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Conservation of biodiversity

We are living at a critical time and conservation of biological resources on earth should be a top priority job for mankind. The world's forests, freshwater and marine ecosystems are endangered due to pollution and other human interventions.

We probably have already lost 1 million species and several more million will be lost in the first few decades of 21st century. [Source: Living planet index 2004].

So, the industrially developed countries must take proper initiative to diminish green house gas emission; otherwise biodiversity as well as human life will be imperilled.

Mustafa Iqbal Shahadat
University of Dhaka

Weekly holiday and man hour wastage

Much has been said in favour of making one and a half day weekly holiday on Saturday-Sunday instead of present two days weekly holiday on Friday-Saturday. In a bid to save fuel cost the government has introduced two days weekly holiday but proper evaluation in respect of actual savings is still unknown. We gained an experience recently during the holding of 13th meeting of Saarc on Saturday-Sunday in our capital during weekly holidays in all other six member countries. The distinguished and high profile guests without spoiling working days in their country fully utilised weekend here in the official busy schedule and citing security reasons our weekly holiday was stretched to Sunday also in Dhaka and as a result we lost three working days. The right honourable finance Minister must have had a first hand calculation of total loss in economic terms incurred during three holidays following a long Eid vacation. We could have avoided the loss if there were Saturday-Sunday weekly holiday in our country as well.

Wastage of man hour is another area totally ignored by all strata of management. They declare unnecessary holidays on different occasions.

Therefore, without wasting any further time the government should positively respond to the demand of the majority citizens to declare one and a half day weekly holiday on Saturday-Sunday and reduce annual religious holidays by at least three-four days for the

sake of national economy and posterity.
Rezaul Huq
Lalmatia, Dhaka

"Bandhak"

When I saw the poster of the film, 'Bandhak' (Mortgage), I smiled for a moment. What a technique! The Censor Board did not allow the film's name as 'Bou Bandhak' (wife in mortgage). So the filmmaker has put a picture of Bou (bride) just ahead the word 'Bandhak' and has printed the word Bou in a small form below the picture, so that the Censor Board can't blame him but people can realise the full meaning of the name of the film. Another film named 'Naree' was publicised the same way. The filmmaker drew up a cross sign on the word 'Nishiddho' (banned) and attached it to the word 'Naree' (women). This is how some so called dishonest filmmakers select such vulgar names of films to draw viewers.

But when will it come to an end?
Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed
Dhaka College, Dhaka

Good offer, but...

A telecom company recently gave an attractive offer for the users of free talk time from 12.00 at night until morning. But teenagers, HSC candidates and university students are misusing this offer. They are not sleeping at night at all and also not attending classes or exams next morning.

Farida Yasmin
Boro Moghbazar, Dhaka

Chudanga-Kushtia road

The Chudanga-Kushtia via Alamda road is in bad shape. Big holes have developed here and there on the road and that make plying of vehicles risky. Accidents are taking place regularly on this road.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter in the interest of all and sundry.

Anoaruzzaman
Alamdanga High School

Woes of apprentice lawyers

Against the backdrop of recent serial bomb blasts, security has been tightened all over the country, especially in court buildings. It is a laudable step. But as nobody is allowed in court buildings without ID card issued by the Bar Association, apprentice lawyers are facing various problems. If

Political degeneration

Two recent news items have something in common: on ex mayor Hanif of AL, and Abu Hena, ruling party MP from Rajshahi. Both have criticised the outdated and inward-looking national policies of their parties. These days political changes are fast, and the fossilized leaders with traditional mindsets have to adjust quickly to changing moods and needs of the societies (anywhere in the world). The problem with opportunist leaders is that the national priorities do not enjoy number one rating (the accent is opposition-bashing).

The rise of religious fanaticism all over the world has left political leadership in tatters. In the underdeveloped nations, the political leaders suffer from insecurity syndrome. Dhaka has seen democratic and autocratic rules for three decades, and the solution is still not in sight. The electorate is getting impatient; especially with security of self and families. The rapid rise in violence in politics has been imported, due to circumstances beyond universal control.

