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Paradigm shift in Latin America?

Though personally I don't believe in reincarnation or metempsychosis, it seems Late Saddam Hussein has started speaking out through the vocal cord of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

Years back, Saddam did deliver a speech full of gravest admonitions that only the

fainthearted Arabs are to bow down before the United States as the only power to decide the fate of the pan-Arab security. Chavez is also intoning the same admonitions to the Latin Americans to stand firm against the United States and its hegemonic instruments like IMF and World Bank; the dif-

ference now is he is buttressed by his solid friends: Fidel Castro of Cuba, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and President Evo Morales of Bolivia, while no Arab country dared to lend a friendly hand to Saddam. Fidel Castro also led the fight for Latin American freedom from domination by

the US and international monetary organisations. Like Saddam, Castro too had then few allies in the region.

When Hugo Chavez came on to the scene, things changed. Today, several countries are working together in Latin America to use their resources for their own people and to

unite as a unit to maintain their identities.

On the last May Day holiday, President Chavez declared that from the May Day holiday of 2010 the legal workweek in his country would be slashed from 40 to 36 hours or 6 hours a day. Minimum wage has already been raised by 20%. He also announced that Venezuela is going to modernize its military and offered to sell oil to the allies at a 50% discount. He has steadily worked to provide alternative forms of credit and financial support for the countries in the region, backed up by Venezuela's oil wealth. He has referred to such a project as the "Bank of the South".

Somewhat analogous to socialist policies, seizing control of oil projects in Venezuela run by large American and European energy companies may be a paradigm shift in governance, perhaps his "21st Century socialism", Chavez has been contemplating to establish first in Latin America, then probably in the rest of the world.

Now the question is: Can Chavez navigate his nation along with his allies, already plagued by inflation and poverty in South American standard, to take a stand against the US when he must continue to allow his own country to be one of the top oil suppliers of his northern nemesis?

Maswood Alam Khan
General Manager
Bangladesh Krishi Bank



Voters' ID & EC

I have been told that an expert is a person who knows more and more about less and less while a layman knows less and less about more and more subjects. Here I am a layman, who fails to understand the operational method of the Election Commission (EC) in the preparation of voter list and the voters ID card.

It seems that they are very busy with the number of laptop and other instruments to be required. I cannot understand why they should be busy in the procurement of the equipments themselves, when they have clearly said that they will outsource the services. It is the responsibility of the outsourcing organisation to decide what would be exactly required for the purpose.

Let the EC decide first what they require: a voter list with photograph or a voter list with ID card including or excluding bio-metric features. Then they can ask for the proposal with costing from the intending outsourcing organisations, evaluate it and award the job to the deserving organisation. Before placing the job to any organisation, the EC can ask for a multimedia presentation and award the job on the basis of the merits of the presentation. It would be their duty to organise whatever equipments

are required for the purpose. The main job of the EC shall be to regularly monitor it. Moreover, they now have the consultants also, to look after and monitor the job professionally.

That's why I feel that the EC should not bother about the procurement of laptops and scanners (unless they want to award the procurement job to some particular organisation), but get themselves ready with their requirement and ask for offers from interested parties immediately. This way they can fulfill the peoples' demand of a free and fair election at an early date.

One word about your reform programme. I personally feel that in the ballot paper you should put one more column "I don't like any of the above candidates" for us to put the stamp if any of us feels so. If there are more votes cast on this column, then you can go for reelection in that particular constituency. It may so happen that both the major parties have fielded either a musclemen or a black money holder and people would be forced to vote for the lesser evil. This way the people can ventilate their hatred for both of them.

A citizen, One e-mail



Deaths at RMCH

I am absolutely appalled as to how the medical interns could deny care to the sick and dying patients at the RMCH. They have violated the Hippocratic Oath their actions were inhuman and unethical. They must be banned for life from practising medicine. Their action is tantamount to premeditated murder.

They should be prosecuted and given the due punishment.
Shahed Nasrullah
Canada

Road link with Myanmar

Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to establish road communication. This is an important development and the plan should be implemented immediately.

