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Death traps



AFP PHOTO

The launch disasters cannot be minimised, unless drastic and immediate action is taken in two main areas: (a) design and trial approvals; and, (b) improvement in human service (regulatory daily exercises, control and

inspection, prosecution, training, elimination of fake certificates). Computerisation reduces human errors and corrupt practices. Tested equipment systems are available for immediate installation, under guidance from UN and

other donor agencies. What are we waiting for? How to discourage unethical practices in the private yards, which do not follow QC standards? Fake documents are killers! [Same in the building construction industry.] The training institutions for serangs (masters) and crew is a grey area, and public awareness and publicity are poor (why?). The wireless navigation and warning network is in woeful condition, and completely inadequate to cope with the operation of thousands of launches and big boats in the 300

institutions). The established IWT institutions need overhaul and modernisation. The society is undisciplined, hence proper monitoring of the private sector activities is necessary to maintain safety standards (compare with land grabbing, smuggling of mobile telephones, drug addiction, meter reading, and politicisation of the public services). The politicians do too much politics in the background and foreground, neglecting direct participation in public services which are visible to the man in the street. Addressing public meeting is a low-priority service, because good work does not remain hidden (note how the Ctg Mayor was re-elected for the third term). Our politicians are not technically oriented, and leave such tasks to the bureaucracy. The latter are file-oriented, and subservient to the political masters. Who give the orders, who listen, and who monitor and regulate? It is a rotten system (politically speaking). We are beating about the bush, and the political will is simply not there in any of the two major political parties, who are hawking (feriwallas) past names to retain power by hook or by crook. Many voters have lost faith in politics.

AL politics

Our politics is not a positive one so it could be argued that the loser of the polls would not take defeat without demur. The AL plan was that they would launch a movement if they lost the Chittagong City Corporation polls. The opposition leader in her speech in Chittagong hinted at such intention. Fortunately, the results went the AL's way. The Awami League, being the opposition, should learn from the recently concluded UK election, where the opposition accepted the results and promised to co-operate with the government. The Awami League would blame the government in case of defeat, but we cannot be victimised by our opposition. In case of a hartal what happens to the government? Nothing. AL leaders know the adverse effects of hartal because they ruled the country from 1996 to 2001 and had also promised not to call hartal once they were in the opposition. But they have not been true to their words.

Moinul Alam
Eskaton Garden Road, Dhaka

Justice delayed

Quite a long time has passed since the brutal murder of Shah SMS Kibria, former finance minister. The late Kibria's family members along with the citizens have been registering their grief and demand for justice through the unique projection of "Blue for peace" rally.

There had been enough talk about the FBI involvement in the probe from the government side, but surprisingly enough, there hasn't been any progress on the issue yet. Rather the whole thing has been enveloped into obscurity. The point that makes us sad is whether justice will at all be meted out.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Look East

Finally, we realised that our best bet is to look east. I wrote once in The Daily Star in the early nineties why we should look East rather

than West. I wrote to Bangladesh Board of Investment to open up our policies to attract foreign investment. I was telling all Bangladeshis, I meet in the US, the same thing that we need to change our mindset. Less government and free economy is the best thing that can happen to a developing nation. I provided examples of Southeast Asian nations—how they have changed the face of the world and become respectable Asians to Europe and America.

Ekram Belal, US

given its due recognition by the state. How could we get Bangla as an important language in the world, at least as the pioneer in arts and culture in this subcontinent as it used to be in the British period, if we did not have an independent sovereign country?

Aminul Ahsan
Rajshahi University

HSC exams

You could say I have taken up the

in a national exam. I hope I am not losing your attention.

All should know about the blunders of our moderators. Perhaps, it was not moderated at all! Just think, they are getting away with such faults just for being in Rajshahi Board. If this was Dhaka, they would not dare to be such callous. Thousands are there to monitor the questions. Is it not so? Cadet Muslehuddin (Sadi)
Rajshahi Cadet College
Sardah, Rajshahi

Definition of democracy

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as "By the people, for the people, of the people". We may redefine it as something "By Bush, for Bush, of Bush" or "By the arms, for the oil, of the puppet government".

