

Who will save the planet? Certainly not its killers.



Pavel Partha, an ecology and biodiversity conservation researcher, is director at Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (BARCIK). He can be reached at animistbangla@gmail.com.

PAVEL PARTHA

It's not just the buds, birds, forests, and humans; it's not just one or two continents. It's not only the conflicts between Palestine and Israel or Russia and Ukraine. This whole planet is now on death row. All because a collective of "rich and developed" countries has been playing a cruel game called "neo-liberal development." In the name of generating electricity, they're choking the rivers with their mega dams. Forests have been ripped apart, and the earth syphoned off their life and blood—coal, oil and gas. And the farmlands, laced with synthetic fertilisers or rather chemical poison, are dying of thirst.

The luxuries of city life have spread lead in the air and arsenic in the water. This is not just happening in Bangladesh, or just the Global South, but the entire world.

But will this keep going? Will Mother Nature just die right in front of eight billion people? Are these very people not responsible for this destruction? While it's been proven that as a species, *Homo sapiens* have greatly wronged the planet, all of us are not actively taking part in the destruction. Only a handful of those who have amassed a mountain of wealth are dangerous for the planet; the rest want to live in peace with Mother Nature. And that's why across the world, many movements have cropped up to save the planet. Today, the environmental movement is a class struggle against the dominant narratives of power structure. Inequality, corruption, discrimination, plunder, fascism, imperialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism—these are the evils the movements plan on defeating.

In times of kings and emperors, killing tigers, deer and rhinos was considered aristocracy. Those days are long gone. The state has announced that killing wildlife is unlawful and illegal. But are the animals living in peace now? Is the state ensuring the security of the elephants or honeybees? Wildlife trading has seen a boom. Forget tigers, you can even get a pangolin in no time! All you have to do is pay the right price. In the name of green revolution, today's soil and seeds have now become poisonous. But who is having the product of this poison? They say conscious people don't want to eat unsafe food. They want natural, organic, fresh fruits from the villages, homegrown legumes, and the rivers' lively fish. Who are these conscious people, the poor farmers from the villages or the rich employees and businesspeople of the cities? Even if everyone is conscious, can the poor farmer, who even today depends on their crops, afford to eat safe, fresh food, the ones supermarkets sell as "organic" at sky-high prices?

Let's steer the question somewhere else. Who runs the chemical fertiliser-poison businesses and who uses their products? Monsanto's Roundup, the world's best-selling "weed killer," is even permitted to be used in the tea gardens of Bangladesh. It's known that the top-selling herbicides in the country today kills the soil's food, herbs and medicinal plants, as well as the snails, beetles, spiders and grasshoppers. Even humans are not spared, as these herbicides lead to complications in the digestive and respiratory systems. Is the food prepared at the homes of these

company owners also laced with poison? Certainly not, because the world's best foods, the most tasty, nutritious and safe, land on their plates. And the most poisonous foods, the leftovers, end up on the plates of the world's majority, who have no choice but to use the products of these companies. The concept of "safety" is seemingly non-existent for this group; all safety is for

this aching world in the hands of multinationals.

Issues centring ecological protection are inherently political, but in this dying earth, these are repeatedly depoliticised. The machinations of those in power are willfully ignored, as if protecting the environment is akin to planting a sapling, or declaring natural forests as protected, or occupying swamps

relationship of various forms of life. This cannot be done by stopping the use of chemical fertilisers and simultaneously approving Monsanto's hybrid corn seeds, which negatively affects local seeds. Such products pose a threat to pollinating birds and insects and destroy the soil's health and structure. Besides, allowing invasive plants like acacia and eucalyptus across the country

It's important to move away from this practice and adopt policies considering the context of people's lives with their interdependent relationships with local ecosystems. The existing policies on environment and development have woefully failed to capture the overall tone and attitude of the subaltern people. And hence, development programmes disrupt the overall order of the ecosystem. Dams, unlimited extraction of fossil fuels and natural resources, amusement parks, social forestry, multinational chemical-based agriculture, large-scale construction, urbanisation, industrial pollution—this development frenzy is strangling not just Bangladesh, but the planet.

To save Mother Nature, the whole world needs to wake up; the working class and the environmental struggle need to join forces. From the Mawalis (honey collectors) and Bawalis (*Nipa* leaf collectors) of Sundarbans to the indigenous people of the Amazon Forest, it's important to hold on to and advance their local knowledge and ethno-science that protects the environment. Kilimanjaro to Kailash, Kamchatka to Keokradong, Prairies to Jamuna's vast catkin fields, Gobi Desert to the Nile—let solidarity strengthen between ecosystems and neighbouring habitats, not between states.

The rich—who are thought to be "educated," "modern," and "developed"—will have to wake up; they must be forced to develop a sense of responsibility for the environment. The next time they grab another slice of pizza or have a bite of that shrimp, they should think about what gluttony is doing to the world. How this civilisation, standing mercilessly and shamelessly on fossil fuels, has trapped our minds. The rich consumers must take accountability for the wounds inflicted on the planet through their criminal overconsumption. Otherwise, this world will not last long in any way. We cannot, under no circumstances, accept such a tragic fate for our Mother Earth.



Mindless development and overconsumption are taking a toll on our ecosystem, producing overwhelming amounts of waste that is clogging up our water bodies.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

the multinational company owners. Even though the times of kings and emperors have ended, class conflict and discrimination has not disappeared; rather, it has taken a new form. The whole world is in the hands of these corporate criminals. Every day, we wake up with the scars of their indiscriminate whips, our weak bodies writhing with pain. Mother Nature is no one's personal commodity, and we must ensure that it doesn't become one; we can't avoid our responsibility and leave

in the name of building a sanctuary, or approving "integrated pesticides" and "genetically modified eggplant" to reduce the use of chemicals in large-scale agriculture. This is like imposing one form of oppression to cover up another kind of injustice, legalising more wrongs with corporate bravery.

Environmental justice has to be seen from the historicity of the local ecosystem. The journey of conservation should start by prioritising the multi-dimensional

in the name of tree planting does not in any way ensure environmental protection. These plants absorb groundwater at excessive rates, create pollen allergies, and lead to dangerous food-cycle disorders for wildlife.

National and international policies, laws, agreements, declarations and various global environmental commitments often do not align with the aspirations and thoughts of the subaltern people. And so, most policies pass years of dysfunction.

Unmasking the cinematic charade of 'Jawan'



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The star-studded Bollywood movie *Jawan* had the local cinemas buzzing like a beehive. I vividly recall dialling the Cineplex hotline, only to be asked to join a waiting queue of three weeks, even after five weeks of sold-out shows! Once the film got released on Netflix, I finally found my chance to decipher the mad rush for an Indian film in Bangladesh. I must admit, it took me a good four or five sittings to survive the ordeal.

Now, don't get me wrong; I'm no film critic, but the movie's endorers and I must have watched two entirely different productions. I couldn't help but ponder how *Jawan* comfortably shared the same streaming platform as the Spanish sensation *Money Heist*. Once you strip away the South Indian *chaat masala* dressings, the plot similarities are as conspicuous as a peacock in a penguin parade. I guess anything goes in the name of artistic inspiration.

Jawan weaves a modern-day Robin Hood tale, generously padded with clichés that would give any avid moviegoer déjà vu moments aplenty. Think Liam Nelson's *Darkman* or Mel Gibson's *Apocalypse*, and add a sprinkle of Mentos' *demag ki batti*, and there you have it. The film attempts to be a pan-Indian commentary on societal ills: farmer suicides, corrupt politicians peddling faulty weapons, and a crumbling health sector. Each segment of the corrupt world is set to the timeless tunes of Hindi, Tamil and Telugu singers from the 60s. The use of old songs is reminiscent of the strategy in *Money Heist*, which throws in the Italian resistance anthem *Bella Ciao* for good measure. Call it what you want, but it seems a dash of retro beats

can overshadow any accusations of unoriginality.

Now, I won't claim to offer a review of Atlee's cinematic endeavour with Shah Rukh Khan donning multiple avatars. Instead, I'm more concerned with the mystery of why our local audience adored this film seemingly tailored for a below-IQ

subtle political undertones—issues that we, apparently, aren't meant to discuss. It portrays our deepest fantasy. In a Big Boss world, *Jawan* says the unsayable, concealing bitter truths within its glamorous capsule, much like how *Money Heist* takes down capitalism with a flourish. The film paints the soldier protagonist as a modern-day warrior battling war machinery where businessmen and politicians treat soldiers like expendable pawns. It's not only soldiers—other groups are equally helpless against the dark political and bureaucratic machinery. As the vendetta mission unfolds, we discover that the troop of female soldiers are, in essence, prisoners of their own devices. Led by a prison guard, this gang exposes the unholy alliance between party politics and underworld thugs—a plot twist as familiar as *Thakurmar Jhuli*.

overpriced non-functioning battle weapons within the military, an open secret that everyone suspects but dares not discuss.

