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Pakistan scene

If there had been any laxity towards development in Balochistan, only a few Sardars were responsible for it. If there had been any negligence towards development in Sindh, none but a few Wadeiry are responsible for it. If there has been any negligence towards development in NWFP, its corrupt and self-centred leadership is responsible for it. If there has been some development works in urban Punjab, the credit goes to its better leadership.

There was no militancy anywhere in Balochistan when there were no development projects in the region. But now when hectic efforts are on to bring Balochistan to the mainstream of Pakistani life and people are enjoying their due share of development (rather more than their due share) - some of the Sardars are trying to neutralise the development process for their own benefits.

Gwadar related mega projects have actually spoiled the dreams of the egocentric Sardars.

Aftab Alam
Advocate (High Court), Swat, Pakistan

PM flies to Kuwait

The demise of anyone, be it an Emir or an ordinary citizen, is always saddening, although as a mortal being, it is also an inescapable fact of life. When an ordinary person dies, the near and dear ones condole the loss of life. When the head of a state dies, world leaders express deep sympathy and offer condolences to the state that lost its leader. It enhances world solidarity and global harmony. The Emir of Kuwait passed away, and our leaders appropriately expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the family of the Emir and to the people of Kuwait.

However, our PM decided to take an extra mile and fly to Kuwait herself to offer condolences. According to the news report, 'A large number of heads of state and government from all over the world will also be going to offer their deep condolences at the demise of Emir of Kuwait.' I do not know what other world leaders are going to Kuwait, but I would assume the middle eastern leaders, having close proximity to Kuwait would be there in person to offer condolences. Was it really necessary for our PM to travel such a distance? Couldn't a dignitary of the PM be sent instead?

Zubair Sadeque
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US

Pakistan-India relations

India and Pakistan were always engaged in rivalry.

However, it is good news that they have been able to make progress on the way to making peace.

SMR Karim
Jahangirnagar University

NGOs and sex workers

NGOs working for the benefit of sex workers and their children employ a large number of young men and women to work with the sex workers inside or outside brothel areas. These young men and women are hard-working people and they are dealing with people from the high-risk group with whom not many people in our society want to work. They face problems in work, which doesn't match the problems of others who work in our NGO community. People don't have a positive attitude towards sex workers or those who work for them. Reflection of their negative attitude is observed in their treatment of those who work for the sex workers i.e. the NGO workers. To work for this vulnerable group, these NGO workers need to sacrifice a lot and show courage. But many of us don't know much about their sufferings or sacrifice. Let's have a look at the problems faced by NGO workers who work for the sex workers.

Workers belonging to active NGOs visit brothel areas on a regular basis for their work. Not only community people, sometimes members from their own families oppose their working with sex workers. The women workers face more problems than men. The problem is acute if the worker is a woman and unmarried. They face problems while getting married. There are examples which show that some women were not able to marry in time or never married only because of working with sex workers. Most of the brothels in our country are situated in the middle of the business places where other members of their family or the people of the society they belong to can watch them. Because of their familiar-