Bush established democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq based on the surge of bloodshed, heinous fake allegations of WMI, avarice of oil and the hegemony of his military power in the Middle East.

Md Zillur Rahaman
Gandaria, Dhaka



AFP PHOTO

Role of Bangla

We have taken English for our offices and education and Hindi for entertainment and culture. Bangla has no place. What is the role of Bangla as the state language? Is just speaking Bangla enough? Could we not do the same even when Bangla was not a state language?

We think a language gains importance only when it is culturally and entertainment-wise enjoyable and

pen out of sheer frustration. I've never written a letter to a daily before. But I have great confidence on you and the Star family. I am a real fan of "SWM" and other star publications.

Coming right to the point, I sat for the HSC English I paper exam a few days ago. To be not harsh at all, the questions were substandard. Alas perhaps, the noble initiative of the Board is to minimise "pass rate"! But that is different from making pathetic mistakes or rather blunders

Arsenic density

While browsing through a local Bangladesh Atlas (2003 edn), I came across a full-page map of Bangladesh showing the density of arsenic throughout the country. The density dots looked more or less uniform in the S N and W zones, with higher concentration in some areas in the South (as expected). The arsenic map of West Bengal (India) was not available for comparison, (according to reports appearing in the press

from time to time, the arsenic spread in WB is not negligible). While the main effect might be due to detailed configuration, the effect of Farakka Barrage (and other barrages within the border perimeters) have to be analysed more deeply, for separate pictures of the man-made and natural effects.

A Mahasen, Dhaka

Female political activists

It is a cheap ploy by political parties to use female political activists to lead street processions (as seen in Dhaka), using them as a frontal buffer against police lathi charge. When police touch the physically active and violent female protesters, the party expects negative public reaction from the crowd, to win sympathy. It is cheap trick obvious to all.

This is, looking from a different perspective, a form of sexual exploitation, and women NGOs should point it out. There are many forms of political exploitation, for party survival. This has reached a nadir in Dhaka political showdowns. Some sort of self-regulation is called for.

AZ, Dhaka

Saarc minus India

Since its inception more than two decades ago Saarc has done nothing worth mentioning for the welfare of the peoples of Saarc countries.

On the contrary, Saarc has held several summits in different capitals with grandeur, pomp and show, decorating some roads and palatial buildings with flags and festoons and arranging colourful cultural shows and lavish feasts for a handful of VVIPs at the cost of millions of public money.

We have also observed and found that many Saarc countries are keenly interested in growing closer ties, friendship and understanding, trade and commerce among themselves and in making the purposes and principles of Saarc successful. But the apathy, jealousy and arbitrary decisions of New Delhi leaders have always stood in the way and created obstructions in the works

and functions of Saarc.

In a seminar held at Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka, some speakers have rightly said "The success of Saarc solely depends on the goodwill of India, being the largest country in the region". Are the smaller Saarc countries supposed to live on the mercy of mammoth India? If so what about ASEAN? Don't the smaller ASEAN countries stand on their own feet? If ASEAN countries can survive without giant China why Saarc cannot survive without India? Due to various cogent reasons Saarc minus India is the requirement of South Asia today.

It may also be mentioned here that now India is vying for a permanent seat in the UNSC. India may get a permanent seat in the UNSC with the blessings of the US.

Once India occupies a permanent seat in the UNSC, it may totally discard and oppose Saarc for its own interest.

It is therefore imperative that Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives and Pakistan stand together, recast, rebuild, reform and give a fresh lease of life to Saarc minus India to protest and safeguard their interests, rights and privileges in South Asia in particular and world affairs in general.

OH Kabir, Wari, Dhaka

BSF activities

In recent days, a number of Bangladeshi nationals have been killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Even some dead bodies are yet to be handed over to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

Perhaps the BSF is trying to take revenge for the killing of one of their commanders inside Bangladesh territory. As a peace-loving citizen of Bangladesh, I don't support killing of any BSF commander/soldier by BDR. But the question arises, what was the purpose of that very commander behind intruding into Bangladesh territory?

The BSF personnel have issued shoot on sight order regarding anybody from Bangladesh in the no man's land in between Bangladesh and India.

