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Inclement winter



We are Bangladeshi and we know that Bangladesh is a developing country. But most of the people are poverty stricken. Some are also helpless and landless. They live under the sky, like roadside, field, and footpath. In this winter season they are suffering most. Because most of them don't have any kind of warm cloths. Children and old men are the most affected ones.

On the other hand, winter is a great joy to the rich, So, it is obviously discrimination between the poor and rich man. But it should never be accepted in an independent country. So, if the rich and patriot show magnanimity and extend their helping hands, we can overcome this problem.

Md. Tanvir Rahman
Walineaj Khan College,
Kishoregonj

Why we talk so much?

I was returning home from abroad, the big aircraft was filled with passengers, except a few Bangla speaking people, all were from different countries. In the long flight I noticed that there was no sound, some passengers were sleeping, and others were watching television, reading books or working on Laptops.

We had to change the plane in a country near Bangladesh. The picture changed, except a few, all the passengers were Bangla speaking. They all started talking loudly and made so much noise that it was just like a fish market. I felt deeply ashamed and disappointed.

In spite of repeated announcements to switch off the mobile phones, I noticed that many passengers started to use their mobile phones before the plane landed, though it was very risky because it could interfere with the electronic devices of the aircraft.

So, I had to ask myself, why we talk so much?
Nurjahan
Chittagong

Attractive figures

The bell is tolling in the data processing temple at the specialists' level. An independent NGO, specialising in economic analysis, is critical of the official draft projections of the national growth rate (approaching 7 pc), as speculated from a news item in The Daily Star of Jan. 8.

What is the difference between an economist and an accountant? The more topical issue is that interested groups (inside a body try scientifically to boost up development figures, fiddling with the rate of growth, to attract more attention and aid in cash or kind).

The UN is not the panacea for all economic ills in the third world. In an LDC, where a mere 10 per cent of the population control 80 per cent of the economy and cash flow, the theories in the books go by default.

Cooking figures do not make the meat tender; and it is difficult to change one's hide (or skin-what is the difference these days?). Statistical cosmetics and make-up are old art; while the proof of the pudding lies in the eating. There is partiality in the pantry, before the dinner is served to all groups of citizens.

Money is round and made to roll; or is it flat and made to pile up? Notice the two sides of the Farakka dam coin, the way the ACC is stalled, and the mysteries in EC policies. How the state is to be run is an endless issue. Tolerance and patience are too narrow based for national consensus.

Wait and see? No more after 35 years of love's labour lost.
Alif Zabr, Dhaka

Development of Chittagong

Chittagong is the commercial capital of Bangladesh. Our export and import trade depends on the port of Chittagong. It's also the darling child of nature. The most attractive and beautiful sea beach, Cox's Bazar, is in Chittagong.

But the city's development is still far behind expected. We would urge the planners and decision makers to look into the matter.
SM Kamrul Hassan
Notre Dame College, Dhaka

Time to rethink about hartal



I was going to my office this morning which was a so called 'hartal day'. I was fortunate enough to hire a taxi at some doubled rent than usual (!). While passing by the Airport and Kllilkhet (Nikunja) area, I saw people waiting for suitable transportation. I was wondering whether they would reach their office or wherever necessary in time. Only some local buses were plying which were fully packed and obviously insufficient to carry that number of persons.

All feelings came to my mind for both who called the hartal and who created some opportunity for others to call it. If a general survey is carried, I am sure only 10%-12% of the officials miss office due to hartal. So it's a clash of ego between the government and the opposition. Whatever the reason is, the country should not come to a halt. There must be some other means to express your disagreement- without harming others' minimal rights and security.

Zakir Ahmed
Station Road, Tongi

The bitter truth

S. A. Khan has rightly exposed the double standard being maintained by the US (and its allies) on the NPT issue involving Iran, in the article 'Iran and disgraceful double standard' published in The Daily Star on Jan. 19, 2006. It is an undeniable fact that the US is blatantly bent upon application of 'might is right' and this smacks of the fascist mindset of Mr. Bush in the garb of democracy, peace and security.

Notwithstanding the evil designs of the superpower, the fact remains that flamboyance is customary with the leadership of Middle East nations and Iranian leadership has shown no exception to this. The diplomatic wisdom demands to do away with the out-of-way harsh uttering by those seated at the top of the government in Tehran. This harms their own interest. They must learn from India, which blinded the NPT and went ahead with its research till it exploded the nuclear device. Pakistan as well surreptitiously continued its effort to obtain the bomb blunting the rigour of NPT and reached the goal.

It would be in the fitness of things if Iran gives up the option to confrontation and finds the means to pursue its peaceful nuclear programme.
Sharafat Ali
On e-mail

Free call

I, as a student, and user of free call, think that it is better to talk with girlfriends or with friends than going to bars or taking drugs.