The crux of the matter lies in democracy and accountability. The titular soldier wages war against all forms of social wrongs, inspired by a promise to his dying mother to clear his supposedly dead father's name from false allegations of treason. The gang held the voting machines hostages right before the election to get the ear of the head of the state. Such attempts make democracy speak. The hero passionately urges the masses to bring politicians under their fingertips during the next election—a plea common to subcontinental nations and chiming with a global audience yearning for democratic norms.

The unmistakable power of a mass message transcends the boundaries of fiction to echo the collective sentiments of a global audience. Despite the banality of the revenge motif, *Jawan* offers a profound commentary on the shared human quest for a more just and equitable society. The seemingly inconspicuous characters mirror the diverse faces of our communities, each playing a crucial role in a broader narrative that speaks to the hunger for a world where power is not concentrated in the hands of a few.

The director, quite cleverly, hides potent messages in plain sight. These stories resonate because they tap into a universal desire for a world where the underdog can triumph, and where the pursuit of justice is not a solitary endeavour but a collective journey. It serves as a compelling reminder that, even in the realm of entertainment, the stories we tell reflect our deepest yearnings. It underscores the fact that seemingly banal narratives have the power to amplify the collective heartbeat of a society hungry for change—a change marked by freedom, democracy, and accountability. And if a Bollywood flick can sneak in such messages amid songs and dance, well, that's a cinematic feat worth viewing, especially by those whose change of hearts can bring real change to the world.



COLLAGE: REHNUMA PROSHOON

audience. Excuse my prudish arrogance, but tolerating mindless action scenes is one thing—believing a doctor can diagnose a fainted woman's pregnancy seconds before facing the gallows is idiocracy on another level. So, what's the secret sauce that made the masses fall head over heels for this cinematic spectacle?

The easy answer is the combined glamour of the main actors. However, I suspect the real allure lies in the film's

The symbolic significance of a few law enforcement members responding to their moral compass and siding with what seems right resonates deeply with the audience. Issues like microcredits, users' oppressive methods, major bank defaulters getting blank cheques from those in power, and the farcical claim of making all hospitals world-class—it's a script that mirrors our reality in an uncanny way. The film whispers about

CROSSWORD

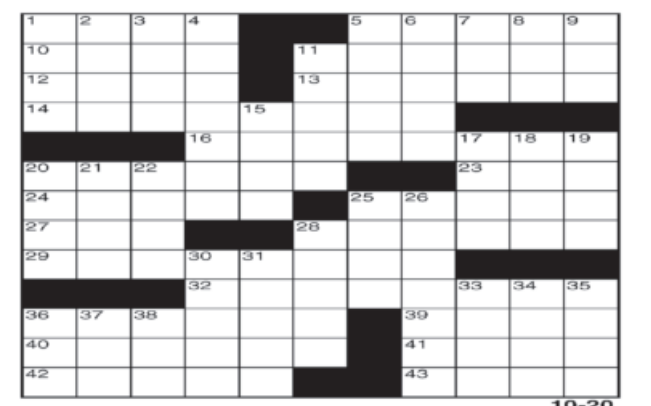
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 High point
- 5 Trio, e.g.
- 10 Dupe
- 11 Complain
- 12 Verdi song
- 13 Blackout thief
- 14 Hotel staffers
- 16 Stretchy garments
- 20 Great traits
- 23 "The Simpsons" bartender
- 24 Merchandise
- 25 25 Job reward
- 27 Wing
- 28 Horse restraint
- 29 Fizzy drinks
- 32 Floor cleaners
- 36 Hushed

DOWN

- 39 "Yeah, right!"
- 40 Makes one's own
- 41 Carry
- 42 Acts sullen
- 43 Whole bunch
- 18 Do studio work
- 19 Visionary
- 20 A long time
- 21 Go it alone
- 22 Auction cry
- 25 Captivated
- 26 Loser to Herbert Hoover
- 28 Party VIPs
- 30 Skilled
- 31 Fourth-down plays
- 33 Bassoon's cousin
- 34 Antifur org.
- 35 Dance part
- 36 Maple output
- 37 Ceremony words
- 38 Gehrig or Brock



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