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Millennium Development Goals

Following eight goals are set as MDG for the LDCs, which according to the author will lead to better Bangladesh, and subsequent result is a better world to live in.

- MDG-1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- MDG-2. Achieve universal primary education
- MDG-3. Promote gender equality and empower woman
- MDG-4. Reduce child mortality
- MDG-5. Improve maternal health
- MDG-6. Combat HIV / AID
- MDG-7. Ensure environmental sustainability
- MDG-8. Develop global partnership for development

Let us discuss the first point. Bangladesh has about 25% population who live under 1.00 \$ a day i.e. living below poverty line. Now if we want to raise the income by just another dollar we will need 1.368 Trillion dollar every year, which is unachievable in every sense. So, if we run after a target, which cannot be achieved, and even if achieved it will not radically alleviate the poverty level, it is a futile exercise to be undertaken.

Instead, we must try to contain our population. One child per family should be the slogan and put our available resources to contain the population growth around zero. If we can maintain this quantum of population then only we can plan for development. Otherwise all development efforts will not be visible, as pressure of a growing number of people will eat away everything. So instead of poverty eradication we should focus our attention to population control.

MDG-2 i.e. achieve universal primary education is the most important goal for the LDCs. This is important because most of other goals are directly or indirectly connected with the success and failure of this very particular goal. If the nation is educated 1 mean educated not literate, MDG-3, 4, 5 & 6 will be automatically achieved which the nation will get as bonus. An educated girl will have enough knowledge to look after her own health and the health of her baby, this will reduce



frame.

child mortality, she will manage her home and surroundings which will establish her authority thereby empowering her not only in her home but also in the society.

So the government should mobilise all the resources and allocate enough funds so that this is achieved within the shortest possible time. To achieve this the government can involve NGOs, local administration, politicians, and philanthropists, Armed forces, NRBs. Also employ best of the people without considering other criteria. We can go without having beef and reduce the consumption of other things but we should be mentally ready to invest most of our resources in this sector. The primary education should be for eight years of schooling and the syllabi should include besides reading, writing and arithmetic, basic health care, agriculture and economics. The government should chart out a realistic time frame and it is certain that the nation will start feeling the change much before the end of the time

Next we need to pay attention to MDG-7 i.e. ensure environmental sustainability. The first job is to make the people know the danger of environmental degradation. A driver may not be aware of the harmful affects of honking the horn to himself and others. So, a massive educative drive through electronic and print media, seminars, prescribe books for schools, bill boards and other available means should be undertaken. The next step is imposition of penalty for the defaulters and that too a heavy one. Because they will always be few unscrupulous people who will not mind to destroy millions of others to save a few pennies.

Bangladesh with its acute resource constraints should not invest in all eight MDGs and achieve nothing. Instead one or two items should be targeted and all resources channeled to achieve cent percent result and target those one or two which will have overflow benefits. I have suggested the two i.e. MDG-2 and 7, but others may differ and come up with better suggestions.

