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Saving water



Amidst the daily news reports of CTG's continuing crusade against the corrupt, and the unwanted drama revolving around the BNP chief, which is now nothing but a boring event, newspaper reading is an unrewarding experience. Only the sports page provides some interesting variety!

In contrast, the good news in page 3 of your publication (May 16) on the real possibility of reduction in water require-

ment for rice planting is the most exciting and eventful news for us in Bangladesh. Hopefully, the breakthrough will soon be achieved. We will be looking forward to more news and follow up of this revolutionary technological achievement by the IRRI. Are our politicians who will run this country at all aware of this important news item?

I am sure our government, elected or otherwise, will give topmost priority and support to

disseminate this important development to the farmers. It will definitely reduce the cost of production of rice.

Even if there is no visible decrease in the price of rice; hopefully it will increase the profit margin of our marginal farmers somewhat. And they really deserve all that they can earn. They are the real backbone of the country.

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Secularism and Bangladesh
Bangladesh as a small country has a lot to learn from India: technologically, in trading and economics, developing infrastructure, developing tourism, even election methods. India has turned itself into a global power in today's world boasting to be one of the largest and fastest growing economies, a challenge which none but China can rival. With such a strong partner beside us, I think Bangladesh can use the Indian model, and use India as a strategic partner to develop itself into a stronger country. One of the first steps would be allowing foreign investments (under favourable conditions of course). But these decisions of favourable/unfavourable deals should be made quickly, and efficiently instead of elongating the method and taking years to come up with a decision. Living abroad I understand that the ball is now in Bangladesh's court, the expectation is high for our country economically (just as our cricket team), it is now for Bangladeshi policy makers to either deliver results or crash out of the global competition.

Now coming to the comments made by the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka. Firstly, I will thank him for advising Bangladesh on better implementation of "secularism". It is unfortunate but the comments of the Indian HC warrant some criticism. India is far ahead of Bangladesh in all of the above cases, but lags behind in secularism. I do not mean to have any tone of sarcasm in my letter, and I understand that the condition of Hindus in Bangladesh is not good according to international standards, but my comparison between the two countries is prompted by

the Indian HC's comments. He mentioned, "Democracy in India is very strong as there is no division or discrepancy among people of different faiths and values because of the practice of real secularism". I think the HC was positioned in Bangladesh in 2002 and really did not get a chance to have a look at the Indian news at that time. As much as I respect and admire India's development, I have to be critical of the treatment meted out to Muslims, not because I am a Muslim myself, but because I am a human being.

Having secularism in a country may be good for democracy, but it is meaningless if it is not practised.

M Shadman
Toronto, Ontario

National ID
I was surprised to hear that in Bangladesh everyone is talking about the immediate data collection process, which is only a very small fraction of the gigantic task, but no one has any concern about the most important task of data processing, updating and storage.

No one has raised any question about how and where the data will be processed and stored. Who will be the custodian of the huge data and how will they ensure the privacy of such sensitive personal information? What infrastructures are needed to secure the data? How the national database can be linked with the national birth and death database maintained by the local authorities? How will the system be kept alive and online so that it can update instantly and securely?

I hope that all concerned will look into the entire present and future prospects, so that we don't end up

having another white elephant project such as the previous voter list project. Finally, there must be a strong project co-ordinator with high level authority and vision to implement such an important project.

Mohammad Rahman
London, UK

BCS exams and expatriates

We, the Bangladeshi students in the UK, feel the need for a BCS exam centre in the UK. Many Bangladeshi students who are currently studying full time can hardly hope to appear in the BCS exams. It may not be possible for many to manage a leave from their institutes to attend the exams in Bangladesh. In addition, thousands of students cannot afford the cost of traveling to Bangladesh recurrently to complete the whole examination procedure. Remarkably, there is usually a few months' gap between different tests (multiple choice, written, viva etc) within the BCS exam system. Therefore, a student from the UK who is willing to appear in the BCS exams needs to travel several times which is obviously time consuming. A student has to attend his classes regularly in his academic session. He needs to prepare himself for the exams. Hence, it is a problem for a Bangladeshi student to appear in the BCS exams in Bangladesh.

I, therefore, request the authorities concerned to set up a BCS exam centre in the UK.

Afjal H Khan
Middlesex University, London

A suggestion

People of Bangladesh are now in their quest for new leaders in politics. They are so frustrated by the past 30 years of politics and political leaders that they are feeling comfortable with the army-backed caretaker government. We have seen that the current caretaker government has taken some steps that aimed at fighting corruption.

But the attempt to force the top two leaders to quit politics has not worked well. Otherwise, the caretaker government is doing an excellent job in controlling domestic chaos. We expect this will continue at least until the polls. To make our election more meaningful and reflective of people's choice I would like to suggest one more step. It's pretty simple less costly but I believe would be very effective. Can the ballot paper have an extra option where people can say "We don't want you". If a candidate receives "don't want" opinion over a certain percentage say 15% of the total voters, then they must be disqualified from election for the next two or three terms. Thus the corrupt politicians can be kept away.

Syed Kollol (MBA)
Australia

AL chief's stand

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina has long been complaining against the interim government. She has claimed that the nation is now in a 'suffocating situation' (18/05/2007).

We strongly believe that only the corrupt are now facing "suffocation".

My question to her: would you want to push us to another pre-11/1 situation?

