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Hon'ble Minister should resign!

The recent launch disaster (the mishap of MV Nasrin) took toll of the ill fated passengers and there are hundreds of families who are still looking for the bodies of their dear ones. The disaster took place due to the callousness of the BIWTA, the minister concerned and his incompetent officers.

The Prime Minister has warned the concerned authority, but nothing has been done so far and the Minister is confident that he will not lose his chair. But the people has already given their verdict -- we do not need such an apathetic minister.

Peerzada S.R.Hussain

Hiala Shaheb Bari, Habigonj.

Right after the launch tragedy the BBC held an interview with the shipping minister. One of the questions was whether he should resign or not. In reply, the venerable minister vehemently ruled out such a possibility and said, I tried to translate the meaning of his speech as closely as possible, "140 million people going around, a few hundred deaths now and then is fairly natural".

How profound observation on the part of our revered public servant! Sounds almost synonymous to his colleague at the Internal Affairs (pun intended: clean-heart-attack in case you are wondering). His colleague has made a comment after the death of an infant by a stray bullet from a gangster. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away". I am glad that our public servants are busy philosophising at the expense of the public money. One would think they are almost self-deprecatingly sarcastic. If not, then they should be commended for adding new dimensions to the show of black humour. Truly, we are getting our money's worth!

Yahya USA

The proverb says that self-preservation is the first law of

nature: Last July 8, a triple-deck launch capsized in the confluence of the Padma, Meghna and Dakatia rivers in which about 750 passengers are feared to have drowned. It is probably the largest launch disaster in our country so far. Hundreds of grieving people converged at the ghat to look for their dear ones. But, nothing can compensate their loss.

Primary findings of the launch disaster reveal that the main causes were overloading of passengers and goods, and severe current and turbulence in the channel where the launch sank. The launch was supposed to enter the Dakatia River through the channel with an angle of 180-degree avoiding the centre current. This is clear as daylight that the root cause of this accident was the breaking of shipping law. Then who is to blame? The Shipping Minister shrugged off his responsibility of launch capsizing saying that the vessel were not built during the BNP rule. How funny!

The only cause for such recurring disasters is lack of interest in maintaining shipping rules. And just by implementing the prevailing rules of shipping strictly, we can avoid this kind of horrific disasters in future.

This a land of wonders! In an interview with BBC, the authority confessed that they have lack of manpower to implement the rules. If you cannot handle your job properly, you should step down from the position. No body has the right to spoil others life.

Abu Taib Ahmed

East Rajabazar, Dhaka

SOS

We are the residents of Uttara Model Town, road no 12 and 11, of Sector 4.

A month ago construction workers started digging both the roads (12 and 14) to make new drains. We are completely blocked in our own houses due to this construction work, more because this being the rainy season. The construction materi-

als are heaped up unplanned, excavated materials have been put at the roadsides which made the area unsuitable for living. The front slabs have been removed, no vehicles (even rickshaws) can enter these roads. We are suffering in our everyday life, the road is full with knee deep mud which makes things worse. We can not go out of our homes, women are completely stranded inside, and children cannot move and suffer to go to schools, and often entangled with mud.

The work is going on for a month and we have no idea when it would finish. Such a pity that we have not even been informed, many cars have been trapped inside the houses and can not come out due to open drains in front of the houses.

We want to get rid of such sufferings in this rainy season. We have doubts that there is any authority to look into it. Only contractor's people are there, we haven't seen any DCC personnel so far.

We want to draw the attention of the highest authority to stop the work and relief us from the sufferings. We request to stop the work during dry season, which would be most sensible. I hope authority will give attention to this plea.

The distressed residents

Road no 11 and 12, Sector 4, Uttara model Town

Banning polythene and mismanagement of government

Banning of polythene was suppose to be a step towards healthier environment provided that the authorities concerned are careful enough in chalking out a realistic policy followed by a systematic infrastructure and monitoring system.

We have banned polythene but its ill effects are still with us. Many of us really never realised that polythene is harmful for the environment and as we failed to have an organised collection system after the banning, it is now

Law breaking citizens!

