

## Criminal negligence that could cost lives

### Biman, two pilots must answer for 2022 mid-flight incident

We are deeply alarmed by Biman’s actions following an incident in which, as reported by this daily, two pilots put passengers’ lives at risk. During a Biman flight on February 1, 2022, one of the pilots set the airspeed of the plane to 165 knots (nautical miles per hour) during take-off, which was 20 knots less than the plane’s standard operating procedure. While climbing, the pilot changed the airspeed thrice in four minutes. The captain said this was done to climb faster to avoid thunderclouds. However, the meteorological report for the day said there was “no significant cloud”. Moreover, this technique is not supported by the standard operating procedure.

The pilots made many other claims, none of which were supported by the plane’s flight data recorder, also known as black box. When the speed supposedly dropped to 152 knots, the pilot disengaged the autopilot and pushed both engines to “emergency” power level, which compromises engine components. Consequently, the plane’s turbine temperature shot up by over 100 degrees, causing metals inside the engines to melt. Despite claiming to investigators later that they were forced to pursue such actions due to being in a life-or-death situation, they never submitted any air safety report, which is a clear violation of the safety manual. And there was a plethora of such violations that followed – including the pilots seemingly wiping out the maintenance message on the audio and radio control display unit (ARCDU) to hide their own mistakes.

What’s worse, despite the damage inflicted on it, the plane flew seven flights before being grounded. And none of this would have even come to light had it not been for the fact that the plane sent automatic data about engine health to the manufacturer, which notified Biman Engineering Services. Biman conducted its own investigations, but the investigation report, submitted in March 2022, was buried. Bizarrely, the senior of the two pilots was even included in a list of pilots set for promotion!

All this raises serious concern about Biman as an institution. It seems the incident happened as a direct result of the pilots’ misjudgement. But instead of owning up to it, they tried to erase evidence ignoring all professional ethics. Clearly, they knowingly put hundreds of peoples’ lives at risk but, instead of holding them to account, Biman tried to hide it. What does that say about Biman’s governance system? Airlines deal with people’s lives on a daily basis, making it crucial that they maintain the highest international standard, something that Biman has failed to do.

Even though Biman is our national flag carrier, and we would like to stand beside it, what it and the pilots did deserve an appropriate response. Their actions – or should we say, criminal negligence? – unnecessarily put people’s lives at risk and further tarnished the image of our country. Therefore, we urge Biman to make the findings of its investigation public, correct its flaws, and apologise to the people whose lives were put at risk. The pilots, if found guilty of misconduct, must be held to account. And even the role of the regulators needs to be carefully investigated.

## Who desecrated idols in Thakurgaon?

### Take action against culprits who committed such a condemnable act

We are deeply alarmed by the news of unidentified criminals desecrating idols of Hindu gods and goddesses in Thakurgaon’s Baliadangi upazila earlier this week. According to a report, at least 14 idols of Saraswati, Laxmi, and Manasha were vandalised at 12 temples. From what we know so far, whoever carried out the attack did so quietly, in the darkness of the night, as the local people only came to know about it when they went to offer prayers at the temples next morning. And even though the culprits have not been identified yet by police, from the nature of the attacks, it can be said that those were no isolated incidents. Those were rather coordinated.

While we condemn such acts in the strongest terms, we would also want to know what might have triggered the criminals to vandalise the idols. Did they want to create an atmosphere of fear among the Hindu community of Thakurgaon? Or did the criminals simply hold the misguided notion that by desecrating sacred symbols of other religions, they are actually showing love for their own? Whatever might have been their twisted reason, we must send them a strong and clear message that every person in the country has the right to practice their own religion, and that this right is guaranteed by our constitution. We must also remind them that desecrating others’ religions totally goes against the ideals of our Liberation War as well as our long-held social values.

Having said that, we also need to find out why such incidents keep recurring in the country, despite assurances by the government that religious intolerance or violence would not be tolerated. If we look at some of the past incidents of religious violence, we will see that in most cases, those involved were never brought to justice. The failure to take action is emboldening others to commit similar crimes.

We need a strong, powerful and uncompromising collective social voice against the growing religious tension and intolerance in the country. While the government must play its part by holding the criminals accountable, our religious leaders must also play their due role. They must tell adherents that religious intolerance is totally unacceptable in a pluralistic society that we aspire to be. They must send out a strong message of interfaith harmony.

As for the Thakurgaon incident, we urge the local administration to identify the culprits responsible for the desecration of idols and take legal action against them and also, equally importantly, extend protection to the local Hindu community. The authorities must create a safe environment for all minority communities by creating a society tolerant of diversity. To do that, it is vital that orchestrators of all previous communal attacks are also brought to book. Only by showing zero tolerance can we prevent repetition of such incidents.