If my argument is not tenable, we should arrange an opinion poll to know how people view the issue.
S.M. Shaikat
University of London, UK

Failed society

BRTC's recent decision to bar mobile phone service providers from offering 'no charge periods' is not short of total immaturity. Free airtime as part of a package is nothing new, being offered in many other countries around the world. However, nowhere else has such an issue been turned into a circus as is the case here. Those who think that free airtime corrupts the youth should throw out their TVs and computers, stop watching movies, listening to music or using the Internet, avoid the print media to large extents and seal their eyes and ears when they step outside. Everything beneficial can be abused for wrong ends. A kitchen knife used to kill someone does not in any way impose a liability on the knife maker. Similarly, mobile operators are not responsible for moral corruption when they offer free airtime.

It is the parents' duty to teach their children about morals, ethics and responsibilities and events will occur all the time that will test everyone. To say that the events are responsible for character

degradation is to shirk personal responsibility and take refuge in feeble excuses.

Personally, I'm more worried about Bangladesh degrading into a 'failed society', characterised by moral depravity and irresponsibility, more than it being declared a 'failed nation'. To

elaborate, a failed nation can once again rise on the shoulders of responsible and morally upright citizenry, but a failed society will only drive a nation to the grave and leave it there through its own irresponsibility.
Ahmed Waris
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Iran, the next target?

The US is again playing a drum for another war with Iran; so called 'Axis of Evil'. Before starting Iraq invasion the US-UK allies made an excuse of Iraq having a lot of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). After the bloody war, the allies, at last, admitted that they would never get the WMD.

President Bush is again talking in the same language.
MA H Nazim
University of Dhaka

Off late the media is saturated with news of the so called A-bomb threat to US from Iran; thanks to the limitless US propaganda machine operating at top gear!

The same lying and war mongering Neo-cons who destroyed Iraq based on lies, and mere lies, are doing it. Are the Neo-cons trying to fool all the people for all the time?

It seems the US war machine needs an armed conflict every now and then to ensure wresting control of the oil resources of the Middle East as its monopoly! When will the world wake up from being fooled by the new empire builder, that is US? Maybe never! After all the UN is nothing but a talk shop as far as the US is concerned! It can be strangled and killed by the veto any time! Iraq war has also proved that they care a fig for world opinion. They are trying to establish the old dictum "might is right!"
A third world citizen, On e-mail



Freedom of journalists

How could a journalist write without fear of favour when, in Bangladesh so many reporters, and all kinds of journalists have been victims of violence; their bones broken, their blood spilled, and their minds tortured?

I know that my country, the United States, is reported to have tortured Muslims and others in secret detention camps. I know that the United States government has used a method called rendition to secretly transport persons from the United States to secret prisons in other countries. So I am not writing as a citizen of a perfect country with a perfect government.

All countries must improve human rights records. I am most disturbed about the violence against journalists in Bangladesh. Without freedom of the press, political progress is difficult. I am, in a modest way, a journalist in the United States and do not approve of the ill treatment of journalists in Bangladesh.

Where is the commitment of the government of Bangladesh to improve human rights? A good government will condemn the violence against journalists and human rights defenders. Attacks and violence against journalists and human rights defenders have

increased. Too long has Bangladesh waited for a National Human Rights Commission.
Dr Mark John Hunter
Alpena, MI, USA

Rab operations

People welcomed Rab. But their record is not satisfactory. So many people have been killed in crossfire. We have heard that some innocent civilians were also killed. The government must refrain from political use of the law enforcers, if it is truly interested in maintenance of law and order.
Mansura Rajiul
Eden College, Dhaka

The F-21 analysis

I am really impressed with Shahrir Robin's analysis of Leepu's unparalleled ingenuity to create the F-21. He had almost no resources whatsoever. As reported the media has been quite excited about Leepu's work for a while but it has always been putting more emphasis on his flashy car models rather than understanding them. The project had been in his head since December 2004. The news appeared earlier also.

Leepu suffers heavily due to lack of tools and resources, but investors may take a look at Ariel,

the English car-making company to come with help and keep his lifetime mission alive and give it an institutional shape.

With its nine part-time workers and a production capability of 99 cars a year, Ariel has managed to establish itself as a cottage industry. Why not Leepu of Bangladesh? Could we request our private banks to form a syndicate and come up with financial help? We are bound to succeed in our endeavour.
Gp Capt MM Khairuzzaman (ret'd)
New DHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Choosing a university

After finishing HSC/ A level, students of our country face a problem of choosing university. There are two types of universities in Bangladesh. They are public and private university. Which one is suitable for whom depends on the students.

Advantages of public university:
1. Reputed institution
2. Low tuition fee.
3. An institution of meritorious students.
4. Qualified teachers
5. Large Campus
Disadvantages of public university: (except IBA & some other institutions)
1. Session jam (1-4 years)

2. Active politics.
3. It takes more than 3-6 months to publish the results of an exam.
4. Den of student leaders and armed cadres.

Advantages of private university: (NSU, EWU, IUB, BRAC & some other topmost varsities)
1. No session jam. There is make up class for hartal days.

