

Uprooting corruption: We can do better

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

THE seasonal discussion on corruption is back in full swing following the release of Berlin-based Transparency International's global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), 2018. Actually, a debate has arisen over the decline in Bangladesh's ranking in the CPI with some heat generated in the process. The chief of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) likened the TI findings to a sea, as it were, demanding specifics or definitive pointers to sectors that he could act on by way of combating graft. But it appears that the methodology as well as the areas vulnerable to corruption have been explicated in some detail. Generally, "the CPI is probably the best known measure of global corruption"; If need be, we may seek further clarification from the TI headquarters. Yet, regardless of the ups and downs in the status of corruption, corruption on the whole remains endemic. And that's how it has to be dealt with resolutely, not verbally in an exhortative manner which falls on deaf ears as soon as the dust settles down.

With Bangladesh going down from the 143rd position in 2017 to 149th in 2018 among 180 countries, the dip in ranking may have had us frown. That we are ranked in the CPI as the second lowest in South Asia—India, Sri Lanka, and even Pakistan having edged ahead of us at 78th, 89th and 117th positions, respectively—is a shame. But if they could better their performance, we could too.

Our track record in containing corruption—though slow-paced—bears proof of a bounce-back. Bangladesh had been at the



Denmark topped the list of countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2018 as the least corrupt country in the world, despite its own share of scandals.

PHOTO: AFP

bottom of the CPI for five consecutive years between 2001 and 2005. In the following years, the country's ranking showed a modest but consistent pattern: 15th, 13th, and 14th from the bottom in 2016, 2015 and 2014 respectively. But while the position was 17th from the bottom in 2017, it took a tumble to 13th in 2018. This sharp dip in a year's time should stir us into stemming the tide and

improving by leaps and bounds over the next few years.

It may be worthwhile to note from a research point of view that in 2014 and 2018, our country ranking declined to the 14th and 13th positions, respectively, from the bottom. Both being election years, one wonders whether the fall in performance was a matter of mere coincidence or whether it had to do

with any unwitting election-year slack.

Having said that, may I echo what Dr Iftekharuzzaman, the chief of TI, Bangladesh, has said about the Bangladesh prime minister's significant words reflecting concerns over the depth and dimension of corruption in the country. On the occasion of releasing the AL's election manifesto, she spoke of zero tolerance against corruption

and reiterated the message after the oath-taking ceremony, adding that "the corrupt have no place in the country." After the formation of the cabinet, she reiterated the warnings against corruption. In her address to the nation, alongside acknowledging the unease at all levels over corruption, the PM made an important four-point declaration. First, she urged self-purification of people involved with graft; second, elimination of corruption through a stern application of laws; third, uprooting corruption through an extensive application of digital technology; and fourth, and above all, due importance to be given towards resisting corruption through people's participation and media cooperation.

The top achievers like the Nordic countries (some certainly have scandals) run transparent democracies with a free press. A free and responsible press helps answerability of governance.

We think the prime minister's political will is embodied in her latest statements; now is the turn for adopting it through crafting a composite strategy drawing on inputs from all stakeholders to rid people of all forms of corruption. This will also tie up with the SDGs. We need to grow at above eight percent which can be ensured if we can retrieve two to three percent of growth lost through corruption without having to borrow externally at high interest rates.

We find Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad unveiling his ambitious five-year plan to clamp down on corruption in government. It requires, among other things, lawmakers and ministers to publicly declare their assets. The plan's measures would target the government's procurement process, law enforcement, judiciary, politics and business.

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The formula of victim-shaming must be ripped to shreds



SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

IN my impressionable childhood, my working parents often used to leave me in the care of our adolescent house-help. My day, for the most part, would be spent in her company. I would watch cartoons, she would watch Hindi soaps. That way, at one point, I too began to take interest in her favourite TV serials. I noticed, in one such serial, a woman, who had been raped, was in constant fear regarding her settling down in the future. It stemmed from the uncertainty of getting marriage proposals because of her "scarred" past. This concept was too complex for me to understand at such a young age. I didn't even know what rape meant, let alone the trauma and hostile environment that a woman would have to go through in its aftermath. The house-help "enlightened" me later on. And I clearly remember what she had said: "No one marries a woman who has been raped." "What will happen to her now?" I remember asking. To which she had replied, "Since no one else will marry her, the rapist will have to do it."

And it did happen. The character playing the rapist did marry the woman playing the character of the victim. Of course, she was subjected to torture in her marital life, as portrayed in the serial. And its resemblance to the lived reality of many rape victims was uncanny.

My thoughts would always dwell on what she had said. Even my eight-year-old conscience couldn't make sense of the sick justification that pointed fingers at the victim. But thank God, I was brought up in a proper environment which helped me grasp how wrong her statement was and how a major section of people (mainly in rural areas) still inhale and exhale that same victim-shaming justification.

