

PEEK-ing the way to better citizenry

LITTLE BROTHER

The country has reached a new stage of development as the entire machinery of the state -- from healthcare and law enforcement to sanitation -- has been deployed to cater to the wellbeing and protection of its citizens.

This has been made possible by the passing of the PEEK [Public Enhancement Engineering Karmasuchi] law in the Chapasthan parliament recently.

Under the law, CCTV cameras and microphones have been placed in all public and private spaces.

People of the country have already been helped by PEEK.

"Last week, I was telling my husband that I have had enough of his temper tantrums, which he embarks upon whenever I tell him that his gambling habit is getting in the way of us putting food on the table," said Anika (nowhere near her real name).

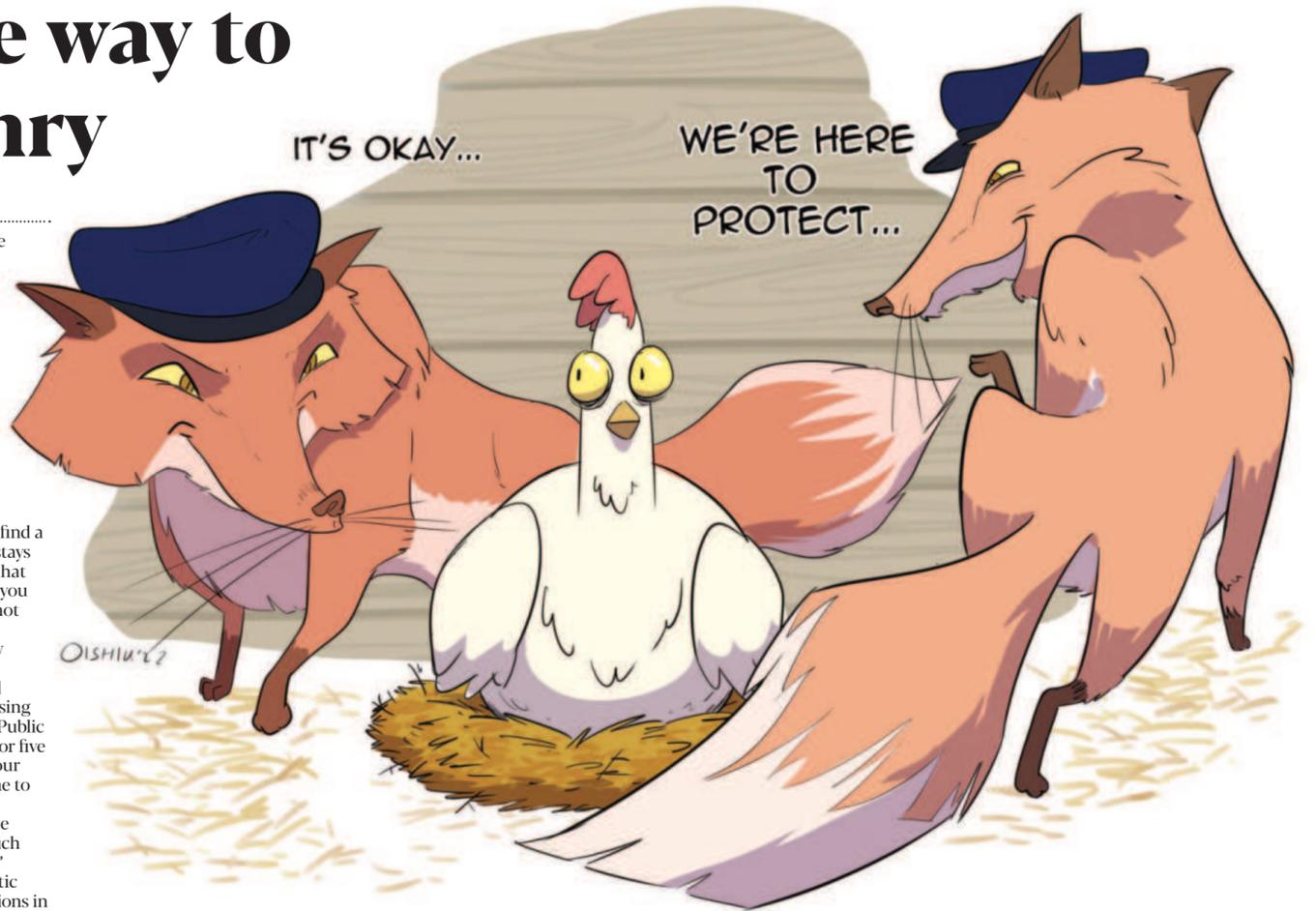
"Within 15 mins, I heard a knock on the door and opened it to find a police officer with a mattress and pillow standing there. He now stays with us to keep me safe from my husband's tantrums and to see that he doesn't gamble anymore. Yes, it is an extra mouth to feed, but you can't put a price on mental peace. It would be perfect if they did not spend the entire night playing cards."