In case of common dangers in the society, there should be a common political platform based on consensus. It appears both the two major political parties are facing erosion and ultimate disintegration, due to lack of foresight and long-term judgement. There is a huge price to pay for weak political leadership, as they control and run the regimes.

We have to learn to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

AZ, Dhaka

Bomb blasts in court-premises and other places have drawn international attention. It is a greater threat to Bangladeshi people than that of the Pakistani army in 1971. It is a threat to the existence of Bangladesh. Why these bomb blasts?

About 90 percent people of Bangladesh are Muslims. They practise Islam normally. They don't like the fundamentalists. They always keep themselves in the middle path even in religion.

M H Ali, DU



during the probationary period a young lawyer is not allowed to enter court buildings, how can he work? If Bangladesh Bar Council does not address the problem, many potential lawyers may get cut off from this profession.

The Bangladesh Bar Council should look into the matter.

An apprentice lawyer
On e-mail

Ikram Sehgal's article

I am an Indian Bengali and read The Daily Star regularly on the Internet. It is a delightful experience for me to read a newspaper from our neighbouring democratic country. I am specifically interested on the analytical articles published in your newspaper. These are really great works from the people around the world.

On December 8, 2005, I came across an article by Ikram Sehgal, on the backlogs of shining India. The loss of direction mentioned in the article is good, but I cannot but protest the wrong figures quoted in the article. It is a truth that only 30% of Indian people are reaping benefits of booming Indian economy, but the picture is not as bleak as he mentioned.

Firstly, he points out an amazing figure of 700 million below poverty line population and also went on to say that Pakistan has a better picture in that field. I don't really understand how he is defining the "Below Poverty Line", but UNDP (United Nations Development Program) figures show that population living below poverty line is 28% (almost 300 million) in India and 32% in Pakistan. Similarly, they ranked India in 58th place, ahead of Pakistan (68th) among developing countries on Human Poverty Index. The measurer of income inequality, named as Gini coefficient, ranked India ahead of Pakistan. The UNDP figures are not the results of Indian rhetoric, but of a successful grassroots development and sustainable democracy.

Next, he mentions that a person having income as high as 45,000 a month cannot afford a flat in a passable location. I do not understand how he distinguishes between a passable and a non-passable location, but inside Kolkata or Hyderabad (where I stay), there are many "passable" locations where people are buying flats at 1 million Indian Rs, and that too with incomes as low as 15,000 a month. This has triggered a boom in housing construction in India, and a competition among the banks moving them towards reducing the housing loan interests. He mentioned about rich getting richer by IPOs. But who are buying these IPOs and shares? The middle class people only.

At the end, he mentioned that

non-Hindus do not have their representation in Indian rich class. I would like to mention, that the richest Indian citizen, Azim Premji, the owner of Wipro, is a Muslim. He is the richest South Asian as well. Had he been discriminated against his counterparts, like Narayan Murthy of Infosys or Tatas of TCS, he would not have reached the place where he is today.

The author possibly overlooked the biggest success of India in last couple of decades, the primary enrolment ratio. 87% of Indian children get themselves admitted in Primary schools, compared to only 59% in Pakistan. Higher literacy at lower costs, and a huge number of graduates triggered Indian knowledge based industry, which now helps India earn \$20 billion a year.

It is definitely true that Indian growth is marked by disparity. The growth of city and villages are not the same, nor is the growth comparable between South India and North India. But, this is only the initial effect of liberal economy, which is faced by many a developing nations. The countries those are rich today, also faced this situation when they started to industrialise. The effective democracy can always absorb this disparity shock, and strengthen the equality among citizens. It will be good for India, and also for the entire South Asia.

Diganta Sarkar
Microsoft India R&D Ltd
Hyderabad, India

National dialogue

At last, the PM (head of government) realises that her government alone is incapable of handling the present JMB crisis. She has called for a national dialogue to face the crisis hand in hand with the opposition. It is, indeed, a step in the right direction. The opposition, however, rejected the offer, instead demanded immediate general election under a restructured caretaker government. This response was not unexpected. If the history is a guide, such a dialogue between the government and the opposition has never taken place. More importantly, the given nature and make up of the present government will make this dialogue impossible.