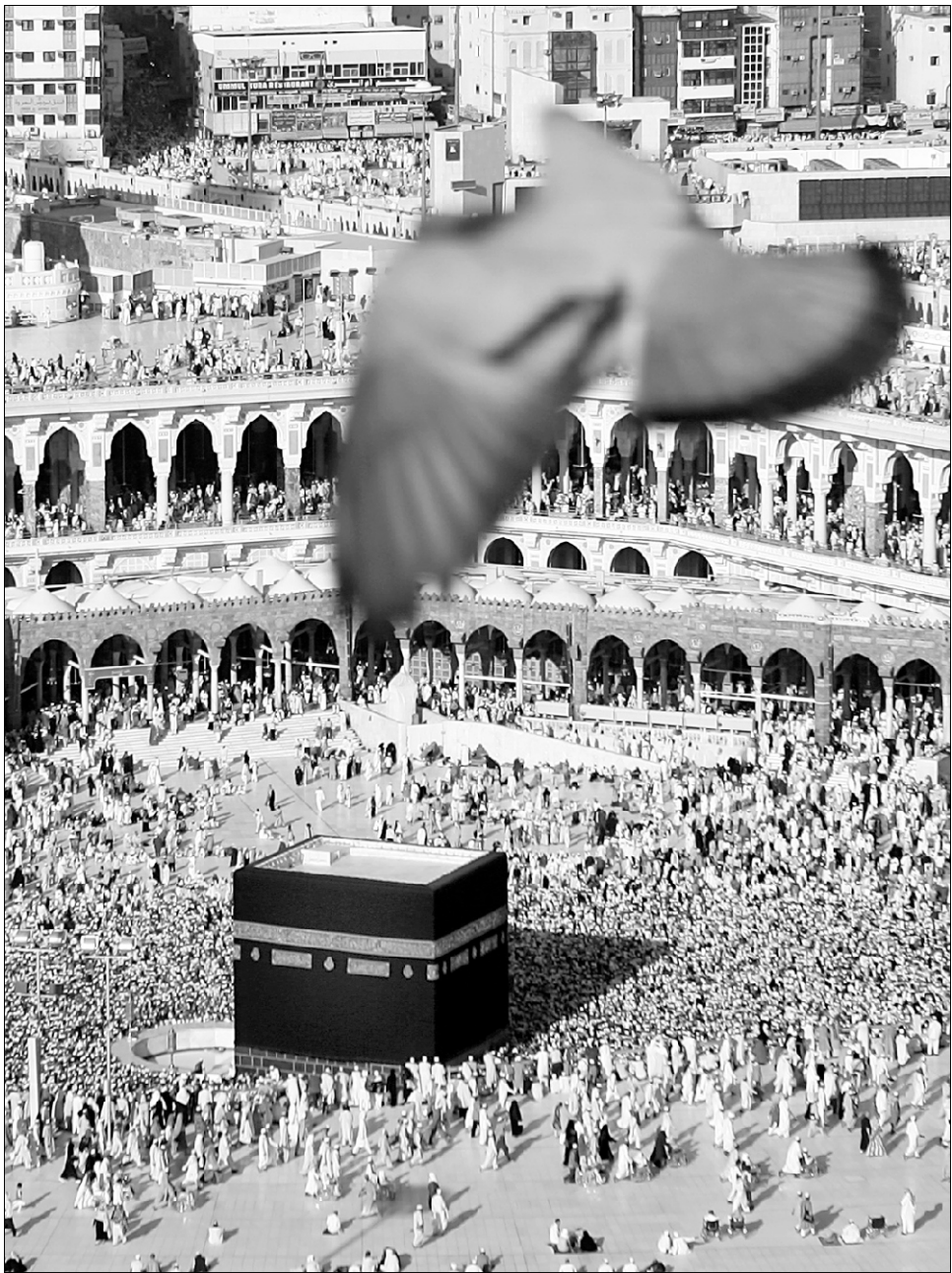


PHOTO: AFP

Experience of a pilgrim

My friend went around the Mina city mainly to see how the Muslims represent themselves, who came from all over the world. As he puts it, "They very much represent the conditions of Muslims today. Throwing the bottles around them, littering the place with wastes and disposables."

While we were walking towards the Jamarats (Satan pillars), we found many people carrying their (all) belongings on their shoulders, some of them carrying small children on one shoulder and their bag on the other. Some even dared to push their old mother in the wheel chair.

It was unbearable thrash from every direction, one compatriot next to us in perfect Arabic and English boasted "I just saved (as if he is the saviour) a family." My companion (a Turk) asked, then why are you pushing me? One after another three women fell down around us, water bottle in my hand and my wife's, we helped two of them to regain their consciousness. Crowds were very manageable and all of us threw

our symbolic stones towards the 'Satan' from a close range and returned.

We did not see any security on our way, few only outside the stream of crowds, unlike the other days when they formed line to discipline the pebble throwers. I was relaxed and thanking Allah that it went peacefully. But my Turkish companion received message that 100 people were killed in the stampede (the push we sustained), though we didn't see any dead but saw the ambulances.

Next we heard 'Al Jazeera' reporting three hundred killed. I wanted to know their nationalities. But no one could answer my question.

With a tragic memory I wish all the Kings and Sultans, Emirs and other rulers represent their faith in true spirit, so that it is represented in Mina also and lives of the pilgrims are not endangered.

MM Haque, Jeddah, K.S.A

up, education, counselling etc. inside brothel areas so that the girls don't need to go out of brothels. These leaders have a good link with local influential, sometimes even with people in the local administration.

For rehabilitation of sex workers, coordinated efforts are needed. Finally, it has to be admitted that not only the sex workers but also the people who work for them are the victims of attitudinal problem of our community people. Their work should not be considered a simple one, neither should they be

Lessons of Eid-ul-Azha

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, we sacrifice animals. But we never bother to think that the idea is to sacrifice the beast within ourselves and become true human beings.