# Bangladesh can avoid the middle-income trap yet



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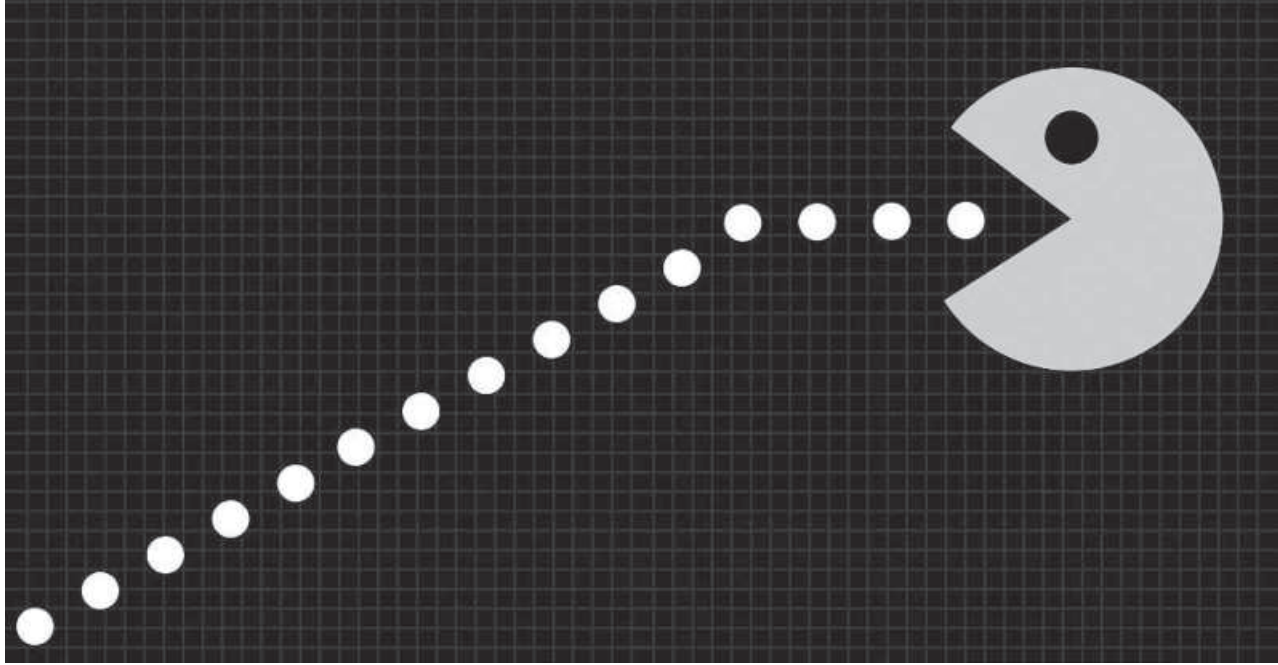
The World Bank is not only a place for economists and statisticians, but also an abode of poets who often coin some literary or figurative terms that rule the domain of policymaking jargon. In the early 1990s, they phrased a term called “the East Asian Miracle,” which was later demystified by numerous economists as a planned journey of East Asia to develop its human capital.

The phrase “the middle-income trap,” also coined by the World Bank, has been used as a powerful weapon to scare some growth-generating countries, so they remain vigilant in navigating their journey to become developed countries. While the organisation’s intention is not vicious, the way they describe this trap is theoretically flawed and more of a cliché. Growth means a percentage change in GDP, which is composed of a million factors that can never be strangled or trapped altogether by any mechanism or magic.

Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank’s managing director of operations, during a visit to Bangladesh for an event to mark 50 years of partnership, warned that the country should be careful about falling into the middle-income trap. He asserted that the middle-income status is a hard struggle and it is a difficult task to go to the higher-income status. He cited the cases of Argentina and Greece, and mentioned that some Latin American countries went the reverse direction after reaching the middle-income status. He advised Bangladesh to follow the steps of countries like South Korea and Singapore, who graduated to being developed nations quite steadily without faltering.

The doctor who leaves alert messages for their patients is regarded as a well-wisher, since they are conscientiously caring for their patients’ well-being. In that sense, the alert is well-taken. But the message is grounded in a conceptual phantasmagoria.

In 1956, economist Richard Nelson contributed to a concept – a theory of the low-level equilibrium trap. It says that a low level of income is a kind of a trap because it satisfies only the subsistence level of living where both the rates of saving and investment are terribly low. A little improvement in income will contribute to higher population growth, which will in turn push the per capita income back to



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its low level again, and hence it is an inescapable situation – a trap.

But that is not the case for the middle-income countries whose past is the story of good savings, handsome investment, and fairly controlled population growth. Poor countries with feeble growth rates (say, below three or four percent) cannot dream of becoming middle-income countries. The countries that graduated to the middle income status were able to generate more than five percent growth before graduation. Hence, assuming a trap or a cul-de-sac in the middle-income bracket is theoretically flawed.

Then why do some policymakers talk about the trap? Simply because it feels like so. But the fact lies in the very nature of the marathon towards becoming a middle-income nation. The journey is too long, and many nations fail to uphold the growth momentum by upgrading its institutions and governance.