Commodore AMA Alam (Retd.) BN, New DOHS, Dhaka

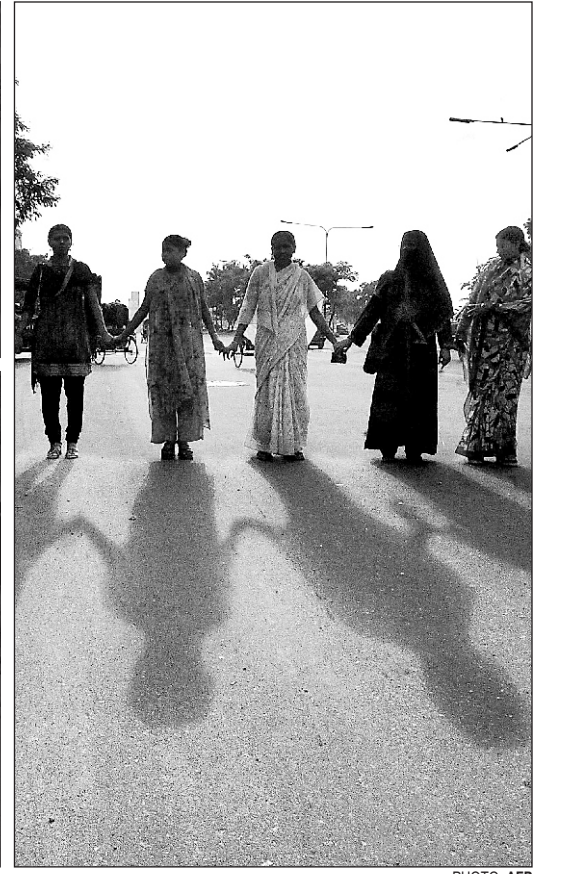


PHOTO: AFP

Students and politics

The students of Bangladesh are not fools. They fought against the British and Pakistanis. Now, they know how to fight against evil concepts and forces. Hopefully, they will choose the right path to achieve their ultimate political objective. The political objective should be liberation from all corrupt ideas and forces. Those student politicians who know their political objective very clearly cannot be influenced by the politicians. However, there are a few students who run after money and it happens only because of the corrupt political system.

Ahmed Riasat Hasan
Notre Dame College, Dhaka

An open letter to bin Laden

Do you know what degree of shame, abomination, misery and wretchedness is being heaped on the innocent and peace-following Muslims all over the world because of this so-called and self-styled Jihad of yours?

Do you know how many innocent, unsullied people are being butchered as a result of this professed Jihad of yours? How many children are being orphaned and women being widowed precisely for the same reason?

And do you know, killing one faultless human being is like killing the entire humanity. You must definitely know that you will surely be held accountable for this bloodshed. Will you, then, be able to face the Almighty? I challenge, no!

Then, why have you become an agent of some hidden hand? Why are you taking the responsibility of the murder of entire humanity to yourself? Why are you dragging the Muslims down? Why are you demeaning Islam by presenting it as a terrorist religion? Acting like this, which religion are you rendering a great service to? Are you raising the standard of Islam high or you (if you reflect on it) are causing the heads of the followers of the path of the righteous bow down with shame in front of the

entire humanity.

Today most of the Muslims believe that you are not a true Muslim but planted by the enemies to destroy the image of Islam.

For God's sake, take recourse to sense, and announce a ceasefire at once so that the inhabitants of the world may be introduced to that divine aspect of the Muslims at whose hands no soul suffer, whose words and actions bear no tinge of dichotomy, whose speech, when uttered, conveys to others the message of love and protection, whose thoughts, when thought, are devoted to the well being of others. Herein lies the true success, and herein lies the victory of the true religion of Allah.

S.A. Rehman
Pakistani Peace Activist, Pakistan

Madrasah students

The country is passing through a very crucial and critical period. The religious extremists backed by their foreign mentors and financiers are pushing hard to impose their brand of retrograde, oppressive, regressive, anti-progressive Islam on the people of Bangladesh. Hitherto benign madrasah students are playing an important role in executing the evil and devilish designs.

The post liberation era of Bangladesh witnessed emergence of a rich class among the Bengalis who are ruthless, self-seeking and show off their wealth shamelessly. Their commitment to the society, community and nation is minimal. The rich and poor difference has increased tremendously. In our country people have become rich overnight. This factor has added to the helplessness, frustrations among many hard-pressed people. They were ever increasingly drawn to religion to find solace. They were thus exploited by the religion based political parties and are being used as pawns.

Social commitment of the rich will have to be ensured. They need to contribute a part of their income towards a common fund for emancipation of the poor. The bottom line is that wealth has to be shared

with the less wealthy so that they do not revolt or go astray, and in turn harm the rich people.

A part of the 'madrasah' students can be de-regimented, a part can be easily convinced back to the 'sane fold' but a hardcore group has to be reined in so that they do not replicate and act like computer virus.

We urge the government to mobilise all its forces to root out the evils.

TKM, Dhaka

Culture of toll collection

The regime is hardly taking any concrete or visible step for containing toll collection, which continues today in spite of the presence of Rab and suicide bombers.

Money and wealth has become the final arbitrator in the modern philosophy of life. What is more worrying is that the miscreants, controlled by the hidden godfathers (politically protected?), are in their early 20s (similar for the suicide bombers).

The young and future generation is being eroded of moral and ethical values. The indirect effects on the society would last for a long time. Get the roots right. It is different from trimming the branches.