A little soul-searching may reveal a long list of reasons for us remaining so impoverished as a nation. Too many people, too small a country with too little natural resources may appear at the top of the list (some would argue however that too many people is a resource itself, after all, Bangladesh has gone up the ranking of human resource development! Others may argue that we have plenty of natural resources, some say we are floating on a see of natural gas!). I believe the item that should be on top of the list is our complete disrespect to the rules of law. Not following the rules seems to have become our national characteristics.

The other day I was waiting in a long queue in front of the gas station at Sheraton crossing (where the queue is always long because it is regarded as the only gas station where you can get pure fuel in the right volume). One driver, perhaps in his bid to appease his owner, tried to cut in the long queue to get fuel first totally ignoring the fact that others before him came earlier and are patiently waiting for their turn to come. We constantly look for opportunities to bypass others. We look for means to get the service first. This encourages others to break the queue. Anyone succeeding in this constant endeavour to go first disregarding the rules takes the false pride of being smarter than others. This is how we start breaking the rules and this is how the system starts to fall apart.

I believe no good can happen to this society of ours unless we collectively start obeying the rules of law.

Zubair Sadeque

Dhaka

- a.clogging the drainage system
- b.reducing the fertility of lands
- c.generating poisonous gas when burnt

We also don't have a modern packaging policy.

The above problems can be resolved by carefully chalking out a policy, which is practical, by the government ensuring proper collection of polythene and an organised packaging system.

The government can go for checking how western environment-conscious countries are managing polythene packaging system. In developed countries polythene bags are not banned, rather used for all items and being collected/ stored and recycled systematically.

Before banning polythene, we should have also checked, whether there are adequate alternative quality bag/ packet industries and affordability of the environment friendly alternative bags/packets

We are deeply concerned to build a environment friendly world for the future generations and urge our government to develop and enforce a pragmatic law which will protect the consumer right, concerned industries, businesses and ultimately our environment.

Arif Husain

Dhaka

Iraq: Heading towards what?

Three wars and twelve years of crippling sanctions have devastated Iraq; millions of Iraqis are now driven into utmost despair and despondency.

And now, the unkindest cut is the occupation by the hostile foreign army bringing terrible insecurity, lack of minimum civic amenities, and added indignity. The international community remains a mute spectator. To add insult to injury, the occupation army is demanding security from the occupied in exchange for restoring basic human services-water, electricity, and sanitation.

Time (USA) ran a article ("Should Christians Convert Muslims?" June 30, 2003), alluding to an opportunity created wherein Christian missionaries and charities are getting ready to bring relief materials, hope and faith, covertly or overtly depending on their denomination. At the same time, social philanthropy by many Islamic charities has come under attack in the wake of "war on terror". Most Arab and Muslim countries' governments are under scrutiny, are pressured to take a defensive stance to prove their "innocence".

If the occupation lasts for many years, if the population is driven into extreme despondency, heaped with indignity and if they lose all hope.... I really do not know how Iraq would look like after ten years.

Zakir Husain, One-e-mail

Dhaka's loony laws

The recent law to castrate the additional bumpers off the cars was just another one to add to the ever-growing list of Dhaka's loony laws. Accidents happen all the time, instead of taking proper measures for prevention, the authorities are going after immaterial, trivial excuses.

My first question is, the driver who was responsible to provoke such a law have a genuine driving license? We hardly come across a driver with a genuine license, even if they do possess it, we all know how to obtain them by 'other means'. Don't we? Every sector in the government is bur-

ied under corruption so why should this one be any different? I have witnessed such 'playful' activities in the police stations (I even had taken back my money, when I found out that my 'legal fee' was nothing but bribe in guise), the post office, the airport, banks.... it seems that it's worse than SARS!

By the way, are we still on the top of the list of corrupt countries?

Shaker

One-e-mail

A better chance!

This is in reference to the letter of Samila, IBA (DU) in July 16, 2003.

I fully harmonise with her but think that the matter demands more clarification. The admission test procedures should change not only in IBA (DU) but also in all departments of DU including all other autonomous universities. Every year thousands of students appears at the admission test but a comparatively small number of them succeed to take admission. After



allocating plots to all the foreign currency applicants at the under-going Purbachaal Model Town Project. I think this is a wonderful opportunity for our country to earn foreign currency and more will be earned during construction.