Abdullah-Al Mamun
BAU, Mymensingh

AL leadership

It seems that Awami League leaders are desperate to come to power. They cannot wait for the EC reforms to take shape. Ironically though, many of these reforms were proposed by the AL during the four-party alliance rule. Now, the AL wants a truncated version of reform implementation as they claim that full implementation of reform package is unnecessary. From the way AL chief Hasina speaks in interviews and public talks, one gets the impression that the current caretaker government has a de facto obligation to make sure that the AL comes back to power. The present leadership of the AL, as usual, has failed to read the popular sentiments.

This should be clear that this government enjoys support of the masses on the streets and people would like this government to execute the reform package in its entirety before the general election is held. The AL top leadership should realise that.

AFM Mohiuddin
Lalmata, Dhaka

Election and democracy

Should we not ask ourselves what we want?

In a very simple manner we can interrogate Bangladeshi citizens and ask them questions like this:

- Are we living now in a better condition under the governance of the present CTG?

- Are we in a rush to see the end of the present government?

- Are we in a hurry for election?

- Why American Senators and other foreign dignitaries want to see the end of this government and ask the CTG to hold election as early as possible?

- Do we want to go back to the so-called democratic rule?

- Should we not hold a referendum on the question of continuation of the present government to eradicate corruption, give time to

reorganise the existing political parties by eliminating bad elements, to help creation of new parties with honest people?

It is up to us, not the foreign governments, to decide what we want. We have to choose between a democratically elected chaotic government or a disciplined undemocratic, selected caretaker institution.

N.G. Chaudhury
Luxembourg

Secularism

In principle I agree, with reservation, with the comment of the Indian High Commissioner, Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, that Bangladesh lacks real practice of secularism. When you compare secularism, we need a standard. Referring India as role model and standard for religious secularism is simply unacceptable.

There are several countries with fine track record in religious harmony that would warrant such a comment, but ironically India is not one of them.

Irtila Ahmad
Boston, USA

To the Chief Adviser

First of all, I congratulate the present interim caretaker government for taking right decisions in almost all the sectors of governance. We appreciate the government's steps taken to root out corruption. We have started benefiting from all such steps. Good luck on your endeavours for making a corruption free Bangladesh!

I have the pleasure to take this opportunity to put forward something about education; and it is in fact, higher education, particularly in Chittagong University.

Almost all the national dailies published a front-page news about the arrival of a UGC probe body to investigate the irregularities in Chittagong University.

Under the circumstances, we appeal to you to kindly look into the Department of Mathematics.

Prof. Dr. Moslehuddin Ahmed
Dep. of Mathematics
Chittagong University

Money in bags & pillows!

The bizarre that might surpass Reply's Believe it or Not stories has been unfolding its multifaceted ugliness one after another in this land lately. There had been posh cars, expensive and rare pets of different kinds and many more in the possession of the corrupt politicians that had been chased by this government. And now you notice, with all sense of wonder and angst, how a high forest official went beyond sense/consciousness when the joint forces arrested him the other day. The person lost his sense for the fact that he knew well, when he was spotted with all his money in cash that mounted miraculously to a staggering one crore taka hidden in pillows, vaults and other places at his own home, that he was going to lose his money-mountain! It was a bizarre spectacle on the TV screen, joint forces officials were searching & collecting the cashes from pillows, vaults and other crevices; the owner was fainting -- trust me, I've never seen such a scene in my life; I bet, very few had the luck or bad luck to witness such an awesome event -- truth is indeed stranger than fiction! reckon!

Finally, this unique story of some high forest official does point out, very vividly indeed, the fact that the rot/evil has actually crept deep into the individuals of the society; and it also manifests the fact that the government has to be cruel only to be kind -- there is no other path left if we mean business.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Lecturer in English
Premier University
Chittagong

limited to the corrupt politicians but has also been extended to corrupt industrialists and government officers, however, on a small scale. Although corruption across the government sectors, politics and business are interlinked, a corrupt government officer is more dangerous and harmful to the people than anyone.

The recent news on the former Chinese head of food and drugs agency, Zheng Xiaoyu, who has been sentenced to death for corruption, has revealed how dangerous a corrupt government servant can be to the state and its people. Because of Zheng's corruption, dozens (including babies) died in China from fake or bad drugs and food products. Moreover, Chinese foods and drugs lost international market significantly.

I am surprised to see one crore Taka in cash at a forest officer's house. I imagine the way this amount was received probably massive deforestation was done through illegal logging in our Sundarbans and elsewhere I am unable to imagine any other source of this big money for a forest officer. Does he know how serious harm he has done consciously to the country?

The CTG is yet to touch the roots of corruption. Detaining corrupt politicians and industrialists has presented a positive view of the CTG to the people, but it is not enough to eliminate or even reduce corruption significantly I believe. Besides politicians and industrialists, a massive anti-corruption drive must be launched against government officers especially at the senior level.

Faruk Ahmed
Asian Institute of Technology
Thailand

Palestine scene



Both Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas

have been elected by the Palestinian people, then why are they slaughtering each other? Only two months ago, they signed an agreement ending the earlier factional fighting and formed a government of national unity. But instead of bringing unity, Fatah and Hamas have resumed their infighting in which they are killing each other without any restraint.

Latest

bloodlettings

started

when Hamas

gunmen

raided

the

house

of an

important

Fatah

leader

killing

his

guards

In the

ensuing

fighting

and

formed

a

government

of

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But

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