

How successful will the anti-drug campaign be?

An economic perspective

MAKSHUDUL ALOM MOKUL MONDAL

THE geographical location of Bangladesh puts the country in an odd position when it comes to the drug and narcotics epidemic. Bangladesh is not only a lucrative market with a burgeoning youth population but also an important corridor to reach out to other markets. And, thus, the widespread outbreak of the drug crisis has drawn everyone's attention. As the government wages a war against drugs, it is important to question whether the current strategy of curtailing the supply will be enough to solve this problem effectively or if there will be any unforeseen socio-economic and security implications.

Considered as the transition country, Bangladesh connects the notorious Golden Triangle (Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar) with the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan). These blocs of countries are largely responsible for the production and global distribution of some major lethal drugs including opium, heroin, Yaba and other forms of methamphetamine. In 2018, a record 53 million Yaba pills were seized and around 300 suspected dealers were killed by the law enforcement agencies. Recently, over 100 dealers have surrendered themselves and are currently seeking

clemency from the authorities.

Although the performance of the law enforcement agencies is praiseworthy and these numbers seem encouraging, this approach is trying to solve only half the problem, i.e. the supply side of it. As the quantity of supply goes down, it will push the price up. Since addictive drugs are considered to have inelastic demand, meaning that higher prices will not bar potential addicts to buy these, this might aggravate the current situation, if it's not monitored and controlled.

For example, the higher price of drugs will inevitably make the existing and potential dealer greedy. While at least 40 known dealers and hundreds of unknown dealers and agents are at large, the spike in price will lure them to take extra risk and extreme measures to cut more profit. There are several known cases of dealers smuggling drugs through innovative means such as carrying them in their stomach or inside religious books. Many have tried to use the Ijtema—an annual congregation of Muslims—as an occasion to transport drugs, putting the security of thousands of people in jeopardy. Furthermore, the disruption in the illegal international trade may impose unsuspected transnational security threats and concerns.

The risk is not prominent from the supply side alone, but the demand side



can also get very messy. With more than seven million drug addicts in Bangladesh, the unavailability and increased price of drugs pose a risk of the deterioration of socio-economic and political stability of the country. Many of these addicts may choose to undertake illegal, anti-social and violent activities, including theft,

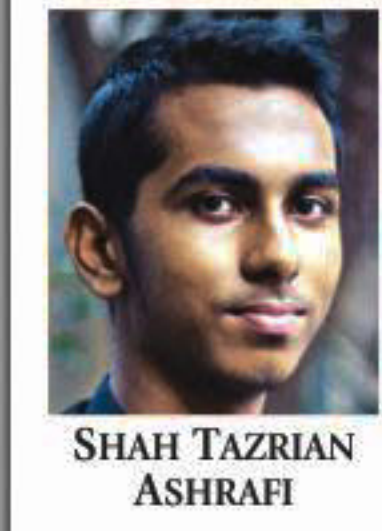
burglary, or domestic terrorism, to acquire the necessary resources. There have been many cases that show the lengths to which addicts will go once they become desperate, sometimes even putting their families in danger. Thus, the demand side too needs urgent attention and a holistic approach should be taken to address this.

The networks of drug lords need to be annihilated and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Extended surveillance, both physical and intelligence, needs to be bolstered to intercept domestic and cross-boundary shipment. The law enforcement and security agencies need to be alert to identify potential national or international threats and such domestic efforts should be strengthened with cross-border cooperation with other international agencies of the region for a sustainable solution to the problem.

A comprehensive rehabilitation plan for drug addicts needs to be a part of the solution so that this huge population can be treated and brought back to a normal way of life. Unfortunately, the current rehabilitation infrastructure of the country is both inadequate and deficient in nature. Private and public efforts need to join hands to design and implement the much-needed social rehabilitation facilities and to mainstream programmes so that the risk of potential social violence can be minimised.

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The abhorrent act of 'generalisation'



SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

WITHOUT knowing that it seeks to establish equality, some think that feminism is an aggressive ideology. That it seeks to lay siege to the rights of "men". Without knowing that Islam doesn't mean being a Bin Laden, some think that Islam is imbued with terrorism. That it seeks to establish a Caliphate by violent means. An Islamophobic person will hate Muslims with every fibre of his being. An anti-feminist will do the same with feminists. Of course, those who think like that are blinded by the shadow of "generalisation". And it is due to the very concept of generalisation that we have seen conflicts tearing through countries and time, swallowing lives and corroding the foundation of peaceful co-existence.

When the Myanmar security forces cracked down on the Rohingya people, they didn't view them as normal people with normal lives. Rather, they were seen as terrorists. Despite having nothing to do with terrorism (in this case, blowing up police outposts), the security forces blamed them for something not they, but a few insurgents had done. As for the consequences, we now have sprawling refugee camps in areas that had once been evergreen forests with rugged hills. Those camps are packed with tragic stories of violence. All because of anger against the "wrong representatives"—the insurgents.