However, RAJUK has established a rule that payment will only be accepted directly from overseas banks and not from local foreign currency accounts. For those of us who live abroad, usually send small amount of money to foreign currency savings accounts that we maintain in the local banks in Bangladesh. It is not possible to make payments in large sum of foreign currency to RAJUK at a time, as many questions arise from foreign banks as an aftermath of the events which occurred on 9/11. Some banks even refuse to transfer such large sums as they do not have a clear concept about RAJUK.

We could, nevertheless, send the money from our savings accounts in Bangladesh to our accounts in overseas banks and then forward this amount to

by them and there is good reason to do that. The main reason behind losses is connivance of senior bank officials with big borrowers to the mutual benefit of both parties. Added to this is the corrupt practices of trade union leaders. Lower level officers and staff are not a party to this game.

As a number of bank branches have merged recently, and there may be some more mergers in near future, according to the logic of economics it may demand some downsizing. Lower level officers and staffs may would suffer while the senior officers who are the main culprits are likely to survive the cut. Hence the government should be very cautious and careful in carrying out the exercise.

Apart from this, there is a humanitarian side also. A person suddenly finding himself unemployed without proper reason may be a threat to social stability.

Every year a good number of people are retiring in normal course. It is suggested that there should be no recruitment against resultant vacancies. In this pro-

Well, they are digging out 'perfectly okay' dividers and setting up new ones.

Many Asian countries started with us but now they are way ahead. We are completely dependent on foreign aid. If this trend goes on well I guess it wont take long for us to collapse. Hopefully someone will do something and save our "Sonar Bangla".

Syed Rashed Zaman

Dhaka

Why foreign doctors?

Normally speaking, people with less money usually rush to governmental hospitals. On the other hand those who have a lot of money do not think going to public hospitals even they do not think of being treated at the private clinics in our country. When the rich feel some problems they go to foreign countries and ultimately our country loss a huge foreign currency.

Why are the patients are flying to other countries? At past I used to think that may be the quality of our doctors is not good but my assumption has proved wrong

Axis of liars!

Latest revelations in Washington and London on Iraq and WMD are indeed, to say the least, very interesting. The US Defense Secretary Mr. Rumsfeld has told a Congressional hearing that the decision to go to war in Iraq was taken on old intelligence information viewed in the light of 9/11. The British PM Mr. Blair has said he is "sure" that evidence of Iraq's WMD programmes would be found if not the WMD weapons. Someone please correct me. Was it not that both USA and UK were convinced based on their intelligence information that Iraq possessed WMDs and needed to be disarmed by force and this was the one and only one reason for the war? Mr. Blair went to the extent of stating in the parliament that British intelligence reports left no doubt that Iraq could put together such WMDs in 45 minutes. Because of this potential threat, Iraq needed to be invaded to destroy these weapons and that alone was given as the reason for invading Iraq.

Looks like the Saddam was not the only guy who was committing deceptions

and telling lies in public. Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair, from the latest revelations, appear equally dept in this deceiving game. I cant help closing my eyes and in my mind seeing Mr. Blair on TV giving that "convincing" rationale for the war based on intelligence gathered and plagiarised from the internet and Mr. Bush matching him with his equally convincing performance linking Saddam Hussein to the African country of Niger for purchase of materials for developing nuclear bombs. It seems to me that in the new order that is emerging, if you lie and get caught and you are an US leader or a leader backed by the US like Mr. Blair, there is no price to be paid -- lie would converted to a new truth. But if you are a leader of a developing nation and you get caught lying, then you have no recourse.

The argument now being made by the US/Britain that the fact that Saddam was an evil dictator was reason enough to invade Iraq. But this is not good enough because Saddam had peaked as an evil dictator long before the invasion

and in fact the killings for which he is now being accused as post facto rationale of the invasion were done when the US had good contacts with his regime and Mr. Rumsfeld himself being hosted in Baghdad. If we are looking for who lied and to what extent, then in fairness to Mr. Saddam Hussein, it must surely be said that till tangible proofs of the WMD are found in Iraq, he would come out better than either Mr. Bush or Mr. Blair.

Shahjahan Ahmed

One e-mail

It is a coincidence. The three main promoters of attack against Iraq are now defending themselves against the accusations of misleading their countrymen about Iraq's attempt to procure nuclear raw materials. They have no straight answer to the accusations.