The truth is, the Jamaat will be the major hurdle to make such a dialogue possible since this party allegedly has a hand in the JMB bombing activities. The government should prepare and submit a workable framework of dialogue to the President for consideration by the opposition. The opposition must take this opportunity and should consider the framework seriously. Obviously, it can make amendments and resubmit the framework to the president. The President should help in reaching

a common framework immediately. Only a common framework of dialogue will yield positive results. The opposition must realise that the extremists are not going to disappear from the horizon soon. Even if the opposition wins the next election, as a new government, they will certainly keep facing this carnage. One does not have to remind that in politics there is no second chance even in the era of Bangladesh's degenerated democracy. The politicians of both persuasions must remember that the so called Islamists have waged a war against the nation, against the people, against the religion and on top of all against the humanity like the Talebans did against

prayers. It is not a mosque as mentioned by Taher J. The hill-top area which Muslims call Haram al-Sharif, has in it the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Once in the past there was Solomon's Temple on that hill-top, built by King and Prophet Suleiman, As (or King Solomon, as the Jews and the Christians call him). Invading pagans, long before the advent of Islam, later destroyed it. When the Khalif of Islam built the Dome and Al-Aqsa Mosque, the hill-top had no temple on it. The Rock from where our Prophet (Pbuh) started his journey to the heavens (in the night of Meraj) was of course there, but without a sheltering roof over it. The Jews and the Christians call

Aqsa Mosque did not exist there at that time, as Islam then did not spread that far.

RD Qureshi
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Radiation from radio transmitter

For many years people have been told radiation from a powerful transmitter mast for instance a Radio station is harmful and injurious to health. This perhaps explains why vast, uninhabited space (often fenced) is kept around such masts.

These days, of course, we know for sure that even minuscule radiation from mobile phones is injurious for human body.

Anti Corruption Commission

We welcome the sunset of Anti Corruption Bureau and the sunrise of Anti Corruption Commission.

We however wonder if Anti Corruption Commission is old wine in a new bottle? How are we going to distinguish the powers, functions and jurisdictions between the erstwhile Anti Corruption Bureau and the newly established Anti Corruption Commission?

Almost all the old officers and staff of former Anti Corruption Bureau have been appointed in Anti Corruption Commission. We also learn that works and functions of Anti Corruption Commission have come to a dead stop or moving at a snail's pace due to internal differences and conflict among some members and the chairman of the Commission on the one hand and the officers and staff of the Commission on the other hand. But they are all drawing their lucrative pay and allowances for months together from our public exchequer sitting idle.

The Anti Corruption Commission has so far failed to march forward and to make any significant contribution to its duties and responsibilities.

What are the aims, objectives and purposes of Anti Corruption Commission?

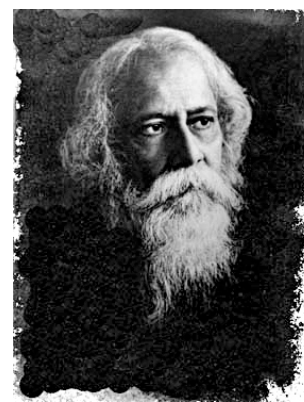
Are these not including bringing corrupt people to book, punish them and to eradicate corruption from our country? Who monitors the performance of the Commission?

Corruption is so widespread and rampant and the number of people involved in corruption is so huge that we think Anti Corruption Commission alone, single handed, may not be able to succeed in its mission.

We therefore feel and suggest that the newly established Anti Corruption Commission may be recast and divided into seven separate and independent Anti Corruption Commissions as follows in the interest of public service

1. Govt Servants' Anti Corruption Commission (for Govt and public sector corporation and Police Department personnel) to be headed by a senior retired civil servant.
2. Political Anti Corruption Commission (for all political parties, workers' unions, MPs and ministers) to be headed by a retired judge of Supreme or High Court.
3. Judicial Anti Corruption Commission (for judicial courts, judges, lawyers and judge court staff) to be headed by a retired judge of Supreme or High Court.
4. Educational Anti Corruption Commission (for universities, schools and colleges, professors & leaders) to be headed by an eminent educationalist.
5. Medical Anti Corruption Commissions (for hospitals, clinics, laboratories, doctors and medicine establishments) to be headed by an eminent physician.
6. Trade, Commerce and Industries Anti Corruption Commission to be headed by a senior ex-member of Federation for Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries.
7. Armed Forces Anti Corruption Commission to be headed by a senior retired army, navy or air force officer.

