

DSCC just can't seem to get it right when it comes to dogs



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RUBAIYA AHMAD

When Obhoyaronno re-launched Dhaka's Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (CNVR) programme in 2016, with support from Humane Society International, the idea was to set up two CNVR centres in each part of the city, run them under the supervision of one of the world's leading animal welfare organisations for one year, and hand over a fully operational programme for the city authorities to continue.

Obhoyaronno and Humane Society International would foot the hefty USD 100,000 bill, as well as develop a skilled and experienced workforce for the city corporations to absorb. As proof of their commitment, each city corporation was asked to provide space and vehicle support to the programme. The proposition was so lucrative that we thought the city authorities would lap it up!

Annisul Huq was the mayor of Dhaka North at the time while Sayeed Khokon was heading Dhaka South. Dhaka North provided us with a beautiful space inside the Mohakhali DNCC market and two

into the issue – and did nothing. In the end, this extremely dangerous and callous practice, which could potentially cause a rabies outbreak in the community, had to be stopped in the face of public outrage and yet another writ petition.

Later on, the community of Dhaka South came forward and started to vaccinate and sterilise dogs using personal funds. Many took in ill and injured animals and cared for them in their own homes. Students, rickshaw-pullers, middle-income families, even certain mosques have been doing the job that was the DSCC's responsibility, with zero support from the authorities.

We recently had delegates from the International Companion Animal Management Coalition (ICAM) visiting Dhaka and they were shocked to see a community-funded CNVR programme, as this was unprecedented. It is clear that if the community had not come forward in Dhaka South, their dogs would have remained uncared for and unprotected. Any sensible city authority would

welcome such enthusiasm from the community to protect its dogs and support, if not subsidise, their efforts. Yet, what is Dhaka South doing now instead? Digging up a public notification from 2016, the DSCC has decided to slap a tax on the carers of the very dogs that they had abandoned, burdening people further with the increased costs of looking after these animals.

Ironically, the city authorities fail to see the impact of this on the community and believe that this is a positive move towards welfare for dogs. This just goes to show how little understanding they have of the issue and of the community they are mandated to serve.

In a recent multi-stakeholder meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, where DSCC officials were also present, I was cautiously optimistic to learn about the DSCC's plan to start neutering dogs. For the time being, I set aside my concerns about an untrained, inexperienced workforce performing mass-scale surgeries on dogs, and reminded myself that they are at least thinking in the right direction. But that is also what's so sad about all this. We have significantly lowered our expectations and standards for the DSCC and are just happy that they are at least not killing or dumping dogs in broad daylight.

So, who is this pet tax for? "The rich" – responded one of the newly appointed vets of the DSCC, who is a dynamic young man, keen on switching up the



The community has grown accustomed to the DSCC's half-baked policies on dogs and have little intention of cooperating now with the newly introduced pet tax.

PHOTO: TOUKIR AHMED TANVEE

brand new pick-up trucks. Dhaka South, on the other hand, gave us one meeting and some empty promises, followed by silence. The fund which was earmarked for Dhaka South was then re-channelled to our Dhaka North operation. As a result, half of the city's dogs remained un-serviced.

So while Dhaka North enjoyed its dogs being humanely picked up, vaccinated, sterilised, and returned to the locality, Dhaka South tackled public complaints by occasionally and secretly picking up and dumping dogs in remote areas, opposing Obhoyaronno's 2014 injunction order against dog culling.

In 2020, when Dhaka South elected a new mayor, DSCC defied the country's newest animal welfare law and launched a mass dog removal campaign all over again. Only this time, they weren't discreet about it.

DSCC's incompetent dog catchers inhumanely picked up dogs, heavily sedated them, and dumped them in the Matuail landfill by the dozens. Many dogs died in the process. Many starved to death.

In desperation, all the major animal welfare groups met with the DSCC mayor and explained the scientific and humane way of managing the dog population. The mayor listened, promised to look

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corporation's negative image.