The question is whether the area has been forcibly occupied by the BSF. If the BDR also issues a counter order, what would happen in the border area then?

MAS Molla
BAAS, Dhaka

Sun coverage

The Sun, a British tabloid, has recently published some photographs of the erstwhile Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein is seen naked except for his underwear that brings disgrace to the global people. The Sun has apparently forgotten that Saddam Hussein once was a bold leader of Iraq. The photographs certainly violated Saddam's right to privacy. As a detainee he has the right to keep himself private at a prison in accordance with Geneva Convention. But the tabloid here almost ignored the right of a detainee.

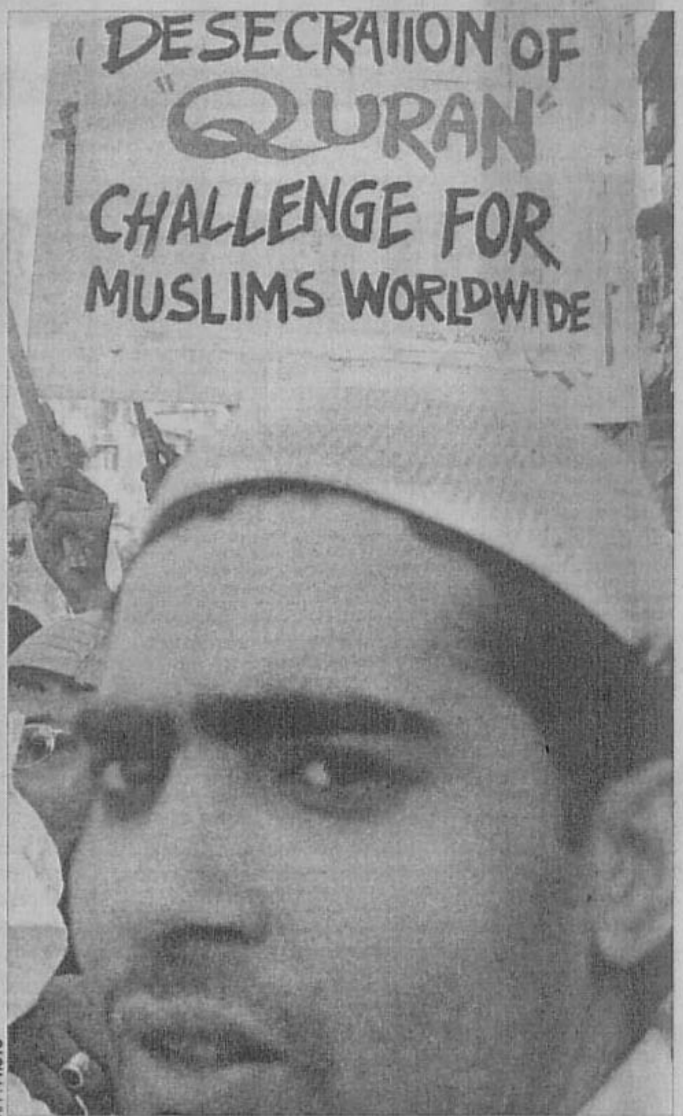
We obviously know that human rights are mostly being violated by the western world. Yet, western leaders are always talking about human rights and democracy.

Shakib Rahman
University of Dhaka

Manpower export

Some Bangladeshi youths died in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Sahara. They were going abroad in search of jobs. But they were the victims of unscrupulous manpower traders. The crooked human traffickers easily deceived those gullible youths. They all spent a goodly amount of money.

We know that Bangladesh, a least developed country, has less natural



AFP PHOTO

Dishonouring the holy book

By a singular statement of the Newsweek Magazine the whole world came to know about the desecration of the Holy Koran by the American troops. A large number of people protested this disgraceful act. But the holy book's value cannot be judged by its physical entity. The Koran is something far greater than a summation of papers. It has magical power to bring peace and collective good to society. We also join the protests against desecration of this holy book. However, we must also go by the dictates of the book that is considered a gift from the Almighty to mankind.

Nazmus Sakib Nirjhor, BPATC Savar, Dhaka

resources but has huge population. We have to think about our manpower export on a priority basis as our Ready Made Garment sectors (RMGS) are narrowing day by day. Time is running out. We must not miss out this great opportunity of sending skilled manpower to the developed countries. Competition will be tough in future. So we hope the government will take pragmatic steps in this regard.