Saif Tinku
One-mail

Letter from US Senators

Your editorial on 18 May characterises the tone of the US Senators' letter as unfortunate and unacceptable. I express my strong belief that this letter and other frequent interferences by US politicians are just that - interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. While every individual anywhere in the world can, and should protest what he or she reasonably perceives to be wrongdoing by a government - the disagreement should not come in a schoolmasterly fashion as in the case of this letter. Not only is this an affront to us as a nation, but it is also insulting that the very Senators who supported President Bush in going to the unjust war in Iraq are taking the moral high ground. Just as an aside, some of your readers may recall the time when the then First Lady Senator Clinton alluded to the need for a separate state for the Palestinians and almost immediately disowned it after being attacked by the pro-Israeli lobby. These days it seems it's not the false sense of superior morality alone but the fact of owning the big stick that prompts the US administration and lawmakers to pronounce what other nations ought to do.

Unfortunately, the blame for this lies with our Bangladeshis in the country and abroad to a great extent. The political leaders almost made it a practice to have their policies guided by foreign powers, solicited blessings and sought mediation of foreign diplomats in matters truly concerning the Bangladeshi people only. Here in the United States, the expatriate Bangladeshis have been quick to mobilize lawmakers to support causes of their favourite parties forgetting the fact that it is demeaning for an independent nation to be reminded every now and then how it should behave. Obviously, our fellow expatriates see no humiliation in this. Whereas they could have used the same clout to lobby for broader access of Bangladeshi goods to the US, for instance, they are engaged in the

game of political one-upmanship.

But however much the blame lies with our leaders and fellow expatriate Bangladeshis, it is up to the foreign meddlers to refrain from imposing their will on a small nation.

H. Taufiq Choudhury
Attorney at Law
New York

27th BCS

First of all, we congratulate the caretaker government for taking the bold steps against all forms of corruption. Hopefully, they will be able to wipe out the roots of corruption for good.

We the finally selected candidates of the 27th BCS came through a very competitive and long procedure of exams and screening methods. We had to appear at the MCQ prelim. exam at first. It is for the very first time that a lethocode system was introduced in BCS written exams so that no one could identify a candidate's answer script. Thus the question of manipulation in written exams didn't arise. We had to appear in nine written exams and those taking general cadres had to sit for two more written exams, each carrying 100 marks. In viva, there were only 100 marks, instead of 200. So chances of manipulation were not there.

The number of doctors who were finally selected for viva after written exams was about 1800. The manpower required by the establishment ministry was 2305. It is to be mentioned that both in the 24th and 25th BCS the numbers of doctors required were about 800 and 1581 respectively, though in the initial circular the posts mentioned were much less. It was about 571 in the 25th BCS.

Most doctors selected through the 25th BCS have already been appointed in district hospitals, as a result our rural population will be without healthcare services if the 27th BCS doctors are not appointed on a priority basis.

So, the doctors selected through the 27th BCS should be appointed immediately.

Selected doctors of 27th BCS
One-mail

Democracy and discipline

I remember while going through a paper published from Hong Kong 20+ years back I came to know that a visiting statesman from Singapore was requested to comment on the democracy established by the president of the host country. The visiting statesman gracefully commented,

"Mr. president you established it but I don't find the results." Mr. president wanted to know about it more specifically. The visiting statesman replied that he should have established "Disciplinocracy" first, before trying to set up democracy---then things would have been alright. The President, a wise man, understood the inherent point and admitted his failure.

In our motherland do we find any discipline anywhere?

People walk along the roads and not the zebra crossings, hence zebra crossings also vanished.

We spit and smoke everywhere - should we not stop it?

We are free to write on others' walls --- should we do it or should we be allowed to do it?

Dhaka and other cities are glutted with ads & hoardings in a haphazard manner - is it acceptable?

There is no road discipline.

There is no speed or horning discipline etc. Will the govt. see to it?

M.A. Bari Mian
One-mail

Press freedom

Press freedom is the precondition for democracy. Democracy depends on the collective wishes of the people. When there is freedom of the press people will have access to the required mass of information they need to reach a logical conclusion on any issue. Moreover, the newspapers will point out the pros and cons of government's decisions. Even the party in power will not dare do anything against the interest of the country, lest people should know about their misdeeds. Through newspapers people will know about the mistakes and wrong doings of the mighty sect of the society. In a democracy, press is the medium connecting people and the government.

Moreover, when a newspaper publishes news about famine, drought or any natural disaster, the government takes immediate steps. To get the benefit of democracy, freedom of the press must be ensured.

Jim Johnny
Crescent Road
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Bac and ACC

I had an opportunity to work at the Bureau of Anti-Corruption as an officer for about two years. I have retired from government service. As I worked for Bac, I came to know about its officials. In my opinion, 98% officials were more or less corrupt. And at least 40% of them were corrupt beyond imagination.