Nothing works even during the normal period; not to speak of the pre election time prevailing now. This is the time to make compromises against national interest the addiction for returning to power, as spelled out by the *netas*. Good governance is not possible when temptation hovers underneath pious faces. The have-nots cannot rule honourably!

The election manifestoes are a farcical time and again. The development projects siphon off 50 pc of the budget through unfair means (the majority of DCC projects are non-essential). Politics is a public service or business?

Then there is the question of monitoring public feedback by the regime! It is a non-starter since 1972. Conclusion: politics

does not work in the LDCs.

Abdud Khan, Dhaka

Chaotic

Reading the news analyses in the morning papers is boring and confusing. The regime talks in one way; the opposition quite opposite; the public feel differently; and the analysts are multi-coloured. Where is the national trend? This year December 16 is recalled with mixed feelings; we perhaps need a second liberation movement. Oust the politicians and start afresh, because politics as a tool has failed, and Bangladesh is being dubbed abroad as a virtual failed state.

One point is clear enough: Politics is not working normally in Bangladesh. The political leadership is worse; it lacks boldness and innovativeness; refusing to come out of the groove. It is moral timidity. Politics has failed as a tool. We need another message and medium for governance in Dhaka. The recurring failure of political science is not surprising in an LDC. The question today is not what the two main parties can do they have undone a lot of good works.

Unless national consensus prevails, the mass would rise to the occasion; with terrible losses. It is avoidable. How? The so-called national leaders should tell us. But there is no time for telling-it is time for action, immediate and instant action. This is not forthcoming due to lack of agreement. Hence change orchestra leaders. Who wants to surrender power and gaddi?

The situation is similar to the unauthorised cluster of high-rise buildings in the metropolis. Nobody is listening to anybody. Defiance is the style of the day. Wait for the earthquake or tsunami, political or natural.

A Husnain, Dhaka

'Photo session'

This letter is in complement to the letter titled "Photo session" by Syed Badrul Haque, Lalmatia, Dhaka published on January 5,

2005. I completely agree with you that the focus of the event should be the award winners not the power elites. I recall a similar incidence from the past. About 10 years ago, a reputed organisation arranged an award-winning ceremony for all the first-class-first students of the University of Dhaka. I was one of the recipients of the gold medals they distributed during a ceremony held at the Sonargaon Hotel. In the big ballroom of the hotel, they reserved a space in one corner for the awardees while the podium was occupied by the chief guest (a minister), special guest (another minister) and probably 10 other leaders of the organisation. In the front row of the audience were the families of those who were on the podium. Throughout the whole event, members of that organisation greeted each other, chatted with the power elites and influential members surrounded the chief guest most of the times. However, nobody seemed to care for those for whom the event was organised neither a single greeting, nor a simple "Hello" until towards the end of the event when the announcer called the awardees by name to accept the medal.

This culture needs to be changed.
Abdus S. Wahed, Ph.D.
Department of Biostatistics
University of Pittsburgh

Getting out of Iraq

Anyone reading Fareed Zakaria's article "Panic Is Not the Solution" can clearly see that he talks about what needs to be done to ensure that the US military leaves Iraq in a better state than it is in today. Mr. Ehsan Mallik wrote about the issues surrounding the US involvement in Iraq and how it was illegal and incorrect and that Mr. Zakaria is confusing the readers and is confused about the entire issue. In actuality there is no confusion. In the article Fareed Zakaria clearly affirms that issues surrounding the invasion are there and everyone is aware of that but he also states that those are in the past and in no way

will change the future unless something is done at present.

Yes, 180 countries in the United Nations opposed the US decision to get into Iraq but since then many of these countries have also pledged support in one form or another. The deed was done. No WMD was found and no one is covering or denying that. This has become a broken record and no matter how much we talk about it the present circumstances do not and will not change.

At this time if Mr. Mallik and others like him think that the clear choice in this conflict is for the US to get out of Iraq then they are simply consigning an entire nation to a fate worse than they have already been dealt. The worst-case scenario is that the US military can drop everything in Iraq and simply leave the country. This will leave a country in a state of anarchy with no particular group or people clearly able to take control without proper infrastructure, with religious issues between the Sunni and Shiite sects alive and worse a haven for terrorism. I think it is obvious now that terrorism is out there and it has to be dealt with. The present situation in Bangladesh is proof enough that we have a cancer in our society and it needs to be fought. Instead of constantly trying to beat down the US for what they have done in the past I think it is our responsibility as members of the world to actually help in establishing a method that leaves Iraq and the Iraqi people in a better situation than they are in today.