According to the World Bank’s latest classification of countries, a country exceeding per capita income of USD 1,085 is marked as a lower-middle-income country. Bangladesh, with its per capita income of USD 2,824 (FY22) – as per the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics – falls in this

income country not only as the longest one, but also as the most critical navigation over the classification spectrum, making some people think of it as a trap. But it is just a number game that requires plenty of patience and planning – just like playing chess quite diligently and intelligently to win the game. Mathematically, a country that has just graduated from a low-income status to a lower middle-income rank must increase its per capita income almost 13 times higher than its current level, requiring 53 years if the country grows at a steady rate of five percent, and 44 years if the growth rate is steadily six percent – which is quite challenging.

Practically, a country’s journey over half a century is supposed to confront global recessions, crises, pandemics, wars, and climate shocks – when growth rates may fall or look poor. On top of global factors, the country itself may fail to develop decent institutions that are at the root of shepherding a country into a fully-fledged developed nation. This was the case for both Singapore and Korea, who succeeded in strengthening the basic three institutions: education, health, and finance. And if Bangladesh’s journey takes too long in the middle-income episode, the reasons will surely be

launderers, and politically empowered bank looters. These three institutions together, if not correctly addressed, will make the journey to becoming a developed nation feel like a trapped expedition for Bangladesh.

Even if the country grows steadily at six percent, it will take another 26 years to achieve USD 13,205 in per capita income – the lowest rung for a developed nation. The probable date thus seems to be somewhere near 2050. Better late than never. Bangladesh experienced a silver lining in growth performance that displayed a pattern of acceleration until the pandemic torpedoed global growth. Bangladesh’s growth volatility is one of the lowest in the region, suggesting that its growth will not fluctuate like Argentina’s or Greece’s.

Bangladesh’s economic leadership must devote its integrity to ensuring quality growth along with lower income inequality. But its institutions must be knowledge-based, rather than being obedience-based. Its pending reforms must be initiated by individual institutions once they are allowed to exercise their autonomy, guided by the best global practices of learning and research. If so, Bangladesh shall never succumb to the so-called ghost stories of the middle-income trap.

# Paternity leave should be the practice, not an option



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Recently, a social media post from the clothing and lifestyle brand Aarong went viral. It was titled “Embracing Fatherhood,” and mentioned that Aarong provides one month of paternity leave to its male employees to care for and bond with their newborns – which people highly appreciated.

Fathers are frequently regarded as the heads of their families, and someone who can have the most impact on children’s development. In the initial stage of parenthood, it is necessary for a father to be there for his partner and their newborn, and to celebrate some of the most precious moments of their lives together with family and friends.

An adequate paternity leave period increases a father’s likelihood of being involved in the lives of his young children. This can lead to improvements in gender equality at work and at home, and may introduce positive changes in interpersonal interactions, parenting responsibilities, and ingrained preconceptions of how parenthood should be.

In most families, a mother often performs the majority of childcare duties. But fathers are vital to the proper development of their children as well. According to recent studies, fathers who are actively involved in their children’s upbringing might be able to have a beneficial long-lasting impact on them.

Normally, if a female employee becomes pregnant while working, she is eligible to receive maternity leave. Assuring a maternity leave period of at least 14 weeks is required under Article 4(I) of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Female government employees are entitled to six months of leave under Section 197(I) of the Bangladesh Service Rules, as amended on January 9, 2011. And under Section 46 of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, women employees are entitled to 16 weeks of maternity leave.

But what about male employees whose partners are pregnant or have given birth? Most workplaces in Bangladesh do not offer paternity

leave to their male workers, even though this is a well-established practice in many other countries.

In 2021, 115 of the 185 countries assessed by the ILO were found to be offering the right to paternity leave, with 33 new countries having implemented such a policy in the last 10 years. This indicates the growing acceptance of men’s role in child care, because it means that 4 out of 10

**Approximately two-thirds of potential fathers don’t have access to paternity leave and are thus missing out on the chance to form close relationships with their newborns. In some countries, men are also discouraged from using their paternity leave due to gender norms that dictate that men should be breadwinners and women should be caregivers.**

prospective fathers reside in countries that offer paternity leave. However, approximately two-thirds of potential fathers (1.26 billion men) don’t have access to paternity leave and are thus missing out on the chance to form close relationships with their newborns. In some countries, men are also discouraged from using their paternity leave due to gender norms

that dictate that men should be breadwinners and women should be caregivers.

As such, companies should actively encourage fathers to take time off to care for their newborn children by developing a supportive workplace culture, and ensure that fathers are not subjected to discrimination for engaging in caregiving activities in order to enhance the take-up rates for paternity leave.

Considering how crucial a father is to a child’s development, it is long past due for the government to consider passing a paternity leave law for male employees in Bangladesh. Fathers who take paternity leave get the chance to spend quality time with their newborns and are able to participate more actively in family life. Additionally, the increased involvement of men in domestic tasks enables women to better balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

Providing paternity leave benefits the company as well. Levelling the playing field for men and women makes the workplace family-friendly and aids companies in reducing gender gap. Paternity leave should be provided to all male employees so that they can care for their partners and newborns throughout and after pregnancy. Any such provision ought to encourage an accepting workplace where fathers are welcomed into parenthood, including being provided with paid leave as part of the paternity benefits.