

THE DAILY DOOMSDAY SCENARIOS

(Rule of Law)

By Danish A. Zubay

While the prophet was saying something in a gathering, a Bedouin came and asked him, “When would the Hour (Doomsday) take place?” Allah’s Apostle continued his talk, so some people said Allah’s Apostle had heard the question, but did not like what the Bedouin had asked. Some of them said that the Allah’s Apostle had not heard it. When the prophet finished his speech he said, “Where is the questioner, who had enquired about the Hour (Doomsday)?” The Bedouin said, “I am here, O Allah’s Apostle. Then the Prophet said, “When the honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday).” The Bedouin said, “How will that be lost?” The Prophet said, “When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday).” (Sahih Bokhari, 1.56, Abu Hureira).

Today, our urban lives, which we continue to live in one fear/phobia or another, demonstrate everyday that we have, to our misfortune, not only inept and unfit people in authority but over the time they have also become shamelessly corrupt and heartless. But the irony is that besides the inept people in power the intelligentsia has shown equal callousness as far as national stability is concerned. We the educated class, who matter in the end, continue to leave a bad precedence for the silent majority.

The first reason that prompted me to write these lines was an appalling attitude of a fellow air-passenger on a domestic flight. Among the population there is a breed of urban well-to-dos that think that they are smarter than the systems. These suited booted smart alecs jump the signals, dodge, bribe, invent shortcuts and bypass all the laws. A smart looking executive sitting beside me, continued to use his cell phone even after a request to switch off the phone by the air steward and then an airhostess. On my request he became furious. He argued and told me that he knew exactly when the cell phone can interfere with the planes communication systems and when exactly it can jeopardize the lives of the passengers.

Surprisingly this class mass-produces its followers. It simply refuses to follow the rules and regulations because they are confident that they are larger than life and can beat the systems. The same people will stand in the line, wait for their turn, give the right of way, and follow all the rules when in Dubai. They dare not attempt to bribe someone anywhere outside Pakistan. They know that they will not be spared overseas and all their connections will fail.

Unfortunately this queer contempt of law and snobbish attitude has also become the hallmark of majority of the people in power and authority. The relatives and friends wait for an opportunity to use their connections to their advantage. Even the driver of the sahib jumps the signal, as if it is his right and a privilege. Then why should we not expect the lower segments of the society follow this disastrous trend. Then why should we complain when we see our own custom-made doomsday scenarios almost everyday? From one crisis to another, from one catastrophe to another we simply move on, waiting for yet another crisis.

Alas! Away from this land of the pure, our godforsaken country, many a places rule of law prevails and institutions take precedence over individuals. Our problems multiply because the

guardians of the law and the lawmakers are the biggest lawbreakers of the country. Disregard of law has developed into an attitude and a fine art. This is by far one of the biggest problems of our country. It seems quite obvious and simple to identify but is rather complex in nature.

If we were to analyze the whole situation in order to trace the history of rot many pointers become apparent. Starting with oft-repeated interruptions in the democratic process and the fatal romance with khaki that this country has had followed by the feudal/tribal mindset politicians and leadership devoid of vision coupled with inept bureaucracy and criminal abuse of lower tiers of the governance especially the police and the judiciary department etc.

But the greatest damage has been done by millions of political postings, un-lawful recruitment of inept and unfit people in almost every department by almost every regime that grabbed the power reins in the country. Knowingly we strangle merit in the garb of quota system. After systematically eliminating quality from every segment, every system and every tier of the governance do we have the right to complain? Obviously in such a bizarre situation when national interest is compromised with such ease people automatically behave like parasites. Thus we see the near-collapse of almost all the institutions carried out by inept politicians and their own inept staff members. They say that Railways and Wapda is eaten by Railways and Wapda people and PIA is destroyed by their own staff and so on. Amazingly we see everything but fail to notice what is wrong.

Today our troubles have worsened to such a degree that the “not guilty party” is becoming harder to distinguish. Putting it in simplistic terms for the sake of argument there are various entities and different levels that form a system. Take for example a ‘problem situation’, where there is an *offender* and the one who has been *offended*. Then there are the *law enforcement agencies*, *bureaucracy* and the *law courts*. Above all we have the *lawmakers* in the assemblies. There has to be at least one party, which is upright and innocent so that justice can be done. Everyday we are confronted with a situation when each one of the entities is involved in some wrongdoing or another. Hard to swallow but some openly proclaim that everyone here has a price-tag and is up for sale. The breakdown of law and order has come to such a degree that the entire fabric of the society has become affected. We now ask as to “who will guard our guards”.