The gist of Fareed Zakaria's article is that the US military stationed in Iraq over the last few years have more or less maintained the status quo within the country. The strategy and the commands given to them from the White House were not geared towards a successful exit strategy for the US i.e. the Iraqi people would be left in a better situation than they are in now and when they were under Saddam Hussein's regime. He also stated that the strategies being formulated currently will result in improvements and this needs to be continued so that more and more control is slowly given over to the Iraqi soldiers and the people. The dysfunction among the elected politicians needs to be ironed out and with good strategic initiatives the US can finally exit.

Zeenat Z. Syed
Atlanta, US

BRTA

On September 24, 2005 you carried a report on how a section of people, in connivance with some BRTA employees, had defrauded a huge amount of money deposited in Post Offices attached to BRTA on account of Road Tax and other fees for different type of vehicles. Being a victim myself I met a number of senior BRTA officials in this connection. Frankly speaking, I received the cooperation of the senior officials though unfortunately I could not recover any amount, as my deposit was reportedly not done properly. But I am still confused as to how the Tax Token could be issued against an improper deposit and if it should be a fake one, how any of the Traffic Sergeants who checked the same along with other papers on the road, at least more than once during the year, could not detect it. However, I have had to pay the fees all over again with penalty of almost equivalent amount.

In course of discussion with the concerned officials, as also from my experience of making the deposits myself this year, it appeared to me that the existing procedure of receiving the deposits and issue of tax tokens need to be changed to ensure flawless

deposit and for saving the depositors from tremendous harassment. Presently people have to queue up in long lines at the BRTA counters where the disposal rate is very slow because the concerned man at the counter has to receive the money, make a number of entries, issue token and perform other works in connection with the deposit. Thereafter he passes the papers to the Post Master for his signature. While this process goes on, people at the long queue keep standing for their turn. Because of such a lengthy process, quite a good number of people have to go back at the end of the day as the counter is closed at the fixed time. Besides, after waiting for several hours in the queue when one finally reaches the counter he may be told that his papers are not in order which can however be brought to order if he would agree to satisfy the man otherwise. Because of such harassment and time-consuming procedure, people are rather compelled to take help of the

agents who move around the place and would invariably approach you as soon as you enter the BRTA premises. The large-scale incidents of fraud could occur due to an unholy alliance between these agents and a section of BRTA employees.

A common complaint that I heard at different stages of my contact in BRTA is that there is a tremendous shortage of manpower. This is possibly true because BRTA has reportedly a total strength of less than 300 for its all offices throughout the country. May be there is truth in it. But even such manpower could be more effective if proper system could be introduced for various functions conducted by them.

So an effective system should be in place to improve the efficiency of BRTA and redress the sufferings of the taxpayers. The authorities concerned may look into the matter urgently.