The 9/11 attacks gave way for hate crimes to rise. The consolidation of hatred has made many Americans see all "Muslims" in a bad light despite



(L-R) Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu Salha and Razan Abu Salha on Deah's graduation day. They were killed in their home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in February 2015 by a white man. The killings called attention to growing concerns about anti-Muslim hate in America.

their innocence. In 2017, hate crimes against Muslims rose to 15 percent in the United States, according to *The New York Times*. A report in the same year by Pew Research Center shows that assaults against Muslims have surpassed the level of 2001.

Let us recall the case of Yusor, Deah, and Razan, who had been brutally killed by their neighbour in Chapel Hill, North Carolina,

execution-style. Let us recall the case of Nabra Hassanen, who had been raped and killed during Ramadan by a man in Virginia. Let us recall the case of a man ready to shoot up a mosque in Canada, claiming five innocent lives.

The reasons? The faith of the victims and the attackers' blind hatred towards it.

In the wake of the recent Kashmir

attack which left 40 Indian paramilitary police dead, my newsfeed was filled with dehumanising sentiments against Pakistan as a whole (the credit goes to some Indian "meme pages"). Bear in mind that the attack was carried out by a Pakistan-based terrorist organisation, Jaish-e-Mohammed. It was not carried out by the innocent Kashmiri people who are now facing people's wrath. As for propagating hateful sentiments, the people commenting under the memes are understandably driven by rage, and of course, the shadow of generalisation. They, much like the security forces of Myanmar, the Islamophobia-driven people in the US, and all those bashing feminism, are expressing their rage towards an entire community.

They fail to understand that the community and its innocent people should not be blamed for something a "wrong representative" has done. According to an article in Scroll.in, in Dehradun, Kashmiri students are being chased by mobs. They are having to go into hiding, leaving their universities behind. The article states how a student has seen his friends and teachers join protests against the Kashmiri people, which made him feel isolated. Shopkeepers are refusing to sell anything to Kashmiri students. Landlords are quietly asking them to look for somewhere else to stay, as their "Kashmiri" presence may bring trouble to the landlords.

The Kashmiris are now facing the consequences of generalisation. This post-Kashmir-attack atmosphere echoes the atmosphere of the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat massacre. In the massacre, around 2,000 (or more) innocent lives were lost. Lives that had nothing to do with the burning of a train in Godhra

(the same year) which killed 59 Hindu pilgrims. Simply belonging to the same faith as the alleged killers of the pilgrims made the innocent culpable and targets of Hindu extremists. The enraged mobs didn't once think that those killers had been the wrong representatives and that those killers' actions had nothing to do with those innocent people. Yet, they raped many women, set properties ablaze, initiated a killing spree, and destroyed any possibility of peaceful co-existence. One can only hope that history doesn't

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repeat itself and that the aftermath of the Kashmir attack isn't the same as that of the Gujarat massacre.

The act of generalisation has deadly consequences. It has cost millions of lives throughout history. More Yusors, Deahs, and Razans, more Kashmiri students in limbo, and more innocent people will continue to get caught up in the crosshairs of hatred and generalisation unless we stop holding the many responsible for the acts of a few.

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QUOTABLE Quote

CARLOS CASTANEDA
(1925–1998)
American author

Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Aussie birds
- 5 Fountain treat
- 10 Circus setting
- 11 Play places
- 12 Female friend, in France
- 13 Sweethearts
- 14 Serenade, say
- 16 Sofa for two
- 20 Hamper
- 23 "Roses -- red"
- 24 Valentines, e.g.
- 25 Valentine's gift
- 27 Iris setting
- 28 Assailed
- 29 Palmistry subject
- 32 Small parrot
- 36 Valentine words

DOWN

- 1 List-ending abbr.
- 2 Office note
- 3 Coll. kin
- 4 Made resolute
- 5 Gem
- 6 Puts on the wall
- 7 Wisdom bringer
- 8 Tab, for one
- 9 Snaky shape
- 11 Push rudely
- 15 Supplies with turf
- 17 Sunrise site
- 18 District
- 19 Final, for one
- 20 Reykjavik's nat.
- 21 Sub spread
- 22 Earlier. Abbr.
- 25 Painter Magritte
- 26 Solid yellow item on a pool table
- 28 Henry VIII had six
- 30 Best of the best
- 31 Solitary sort
- 33 "Would -- to you?"
- 34 City on the Tiber
- 35 Sweetheart
- 36 Naughty
- 37 Sense of self
- 38 Yoga need

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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

I LOVE BUFFETS!
WHAT WILL YOU HAVE?
THAT IS NOT "A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING"

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

WHERE'S OUR MODEL AIRPLANE?
IS IT RUINED?
I TOOK IT FOR A TEST FLIGHT.
NO, NO. JUST DAMAGED A LITTLE.
WE STILL HAVE SOME GUE LEFT, RIGHT?

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

SARA CRESS RESINO UNO BARBIB STALL USEBY SUM GEORG SON BARBELL PITBULL ARIEDY KEYS TACK COLON AMBLE AIRBALL NIL BYE GEORG BELL MOE LOVE NOTED BESS