Stranger Things*. A unique blend of themes like retro-nostalgia, classic horror, friendship and camaraderie in the ordeal of standing up to evil has made *Stranger Things* a must-watch for any TV buff. Set in the sleepy, wooded town of Hawkins, Indiana, the show follows a group of kids in the 80s as they search for a friend who has gone missing after biking home one night. Their motley crew is joined by a strange child who doesn't know her name, and is instead referred to as Eleven by the people who come into close contact with her, for the "011" tattooed on her arm. While searching for the missing kid, the town's sheriff, whose most demanding days at office were usually spent settling petty squabbles among farmers and neighbours, discovers a whole other world of supernatural proportions that'll test his ability to keep his wits about him. In fact, that is generally the underlying theme in *Stranger Things*—people apparently love watching the lives of plucky small-town folk change in the face of adversity. All of this character development over the season comes together in a final battle where each member of the cast has their own contributions in defeating the evil threat, not unlike the distinct heroes that make up a party in board games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. Now in its second season, *Stranger Things* seems to have lost some of the shine that made it a fantastic watch. The character

development alone, however, makes it worth continuing.

Meanwhile, serialised depictions of city life have somehow become the forte of superhero shows like *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Arrow* and *Luke Cage*, all of which have a super-powered individual rising from the ranks of the "normal" to save an endangered city. When they do band together, the individuality of these characters is washed away, resulting in over-saturated garbage like *Marvel's The Defenders*. For all its worth, the city slickers seem to only do well in their own individual settings.

Is there a trend here? Does the hustle and bustle of city life make the residents of a constantly shifting landscape yearn for old-fashioned connections which they project onto the kind of TV shows they prefer watching? Perhaps not, but it would certainly explain why an older audience prefers mostly rural, simpler settings for the shows they watch, whether it originates in Kolkata or Los Angeles. The rejection of the typical city-centric sitcom or crime drama does indicate a yearning for community as well as the necessary space to think, be it in the disorganised teen or the laden-with-responsibility adult.

One thing is certain however—shows like *Stranger Things*, *Mindhunter*, *Longmire*, *The Walking Dead* and even mainstream trash like *Riverdale* have overcome the "rural purge" that occurred in American TV in the 70s and 80s and are responsible for making the rural setting popular again. The reasons for it are best left to social scientists, preferably not the living room ones.

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