M.A. Zahid, One-mail

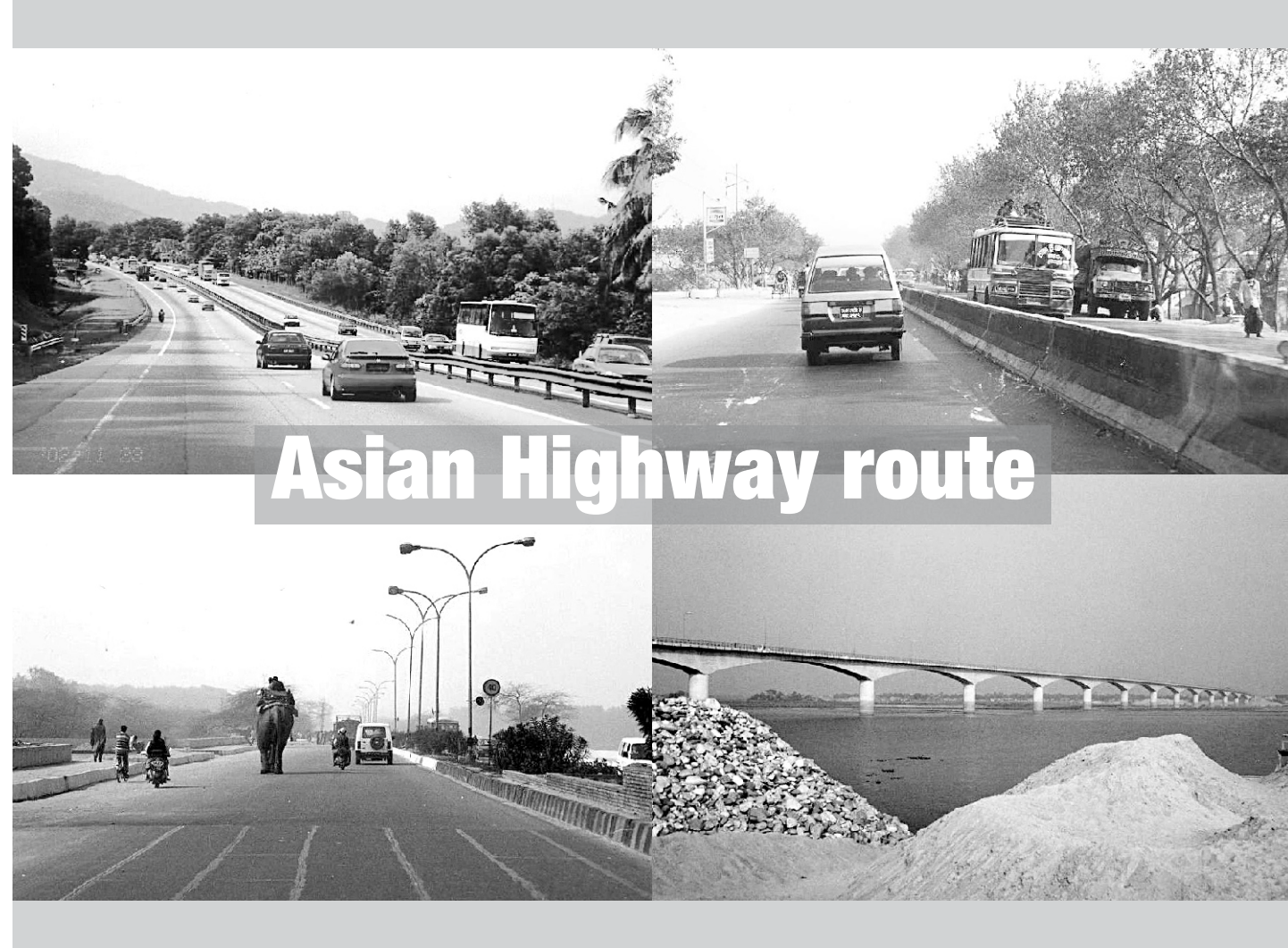
SAFTA



South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), which is to be effective from January 1, 2006, will help the Saarc member countries to start free trade among them. But this will not bring any benefit for the least developed countries like Bangladesh. As the trade liberalisation programme will not apply to the sensitive product list, it will not basically bring any benefit for our country. Our main exporting item is ready-made garments (RMG). If it is in the list of sensitive product of India, what will be exported? It is expected that India will allow RMG if Bangladesh imports the raw materials from it. From this condition India is doing business again. As much RMG will be exported to India as the raw materials must be imported from it. India has made a list of sensitive products, which includes 763 items for LDCs. If tariff barrier is imposed on such huge products, what is the meaning of free trade? This is beneficial for India and this will benefit only India.

India is occupying our market regarding all products from cosmetics to daily necessities. Most of the products are coming through black market. Somehow India has occupied our markets and through this so-called free trade they will occupy our market legally.

Taslim Hasan Sabu
University of Dhaka



Asian Highway route

Some articles/letters have appeared in national dailies deploring the stand of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) on the issue. GoB refused to endorse the Asian Highway route passing through Benapol-Sylhet-Assam-Monipur-Myanmar. Bangladesh prefers the AH route through Teknaf to Myanmar on consideration of route kilometerage. The distance between Dhaka and Yangon by road if passing through Assam and Monipur will increase by 800km. Who will bother to send cargo from Dhaka and Chittagong areas to Yangon and for that matter to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore by paying transport costs for extra 800km?

M.A. Alim, MCIT
Agrabad, Chittagong