We must strive hard to attain that objective.

Zishan, Lalmatia, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

classified as similar to other service providers because they are dealing with a specific group of people with whom not many people of our society want to be involved.

Syed Taposh
UNDP Assisted Project, Jessore

Again a poor decision

I'm shocked to learn about the decision of not letting Bangladesh be a part of Asian Highway Network by the present government. As far as I can recall, though I was a student of class VIII then, this political party while in power earlier took another such imprudent decision by not letting Bangladesh be a part of the fibre cable network on the plea of insecurity about secret national information. Fortunately, on this term they haven't revoked the decision of the immediate past political regime in power to connect Bangladesh to the information super highway. But I'm surprised about the present decision as Bangladesh is already having the infrastructure to get connected to the Asian Highway, which is likely to connect Asia with Europe, and the only requirement was upgrading. I don't understand why our governments can't foresee even the near future. Improvement of communication is the major concern of the present time. If one country is not caring about this improvement, it is going to lag behind others. There's no way to escape from this reality. The plea, that if a part of the Asian Highway Bangladesh would become a transit for Indian goods, for current refusal is ridiculous, because Bangladeshi market is already flooded with Indian goods, and a number of present and past lawmakers make a part of their livelihood by importing goods from India.

Bangladesh has to bear the loss of this unwise decision, that's why I truly regret this.

M.M.A. Sayeed Rushd
University of Alberta, Canada

BTB decision

BTB recently announced their decision to include 15 more countries in the flat rate of Taka 7.5 calling framework. This service has been extremely successful since its introduction in early 2004 and will now include the calls to China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Brunei, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Spain, Greece and Austria in addition to the earlier countries - United States, Canada, England, France, Italy, Germany, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

I am surprised that none of the Middle East or Gulf countries are included in the programme where most of the migrant Bangladeshi workers are residing. They are also remitting their hard-earned salaries to Bangladesh boosting our foreign currency reserve to record levels. It would only be a nice gesture to them and their families at home to offer the flat rate service to the Middle East and this will surely give a boost to BTB revenues as well.

Lastly, why is the government not taking any initiative to bring

PUT THE BLAME WHERE IT'S DUE

Every Eid we see headlines in newspapers about road accidents with the number of deaths going up every year. According to studies,

Bangladesh has the highest number of fatalities per km travelled. In news headlines, and in the statements of the police, the blame is always placed squarely upon the driver. However, while the driver bears a huge responsibility for these accidents we cannot ignore the role that law enforcement plays in this situation.

Our law enforcement authorities turn a blind eye to every manner of hazardous driving that goes on in the streets and highways. They fail to keep dangerous and reckless drivers and poorly maintained vehicles off the streets. Then they turn around and blame the drivers when an accident happens. It is their job to prevent such drivers from being in the street in the first place. It is their job to enforce traffic rules to prevent such accidents. While they are busy collecting money from truck drivers, they fail to perform their basic duties.

Thus the police and traffic enforcement authorities should share the blame for the accidents.

Saifuddin Ahmed, Mohammedpur, Dhaka

Internet Telephony into the legal framework? They themselves are availing the facilities to give us this low rate service - and numerous other local and international operators are using that as well.

These companies are thus evading tax for their business and BTB in turn is losing millions of dollars. The government should thus incorporate Internet Telephony into a taxable business framework immediately and enforce regulations to boost its tax and revenue earnings.

Shafiqat
Seattle, USA

Mobile abuse?

increase their subscribers, is it unethical? Does it go against the existing laws?

I think the operators should fight against this.

Naser

One-mail

Right decision

The Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission has just asked mobile phone operators to discontinue free-call facilities late into the night. I strongly support the move by BTRC and commend the government body for the decision.

Many of us may ask: Who has given the BTRC the right to judge

tion projection of 112.84% by 2015 puzzles me. Will kids from other countries come to Bangladesh for primary education by that time? My mind does not want to go beyond 100% educated. The 112.84% by 2015 seems still more a dream since child mortality (goal 4) should be coming down from 69 to 48.1 per 1000! I believe these two goals to the extent is interrelated.