2. No student politics & totally English medium.
3. Top class educational environment & classroom.

4. After the class, every teacher is available in his room for 2 hours.
5. Teacher's assistant and student workers are available more than 4 hours a day.

6. It takes 3-7 days to publish the results of an exam.
7. Qualified teachers & active career counselling department.

8. One can use computer (MS office, power point) to prepare projects and assignments as well as multimedia presentation.
Disadvantages of Private University:

1. Very high tuition fee.
2. A lot of low calibre students get admitted in private university.
3. Not highly reputed.
4. There are many low quality private universities around us.

5. Small campus.
So, both have merits and demerits.
Tamim Ahmed
East West University

Human trafficking in Bangladesh

Human trafficking is a 'social evil' that seems to be growing at an alarming rate throughout the world. This practice results in unimaginable human suffering and represents one of the most important human rights violations of our times, resulting in a form of 'Modern Slavery'. For Bangladesh, this condition is more acute.

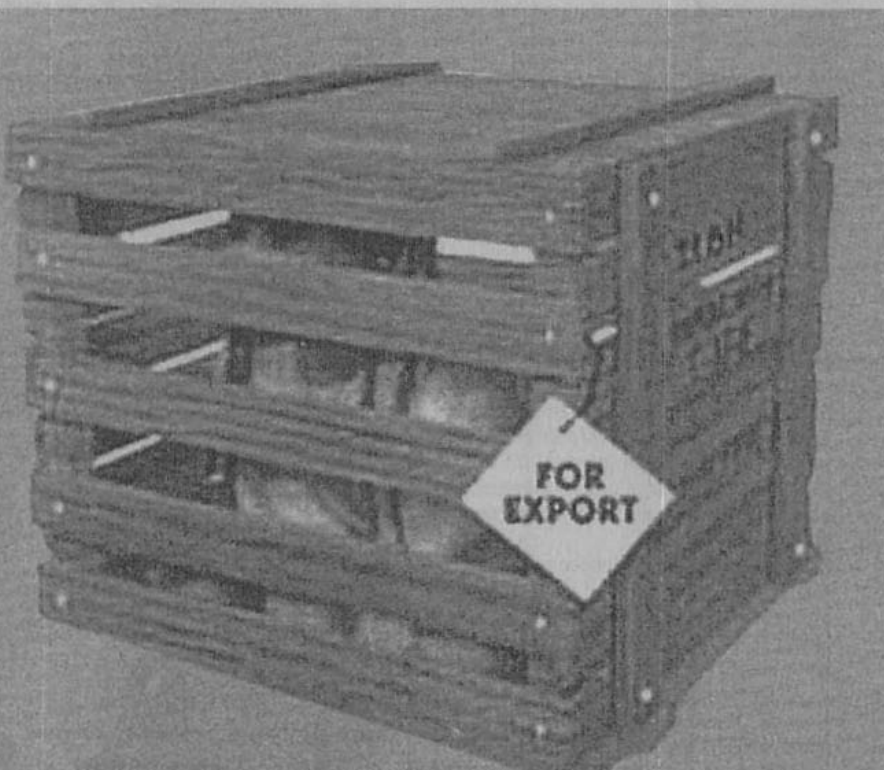
Bangladesh is the origin and transit for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation, involuntary domestic servitude, and debt bondage. Bangladeshi women and girls are trafficked to India, Pakistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). A small number of women and girls are trafficked from Myanmar to India through the country.

Bangladeshi boys are also trafficked to the U.A.E., Qatar, and Kuwait for forced work as camel jockeys and beggars. Women and children from rural areas in Bangladesh are trafficked to urban centres for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.

Its high-profit, low-penalty-nature makes human trafficking attractive to criminal gangs. The crime of trafficking is mainly committed against persons who are socially and economically vulnerable. Economic underdevelopment generates huge exodus of men and women to affluent countries. As far as trafficking in women and children is concerned, it necessarily involves a gender dimension and a negative consequence on the rights of women and children as almost all the women-victims are trafficked for the immoral purposes of flesh trade or child-victims are sold as suppliers of human organs.

Trafficking victims are lured into trafficking by false promises, like promise of better life/jobs, and marriage proposal or fake marriage, forced (kidnapping), and outright trade (sale done by people known to the victims such as relatives). They are vulnerable to trafficking schemes due to poverty, gender discrimination on social protection.

The South Asia-Gulf Region trafficking route affects Bangladesh.



Several reports over the years reveal that traffickers use 20 main points in 16 south/south-western districts of Bangladesh near the Indian border to run their trade. The main trafficking route is Dhaka-Mumbai-Karachi-Dubai. There are people on both sides of the Bangladesh-India border involved in this trafficking chain. Bangladesh continues to face a

huge trafficking problem, which is compounded by pervasive poverty, weak government control, and generalised corruption. Trafficking victims suffer from mental stress; bad social treatment after their rescue. This crime has to be prevented at any cost.
SYasmin
Lalmatia, Dhaka