

Rediscovering meaning in a fractured reality



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"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity"—this is a hopeful refrain from Albert Einstein, whose own life was marked by upheaval, exile, and intellectual solitude. Yet, to the average person today, who is struggling with global crises and personal insecurities, such optimism might feel elusive—even naïve. The present moment is not merely difficult; it is suffocatingly uncertain. From economic turmoil and political chaos to personal disintegration and mental health deterioration, the world seems caught in the throes of a quiet, universal anxiety.

Across borders and cultures, a pattern emerges: fear, restlessness, and a gnawing sadness that transcends material reality. The structure of society itself appears to be trembling: governments falter, public trust erodes, communities fragment, and individuals find themselves isolated amid a sea of digital noise and sociopolitical confusion. What was once solid now seems slippery; what was predictable now feels precarious.

This is the age of mental stress, a silent killer cloaked in invisibility, wreaking havoc on the lives of billions. And while its symptoms may be subtle—a sleepless night here, a racing heart there—its long-term consequences are profoundly grave. Depression, anxiety disorders, emotional fatigue, and burnout have ceased to be exceptions. They are now the norm.

Mental stress is no longer confined to urban sprawls or high-powered jobs. As technology permeates the remotest villages, and the global economy impacts every household, even rural lives are no longer insulated. The

speed of modernity, the glut of information, the cult of productivity, and the constant need to "keep up" have together forged a psychological battleground from which few can escape unscathed.

Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, once observed, "When a person can't find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure." But in the digital age, pleasure has become its own kind of tyranny. Social media offers dopamine but no peace; instant connectivity brings exposure but not intimacy. The human soul, once enriched by slowness, silence, and spiritual reflection, is now under constant siege by noise, comparison, and distraction.

This explains why, despite technological advancements and material abundance, the epidemic of mental unrest continues to grow. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that nearly one in eight people globally live with a mental health disorder. Suicide has become one of the leading causes of death among young adults. Even children now exhibit symptoms of chronic stress—a devastating indictment of our collective failure to build an emotionally sustainable society.

Where does this stress originate? The answer is complicated.

Firstly, political instability and the erosion of democratic values around the globe create an ambient fear that the future is neither safe nor fair. Economic inequality adds fuel to this fire, with growing numbers of people facing unemployment, underemployment, or

exploitative work conditions. At home, broken family systems, generational trauma, and emotional isolation hollow out the spaces that once offered refuge.

Then there is the problem of overidentification with success and failure. As J.K. Rowling poignantly put it, "It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all." But society no longer permits

distortion—catastrophising, generalising, personalising—has been well-documented by psychologists. Aaron Beck, father of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), identified that distorted thinking is central to anxiety and depression. By restructuring these thought patterns, he argued, individuals can reclaim agency over their emotional state.

Thus, the first step towards liberation is self-awareness. As Socrates taught, "Know

thyself." In understanding our fears, motives, and habits, we acquire the tools to reframe them. This is not an esoteric task, but a deeply practical one. A journal, a walk in nature, honest conversations, or even a few minutes of mindfulness each day—these can be revolutionary acts of healing in a world that thrives on our disconnection from self.

Beyond introspection, there is a profound need for something greater: belief. Not only

religious faith, though that too has proven a balm for many, but belief in the inherent value of life and the resilience of the human spirit. Fyodor Dostoevsky once declared, "The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for." Whether that "something" is family, service, creativity, or a cause, it must be found and held onto tightly.

But individuals cannot bear this burden alone. Society must change. Mental health should be treated with the same urgency and funding as physical health. Workplaces need to adopt human-centric policies. Schools must teach emotional intelligence alongside academics. We need public discourse that values compassion over polarisation, understanding over judgement.

As philosopher Martin Buber said, "All real living is meeting." This simple truth reminds us that the path forward lies not in isolation, but in connection. In solidarity. In mutual care.

Despite the darkness of the times, there is, indeed, light at the end of the tunnel. History attests that humanity has always risen from ashes—be it after world wars, plagues, or great depressions. We are still here, still breathing, still hoping. And that, in itself, is a triumph.

To trust in the future is to trust in ourselves. This is not a passive hope, but an active resistance against despair. It is what psychologists call "post-traumatic growth"—the idea that suffering, though painful, can lead to transformation and renewal.

We must, therefore, reclaim our mental well-being not only as individuals but as a collective. Through compassion, authenticity, and inner strength, we can pierce the gloom. As Japanese author Haruki Murakami once wrote, "And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through... But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in."

In that truth lies our greatest hope. That no matter how long or dark the tunnel may be, we don't walk it alone. That eventually, we will emerge—not broken, but reborn.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: RAKEEB RAZZAQ

The Sagar-Runi case and our crisis of justice



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Thirteen years is a long time to wait for justice. In most places of the world, that kind of delay would be an anomaly. In Bangladesh, it's become a routine. On May 21, a Dhaka court quietly extended the deadline for the investigation report in the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi—for the 118th time. The new deadline is July 8, and few expect it to stick. The case has become less of a legal proceeding and more of a national metaphor for institutional decay, political obstruction, and a state still struggling to break out of its past.

The couple—he a news editor at Maasranga Television, she a senior reporter with ATN Bangla—were killed in their home in February 2012, stabbed to death while their child, just five years old at the time, was in the next room. The crime shocked the nation. It should have shocked the system into action, too. But 13 years on, the case remains unsolved, the culprits unpunished,

and the consequences unresolved.

This isn't just another cold case. It's something else entirely—a symbol of how deep the rot runs, and how hard it will be for the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus to convince people that real reform is even possible.

When Yunus stepped into the role of chief adviser in the wake of the political upheaval in August last year, he did so on the strength of a promise: fundamental reform. Not just a new government, but a new kind of governance. He spoke of irreversible change. More than nine months later, the Sagar-Runi case is still stuck. This is important, because a failure like this tells people more than speeches or policy proposals ever can.

The history of this case reads like a catalogue of missteps. Initial investigations were fumbled, passed between agencies like a burden no one wanted. First, the local police, then the Detective Branch, then the

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)—none of them got close to solving it. More than a hundred extensions later, there's still no conviction, no clear suspect, not even a timeline that makes sense. Along the way, key evidence was destroyed, including—most recently—in a fire at a police office.

Earlier this year, the case took another turn. The family's lawyer accused high-level officials from the previous government of actively obstructing the investigation. That lines up with what UN human rights observers have been saying since 2022: that Bangladesh suffers from a "pervasive culture of impunity," where political connections act like shields against scrutiny. If those allegations are even partly true, it raises difficult questions—not just about the past, but about how much has changed under this new administration.

To be fair, the interim government hasn't entirely ignored the case. A task force was formed in October last year, including members from the Police Bureau of Investigation, the CID, and even Rab, although they had already been removed from leading the probe. The team has interviewed over 70 people, including a range of former officials. That's more effort than we have seen in years. But even so, there's a sense that the clock is ticking louder than ever.

In April, when investigators told the court they needed nine more months, they

were granted just six. That decision reflects a growing impatience on the part of the judiciary, the public, and especially the press. Every delay chips away at confidence. Every missed deadline reaffirms a painful truth: that, sometimes, justice in this country is more political than procedural.

And there's a broader context here. Prof Yunus came to power not through an election, but through what's been called a "Monsoon Revolution." The movement that swept Sheikh Hasina's government out of office was driven by popular frustration with corruption, authoritarianism, and the sense that institutions had become hollowed out. The new administration's legitimacy hinges on the idea that things are different now. But how different, exactly? The continued stagnation of the Sagar Runi investigation raises uncomfortable doubts.

If the interim government can't resolve this case—one that stands as a touchstone for press freedom, justice, and accountability—what does that say about its ability to reform anything else? This isn't just another file on a dusty desk; it's a test case for the government.

Some of the hurdles are real. The crime scene was reportedly contaminated hours after the murders, with journalists and onlookers trampling over key evidence, according to the case investigators. The DNA evidence recovered is partial and inconclusive. These aren't small issues, but

they don't fully explain why 13 years have passed without answers. They don't explain the lost documents, conflicting timelines, or the inertia that has followed this case like a shadow.

There's a lesson here that goes beyond forensics or bureaucratic reform. For Bangladesh to truly move past the Hasina era—or any era defined by unchecked executive power—it has to deal honestly with its ghosts. That means confronting cases like this one head-on, without delay and compromise. Anything less risks repeating the cycle.

For journalists still working in the country, the message is chilling. The Sagar-Runi case isn't ancient history; it's a daily reminder that their safety is negotiable, their profession vulnerable. And for ordinary citizens, the case underlines something more basic: that justice, when delayed this long, can start to look like denial.

There are still a few weeks before the new deadline. Maybe something will finally move. Maybe the 119th time will be different. But hopes are thin, and patience is thinner. A revolution, no matter how well-intentioned, can't rely on symbolism alone. It has to deliver—not just policy, not just vision, but results.

Until then, the legacy of Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi remains suspended in time, like their case file, like the trust of a nation still waiting for proof that justice doesn't only belong to the powerful.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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12 Roulette bet
13 Old photo tint
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15 Become cheerful
17 Take in
19 Kickoff aid
20 Scathing review
23 Hard to control
25 Head, to Henri
26 Energy-boosting drink
28 Amorous archer
29 Stamping need
30 Go bad
31 Finish
32 Print units
33 Engaged
35 Cargo spots
38 Battery part
41 Parting word
42 Bolshevik leader
43 Gaggle group
44 Minnesota team

DOWN

1 Holds
2 Spanish cheer
3 West Indian stew
4 Buffalo's lake
5 Catch off guard
6 Bicker
7 Hen pen
8 Crude home
9 Swelled head
10 Cub's cave
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17 "Great!"
18 Madrid month
20 Pizzeria supply
21 Top players
22 Uncool group
24 Good times
25 Toll hwy.
27 Still in the deck
31 Follow
33 March time
34 Fresh
35 Crone
36 Lyric work
37 Tell stories
39 Jumble of noise
40 Print units

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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Office of the Senior Jail Superintendent
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Memo No. 58.04.2600.072.04.032.2025.570

Date:26.05.2025

E-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

Schedule No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, Closing date & Time
Schedule No-"KHA"	1118760	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:00:00
	1118771	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:15:00
	1118773	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-03 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:30:00
	1118775	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-04 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:45:00
Schedule No-"GHA"	1118783	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-05 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 11:00:00
	1119008	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Edible Oil, Transports and other products) of Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:58:00 16-Jun-2025 11:10:00
	1119019	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Edible Oil, Transports and other products) of Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:58:00 16-Jun-2025 11:20:00

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26.05.2025
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GD-1285