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A DS reader



I am a regular reader of your 'The Daily Star'. I used to read The Daily Star every day with the other Bangla dailies in a local library named 'The Young Star Gonokendra Pathagar', where approximately 125 readers come every day for reading. Of them, the number of English newspaper readers is not more than 10. Among The English dailies their first choice is The Daily Star.

However, we have found that the English dailies do not cover as many news items as Bangla dailies. Can't you do anything about it?

Md. Shahidullah, Dinajpur

Push-in bids

I read your editorial 'The push-in bids' (October 28th) with a great deal of interest. There was a BBC coverage on this issue too recently. Your editorial and the BBC coverage have highlighted the Congress-led Indian government's latest bid to make this issue a great irritant in Bangladesh-India

the hardened criminals have gone on hiding fearing death. But of late political workers and businessmen are also being targeted.

The professional human rights activists are in hibernation. No court has yet taken any suo moto move to bring the matter under legal review. It should be mentioned here that there is no such word as crossfire in our legal

Perhaps the Planning Commission needs a new image, to assist other bodies such as BOI, EPZ activities, SEC, and other new forms of trading and industrial activities Bangladesh is witnessing for a decade now. Governance these days is business oriented, not bureaucratic file-showing. Where are the secretariat reforms? Free the judiciary, and free the entrenched

with iron and steel bars is ugly and disturbing. It gives the impression as if the vehicles are in a competition to hit one another, the city streets being the arena.

To any expatriate the scene is bound to give a negative impression about our road and aesthetic sense. I would like to draw the attention of the policy makers to come to a decision in this regard before the SAARC summit begins, so that the streets of Dhaka get a smarter look.

Amit Bikram Tripathy

Residential Model College

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Parking lots

While the brilliant revised master plans mature, the police may enforce some simple rules on parking with immediate effect (with low capital expenditure): a) no parking or halts on designated main roads; (Mirpur Rd, Elephant Rd, etc. and all over the city). b) no kerbside parking near schools, shopping centres/areas; bazaars/markets. Park only in parking lots (sign displayed). The shoppers or students can walk a bit to the vehicles. c) no parking or halting at road junctions within 25 steps/yards. The crossing must be kept free.

These simple steps would reduce traffic jam to a great extent. A pilot project may be tried before the Eid.

Abul MAHMAD, Dhaka

efforts, not denounced.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Taxpayers' woes

The morass of bureaucratic procedures in the income tax department of the government is vexing and time consuming for the taxpayers whose nerves are taxed by the tax officials creating entanglements for reasons best known to them. As a consequence, the vexed taxpayers are obliged to go stage by stage up to the Appellate Tribunal which is the highest and final Authority in respect of settlement of Appeals against the orders of the income tax officials.

The government should look into the matter.

Majedul Islam Patwary (Ujjal)

Advocate

Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Beautifying ugly projects!

The caprices of the regime and the DCC are unfathomable. Suddenly 'Beautifying Dhaka' project was launched to add lustre to the forthcoming SAARC conference in Dhaka. Now, according to press reports, the wily contractors made money on tree plantations along the roads, as most of the saplings have died due to poor quality and supervision and the absence of disciplinary steps.

When we read about the above situations against the latest news that Bangladesh is once again classified as the most corrupt country in the world for the fourth successive time, the credibility of most projects is revealed (make some money on the side).

Why was it considered essential to beautify Dhaka to impress the SAARC delegates? SAARC is stalled for decades, and cosmetic effects are a huge waste of time and money. Get the political environment right first, not the horticulture or gardening!

Look at how the two major political parties in Dhaka are behaving with each other, and with the voters; then how do we expect SAARC to flower?

Let us watch how this beautification of Dhaka affects the participants and the resolutions. How about inner cleanliness and practising transparency in politics and governance? First things first. Branches and leaves do not generate roots; it is the other way round!

AMawaz

Dhaka

Rehabilitation of toll collectors

The government has to speak out on the drugging effect on the nation of the evils of toll collection, which has now become institutionalised, because it is indirectly patronised by hidden political 'godfathers' (an open secret otherwise, it could not have prospered with nine lives).

Therefore the finding of TI is not too much off the mark, (despite the honest anguish of the finance minister), recording that Bangladesh is still on the top of the list of most-corrupt countries in the world for the fourth time running! Local instinct confirms, it, time and again!

How the government plans to get out of this black hole? The measures may be disclosed at the earliest, to regain public confidence. The present regime is telling the masses that it improved the situation in many areas after taking over power three years back. Only the physical projects, which can be seen, are publicised, not the immoral and corrupt practices (led by the conduct of the police personnel; the criminality in tender business, the damaging of the educational institutions- the list is long and

stable).

The regulatory and implementation (and prosecution) sides are still very weak, due to political interference and indifference, and the continued presence of contaminated regulatory personnel who are not prosecuted with due publicity (the civil service will collapse!). The regime is busy

would trust and employ them, once these toll wealth is spent, and job seekers are scavenging the job market? How to remove the stigma? No one is talking officially about these future problems.

The fabric of the society is virus infected. What the politicians have to offer as healers? Remember, bad politics created bad governance,

different capitals of the world through centuries. Bangladesh is not an exception, but the point to note is that it is recurring in Dhaka at irregular intervals. How have we used the three decades usefully since gaining freedom? This is a very pertinent question the millions can ask the leaders, whom they had allowed to rule over their impoverished destinies.

The opposition is demanding change of regime. What for, considering the above points? The blind are leading the blind (and those with eyesight) in the darkness. There is no guiding light in the parliament (JS). The batteries of the political leaders cannot be recharged (limping with lame excuses). The main power supply voltage these evenings go down to 168-171V from the usual 220V (as monitored on my digital voltmeter connected 24 hours). Occasional high voltage surges and sparks by some leaders look like freaks; and results in power interruptions!

As a citizen, I feel frustrated and ashamed. Who will help us to lead a bhadra (decent) life?

AMahseen

Dhaka

Why medical treatment abroad?

Recently my 11-year old son had fever. Also some skin rash appeared. My family waited for 2/3 days but the fever was not coming down and they consulted a local doctor. The local doctor suspected him as a case of dengue fever. My wife got my son's blood tested and when the doctor confirmed that he had a viral dengue my entire family became very nervous and then they consulted another doctor who gave a different opinion. He was not sure about dengue but said it was not unlikely that the boy was suffering from some other disease. He asked to have another set of blood test and X-rays. He also prescribed some medicines. My family then became more confused and then they consulted a medicine specialist of a well known hospital. When he was consulted he advised not to administer those medicines and he after reviewing the previous blood test reports diagnosed that my son had been suffering from paratyphoid and he prescribed some medicines. When my son started taking those medicines he became extremely weak, and he started feeling pain in his chest. When the medicine specialist was informed he advised to continue the medicines and he assured my wife that as these were high quality medicines they needed a little bit time for body adjustment. My son's condition was deteriorating gradually.

As I work in Kabul, Afghanistan, I could not help my family and I also was passing my days in deep anxiety and tension. Everyday, I was calling my home to track my son's health. When there was no sign of improvement, then I advised my wife to consult another doctor whom I knew personally. The military doctor, after reviewing all prescriptions and reports and after a patient hearing and examining of all symptoms, requested my wife to do one more blood examination. It was finally diagnosed that my son was suffering from jaundice. Currently, my son is under his treatment and by the grace of Allah he is improving rapidly.

It is very unfortunate that in our country there are not many doctors who can correctly diagnose a disease. Then I realised that this is one of the reasons why thousands of patients are going abroad every day for medical treatment.

SM Khaleque Zaman, Afghanistan

Those toiling men

On October 14, 2004, we came across the news. "WB (World Bank) keen to help 160,000 affected rickshaw-pullers," which was published in The Daily Star. That news reminded us the history of commonly seen non-motorised three wheelers in our country, especially in Dhaka city. Though it is found on all the roads of towns and cities, Dhaka, one of the ancient cities in our Indian subcontinent, is very closely correlated with the rickshaw. This vehicle helps earn the means of living to about 4 lakhs rickshaw pullers along with their family members. It has been used by the people of all spheres of society since its invention.

The rickshaw off-limit programme enforced by DTCB (Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board), has brought misery to the pullers. We know some of them have come to Dhaka for either losing their ways to survive in the villages or being cursed by the rivers of their locality. Only for the purpose of existence, they have thronged the capital city, demanding two meals a day which are also not secure at present.

The Traffic Weak observed from Oct. 9,



2004 to Oct. 15, 2004 did not promise anything. We are watching an even more disgusting traffic jam in the city these days.

In these circumstances, the only silver lining here is the offer given by the WB. I fully appreciate the initiative taken by the WB with the hope that it will be imple-

mented smoothly.

The task of finding the affected rickshaw pullers is not an easy one, but the government must make sure that only the victims get compensation.

Md. Khairul Alam

Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University

bilateral relations. Along with the push-in bids, the Indian newspapers have been talking about 20 million Bangladeshis staying illegally in India. Bangladesh continues to maintain that there are no illegal Bangladeshis in India.

The issue of Bangladeshis staying in India is more political than anything else. The claim of the Indian newspapers is preposterous. Bangladesh's position that there are no Bangladeshis in India is also not correct. The truth is our borders are so porous that Bangladeshis move between the borders illegally and there is just no way to stop this. It is also true that India is no United States to attract our poor to migrate in that large number to India and in fact, compared to many places of India, there are more opportunities for the poor in Bangladesh. Finally, if the Indian newspapers are talking about people in West Bengal from former East Bengal and East Pakistan, which includes the former West Bengal Chief Minister Mr. Joyoti Basu, then we are talking of a different ball game that just can never be resolved.

The Indians are using this issue just to embarrass and harass Bangladesh. It is also one of the many cards that the Indian have against us. The answer to the resolution of this and many other irritants in our bilateral relations is healthy and strong bilateral relations where friendship and confrontation is the way out. As the cards are stacked against us, it is in our interest that we seek friendship and not confrontation.

This push-in issue was coming ever since the FM's famous outburst and BNP's generally anti-Indian posture. More such issues are in line. We need to look into our relations with India objectively and make adjustments on what Indians want from us before accusing Indians of wrong doings.

Shahjahan Ahmed

Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

RAB and custodial deaths

A Frankenstein is born. The government in its attempt to curb crime is itself entangled in unlawful activities. Not even a child believes the stories of crossfire. Circumstances are too similar to believe. General people are unconcerned and a little bit relieved as many of

terminology. But it is mandatory under the law to produce the arrested person before a magistrate immediately. A person so arrested must be safeguarded by the arresting authorities. If any person dies while in custody an enquiry by a magistrate is mandatory. Unfortunately, all the crossfire deaths evaded such enquiry.

Two lawyers have challenged the legality of formation of the RAB. No doubt it's a good move. A concerned citizen

Power supply problems

The commentary on the power generation scenario (DS Oct 20, by an ex-Director of PDB) makes uneasy reading. There appears to be weaknesses in several areas of the whole system: i) No clear-cut official, long-term policy on power generation for each coming decade; ii) Investment conditionalities and uncertainties in the public and private sectors; iii) Management, operation, and maintenance shortcomings, resulting in systems losses and corrupt practices; iv) Regulatory insensitivity at vertical and horizontal levels, both internal and external; v) Political callousness from the public service point of view; and vi) Inability of regime after regime to bring about healthier changes, with tinges of development fever.

We have professional expertise, but it cannot contribute and deliver at the institutional level, for reasons which the public have the right to know. We do carry out system analyses from time to time, in cooperation with other international agencies, but the end results are rather disappointing (specially in the power and energy sectors). What are the bugs, and where are these lingering, in spite of all the good intentions beaming out of benevolent governance?

Tata is coming in a big way. This is the time to harness our revised development projects in tandem, to take advantage of the catalytic effect (there is a strong local pressure, watching the stock exchange for new stocks). The performances of the semi-public sector and the corporations are simply not clicking. Too many flies all around, seething with unhealthy contamination!

concentration of power!

Let us have more debates on how to get more energy from the energy sector.

Md. Abad

Dhaka

Determined, oath-bound!

Ever since we became independent we have been listening to a particular vocabulary being incessantly used by guardians of our society. When there is news of gold or heroine smuggling we will surely see a leader roaring, "we are determined to crush it". When there is a leakage of examination questions, another bigwig will whimper, "we are oath-bound to punish the offenders". Likewise, we hear "pledge-bound to catch conspirators injecting chemicals into fruits and vegetables" or "punish the destroyers of our good image". It is significant that the person in charge of a department is not speaking on his subject but otherwise. Accordingly, we observe the top boss of roads expressing determination to "preserve environment", the works department chief vowing to "guarantee sovereignty", the top brass of foreign affairs emphasising the maintenance of "proper standards of consumable items", and so on. What a pleasure to think that we have no committee even with mild powers, no commitment half-hearted or equivocal, and we are successful in everything!

Advocate Monser Fakir

Jamalpur

Bumpers in vehicles

Beside the annoying and disgusting traffic congestion in the streets of Dhaka, another ugly sight is the vehicles, cars, jeeps, CNGs, cabs, micros, minis etc fitted with metal bumpers both in the front and back posing a constant threat to the bikers and pedestrians. A tragic incident of death by being stuck up with the bumper of a running car was reported in the newspapers in July last year. In response to the incident, the Commissioner, Dhaka Metropolitan Police attempted to ban the illegal use of bumpers on the vehicles plying the streets of Dhaka but unfortunately an order of the court compelled the Commissioner to abandon his initiative. The very sight of thousands of vehicles fitted

Well done, RAB

We heartily thank the government for introducing the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to deal with the criminals. People are feeling safe and secure nowadays, as the RAB is doing its job efficiently and people are very happy with their performance. Many terrorists are being caught and many are being killed during gun battles with the RAB. Crimes have decreased considerably as the RAB has been able to instil fear in the minds of the criminals, we hope that the RAB will continue to safeguard people's lives and property. People are grateful to them and will remain so.

We do not understand why some quarters are criticising RAB's actions, which are not politically motivated. They are sparing nobody, a criminal is a criminal, he has no other identity. So, we think the RAB should be praised for the sincere

No housing for middle class!

The government has been sleeping since 1991 and did not announce any modular long-term project for the construction of homes for the orphaned middle class (and the nationalised banks are nowhere with the HP schemes).

Now, perhaps as an election stunt, the GoB has announced some scheme for these neglected class of citizens; while the private sector cashed on the boom of the newly rich by constructing 'luxurious' high-rise flats in posh expensive locations of the major cities, violating site rules right and left. The question is why these 13 years were wasted.

Housing in urban migratory society is a huge sector, with good prospects for investment. In Malaysia, the new flats were much costlier than the bungalows (for example the monthly house rents were M\$3,000 for a typical flat, and M\$800 for a two-storied bungalow. Later, in the

late 1980s, cheap flats were available for the factory workers in 18-storied apartment buildings for HP rent as low as M\$50 pm).

Bangladesh can easily rise above the five percent growth rate if the political parties display some sanity in approach to national problems. Now even giants like Tata is lured to the potentialities of the Bangladesh market. But the problem is that wealth, (white, grey and black) is concentrated in the hands of the few who are at the top of the society, and the politicians (difficult to spot a 'middle-class' politician!). The pensioners' schemes are also not being enhanced.

The biggest stumbling block to doing routine peaceful business is the wicked political culture which the two major parties have allowed to proliferate the vanity of immortality!

Alif Zabar

Dhaka



planning not to rustle hostile nets during the two remaining years, as the pending elections. Is this a win-win tactic?

Coming back to toll collectors, how to rehabilitate lakhs of them (including teenagers and drug addicts) back into the normal social and employment streams? Who

and the good politicians cannot shift the responsibility to others, as the politicians rule the country through elected representatives!

There is one unpleasant, theoretical solution: send the politicians on a long holiday! This is not an unusual statement, as examples are strewn through