One wonders if these leaders have killed thousands of innocent people, both their country's soldiers and Iraqi civilians, on their conscience.

MAH

Dhaka



Watch out! WMDs.

Prevent road accident

It is heartening to know (Daily Star July 3) that the National Road Safety Council has taken decisions, among other things, to prevent road accidents. I feel that it needs to formulate measures to educate road



users, too.

Sociologist Bernard Phillips wrote, 'A falling rock does not change its mind, but we humans can suddenly turn and reverse direction'. In road use context, 'A vehicle on the road does not change its mind, but the person on the steering does'. Changing mind (viz., lanes) while driving, to others' surprise is a major accident causing factor. Clearly then, it is a behavioural issue and need to be dealt by behaviour shaping tools like information and education. There is a wide array of mediums to select from.

The road users in many developing countries are educated on road use symbols. I don't know, but, if we do have road use rules, how many of us know them? Left carelessly on the Old Airport Road, the cement blocks has endangered life of many vehicle operators. A caring symbol would alert fast approaching traffic about the imminent danger.

Effective symbol or statement needs to be backed up by penalty information for its non-conformance, too. A typical penalty statement like "a punishable offence" is not effective. On this issue, I remember that underneath a "no smoking" symbol in the Delta Chelsea Inn in Toronto City, Canada is written "its non-conformance penalty is \$200". Effective!

NRSC also adopted measure to put video cameras or CCTVs on every major bus stands. But what happens if the bus driver defies the rule, which is what they always enjoy to do. An effective traffic system is, therefore, one that educates citizens on the road use rules and on their attendant financial penalty.

Syed Azim

Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

the admission, some students look for better options, it may be BUET, medical, private universities or other foreign universities. And of them take this after a year (after completing one year). So, at that time the authority has basically nothing to do i.e., that time the authority cannot call up from the waiting list.

For example I can say as a student of the Economics Department of DU i.e. when we took admission, the number of students were 140. And at the end of the fourth year's honours final examination, the number reduced into 119, including the dropouts. The university authority is trying to tackle this 'better chance problem' (those who take better chances after one year) but failed to come up with any solution.

Md.Zillur Rahaman

Bangabandhu Hall, University of Dhaka,

RAJUK

I would like to thank RAJUK and the present government for

RAJUK as per Bangladeshi Bank regulations. This would be an enormous hassle for the plot allottees and no one would benefit except for foreign banks by receiving commission.

I would like to request that RAJUK look into this matter and try to change their views on this policy, so that we are able to pay the remaining balance from local bank accounts in foreign currency. I would like to thank RAJUK again for providing such a wonderful opportunity for the benefit of the country as well as the foreign currency earners.

Siddiqui

London, UK

Downsizing nationalised banks

I would like to ventilate my views on the subject.

Newspaper report says that government is contemplating downsizing nationalised banks in view of huge net losses incurred

cess ideal size of manpower can be reached within two to three years. Will the Finance Ministry and Prime Minister's secretariat give a thought to this.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury

Mohakhali, Dhaka

Where are we now?

Life in Dhaka is literally getting worst day by day. How long can we bear the pain? Why are we suffering this much? Why our country cannot compete with the rest of the world? These questions are not new at all but unfortunately there is no one to answer us.

The root cause of the problem lies in the fact that this country is corrupted to the core and we have dug such a big hole for ourselves that it is now become virtually impossible to get ourselves out of it.

We are the most polluted city and I guess so far the most unplanned one. Roads are broken almost everywhere and what is our administration doing?

when I have gone to BSMU with one of my friends. A mentally ill lady came to a peon to know the address of a doctor and what happened we do not know, but when the lady came for the second time she was threatened in such a way that she did not come back to get the information. Later I asked the peon about his rough behaviour and he told me that without behaving such a way they couldn't control the patients of the hospital.

This is the picture prevailing among the lower class employees and the renowned doctors those who commit to serve the nation. It is a tradition that people will be bound to the rules of doctors. Without hearing the problem of the patient many doctors prescribe and finally patients suffer in the long run. I am urging the top management to take some necessary steps to remove this problem.

Bazlu Rahman

One-e-mail