It seems, at the initial level, this tax will be imposed on people who voluntarily register their dogs with the DSCC. The overall rate of pet registration is already very low in Dhaka, simply because dog owners see no benefit in registering their dogs with the city. Moreover, in our socioeconomic reality, a large number of pet dogs roam freely, and are considered "community" dogs. This concept has completely eluded DSCC officials, who somehow think that dog owners in Dhaka equate only those owning golden retrievers and huskies in the tristate area.

Dear DSCC, I have news for you: the dog owners of the tristate area never even leave the tristate, and therefore will never visit Nagar Bhaban to register their dogs, whom they also won't let you touch with a ten-foot pole.

That leaves the other 99 percent of us. Are we willing to pay this tax? Absolutely not.

In 2016, the cash-strapped Bangalore civic body in India proposed a tax on pet dogs. The proposition was later tossed in the face of public outrage. Is the DSCC looking at a similar fate? You bet. But, by now, the community has grown accustomed to the DSCC's half-baked policies on dogs and have little intention of cooperating.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Iranians are not 'docile' bodies



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December 25 marked the 100th day since the current women-led revolution broke out in Iran. It feels almost criminal for me, a member of the Iranian diaspora, to be sitting in the comfort and safety of my home in Dhaka, 4,000 kilometres away from the land of my roots, a few hours away from the streets where the lionhearts continue to protest against 43 years of oppression in the face of lethal crackdowns.

What fills me with a sense of pride, though, is knowing with a sense of conviction that even if the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) continues to torture and kill revolutionaries, it will fail to crush the indefatigable spirit of the revolution. The IRI is making my people burn, but they will rise from the ashes, and their phoenix-like reincarnations shall pave the path to long-awaited freedom.

The current revolution in Iran is one that will go down in history as evidence that human beings have indomitable spirits and aren't just mere sheep-like, "docile" bodies that abide by the laws of an all-seeing authoritarian shepherd.

The concept of "docile" bodies comes from *Discipline and Punish*, written by French philosopher Michel Foucault, who claimed that such bodies internalise discipline as a result of constant surveillance, which in turn disallows them to resist. With bouts of resistance since the IRI came to power in 1979, the theocracy continues to attempt to establish its position of power through its exercise of "discipline" (if you can even call it that) among a people who were, generally speaking, up until now, "docile" bodies. But now, those once "docile" bodies know how to reason un-blindly, and their rationalities allow them to question repressive laws. The un-colonisable mass consciousness enables them to recognise that human dignity cannot be forfeited. Such realisations, despite a knowledge of repercussions, have led to a nationwide uprising that will undoubtedly create a rupture in historic continuity.

According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 502 protestors were killed (in state-sanctioned, extrajudicial killings) and 18,452 were incarcerated till December 18, 2022. Death sentences are being handed out like cheap candy for the crime of "Moharebeh" – waging war against God, because apparently, when you go against the Supreme Leader – the Velayat-e Faqih – who is deemed to be the representative of God, you go against God himself.

A few official executions have already taken place. One may wonder how it is that the IRI is executing so many men amidst a women-led revolution. In my view, the IRI is afraid of hanging female protestors because it has already stained its reputation to

the point that it has been ousted from the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The IRI probably realises that executing women "officially" will be too inflammatory.

However, they still need to carry out a deterrent to serve as a chilling effect, which is why they hang men while women go "missing," only to be found dead/battered, with bodily signs of sexual assault and other forms of severe corporeal torture. The latest victim is 14-year-old Masoomeh, who, through surveillance technology, was identified as a hijab rebel, taken away by the regime forces, and was later brought to a hospital with severe vaginal tears. She died soon afterwards.

How ironic that the IRI is so hell-bent on enforcing their version of "modesty" that they're willing to resort to rape as a tactic of doing so.