Shimul Akram, who works as an office clerk, said the PEEK law has helped his wife Aziza deal with her anxiety.

"My wife has been very worried about the unsafe tap water and has long been badmouthing the administration, as well as organising locally to protest the government's inefficacy in bringing PISLA [Public Interest Supply of Liquids Authority] to task," Shimul said. "Four or five days after the CCTV cameras and microphones were installed in our home, a man visited us and told us he was a psychiatrist who came to help my wife with her obvious mental problems.

"He has her on a heavy dose of anti-depressants and visits twice a day to make sure she is taking them regularly," Shimul said. "Such dedication to her well-being is literally and figuratively touching."

The PEEK law has its limits, of course, as any law in a democratic country should. It prevents the state from looking into conversations in the virtual space, because those are truly private.



THE CONSCIOUS CITIZEN

This art installation of a conscious citizen wearing a plastic stool on his head is a metaphor for wider society. There is a camera around his neck, which represents that conscious citizens remember all they see. The stool on top of the head says such citizens carry society's wellbeing on their shoulders. It can also protect from the rain and brickbats when conscious citizens see too much, but that rarely happens.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Is this 'satire'?



KOUTUKMAN

The following is a summary of all the complaints about this page's content, mostly gleaned from social media, and a satire writer's foolhardy attempt to answer them.

THE COMPLAINTS

Real or fake?: Many articles on this page have confused us. Amid this epidemic of fake news and misinformation, you guys have tried to confuse us even further. Last week I read that it is illegal to criticize reverse sweeps, and I developed an ulcer trying to hold it in. Four days later, I found out it was "satire". Well, let me tell you this, the medical bills are pretty real. I wish I could tell the doctor that it was "satire", and I actually did, but she wasn't fooled. Is that what you are trying to do? Do you want to fool us?

Not enough humour: I have read many of your "satires" and I didn't laugh out loud. Not once. Where is the humour in the humour page? Have you seen Saturday Night Live? You could check that out once in a while.

Not enough animals: Also, have you read Animal Farm? Have you? That is satire, we don't know what you guys are up to. Use your imagination. Just using a fake country name does not cut it.

Insensitive: Our society has so many problems. Actual people suffer. It's not right to poke fun at those issues, but you do it week in, week out. We expect more responsibility from this page.

RESPONSE

Are we trying to fool you? Yes and no. Our real aim in writing "satire" is questioning and ridiculing the status quo. If the status quo is such that ridiculous articles can be taken seriously, then don't hate the player, hate the game. On a serious note, we regret that you ran up real medical bills. We could look at that if you write to accounts@fakedomain.com.

About the humour part, all we can do is apologise. Our only defence is to say that there is so much dark humour doing the rounds in reality, that "satire pieces" and their attempt to ridicule the already ridiculous does not always cut it. Also, SNL has a budget and their writers work full-time.

The Animal Farm thing was also brought to our attention by a high official. We apologise for not being George Orwell. Also, maybe Google "allegory" and "satire".

About the insensitivity thing, our attempt has always been to make fun of others' insensitivities and those who cruelly take advantage of their privileges and others' weaknesses. We are also extremely hurt by the insensitivity you have displayed by questioning our sensitivities.

[Any resemblance of the above complaints to yours is purely coincidental, and like most things on this page, this piece is an attempt to fill up space]