OH Kabir, Hare Street, Wari, Dhaka



Bangla songs...

To dispel monotony and anxiety man needs recreation. A life without recreation is very poor and dull. Music is a part and parcel of recreation. Music is a remarkable aspect of Bangla Culture. Music has an enchanting power to charm people. Music has been attracting people from time immemorial.

Bangla songs have great reputation in this subcontinent. Bangla songs thrived widely at the hands of Rabinadrath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Subsequently, a large number of famous songs especially modern songs, patriotic songs, folk songs and religious songs were composed. Then two great singers named Abbas uddin and AbdulAlim emerged as the blessing to us with unparalleled voice and

charmed the people of our country through their songs. Afterwards, Ferdousi Rahman, Sabina Yesmin, Runa Laila, Sayed Abdul Hadi, Khurshed Alam, Mahmudunnabi, Bashir Ahmed, Subir Nandi, Andrew Kishore, Shakila Jafar earned fame as singers.

But this trend lost its momentum from the early eighties. Of late, light lyrics have made the songs of Bangla films rather insipid. All meaningless and obscene songs are being included in Bangla films except a few good ones. On the other hand, Hindi films are still rich in good and melodious songs, which divert the attention of our young generation from Bangla songs. Nowadays most of the children in urban

areas prefer Hindi songs to Bangla ones. They are extremely influenced by the Hindi songs. Of course, every body is at liberty to hear songs of his choice and taste but not forgetting the native ones.

I think it will be possible to find out talented singers from different places of the country through the programmes initiated by the TV channels. Besides, eminent personalities in music and dedicated composers or lyricists should come forward with a commitment to making our music arena rich by regaining our lost tradition.

Md Abdur Rahim
Comilla Zilla School, Comilla

Afghanistan.
Dr Moazzem Hossain
Brisbane, Australia

The Dome of the Rock

The letter written by Taher J. from Sharjah, UAE titled 'Real photo of Masjid Al-Aqsa' appeared in your daily recently.

In his letter the writer mentioned that our Prophet (Pbuh) offered prayers 'here' (meaning Al-Aqsa Mosque). But Al-Aqsa Mosque did not exist in the days of our Prophet (Pbuh). It was built at the initiative of Calif Abd al-Malik of Damascus, during the Hijri

the Rock and activities Therein.' It was taken from a book published earlier in 1890 titled 'Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from AD 650 to 1500. Works of The Mediaeval Geographers'.

The place we Muslims call 'Bait Al-Muqaddas', the first Qibla before 'Kaaba' in Mecca, is actually the Holy Rock (Sakhr) in Jerusalem which is covered by the magnificent Dome with its supporting structures and is accessible to those Muslims who are allowed to enter to offer 'extra'

this hill Temple Mount, the mountain that once had Solomon's Temple on it. It is a top sacred place to the Jews, who are desperate to snatch it from the Muslims.

Taher J. is right in stating that "the Aqsa Mosque and Sakhra mosque are not the same," but he is wrong in assuming that Al Aqsa Mosque is more sacred to the Muslims than the Dome of the Rock. It is the Rock (Sakhr) under the Dome where our Prophet (Pbuh) offered his prayers and wherefrom he started his journey to the heavens. Al-

If above notions are true, I wonder how a children's park is coming up in close proximity and indeed within the fenced perimeter of the powerful (100 KW) transmission mast of Chittagong Radio Station, Changaon?

Are we going to unwittingly (or knowingly!) expose our children to the dangers of electromagnetic radiations?
Ali Ahmed, Khulsi Hills
Chittagong