



SOURCE: MARIAPIERETTI.CO.UK

# Building a society where girls feel safe



MD SHARIFUL ISLAM

**I**N the film *Taken* (released in 2008), Kim, an American 17-year-old girl, was abducted in Paris during her European tour. Her father Bryan Mills was a retired CIA field agent. The father, through his network, soon found out that the kidnapers were part of an Albanian sex trafficking ring. Bryan flew down to Paris and used his acquaintance, former French intelligence agent Jean-Claude Pitrel, to track down the location of the kidnapers. Eventually, Bryan heroically rescued Kim from the hands of this gang of hoodlums.

I am not Bryan, with powerful contacts or networks. I am a helpless father of a baby girl who is deeply concerned about his daughter's safety. I worry whether I can give her a safe environment to grow up in. She is now one-and-a-half years old. I am sure I am not alone in feeling this way. I am sure there are many fathers like me who are just as concerned about their daughter's safety in a society where there's a growing incidence of rape. According to WE CAN Bangladesh, a platform of civil society, organisations, individuals, and institutions aiming to end domestic violence against women, in 2018 alone, there were 396 rape cases and 179 incidents of sexual harassment. Prothom Alo (February 2, 2019) cites the police department's data according to which there was more than 19,000 rape cases between 2014 and 2018.

This gives rise to many questions: How safe are our girls? How many more girls and women will have to endure such violence against them? When will it end, if ever? Who will ensure their safety? Whose responsibility is it? How long will we remain silent? How much longer will we stay quiet and avoid our responsibility to speak up against such injustices? Until it's our daughter or sister

*It seems that sexual violence against girls and women has become normalised in our society and when rape incidents are reported in newspapers, we simply shrug our shoulders as if there's nothing we can do about it. News of rape cases does not disgust or shake us to the core anymore.*

who is victimised?

It seems that sexual violence against girls and women has become normalised in our society and when rape incidents are reported in newspapers, we simply shrug our shoulders as if there's nothing we can do about it. News of rape cases does not disgust or shake us to the core anymore.

It is quite alarming that every day, we read about news reports of rape cases—victims ranging from adult women to little children. We read about rape cases where the disabled, the blind, and schoolgoing children are gang-raped. How can a father like me who is raising a daughter in this society not be worried about her safety?

It is time to stamp out this menace from our society. It's high time that we prioritised creating an environment where girls can grow up freely—without having to look over their shoulders. It's high time to raise our voice against sexual violence against women irrespective of class, age or race. We are all in it together.

There is no shortcut solution. We need a social movement and for that to happen we need to come together as a civil society and create awareness. In one way or another, we all have a responsibility that we can no longer overlook.

Second, the role of the family in bringing up boys so that they grow up to be responsible, decent men who respect women needs to be reinforced. Our patriarchal mindset needs to change.

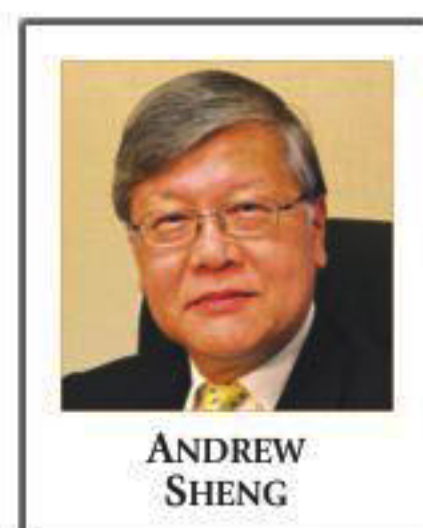
Third, knowledge matters and ignorance is a recipe for disaster. This means that gender studies need to be introduced as a mandatory course in our curricula both at the secondary and higher secondary levels. In addition, courses on ethics, morality, and values need to be taken into consideration.

Finally, the role of the state needs to be more prominent. The Bangladesh government needs to be fully committed in ensuring the security of the country's girls and women, which includes the need to make sure that the rule of law is implemented in every case of sexual violence against women so that perpetrators are punished. I must also add that the availability of pornography in the internet needs to be strictly checked or even prohibited.

We know that Bangladesh has come a long way since independence. The country, once known as a "development case", is now being touted as a "development miracle". But if we cannot ensure the security of our girls, can we really say that we have achieved meaningful development?

As a father, to me my daughter's safety comes first. I want to see her grow up and achieve her dreams. Like every parent, what I want is for my daughter to be able to live in a society free from violence against women—not where we have to read news reports of rape cases every single day. On behalf of all those men who are a father to a daughter, I urge the state to not let my appeal go unheard.

MD Shariful Islam teaches international relations at the University of Rajshahi. He can be reached at shariful\_rui@ru.ac.bd.



ANDREW SHENG

**A**S the world goes through messy divorces in Brexit and the US-China trade relationship, there is considerable angst about whether we are moving into a period of disorder.

This month will witness whether these relations can be patched up, but it is already clear that Brexit will happen, deal or no deal, and even though there may be a detente on US-China tariff negotiations, the damage in relations will take a long time to repair.