The new ACC chairman will have to address this problem before anything else. I hope and strongly believe that he will do justice to his reputation.

Abdur Razzak
Uttara, Dhaka

Business leaders

There are so many leaders of FBCCI and other chambers who have cases of bank loan default against them. But these business leaders usually talk much about their contributions to the nation, while speaking in a seminar or meeting.

My request to the business leaders: instead of issuing statements, please try to be honest in

your profession.

Zafar Hossain
Elephant Road, Dhaka

Black money

Before going deep into the matter, I think it will be better if I try to explain what black money is and how it is made. In this respect I quote Horace Greely, "The darkest hour of any man's life is when he sits down to plan how to get money without earning it." This is possibly one of the best ways of explaining the black money and the mental attitude of the person engaged in illegal methods of getting money. The money which is not earned legally is black. There are many ways the holder of such black money/wealth earns it. Black-marketing, smuggling, adulteration, bribery, graft, evasion of taxes etc. are some of the common things in our country.

Communicative teaching

English deserves a special place as a language because of its global importance.

There is no doubt that the communicative teaching approach is very effective for language learning. It is known to us as a theoretical concept only, because in English language teaching we don't see the appropriate implementation of this approach.

Last week, I participated in a five-day workshop on techniques and tactics of communicative teaching approach. At this workshop, some fundamental points were raised, such as modifying speech through talking at a slow-to-normal pace, short sentences, pleasant tone, simple sentence structure and high frequency words. There was also a lively presentation on group and pair working to make an ideal English language class.

Here my view is that this sort of workshop is not rare in Dhaka city. But the disappointing thing is such discussion can't produce good results.

There are standard methods which have to be followed in this important area.

Md. Mehedi Hassan
Department of English
Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT)

The illegal occupants of government land are also to be bracketed as black money/wealth holders. By now, a large number of such illegal holders of money and land have been caught and the process is on.

The government should now quickly arrange to get possession of all such lands/buildings recovered from illegal occupants and plan to utilize them as office, residence, playground, park etc. The best thing will be to construct shelters for the floating poor people. In those buildings they can be given shelter, after proper registration with photograph. The money needed can be collected from the huge amount of black money on which the illegal owners have no legal claim. They will have to remain satisfied with the fact that their un-earned money has been spent in nation

her corrupt party people?

In my opinion, she has lost all credibility to be a political leader.

Khaled
Manhattan, US

Dr. Yunus' decision

It is good news that Dr. Yunus has finally understood that politics is not his cup of tea.

He can perform much better in the economic field.
Monzur Rahman
Rajshahi

Irregularities in health ministry

Readers' attention has been drawn to a news item on 'Corruption, irregularities and indiscipline' in the Health Ministry, published in a Bangla daily. Actually, the ministry is not fulfilling the expectations of

the people, especially those who rely on the ministry and the health department.

Even some educational institutions under the ministry are facing many problems while important files, which have already been investigated and given clearance, are still marked 'red' by the ministry.

As the present government is neutral, impartial and committed to the welfare of the country as well as the people, so the victims of the irregularities in the health ministry are expecting something better and removal of the corrupt.

Victims
Dhaka

Corruption

The government is trying to do a lot of things to get rid of corruption. But I think we are overlooking the main problem and that is our middle class people, mostly government officials and other service holders. If we don't take care of them, then again corrupt politicians and businessmen will exploit them (due to their poor salary). We have to think of our middle class and make them happy, only then we can have a society with much less corruption. We need to introduce some incentives for the government employees, so that they feel motivated to remain honest.

I am not an expert on these matters, but strongly feel that something must be done to ensure honesty at all levels.

Ataul Hasan
Dallas, Texas

New society emerging

Old Golden Bengal [now Bangladesh] is getting back its humour. The previous phase, 1971-2006 has ended. This type of regeneration [or reincarnation] is not new. These are historical cycles, like ebb and flow tides.

The 21st century is a period of change for Bangladesh; we faltered in homework for three decades; but learnt and unlearned many lessons. The old order changes, to yield place to the new. Let us hope we make less mistakes from now on. There are crawling and toddling stages in life--nine months were not enough.

Let 70 millions of us, Bengalee adults, become the new caretakers, replacing the old guards. It is our baby, now growing up. The seed has grown into a sapling. The formative years are sensitive and critical. The enthusiasm of youth has to be channeled correctly. We are no longer apprentices. Now is the craftsmanship phase [our traditional handicraft products are inimitable].