Now as I think of it, I can't help but stress on the fact that many impressionable kids are being brought up in an environment (especially in uneducated families and rural areas) which is still captive to an inhumane mentality that blames the victim. This mentality, so deeply ingrained in our social fabric, is what has allowed many unjustifiable societal "norms" to bloom, such as treating rape victims as social outcasts.

One of the hardest parts is to change people's mindset. When children enter adulthood and build their own families, holding on to the morally corrupt beliefs that they had grown up with, the toxic mentality of victim-shaming is perpetuated. The shift is tough because, as it is, there are very few possibilities of change that a narrow-minded society presents. A generation growing up on harmful beliefs naturally births a similar generation. Sometimes even the victim herself believes that she is to blame. This is how the formula of victim-shaming and victim-blaming is created.

Look at the women who were violated at the hands of the Pakistani army and their collaborators during Bangladesh's Liberation War; although they were honoured with the title of "Birangana", meaning war heroine,



SOURCE: BULLYINGRECOVERY.ORG

they were treated unfairly by society during the course of their lives later on. Why? Because their bodies were thought to be "impure", and this viewpoint led many of their families to end ties with them. Even though many were taken in by their families with open arms, the society looked at them with disdain. Some fled to India and some committed suicide fearing persecution by their communities.

In Nilima Ibrahim's book "Ami Birangana

Bolchi" (As a War Heroine, I Speak), one adolescent Hindu girl seemed reluctant to reach out to her family after being rescued from the camp, because she knew that her family would abandon her, since she had been raped by Muslim men. Many Biranganas were apparently married off, at the cost of dowries. Some marriages ended as the women were subjected to torture, both physical and mental. Some were a bit more fortunate; they got married to men who had

willingly come forward and instead of blaming them, embraced them, didn't judge them by their past, and loved them as they would any other human being. But such a mentality in our society was, and still is, rare.

Deeply rooted misconceptions and the resultant norms that subject victims of rape to persecution are not only relevant to us; this social stigma exists everywhere around the world. In Rwanda, the same happened after the genocide. In the Rohingya community too, rape victims are considered a disgrace. In an Al Jazeera article, a midwife in the Kutupalong refugee camp was quoted as saying, "But they should keep quiet and not talk about what happened to them, otherwise people would regard them as tarnished, and cut off their ties with them. In the case of unmarried girls, no one would look at them or consider them for marriage."

Those who shame victims are those who cave in to such a toxic mentality. We need to create a society where more and more people stop subscribing to these misogynistic beliefs. We need more of those with a defiant mindset if we are to uproot this system. No matter how "developed" a nation we become and how much we claim to have "empowered" women, it won't mean anything if rape victims, instead of the perpetrators, are constantly blamed and shamed. We need to create a system where the victims are no longer questioned and ostracised from society. We need to create a system where rapists and their horrific crimes are punished. The age-old formula of victim-shaming must be ripped to shreds.

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QUOTABLE Quote

JOSEPH SCHUMPETER
(1883-1950)
Austrian political economist

Capitalism inevitably and by virtue of the very logic of its civilization creates, educates and subsidizes a vested interest in social unrest.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 33 Porgy's love
- 34 Vigor
- 37 Dune makeup
- 39 Book boo-boos
- 43 In the past
- 44 Gizmo
- 45 Did a textile job
- 46 They have titles

DOWN

- 1 River blocker
- 2 Pitcher's stat
- 3 Soup buy
- 4 Tolerate
- 5 Dossier
- 6 Do a checkout chore
- 7 Alpine home
- 8 Home
- 9 Paintings and sculpture
- 10 Scary shout
- 16 Test for purity
- 17 Sanctioned
- 18 Throat dangler
- 19 Reserve
- 21 Provinces
- 22 Small salamanders
- 24 Home
- 25 Ornate vase
- 30 Patched up
- 33 "Childe Harold" poet
- 35 Make over
- 36 Expand
- 37 Lawn material
- 38 Some amount of
- 40 Citrus drink
- 41 Sailor, in slang
- 42 Spots on TV

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

M	A	C	A	W	M	I	S	T	S
A	W	A	R	E	A	N	T	I	C
C	A	P	T	A	I	N	N	E	M
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MONEY									
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G	E	N	E	S	F	L	A	M	E
STARS									
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C	A	P	T	A	I	N	A	H	A
I	D	I	O	M	C	L	O	N	E
D	A	T	E	S	S	L	E	E	T

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

THIS THING YOU WROTE IS HARD TO READ, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUNCTUATE

YOU WANT PUNCTUATION?! STAND BACK!

GO AWAY, JERK! WRITE YOUR OWN STUFF! LEAVE ME ALONE!!

GREAT JOKES! WALKER

7-19

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

HEY DARRYL, DID YOU TALK TO WANDA?

ABOUT SHIPPING THE SCHOOL PUPPET SHOW AND GOING WITH YOU TO THE HOCKEY GAME INSTEAD?

YEAH, WHAT DID SHE SAY?

EXACTLY WHAT I THOUGHT SHE'D SAY.

"DO WHATEVER YOU WANT."

OKAY, I'LL ASK LARRY IF HE CAN GO.