*Foreign Affairs* magazine this month asked, "Who will run the world? America, China and Global Order", lamenting the fact that "both order and sponsor are in crisis, and the future is up for grabs." The hard reality is that, stability today is no longer the diktat of a single hegemony, but the messy outcome of games of contending thrones, disrupted by technology, human migration, climate change, competing religions and ideologies amidst worsening social inequality and injustices. If you believe in astrology, even the blood moons, earthquakes and tsunamis are signalling the messy change in world order.

The person who predicted the demise of the self-regulating market order was the Hungarian historian, sociologist and economist Karl Polanyi (1886-1964). His book *The Great Transformations: the Political and Economic Origins of our Time* came out in 1944, the same year as the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek's (1889-1992) book *The Road to Serfdom*.

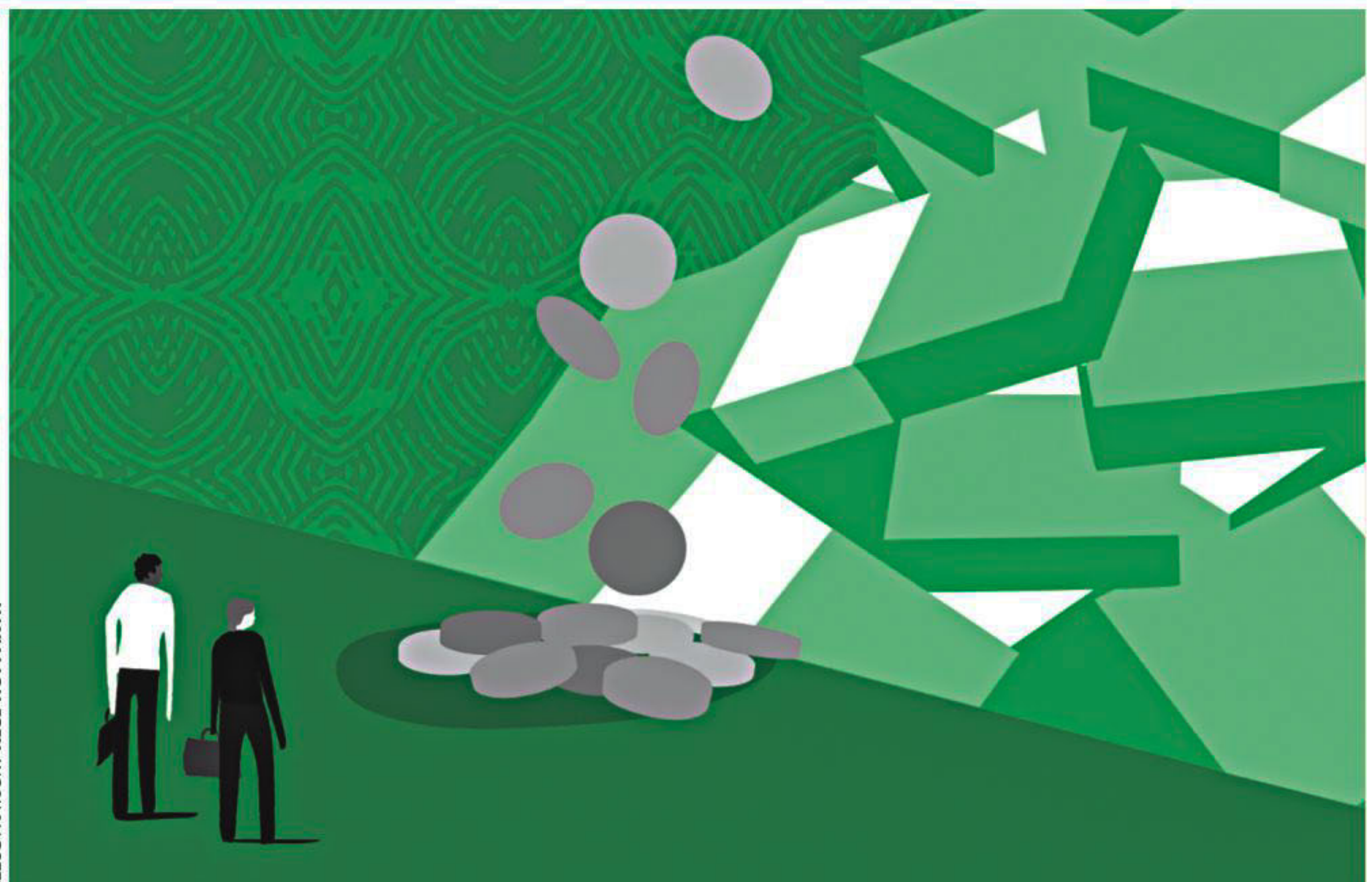


ILLUSTRATION: RICCI HOFFARTH

Hayek was the founder of the Mount Pelerin Society in 1947, which had great success in pushing for the adoption of neoliberalism around the world on the premise of free markets, free trade, free capital flows, rule of law, primacy of individual freedoms and electoral democracy. Hayek, rather than Polanyi, was the intellectual father of the current order.