Munir
Palachi, Dhaka

Acid throwing

In our patriarchy and man dominated society women are very helpless, they are continually tortured—physically, mentally, sexually—and various types of violence take place against them. Among them acid throwing is the

most horrible. People should organise a social movement to stop acid throwing that has already ruined the lives of many women.

Pavel Chakma
Rajshahi University



AFP PHOTO

SAVAR TRAGEDY

The Savar tragedy is one of the worst in the country's history.

It's the first time that a nine storied building collapsed and many people were buried alive.

It took nine days to finish the rescue operation and clean the debris. One thing has become clear: the absence of well-trained rescue operators and equipment. If the rescue operation could be carried out a bit faster than the number of survivors would have been higher. Not less than 100 people died and many others were injured. Some victims even died after four days of the accident inside the building. Some died in front of the rescue workers who even gave them water to drink. That was the most horrible experience.

The question is, if a nine storied building needs nine days to clean how long will it take to complete the rescue operations if there is a big earthquake in the country?

Remember Bangladesh is located in an earth-quake prone zone. M. Jashim Uddin
Chaktai, Chittagong

I saw coverage of the Savar building collapse in Canadian National TV media CBC news. We rarely see Bangladeshi news item in Canadian TVs. The US and Canada are importers of Bangladeshi clothing items and these countries are very much concerned about worker's safety issue. I guess that the incident may have an adverse impact on Bangladeshi garments export to these countries.

News reports suggest that the owner built the nine-storied factory without the permission of the appropriate authorities. The soil condition in that area was not suitable for such high rise buildings and there was no proper foundation. These issues should be investigated. However, the problem is that the owner is closely related to

the ruling BNP.

That is why I am afraid whether there will be proper investigation and whether the culprit will be punished.

Rashed Choudhury
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

It's very common nowadays that every year there will be one or more tragedies in the garments industry, whether its fire or stampede or building collapse. Why is it happening? The answer is very simple "negligence". The hard working poor

people, who are bringing millions of dollars for the country, die under rubbles because there are not enough equipment to bring them out. Malls are mushrooming in our city but we helplessly observed 100's of lives perishing gradually inside the

rubbles! We see big processions are held for political reasons, but no one stands for these poor people. No one comes out on the street demanding and pressuring the government to bring the culprits responsible for this accident to justice.

I feel not only the garment factory owner, the whole country didn't value the lives of these poor people. Now the question is, what can be done to avoid any such future incident?

Nazmun
Canada

The terrible tragedy of the garments factory has occurred in an area of Bangladesh that I am familiar with, having visited Palasbari on many occasions. It saddens me when I see once again that it is the poorest of the poor who are affected by yet another tragedy. It angers me when I know that this is only one of many incidents in these garment factories where lives have been lost so that companies in

the West can make maximum profit by selling garments made in these disgusting conditions. It is true that there is always someone to replace those who have died for even though the wages and conditions are so pathetic, they are better than nothing at all. Lives will be put at risk so that someone can become rich on the blood of their own countrymen and women. These people should hang their heads in shame for their exploitation just as we in the West should hang our heads in shame to know that the clothes we are wearing come at such a cost in human misery and suffering.

Areader
Dhaka

A massive construction collapse is nothing new anywhere in the world but a lack of proper investigation is what is heartbreaking for the sufferers in Bangladesh... a beautiful green spot in this huge world. A third-world country but with proven desires to get

rid of that title, Bangladesh is constantly suffering from unbearable corruption. I have seen so many good changes in that country in the past 20 years: population control, continuous participation in world peace and security programmes, improvements in roads and highways, development in business sectors, effective innovation of micro-credit systems, massive education drives, tremendous improvement in customer service areas, and in so many more areas that I find it difficult to believe how only a small group of people are easily able to hold the country back from bursting into international fame and struggling off the 'third-world' title. Why is it that only 1% of the 300+ parliament seats is occupied by people having a high public standing? How can the people of Bangladesh expect justice with a parliament like that?

John SAhmed
Uttara Dhaka