The second reason for this article is the unfortunate death of two young girls waiting on a bus stop by reckless bus drivers in Karachi recently. Although the rot that we have touched upon shows in the entire country but nowhere has it crossed all its limits except in Karachi. Perhaps Karachi is the only megalopolis in the world where the daily urban tragedies and casualties simply continue to wreck our minds ceaselessly. When the automobile theft drops to a less than twenty a day we feel that the law and order situation has greatly improved. When the crime calendar is less busy we think that good days have arrived. Yet everyday the newspapers bring to your doorstep so much disgust and shame that one is left dumbfounded. But this temporary stress is only for a select few, who start their day with a newspaper. It appears that even this tiny minority has lost its sensitivity, as very aptly put by the great journalist ABS Jafri, that “we have even lost the sense of loss and grief”. It doesn’t take long before we take the daily dose of bloodshed as a natural consequence of our own urban mismanagement and continue with our daily routine.

The real tragedy is that the loss of these innocent lives by murdering bus drivers and subsequent editorials, letters and articles will again become a thing of the past. Doesn’t it happen almost everyday? We seldom have enough time to actually feel the grief or even assess the gravity of the situation let alone sympathizing with the parents. One girl was the only child of the parents and other was preparing for the first day in College. Even bigger tragedy is that many more innocent

citizens have been killed on a daily basis by reckless driving since that day. The transport mafia has condemned the arrest of the criminal bus drivers, have struck once; maybe will strike again to paralyze this mega city. We know that any group can organize and take this city hostage and have their demands met. But haven't we all seen this road before?

It doesn't take a committee of intellectuals or think tanks to figure out that one of the main causes of agony to the citizens is the failed law enforcement and the agencies. The torturous 'thana' culture hurts more than the crime itself. The enforcement agencies are now commonly equated as extortion agencies. My illiterate driver tells me "Isn't it the police who let all these mad drivers play havoc with our lives while they are busy elsewhere extorting money from the poor people". "Har cheez main in ka haath hota hai", they are involved in everything.

Ask any Karachiite and he will share with you the long and sad story of citizens' sufferings with a bleeding heart. Each one of us, in this city of millions has been directly affected by the criminal activity, which has now turned into a thriving industry. Believe it or not almost all chemists, petrol pumps and bakeries have been looted in broad day light more than twice. Even Doctors clinics have not been spared. Karachi has all the material for a separate Guinness book of records. Dacoits, robbers, thieves have a field day in any area of their choice in Karachi and they kill the grieved party if they have to. Police connivance is an old story now. As a matter of routine the grieved people stay away from the law enforcing agencies because contacting them is the beginning of an ordeal worse than the crime meted out to them. Majority of criminals live quite normally amongst us because they never get caught. It is quite a dreadful feeling.

Yes, we have mountains of problems, which are complex in nature and have no clear-cut solutions, but somehow most of our problems somehow link to one thing or point towards the near collapse of the law and law enforcing departments. People believe that half of our miseries and problems will be solved once the law enforcing agencies start to function as they are designed to. Just by shifting responsibility, changing names and designations is not going to do the trick. But the present government has shown some positive signs in many troubled areas, so this is the time for a radical change. Until such time when the system will be changed, a temporary but radical solution is needed to provide a relief to the people on a war footing. A friend of mine suggested that 'we need someone to police our police'. He went further, jokingly, that while we are busy selling our silver abroad we should sublet out police stations to a better police like that of Germany. This gora sahib in uniform will refuse to recognize the official or the non-official offenders.

The day we find the law has been equally applied to all, everything will start to fall in place. The day we find that no one is up for sale, starting from a traffic constable right up to the highest official and that justice can be available; things will automatically start to change for good. I told my friend that this suggestion borders on compromising the national sovereignty but perhaps we could achieve the same goal by creating special monitoring teams of senior citizens and senior army officers permanently stationed with the SHO's. Again leaning on the Khaki will raise a lot of criticism but do we have a solution?

I feel that we would never be able to solve our problems if we do not appreciate that it is this combination of (newly developed) general contempt of law by everyone and dysfunctional law/law enforcement departments that has done us all and the answer lies nowhere except Rule of law. Period.

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