Even though the socialist experiment in economics failed in 1989 with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the neoliberal order stumbled after the global financial crisis of 2008/9, and began to crumble in the face of a lost decade of growth, widening social inequality and the resurgence of populist sentiments against globalisation and free trade.

Polanyi presciently pointed out that "the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any

length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness." In short, "to allow the market mechanism to be the sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment...would result in the demolition of society."

Polanyi's thesis rests on four crucial insights. First, the market economy is "embedded" in society, which is itself embedded in nature. To claim that the market is self-regulating completely dehumanises society, treating the market as a mechanical system, in which human beings and mother nature are robots and cogs to be exploited. The populist rebellion against the cruelties of the market and the "revenge of nature" in climate warming suggest that the "free market view" is

*To claim that the market is self-regulating completely dehumanises society, treating the market as a mechanical system, in which human beings and mother nature are robots and cogs to be exploited.*

principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market; the other is the principle of social protection, aiming at the conservation of man and nature as productive organisation." In other words, one movement generates a counter-movement—markets create the need for the state to regulate the market and vice versa. It is not a matter of either/or, but both state and market co-exist to balance each other out.

Fourth, the gold standard was a key invention that anchored the idea of a self-regulating market. Gold imposed a "hard budget constraint", forcing people and states to live within their means, but it was precisely the pain and rejection of huge deflation, unemployment and social distress (caused by the mistaken return to the gold standard) that created the conditions for the rise of fascism in the 1930s.

Modern central banking, on the other hand, is a "soft budget constraint", in that every time the market tries to impose pain when individuals, firms and states want to live beyond their means, the central banks are asked to print more money. The fact that the markets have jumped up just because the Fed has promised to slow down on interest rate increases shows that the "Greenspan Put" is widely believed. Every time the market wobbles today, central banks are in the markets either lowering interest rates or increasing liquidity.

Free markets cannot exist in practice, as long as central banks are willing to inject massive amounts of money (USD 14 trillion into global markets since 2009) and today hold more than their

too idealistic, at best a theory, at worst a bad ideology that should be discarded in the rubbish bin of history.

Second, Polanyi argued that to treat land, labour and capital as commodities to be exchanged, traded and valued is fiction. Land is produced by nature and not to be treated as individual rights—witness how GDP calculations do not take into consideration the costs of non-renewable natural destruction and pollution. Human labour cannot be bought and sold as if they are slaves without human dignity. Money "is merely a token of purchasing power which...comes into being through the mechanism of banking or state finance." What is the true value of money, when central banks can create conditions of negative interest rates?

Third, Polanyi considers that "the social history of our time is the result of a double movement: the one is the

fair share of sovereign debt, equity and even non-performing assets in the name of monetary and financial stability. Central bankers are no longer independent if they perceive their job as maintaining stock market indices at stable levels.

We cannot therefore talk of the new global order without having a hard look at the total state of the world in human, financial, political, social and ecological terms. Economics can no longer be independent of politics, sociology, demography, technology, but also national security and ecology. The parts simply do not add up.

Polanyi was correct that there is a Great Transformation ongoing in the 21st century, but what is happening instead is a Grand Delusion of order that is no longer here.

Andrew Sheng writes on global issues from an Asian perspective. Copyright: Asia News Network

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**JOHN F. KENNEDY**  
35TH US PRESIDENT

*If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

1 Apple centres	29 Carpet cleaner, for short	7 Memorable time
6 Lukewarm	30 Autumn apples	8 Misapply
11 Dancer Castle	34 Fire remnant	9 Whole number
12 Sports site	35 Braying beast	10 Florida's -- 500
13 Outdoor gathering	36 Obtained	14 Empty
15 -- loss (baffled)	37 Police-led group	19 Bull, in Barcelona
16 Take to court	40 Banks of the Cubs	22 Ties the knot
17 Old hand	41 Cager Shaquille	23 Borneo neighbour
18 Tourists' cars	42 Famed fur tycoon	24 Pencil ends
20 Swelled head	43 Owner's paper	25 Charm
21 Symbol of wisdom		26 Drunkard
22 Small songbird	<b>DOWN</b>	28 Be effusive
23 Mocks	1 Humid item	30 Indy entrant
26 Aquarium fish	2 Speak	31 Snowy bird
27 Florence's river	3 Showed over	32 Add up
28 Mercury or Mars	4 Finish	33 Flair
	5 Playground sights	38 Carnival city
	6 Uses a VCR	39 Singer DiFranco

Write for us. Send your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com.

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

S	T	A	G	E	M	U	N	S	
L	A	T	I	N	O	N	E	N	D
O	M	E	G	A	D	I	N	A	R
S	P	A	M	O	E	A	C	E	
H	A	M	M	E	R	L	O	C	K
			A	L	E	Z	E	S	
W	A	L	K	S	P	A	D	D	Y
A	L	E	E	P	E	R			
F	L	O	R	I	D	A	K	E	Y
T	O	N	C	A	T	L	O	L	
E	V	I	T	A	B	R	I	D	E
D	E	N	I	M	O	O	Z	E	D
R	E	N	E		G	O	A	L	S

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott