

This Act will Cost AL a Lot

What the Awami League government did on Thursday last smacked of what happens in a police state. It is totally unacceptable that police should enter the office of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) — or for that matter any political party — and attack its workers and leaders within its premises.

What is most surprising is that AL government appears to have chosen the confrontational course precisely when it can least afford it. More than anything else the government needs calm in the political sphere so that economic activities can be carried out in a smooth fashion.

We cannot say that what we have seen so far of the opposition politics has been either reasonable or logical. From the very outset the decision appeared to be to try and bring down this government in any way it can. But what the AL government did to BNP last Thursday is far more unreasonable and illogical than what BNP had done so far.

We warned the BNP government while in power not to take the confrontational line when it began to do so against the then opposition. We warn the AL government now. No political party in power has ever been able to deliver without the cooperation of the opposition.

Rethink Two-day Weekend

The decision to keep some of the branches of commercial banks open on Saturday is a good one. It is for the first time that the government is showing some signs of recognition that its unthinking and sudden decision to go for a two-day weekend was a mistake.

Government has so far not given any cogent argument as to why it suddenly felt compelled to make this drastic change. The point has been made that by increasing the working hours of the other five days it is compensating for the loss of time caused by the change.

There was a lot to be said about the old timing which, with the afternoon off, provided people extra time with the family and also the possibility of doing extra work in the evenings — like running small shops or business, doing private tuition, doing handiwork at home, etc.

Piracy Made Easy?

Aggrieved engineer Nazmul Huda has made a longish point — one that goes far beyond his personal concern for recognition. Slightly over a decade ago, he made public his invention of the world's first radio operating without a battery or electricity.

Huda's tale highlights the plight of many science or technology enthusiasts or buffs in the country. From Jingira to the highest seat of research or learning we have had practical demonstrations of variegated innovations and improvisations.

Then when came the stage for them to seek patent rights, a crude combination of meanness, unscientific temper and bureaucratic red-tape threw them by the wayside — crestfallen, while others step on their unborn intellectual property entirely without prior knowledge perhaps.

A rabbit and an owl were stranded on a small island in the middle of a flooded river. As the flood waters were rising, the rabbit asked the owl: "What am I to do?" "Very simple," replied the owl: "Turn yourself into a bird and fly away."

This is the starting para of a paper: "Persistent and Pervasive Poverty in Africa: looking at the Numerator and Denominator of Structural Transformation" by Bruce F. Johnston — an ace agricultural economist of the world.

THE greatest problem now facing the country is perhaps the insidious web of corruption that has seemingly throttled all developmental activities. So deep is the rot and so all-pervasive is the cynicism that all pious proclamations of intent have apparently reduced to footnote on history book.

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People are only wondering as to how this systematic looting of public money by some ill-inspired state officials could be lost sight of by the present government that came to power on people's mandate.

Justice and fair play demand that those who did the same work in the same post should get equal remuneration. But that has not been done due to various reasons. All pensioners are a class. But the prevailing circumstances, from time to time, at the time of retirement, divided them into two groups — privileged and privileged.

To the Editor...

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The Rabbit and the Owl Story

"All too often economists and other development specialists take a partial and misleading view of reality... The process of economic development is just too complex to be understood by armchair theorizing"

economic development is just too complex to be understood by armchair theorizing" — argued the aged but agile economist. In his quest for the numerator and denominator of structural transformation, Dr Johnston devoted few paras on Bangladesh in the wake of a comparison of demographic transition between Bangladesh and the USA.

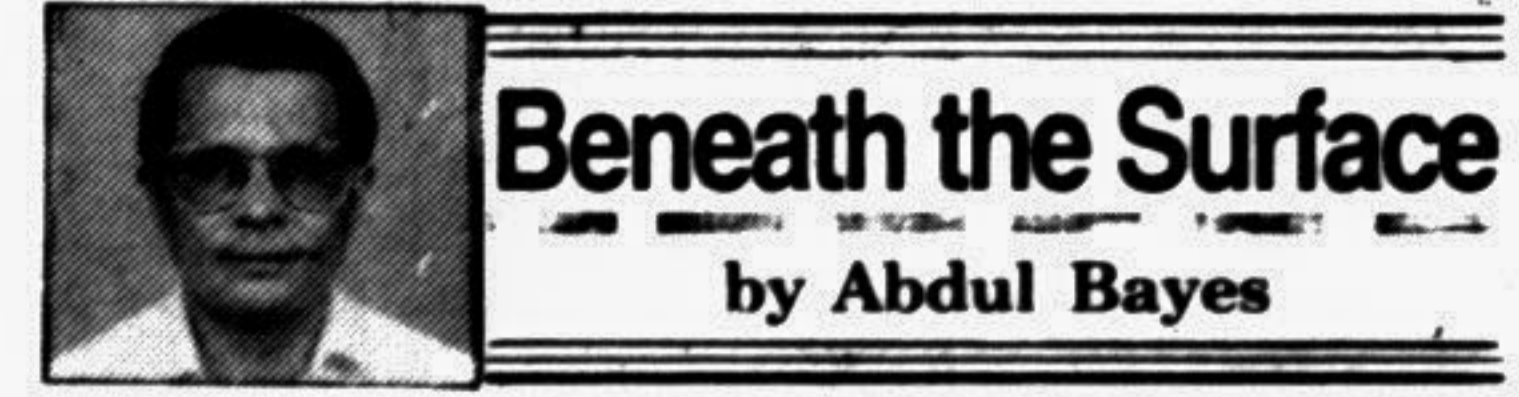
According to the available literature, change in a country's labour productivity might connote two components: change in output per hectare and change in number of hectares cultivated per hectare.

male farm workforce in Bangladesh exhibited a rise by 48 per cent (from 12 to 19 million) in contrast to a decline of the same by 68 per cent in US (from 3.8 to 1.7 million).

caused a huge increase from 117 to 247 hectares cultivated per worker. The combined effect was a three-fold increase in agricultural labour productivity (output/worker) in the US (from 94 to 286) and a decline in Bangladesh from 2.0 to 1.8. It can be argued that notwithstanding the same percentage increase in output per hectare among them, the enormous productivity differential could only be added to contrasting changes in the size of their agricultural labour force.

tion in US agriculture but "it was structural transformation and a completed demographic transition that made it both feasible and socially and privately profitable for farmers to invest in farm equipment and for manufacturers to make large investments in R&D and plant and equipment required for the production of a vast array of productivity-enhancing

farm equipment." (Necessity is the mother of invention!) Why did agricultural labour force increase in Bangladesh between 1960 and 1980? Each year, population of working age group rose by close to 3 per cent and three quarters of the labour force was still in agriculture in 1980.



Beneath the Surface by Abdul Bayes

Power Sector: Whither Improvement?

The menace of load shedding that continues unabated for more than a year now with no apparent explanation by the authority as to when things will show an improvement creates a sense of despondency in public mind and is likely to erode confidence in the administration's ability to set things in order.

power sector and installing power plants in the private sector was in response to a call from the potential foreign investors to set the erratic power supply position right so that they would feel interested in committing funds to industrial projects in Bangladesh.

No government either in the past or at the present moment could tackle the problem of "system loss" — that devours about 30 per cent of the generated power. The system loss that includes among other forms of thefts, illegal connections that must have been given by field level officials and workers surely in exchange of cash graft, have either gone unnoticed or untackled.

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14 months. But most people believe that the ghosts of the past are again raising their menacing heads to thwart peace, progress and development. Let not the Prime Minister become a captive of these hordes.

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complained to the control room about too frequent load shedding in the university residential area. The smart control room official told him that too many illegal connections had been taken from his area and it was the policy of the electricity administration to put those areas prone to illegal connections under frequent and longer load shedding.

As it appears, corruption in the power sector is an insidious enemy set in stages starting from inviting tenders, commissioning of the power plant, generation of electricity up to the last phase of the distribution system. Report carried by the media on 5th September last revealed that the 110 MW power plant at Goalpara, Khulna is likely to face a shutdown any time as the oil companies-cum-tank owners nexus has withheld supply of furnace oil to the plant.

2010, agricultural labour force in Bangladesh could increase by 42 per cent as opposed to 57 per cent increase between 1960 and 1980. Bangladesh would compare favourably with Kenya, African countries may other agricultural labour force is projected to rise at a much faster rate than that of Bangladesh.

In the realm of demographic transition, the most destructive (as well as disturbing) element to take note of is the duration of the rapid population growth phase. For example, Crude Birth Rate (CBR) in Taiwan and South Korea almost halved between 1960 and 1975 (from 40 per thousand to 23 per thousand).

thermo-electric plant now generates only 26 MW. Rawzan thermo-electric plant that had been ailing since its installation was also in doldrums. Despite the fact that the generational capacity of this plant after a long period of shut down has peaked to 150 MW, its 2nd unit still remains inoperative.

In a bid to cut down the phenomenal system loss through curbing tyrannical CBA activities, the government objective of turning DESA into DESCO (Public limited company) comprising one director from FBCCI and one from BUET might yield some desired result.

The country's power generation scenario seems to be sufficiently bleak till now. Reports carried by the media on 25th August last revealed that power generation capacity of Kaptai Hydroelectric Project (196 MW) has been reduced by 50 MW due to faults in the unit no 5.

Since the country's statecraft is susceptible to public opinion, the Prime Minister can very well use the popular disgust against the country's laws to tame the political class. People want her make a start.

We have records in delivering humiliating sporting performances. Failure in the SAF Football, losing to Nepal in the Dhaka stadium, thrashing by Japan by a 2-0 margin, pulverised by UAE — yet, all these results were just not enough, a final disgrace was in store to properly consolidate the label of shame.

Even here in London this embarrassing result has been accepted with unmitigated disgust. Needless to say that the expatriate supporters are shattered. However, this 1-1 nil result has revealed the parlous state our football is in at present.

Unthinkable it may seem, only ten years ago, MSC ranked among the seven top Asian clubs. Under the conscientious coaching of Naser Hejazi (the misunderstood Iraqi coach) MSC flourished and proved their superiority in South East Asia.

With the tragic death of Diana, the Princess of Wales, the life of the heroin of fairy tale of romance has come to an end all of a sudden. It was like a bolt from the blue.

Although Diana had been lately leading a complex and fast life, yet she became a heart-throb of the millions for her charming personality and humanitarian works.

In all these years, we have fooled ourselves with hopes. During the last ten years, Asian football has made immense improvement but we, blind and headstrong have kept ourselves busy with triv-

continue to be high for another decade and a half even if birth rates should begin to decline immediately at a rapid rate. That concentration of population in the under 15 age groups also ensures that the rate of growth of labour force will continue to be rapid for atleast the next decade and a half.

Dr Johnston frankly admitted that, unlike the "owl" he does not have a simple solution of a complex problem. He also seems to abhor the idea that mere enunciation of policy prescription without due cognizance of their implementation might do harm than good. What he argues for is that instead of drawing up a long list of causal factors inhibiting development, one needs to focus on the long duration of the rapid growth phase of demographic transition.

People are aware that there are allegations of serious bungling in the installation of Rawzan thermo-electric plant. In a bid to cut down the phenomenal system loss through curbing tyrannical CBA activities, the government objective of turning DESA into DESCO (Public limited company) comprising one director from FBCCI and one from BUET might yield some desired result.

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OPINION The Ultimate Ignominy Touheed Feroze

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