The elders have to use their discretion with foresight and judgment. If the head rolls, nothing is steady. Now steady progress, not slow--we wasted a lot of time choosing national priorities. Our weakness is in the top layers--inability to resist temptation, and materialistic and personal gains. The formula is simple: service before self.

AMahasen
Dhaka

Thanks, Dr. Yunus

I am very happy to learn about Dr Yunus' decision of withdrawing from politics. That is undoubtedly a profound and pragmatic decision. If he joined or formed a political party, he would have lost his stature as a Nobel laureate.

We hope that he will contribute a lot to the nation without joining politics.

Md. Ebrahim Khalil Milon
New Govt. Degree College, Rajshahi

Maintain the status of Dhanmondi

Dhanmondi was developed as a posh residential area in the fifties mostly for the senior government servants and high level professionals. Since then it continued as a serene residential area. But in the last few years its status is being changed to a semi-commercial area. Already the plots around the Mirpur Road, Road no: 27, Satmasjid Road and Road no: 2 have been converted into commercial ones. The businessmen have also started intruding inside with university, college, school, clinic and other establishments creating problems for the residents. The gentlemen residing in the area are not raising their voices against the intruders. But now they feel that they are helpless. Starting from 7:00am to 9:00am in the morning and again from 12:30 to 14:30pm at noon the traffic jam due to universities, colleges and schools creates a horrible scene. Movement in the whole of Dhanmondi gets stalled during these hours. Normally, I need 40 minutes to reach my office at 9:00am but I am to leave my house at 7:30am, otherwise I cannot get out.

Why should I suffer so much for the greedy businessmen? I felt happy when the Honourable Adviser for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives declared that the commercial establishments from Dhanmondi area would be shifted to somewhere else. To my utter surprise, I have found that from 6th instant most of the roads in Dhanmondi area have been made one way, creating more problems for the insiders. Movement of traffic has become slower; rickshaw-pullers have started charging more for the detour. Can the traffic department maintain this by deploying so many police personnel throughout the year?

I would request the authorities concerned to understand the situation. Making one way road is not the solution, rather removing the illegally located commercial establishments in the residential areas. Should the authorities side with the greedy businessmen or with the peace-loving residents?

Abu Zafar
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Investors' conference

Investment, both from domestic and external sources, is the engine of accelerated pace of industrialisation. Many organisations, both

from public and private sectors, take initiatives for drawing attention and increasing the amount of investment into the economy. The Dhaka Stock Exchange in collaboration with City Bank N.A organised a two-day Investors' Conference at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on last Thursday -Friday where participants from home and abroad took part. Learning about the unique facilities and glancing over the macro-economic indicators in Bangladesh, many foreigners have expressed satisfaction, but the government in association with the private entrepreneurs will have to keep the fiscal and monetary policy prudent, keeping the business costs at reasonable levels with modern facilities, removing red-tapism etc. Foreign Direct Investment has been very important for our economy but it must come into our manufacturing sector. Over the years, it is coming into the service sector, which may not help us reach a sustainable development goal.

Through this conference a new horizon in the country's economy will be heralded, I hope.

Bazlur Rahman
Executive, Research, Development and Information Department
Dhaka Stock Exchange

Honesty

We have seen that the rich and educated people have the tendency of falling into the trap of corruption in Bangladesh. These so-called "enlightened and educated" barristers, bankers, businessmen and others coming apparently from respected families have ruined the respect they deserve.

In my opinion, the first criterion to select or elect people who will serve our country should be honesty. These people may not have a noble family background neither a "quality" education but they must be clean and honest. Take the examples of Lula in Brazil or Lech Walesa in Poland.

N.G. Chaudhury
Luxembourg

Scarcity of drinking water

A huge quantity of water is available on our planet, almost 1500 million cubic cms, but most of it is useless for us as it contains too much of salt. Total amount of available fresh water on our planet is only 84.4 million cubic cms. So, it is clear that drinking water is very limited. The situation is critical for developing and under developing countries, including Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, water treatment plants are very limited. Only 26% rural people use tube-well water for all household activities. The flow of our rivers is gradually declining and salinity is on the rise.

The planners have to address the water issue in all seriousness.
S.M. Shah Mahmood
Dept. of Urban and Rural Planning
Khulna University