Will the IRI shed every last remnant of its humanity to hold on to its position of power? How many more executions will it take for the international community to realise that the judiciary in Iran is nothing like that of the democratic nations? And that sham trials in kangaroo courts – which the UN calls "grossly unfair summary trials" – end in handing out the death penalty to "criminals" (who have no access to lawyers) based on confessions forced out in torture cells? Why aren't we looking at facts?

Iran has one of the highest execution rates in the world and, according to the BBC, it is the world's second-most prolific executioner that is willing to execute those under the age of 18 – a violation of international human rights law. Why aren't we opening our eyes to this regime's history? What about the mass execution of up to 30,000 political prisoners in 1988? What will stop them now from conducting another one? Or worse, will international pressure make them execute people in secret? Is Captagon or "Jihadi pills" – a psychostimulant that makes users lose empathy – to be more widely used by the regime forces than ever before? Will "white torture" – a type of psychological torture – drive more prisoners to commit suicide?

Not a day that goes by when I'm not moved to tears by at least one video coming out of Iran.

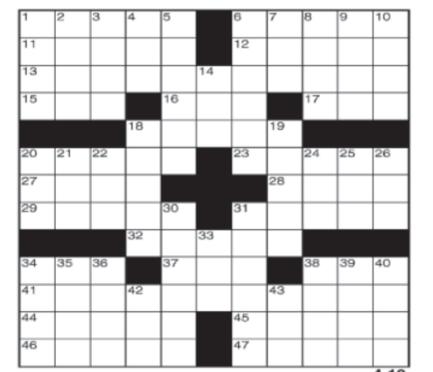
Footage of Mohsen Shekari's mother's ear-splitting shrieks, calling out her son's name outside the prison where he was executed or Farzin Maroufi's father dancing madly with a large birthday cake on his child's grave for his never-to-be-celebrated birthday are only a couple examples.

I cannot help but predict that, given the IRI's Machiavellian motto (that it is better to be widely feared than to be greatly loved), this revolution may lead the till-now peaceful-yet-fearless people to have no other way than follow the fashion of the French Revolution. As of now, the poorest are among those going on strike, risking the ability to put food on the table for their children, because it's a do or die kind of situation. But for how long?

I mourn for the martyrs, my heart breaks for their families. I fear that the means to freedom may be bloody, but I believe Iran will be glorious once again – a country where I, a member of the persecuted Baha'i community, will not be afraid to go back to. *Be omide pirooz!* (In the hope of victory)!

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Blackboard material
 - 6 Yule song
 - 11 Shade
 - 12 Curaçao's neighbor
 - 13 Theoretical idea
 - 15 "The Matrix" hero
 - 16 Bible boat
 - 17 Homer's neighbor
 - 18 Ring
 - 20 Scoundrel
 - 23 Raring to go
 - 27 Farm unit
 - 28 Albacore, e.g.
 - 29 Lorry quartet
 - 31 One of the Bradys
 - 32 Glossy fabric
 - 34 – chi (martial art)
 - 37 Train unit
 - 38 Sauna site
 - 41 Blockage
 - 44 Skirmish
 - 45 Took it easy
 - 46 Run, as color
 - 47 Foe
- DOWN**
- 1 X-ray's kin
 - 2 Ear part
 - 3 In addition
 - 4 Young one
 - 5 Gopher's work
 - 6 Witch sound
 - 7 Gallery fill
 - 8 Bankrupt
 - 9 Clarinet's kin
 - 10 Touch down
 - 14 "Roses – red"
 - 18 Places for pads
 - 19 Classical tongue
 - 20 Diet no no
 - 21 Quite cold
 - 22 Make mistakes
 - 24 Colt creation
 - 25 Close
 - 26 Beam of light
 - 30 Holy
 - 31 Compass creation
 - 33 Letter after sigma
 - 34 Archaeologist's find
 - 35 Cain's brother
 - 36 Cruise stop
 - 38 Tag info
 - 39 Limerick, e.g.
 - 40 Artist Warhol
 - 42 Course need
 - 43 Shoe hue



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

P	E	S	T	J	A	R	S		
R	O	M	E	O	A	B	O		
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