

35-Years Of Crime In Bangladesh : Socio-Economic Implications

—Salahuddin Ahmed

AS far back as March 23, 1964 I wrote an article entitled "Fifteen Years' of Crime in East Pakistan (1948-62)" published in the Pakistan Observer, incorporated in a Book entitled "Studies in Juvenile Delinquency and Crime in East Pakistan" published by the College of Social Welfare & Research Centre, Dhaka in April, 1966.

These 15 years' crime figures were compiled from respective annual Police Administration reports. Thanks to the concerned authorities for these reports, allowing for certain inevitable time lag, these are still being published and students of Social Sciences, particularly those of Criminology, Sociology and Social Welfare have these statistics for their studies and research and for whatever conclusions they may like to draw from them.

Reproduced herewith from above references:

Number of cases reported to

Former Defence Secretary, Govt. of Bangladesh

Police between 1948 to 1962 in East Pakistan.

Year	No. of cases reported.
1948	69,881
1949	67,231
1950	68,212
1951	63,827
1952	58,892
1953	59,678
1954	56,877
1955	58,678
1956	67,102
1957	74,257
1958	70,895
1959	74,355
1960	70,837
1961	59,991
1962	57,210

(From Studies in Juvenile Delinquency and Crime in East Pakistan by Salahuddin Ahmed).

Since 1947-48 the then East Pakistan's population of only 42 million, in 1983 reportedly stands at 90-93 million. In addition to more than doubling up of the population, urbanisation, industrialisation and economic development however

chequered, stunted and disturbed these may have been, because of liberation war and lately drying up of foreign assistance and erosion of purchasing power due to fall in the real value of our resources and rise in the cost of import which in other words may be called adverse terms of trade: there has been after all some development. Interior areas in the country side have been opened up more road transport vehicles ply and people's mobility have increased manifold. In addition to the above socio-economic background, development of the infrastructure, unemployment, recession, inflation and high cost of living, etc. have added significant burden and economic distress on the common men. A large majority of the population are living below the absolute poverty line (According to an erst while Finance Minister, more than 80% people live below poverty line). Let me quote here from a very recent paper presented at the 6th Annual Conference of the Bangladesh Economic Association in October, 1983, a paper entitled "Strategy for Rural Development Projects" presented by Rural Development & Institution Division, Planning Commission.

"Share of income of the top 5 per cent of the households increased from 13 per cent in 1968-69 to 16 per cent in 1973. 74 and then very sharply to 29 per cent in 1976-77 while that for the bottom 20 per cent decreased from 10.4 per cent to 7.2 per cent and then 5.7 per cent in 1976-77. While the average per capita income has not appreciably increased the income for lower 40 per cent of the households has gone down over the years. This is a very serious situation and if allowed to continue will further erode away the purchasing power of the vast rural poor finally leading to a disastrous situation. Polarisation and pauperisation are more intense in this case."

I would like to pose here a question to the social thinkers in Bangladesh: why with all

indicators pointing towards a continuous and inexorable rise in the crime rate, nevertheless, crime figures in the then East Pakistan and present Bangladesh do not seem to conform to any well recognised pattern. Around 1948-50 crime reported was in the neighbourhood of 68,000 : crime

reported to police between 1957-59 was in the neighbourhood of 73,74,000. But in 1953, 1954, 1955 and in 1962 these were near about 67,000. I have collected more recent crime figures and these are appended in the various statements (II and III) below. Any (Continued on page 9.)

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casual observer will be entitled to ... how come despite all metamorphosis in the socio-economic scene serious crime for the years 1959-70 vide statement II has remained not only static but in many

cases has registered a decline despite increase in population and other crime generating potentials.

STATEMENT II

Statement of serious crime for the years 1959-70

Years	Dacoity	Robbery	Burglary	Theft	Murder	Rioting	Total crime reported under classes I-V
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1959	923	827	22,566	25,580	749	4,329	56,931
1960	944	899	21,382	15,322	880	4,579	56,788
1961	761	842	16,570	13,169	1,018	4,965	49,400
1962	1,094	961	16,813	11,999	1,012	5,034	48,439
1963	1,131	864	16,838	12,560	1,007	5,266	49,440
1964	1,080	972	14,929	11,782	913	6,050	46,301
1965	980	868	15,811	13,241	994	5,906	44,562
1966	1,166	1,018	16,842	14,715	1,074	6,487	44,562
1967	1,197	880	16,050	14,537	1,138	7,081	52,577
1968	1,189	808	15,728	14,209	1,103	7,713	52,441
1969	1,339	1,020	17,684	16,781	1,350	8,714	59,222
1970	1,323	1,077	16,540	15,605	1,262	8,773	59,005
O.A. (1964-68)	11,224	889.2	15,868.0	13,696.4	2,834.4	6,647.4	50,824.4

STATEMENT III

YEAR	Dacoity	Robbery	Burglary	Theft	Murder	Rioting	Others	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1973	5084	3949	12754	12267	2387	7823	19344	63608
1974	4737	3911	14586	14806	2572	8764	24049	73421
1975	2778	2853	12922	12961	2409	8487	20541	62951
1976	2265	2430	12615	14322	1843	9249	89638	63656
1977	1669	1985	12734	14078	1791	10402	19498	62158
1978	1282	1697	11570	15016	1638	12029	21576	64800
1979	1222	1422	9273	10197	1602	8422	30648	62986
1980	1064	1235	7719	9431	1991	7910	28905	58151
1981	1189	1272	6795	8398	1882	8450	28913	56671
1982	880	996	8000	9398	1769	5454	30122	56619

Statement IV below which gives number of reported cognisable cases and estimated population and the rate of crime per 1 lac of population between 1973 and 1982 brings out this aspect more poignantly. In 1974 with total number of cognisable cases at 73425

gives the rate of crime per 1 lac of population at 96.55. This is apparently one of the lowest rate of crime in any part of the world, not only the developed part where the crime rate is indeed very high but also for a developing country. But

the more astonishing thing is that since 1974 onwards with the crime rate at 96.55 it has continued to climb down perceptibly with total number of cognisable cases standing at 56,619 giving a rate of crime of 1 lac of population at 63.31.

One would be quick to jump to the conclusion that in spite of abject poverty, unemployment, distress further aggravated by serious scarcity of food, food grains due to draught or flood, this must be one of the most glaring example of something happening in Bangladesh which is completely against the world trend. Some affected people do not bother

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STATEMENT IV

Total number of reported cognisable cases and estimated population 1973-1982 with rate of crime per one lac of population.

Year	Estimated population in million.	Total number of cognisable cases.	Rate of crime per one lac of population
1973	74.26	63608	85.62
1974	76.05	73425	96.55
1975	78.04	62951	80.66
1976	79.88	63656	79.58
1977	81.76	62158	76.07

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