

The next 50 years: we need to change

It is said that we humans live out our lives on this planet to fulfil our goals and dreams, all in accordance with our destiny. It is what makes us get out of bed in the morning, power through our days, close our eyes at night, and repeat.

It is also said that the circumstances of one's birth is irrelevant, that s/he can achieve greatness with hard work and sincerity.

In that same way, it can be said that nations, like men, also have their own destiny. Take our own Bangladesh. Its birth was bloody, the circumstances for it, the right to speak our mother language, so unique that no other such case exist elsewhere, and now, 50 years later, on the verge of leaving the Least Developed Country category by the UN CDP.

Bangladesh has come a long way in its 50 years of independence. We suffered heavily in the early years, losing the Father of the Nation, the multiple military coups, but after the restoration of democracy in December 1990, the country has slowly, but steadily, began to advance and has nearly met all the goals set forth for the country all those years ago.

So, when I was wondering where Bangladesh would be another 50 years from now, I went for the stereotypical thought-process; maglev trains, no pollution, free energy, free Wi-Fi on the streets for anyone to use, flying cars, the lot. But as I take time, look out the window and see the country I was born into, I can't help but feel that while the country, as an entity, as gone beyond what my 10-year-old self ever

imagined, its citizens may not have taken the same evolutionary jump.

We humans, as a species, have apparently advanced immensely in the last 40-50 years. But I feel as though during that advancement, we lost something important; empathy, and our own citizens fall into this as well. I see this lack of empathy, garnished with an unhealthy amount of selfishness everywhere.

Now you might argue that I am being ungrateful, or I am being sour for being dealt a bad hand at life. To you, I say that when I see teenagers cutting up kittens on Facebook for "entertainment," or acts of violence against women publicised on social media, or to the petty theft that happens to someone involved in a hit-and-

run, or people being run over because of competing buses, or the amount of people killed by medical malpractice, and the many other "seemingly normal" incidents

that happen every day does not portray a healthy citizenry to me. The absolute tragedy about all this is that it is not due to a lack of infrastructure development at all. As I said before, the country is advanced well beyond expectations. It's us, the people that have not kept up. This is why, in a country with so many facilities designed to get your work done fast and efficiently, you still have to pay extra on the side to get things done.

This is why our sellers don't think twice about using colours and preservatives in food that are lethal for human consumption; the very same items we end up giving to members of the community who are sick. This is why, when the signal on the road goes green, it is not the cars,

people cross on the road when there is a foot over-bridge, literally over them?

I once saw a dog use the foot over-bridge on a very busy road and was left astonished at its intelligence, and as I looked down, I saw people scale over guard-railings on the island to cross that same busy road; make of that story what you will. This is why, when someone is desperately ill here, the first thing we do is book air tickets to fly abroad. This is a particularly sore point for us because, let's not forget, some of the leading doctors in many major foreign healthcare facilities are from here.

Imagine if doctors here actually put patients first, instead of their wallet; that would be real advancement if you ask me. It is this lack of empathy that I feel when I speak of what I want to see changed in the next 50 years.

I could go on and on, but this wouldn't be fruitful. So, I will say this; in the next 50 years, I would like a nation where its people displayed empathy for one another, that we use the already established, and still to be established infrastructure to actually better ourselves. I hope that 50 years from now, there is no such thing as violence against women. I hope that in the future, no household has to cross international borders to get treatment for serious illnesses.

A knife in the hands of a child is a dangerous thing, and so it can be said about social media in the hands of people with no idea of its capabilities, and so maybe in the next 50 years, we can discard our bad social media habits and actually tap into its potential for good. If we as citizens rise to the occasion, this nation doesn't really have to worry about its image around the world anymore.

As for the maglevs and free Wi-Fi, I can wait, but perhaps no pollution can get here a bit sooner so that I can live to see my country 50 years for now.

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but the people that decide to cross first. We don't hesitate to badmouth traffic police, but what about the pedestrians? Disagree with what I said? Let me ask you, why do