Goal 3: It seems gender equality on education basis was already achieved up to secondary level by 1998-99, so the 2015 goal seems unrealistic in that context! On women empowerment, I cannot define it, however the author leaves it in the realm

Hapless people

Every day we find news of people dying due to cold and cold related diseases all over Bangladesh. It's true that we have no control over Nature, but can't our government ensure that at least no person will die for not having warm clothes, treatment or medi-

cines? We see that mostly old persons and children die from cold. Why? Because their poor health and low resistance do not permit them to fight against this severe cold. It's their ill fate that they are the citizens of such a country where the government does-

n't show an iota of sympathy for them.

Since people are dying in accidents and in unforeseen circumstances, there is perhaps nobody to worry about the hapless victims of cold.

S Yasmin
Lalmatia, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

In a letter sent to all five of Bangladesh's networks, the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission said the young were abusing the "free calls after midnight" offers.

A senior official at the regulator told the BBC they had received scores of complaints from parents.

The rapid expansion of mobile phone use is driving social and economic change in Bangladesh. By the end of last year, Grameen was signing up one million new customers every 40 days. But many Bangladeshis are conservative, particularly when it comes to matters of the heart.

The country's biggest mobile phone operator, GrameenPhone, says it will meet its competitors to try to come up with a joint response.

The phone companies say they are surprised by the order, which the regulator says must be obeyed immediately.

One spokesman has been quoted as saying that if the authorities wish to stop young people meeting each other, by the same logic, fast food restaurants and universities should be shut down, too.

Roland Buerk
BBC News, Dhaka

No free-talk-time

Some sources say that "Free Talk-time" given by different mobile operators is soon going to be stopped. Reason - students are usually taking that opportunity, I should rather say "abusing" this. They are sometimes found sleeping in the class.

My question is - when mobile operators took their licence, was it mentioned that there would not be any "Free Talk-time"? If operators offer different packages including free talk-time to

the morality of the young people of Bangladesh? Well, those who ask this question should ask themselves: will they allow their kids to talk on the phone all night long? I doubt that. The so-called progressive-minded people may say that they will. Why? Because we live in a democratic atmosphere. Fine, if you want an unbridled democracy, go ahead with your kids - allow them whatever you want. But as a parent and as a part of this society, I strongly urge the mobile phone operators to stop these call facilities.

Aparent, Dhaka

MDG facts and fiction

Uninitiated that I am on the mysteries and magic of statistics, Dr. Majumdar's interesting table (DS: Jan 17) raises more questions than answers for me. I am listing some of the questions that crop up; goal and target wise.

Goal 1: It seems that cent percent US\$ 1 per day as basic income above poverty level will be achieved sometimes in the year 2648 as stated. How was the figure arrived at when most recent data (2000) shows deterioration by 3.9% over 1990 figures! Is this fact or fiction or something in between? May be the only way out is if US dollar devalues to say Tk.20 to a dollar, then the projected 2015 goal seems a reality with may be 95% confidence level.

Regarding hunger I do not know the basic definition of hunger on which the data is based. I am often hungry, although I am not below the hunger level. In any case since most of us fast 8% of the days per year, can we ever be hunger free all the time? My simple answer is no, never! This is of course on a theoretical basis and just a guess.

Goal 2: Primary level educa-

of education: seeing that other-wise women are already over-powered if I may guess!

Goal 4: Child mortality goal will be reached this year. Then why not project a challenging goal for year 2015?

Goal 5: Similarly, maternal health goal was achieved in 2003! Shouldn't our year 2015 goal be revised?

Goal 6: HIV/AIDS, Malaria etc. If these goals have been achieved may be ten years back as stated, should not the 2015 goals for prevalence and death be say: 100 and 20 respectively? The goals provided are outdated as such.

Target 10: I wonder with the increase of salinity of our inland water ways creeping up the hinterland and subsoil arsenic spreading can we ever achieve the year 2015 goal? Even the year 2033 estimate seems to be over ambitions and more publicity than reality based.

The sanitation standards not being clearly defined; all the figure work seems anything but guesstimates only!

Frankly, I believe the whole basis behind the figures seems to be rather imaginative than realistic. Issues like gender equality, women empowerment, safe drinking water, sanitation and environmental sustainability need clearer definition before goal setting can be attempted.

I do not know if my observations are logical or wide off the mark. May be more knowledgeable persons can throw light on the matter for our understanding. However without widespread understanding, the work forward and achieving of goals appears to be mere nebulous ideas to me. I wonder what other readers feel about these important national issues!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka