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## Corruption and nepotism



Bangladesh is being clobbered everyday because of its inability to tackle corruption and nepotism. The losers are the 130 million citizens, most of whom are as naive and honest as a baby.

In an article you have mentioned that the government has decided to sweep under the carpet corruption charges against officers in the Prime Minister's Office. How can the government make its electorate and the rest of the world believe that it is sincere about eradicating

corruption when it does not take effective measures to clean its house first, the PMO. The prime minister has to take the initiative to make sure that her own office is corruption free.

There is a story of a prophet's (pbuh) sahabah, where he refrained from admonishing a child for eating too much sugar because he himself was into it. Only after he had quit, did he call the child to tell him that too much sugar was bad for him.

**Ishfaqur, US**

RMG is a taboo issue for open and honest criticism obviously, but the winds of change are noticeable in the banning of some religious extremists groups, just announced, DS Feb 21.

The compromising stance of the BNP has been hinted at the DS staff report (Feb 24), as an unholy desire to cling to power. Opposition-bashing is not the only or main tool. BNP has to think about its future existence—loudspeaker-oratory is not enough for the informed voters. The other major party's fate is also hanging in the balance—completely out of touch with public sentiment. Our politics has no anchoring.

Real-time public opinion has no substitute for incorporation in dubious political planning. Taking cognizance of mass feedback is the very base and foundation of political existence.

Note the unexpected result in the last Indian general election; and the West-West hairline cracks in the US-EU relations).

**AZ, Dhaka**

### Creaking law and order

There is no security in our life. People cannot move freely due to the awesome law and order situation all over the country. Bombing of public meetings and rallies has become a regular affair.

The government must act quickly to nab the culprits.

**M Serajul Islam**  
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### Paper famine

In The Daily Star of Feb 22, there are two similar news which sound depressing to the citizens. BCIC has invited tenders for running the defunct North Bengal Paper Mills Ltd; and the half a century old Kamaphuli Paper Mills, KPM, is running at a loss.

The production of local papers cannot meet the country's demand, and the market is flooded with huge imports. Even the students have to rely on imported paper, and we talk about development in the education sector, without bothering to redress the shortcoming in the infrastructure. Recently, there was a near crisis in the printing industry, threatening delay in marketing of the textbooks at the beginning of the session.

Before 1971, the national development corporation shouldered the job well. With each passing decade, the more we develop, the more weaknesses are revealed in planning and management. This ad hoc approach is an illness in the society; we are caught napping most of the time, whether it is politics, crime, law and order situation, energy, gas, electricity, telephone, or you name it. Similarly, the jute industry has limped to the grave.

The civil service is experienced, and the Planning Commission and associated agencies know their jobs. It is tempting to cite one conclusion; poor foresight and judgement in governance, and absence of practical feedback network at all levels. Bureaucracy is top heavy, centre of gravity high and unstable. The public service systems are not allowed to operate in a healthy, routine manner, due to extraneous pressures and influences. There are numerous examples, which ordinary citizens, without technical and professional background, could cite. We are complaining all the time, and feel uncertain about solutions at the official and formal levels.

Take the launch disasters in the IWT sector: 4,000 perish in a decade (DS front-page headline, Feb 22). The munga situation in the northern districts is not new, but every year, similar grievances are ventilated. The session jams at the public universities have reached notorious proportions, suspected to be due to politics. It appears none can control the politicians. We are developing Frankensteins!

When politics becomes a source of business, business becomes rotten. What we have is more than

paper famine.

**A Mawaz, Dhaka**

### Where are the patriots?

It appeared in a Bangla daily that Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Oikyo Parishad in the US submitted a memorandum to Mr. Joseph Crowley, Congressman and the Chairman of Bangladesh Caucus, demanding a national government in Bangladesh. It seems Mr. Joseph Crowley is the authority to decide who would rule Bangladesh and not the 140 million people of the country.

The same character is seen among the politicians of Bangladesh too. Whoever are in the opposition, they are continuously approaching the representatives / ambassadors of the donor agencies/countries, highlighting exaggerated stories of the failures of the ruling party, seeking their help to unseat the government and put the opposition in power, as if the donor agencies/ countries are the decision makers.

Due to this bankrupt nature of the political parties and also some vested

The news item 'Good RMG managers need engineering background' in The Daily Star has drawn my attention. I am a Graduate of BUET from Electrical and Electronics Engineering Department. While doing my MBA (IBA) I came across the garments sector in Bangladesh while preparing a research paper on 'Quality Control' in the garments sector in Bangladesh. For this study I visited about 50 garments industries of different sizes and my observations from those days and subsequent interest in the garments sector are as follows:

a) The education curriculum in BUET needs to change to reflect the reality of the world. In BUET the emphasis is more on education and discipline rather than on making the students ready to face the real world. We studied accounting or management with an objective to pass the exams, rather than learn how this may help us in our practical life.

In BUET the students are far away from reality. Every student

by owner managers (correct me if things have changed in the last couple of years). Although the working environment has changed to some extent with pressure from the buyers, this is not definitely something which will attract young talents from good reputed universities. Although many garments industries at the moment are paying handsome salaries to foreign experts (Mr. Anisul Haque has mentioned this), the salaries of the locals are very low. The majority of the locals are paid just enough to survive in poor conditions. Since Bangladeshis do not have opportunities to explore out of the country (our national identity does not attract most of the employers abroad), they have to work under such conditions.

The garments sector has progressed a lot in the last one/two decades. However, it is definitely a question for the experts like Mr. Haque Eas to how much they have invested in the development of Human Resources in Bangladesh? How much professionalism they

RMG sector. We need to give hope to young potential managers about their future in the sector.

b) Introduce better salary and benefits for the local professionals in line with the profit potential of the industry.

c) Look for productivity improvement which is a key to survive in the face of increased competition from China and others. One way of doing this is to expose the sector with best practices and introduce benchmarking with other big players.

d) Identify the bottlenecks of the sector and agree to settlements within the industry for industry specific issues.

e) BUET authorities should really look into how best they can serve this nation. It is no longer enough to just produce the best students, we need a good manager engineer who can cope with not only technical needs but also managerial needs.

The RMG industry is the backbone of our economy and we all need to make sure that this industry survives.

**Itekhhar Ahmad, Dubai, UAE**

## A divided society

Are the intellectuals, high-level opportunists and the politicians flirting with the new born nation, aged only one generation? To stop the rot in the new young generation and provide them with a sense of national direction, some drastic basic steps have to be taken to stem the subjective tides followed by some of the leaders of the society; including, of course, the political leaders, who are calling the tunes in all the social fields.

Politics is getting too much importance, since it has become a course of business and making money through unfair practices (misuse of power and influence). In the text books there is no differentiation of different types of GND or GDP. The prevailing atmosphere is more important than dry and/or juicy statistics. Our catch is the human problem.

The apprehension of citizens is confirmed from the recent trends of corrupt practices and the use of violence to forge ahead. Now fundamental religious guidelines are being imposed, not only in Dhaka, but in other parts of the world, signifying an unattainable decade of unpredictable changes. The only (and lonely) superpower is too busy to act from within the UN structure. The latter is a disquieting phenomenon, confirming the erosion of the established social institutions which regulate human lives in the different societies. Global leadership is facing cracks in the system.

The political parties in Dhaka are too busy fighting one another, to be able to reduce the high systems losses at the national level. Seemingly, it is more than a fight for basic ideologies, although there are dedicated groups active in establishing a new world order.

The return to religious movement has started in earnest, as other man made sciences and philosophies are unable to deliver; but the tolerance factor is low, as well as patience. Diplomacy does not work these days in the right positive mode; as new technologies in the ICT sector is depending on questionable short-cuts through sustained media propaganda. Two thirds of the deprived people (of six billion-souls) cannot counter the avarice of the rich and powerful. One way communication prevails in the third world.

Politics at the lower

levels cannot follow self-imposed boundary conditions, the current leadership cannot impose the same from the top, or from the outside. Politics seems to have become a closed system, and democracy has been cornered. We see the hands-up signs everywhere. The going was never better for the political pundits, but it is an internal race between the haves and the have-nots. Moral values have eroded, and tribalism rules the day (even in the modern metros). The international organisation IT is facing tough tasks ahead.

Nowadays what is the success rate of peaceful mass movements? It is the difference between quality and quantity. Our density of population is one of the highest in the world. With limited resources in under-developed countries, it is a trying task for the politicians to gain the confidence of the majority of voters (where voting is possible, regardless of the intrinsic worth of the elections rituals). How to reduce this state of instability?

When the earning is murky, the spending of it is non-transparent. When the hearts (not the physical organ) cannot be x-rayed, brilliant brains have no public utility. In the LDCs, there is no extra energy for such basic exercises.

The new politics lacks competition of the right sort. There is a shortage of the right type of leaders.

**A Mahasen, Dhaka**



### Reform Rajuk and DCC

The dirty and unethical problems of dirty Dhaka metropolis (pop. over 10m) were brought out in the article published in the DS of Feb. 26. The problems are old, and the grievances are also old, retold many times.

The problem is that the policy makers at the top have become insensitive, and are too busy politically in two ways, one open, and the other through the back doors. First, without going into details, the basic approach has to be correct.

i) Carry out major reforms in the way Rajuk and DCC are run. Review the human resources and the tools, and the system of daily routine operation. There are many loopholes; and plenty of updates are needed, to be recommended by expert bodies commissioned for the task (an old repetitive exercise!).

New organograms have to be prepared, to be run by local professionals, with adequate checks and balances (beware of foreign ideas which cannot perform in local environmental conditions). Such reviews have not been carried out for years, and public awareness level is poor. Focus on the internal environment or atmosphere. No ventilation for fresh air.

ii) Reshuffle the officials and staff; and make transfers a regular feature, to avoid building up of vested mini empires. No report on this issue ever published.

iii) There are several different

bodies, groups, committees, to look after the various development projects in the metropolis. The duplication and coordination weaknesses have to be redressed, and made public. When such an exercise was carried out, and how much the systems losses have come down? For the electricity sector, some figures have been made public, but not for Rajuk and DCC systems losses. In fact, we seem to need a new Municipal Service Code to tackle urban migration pressures. A big headache is that the rules and regulations are not respected. Paper governance or puppet shows? Caution: political regimes are fast developing a bad image.

The ball is in their court!

iv) Urban migration is a big evil, but politically it is an elusive issue, having to deal with decentralisation of power to the divisions and districts. That means Secretariat reforms, which is also a taboo issue, like the separation of the judiciary, hanging for decades.

We see the exposed dirt, but not what is kept under the carpet. In fact there are too many plush carpets all around. Pull out the carpets and display the Aladdin's lamp!

v) Political transparency is becoming a big election issue. Now it is too late for reform, as election campaign has to start. The voters are disenchanted with these mock elections, because politics itself is dirty (dirty Dhaka city is No. 2 on the list). Cheap, popular political stunts don't last, or contribute to solid long-term development of the society.

The onus is on the political masters. The politicians do not talk at peer level, thus creating a psychological barrier, which makes the atmosphere dirtier.

We are faced with many kinds of garbage, starting with the management and administration's amateurish approaches (plus corrupt practices). The vicious circle has to be snapped at one point, to break up the recycling of evil practices.

**A Mawaz, Dhaka**

### Leadership and decision-making

Now that the Adamjee Jute Mills area in Narayanganj, very close to the metropolis, is being converted into EPZ, the government may firmly announce that the first priority of allocation of plots would be accorded to the hundreds of RMG factories located in Dhaka city DCC zone.

The government has very wisely shifted the numerous tannery factories outside the Dhaka city. Why this is a go-slow policy in respect of RMG?

The RMG relocation would greatly mitigate many of the problems of the congested megacity, and the public would be grateful for this official initiative. BGMEA's silence and go-slow stand towards relocation of the factories from Dhaka is inexplicable. The vast AJM can provide amenities and some accommodation to the female garment workers, who deserve better working and living conditions. Where is the publicity for public awareness?



## Ekushey book fair

The Ekushey book fair has always been a very special event in my life. In my childhood I used to get extremely anxious to visit the fair in the month of February. My workaholic parents had to keep some time apart to take me there or else I used to get deeply depressed. I still remember how eagerly I longed for the enchanting, sunny day when I'd eventually get a chance to visit the fair. That day was like the day of a religious festival to me when everything seemed exotically different. Once I was in the fair I used to go from one stall to another with my father or mother. I used to be quite excited by seeing all those colourful books. I've been an omnivorous reader from my childhood, I got extremely happy when I could buy a good number of books and

I felt happier than ever to carry the books while visiting the fair. Now when I visit the fair as a grown man I feel the same enthusiasm in my heart in a rather novel form. Time has cooled my innocence and the explicit feelings of wonders but the overwhelming attraction that I felt for the pungent smell of the new books and the entire colourful ambience of the place is still in tact. I'm proud that we arrange a programme of this category each year to express our solemn respect to the language martyrs and our language movement. It's great to see that this year the organisers have taken extended security measures to ensure public security.

However, a few people are not appreciating it. They should

realise that it's a sensitive spot and it's quite likely that the people who are trying to attack our culture and our 'way of life' would be looking forward to endangering it.

**KH Asef Safa Kabir Upal**  
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I wanted to send some publications in English (old or new) on Bangladesh and Ekusey February to some foreign acquaintances abroad, but hardly anything worthwhile was available.

The number of new publications (in Bangla) were very encouraging, and it was heartening to note that many new and young writers got a chance to have their works published.

Translations of selected works into English (the only global language) have to be undertaken

by the relevant agencies at the national level, to open a window for the rest of the world.

Another trend noted was that the vast majority of the books and publications were poetry. Why this neglect of Bangla prose? Perhaps we look at politics more through the heart than through the head (rationality).

Our culture has to be publicised abroad, but there is no awareness campaign on the relevant national code, no round-the-year activities for international clients. In these fast moving times, we have to be mentally prepared for changing the facets of political culture, lest we are misunderstood by the foreigners.

We are a young free nation, but our heritage goes deep several millenniums.

**A citizen, Dhaka**