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Garment workers' wages

At long last, and at least two months after the CTG's correction drives started; this gross violation of Minimum Wages law by the rich garment factory owners came as front-page news in many dailies on 28 May. This undue procrastination on the matter by the CTG is sad indeed. But then who cares about the poor and the needy; they seem to be the last and least of our national priorities.

Hopefully, they will now redeem themselves by rooting out this cancer in our society; patronised by the rich; and the basic cause behind the lawlessness in garment industries and the country as a whole.

Hopefully, CTG will bell the "tom-cats". Pity the poor garment workers; mostly helpless and needy women; whom the factory owners have been exploiting with impunity! While price of daily necessities has gone up by around 20 percent; these workers have been deprived of their due wages for many years! Was this not a form of moral and inhuman corruption on the part of our political governments? Possibly many ex-MPs were owners; so they could merrily ignore the fundamental rights of the working people. They could not care less, so long as cash came to their pockets!

The CTG must force the owners to

pay the workers' minimum wages, with retrospective effect since the minimum wages came into force. They must be also forced to pay all overtimes, and legal benefits on this basis, including the workers whose services were terminated earlier and who were deprived of the minimum wages. This must be done if the CTG believes in moral justice.

Don't ignore the undeniable right incorporated in Islamic tenets of fair wages for a fair day's work pay before the worker's sweat of the brow has dried up!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka



Travel tax

Some mysterious things are going on in the Benapole checkpoint regarding the Foreign Travel Tax which an individual has to pay before travelling to India. This tax is paid by nationals from other countries also, not only Bangladeshis. Normally, the agency concerned issues 2 receipts of such tax payment. One copy is retained by the immigration department. And the other copy, which is clearly stated and printed on the receipt as passenger's copy, is taken away by the BDR.

Discrepancies have been creeping in for quite a while. At first, this Foreign Travel Tax was only taken from Bangladeshi nationals. But later, this Foreign Travel Tax was introduced for people of any nationality. For Indians, returning to India is not "Foreign Travel", instead it should be treated as return journey, but tax was being taken as "Foreign Travel Tax". The amount was previously Tk. 250, then it was raised to Tk. 500. Most importantly, for the foreign nationals, there was no printed government receipt at that time. Clearly, it was some kind of

anomaly. Later, I don't know how, the amount was fixed at Tk. 300 which is the present rate. BUT, the passenger copy is taken away by the BDR. And the passenger is left with no proof that he has paid the tax!

We are simply confused. Can we expect a satisfactory answer from the authorities as to what's going on? We are paying money as per government rules, but we cannot have our receipt of tax payment!

Kaushik Biswas
Kolkata, India

Praiseworthy move

That two important organisations are going to be made autonomous by the present interim government is a significant development. For long, Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television have been functioning as sycophants of every elected government and in many ways these two stations are a habitat of corruption and nepotism. So far all the governments have used Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television for political purpose.

These two state-run organisations may now function independently.

Md. Rezaul Karim
Lecturer, English Department
Leading University, Sylhet
Good write-up

I am an avid reader of Mr. Badrul Ahsan's column Cross Talk which appears in your weekend issue. His recent one entitled "Gates of Busyrane" is truly outstanding. I must congratulate and commend him for such a bold and thought-provoking write-up which hopefully will be read by the present lawmakers and those in the ACC.

An age-old adage always helped us to understand that anyone who deals with stolen items is also as guilty as the thief who had committed the theft.

Farook Chowdhury
Feeringhee Bazar
Chittagong

Anti-corruption drive

I have been following the anti-corruption drive in Bangladesh as reported in the media with a certain degree of skepticism. The primary reason for my skepticism lies in the fact that the anti-corruption drive appears to be ignoring the corrupt established traditional moneyed

families of Bangladesh. Ever since the creation of Pakistan, these families have been illegally looting the country's wealth in a massive way. They have developed a highly effective method of looting and plundering Bangladesh and they are responsible for massive net capital outflows. Most of these families maintain substantial bank accounts and other financial and real estate assets in the United Kingdom, USA, Canada and the Far East. Just as in Bangladesh, they avoid every means of not paying income taxes of their host countries and yet take full advantage of the healthcare and other socio-economic entitlements offered by these countries to their residents. In these countries they send their children to expensive private schools.

For the anti-corruption drive to have sustainable success, the authorities must target the corrupt families.

Latif Taimur
One-mail

How serious is AL?

Finally, the AL is talking about sycophancy! How serious, really, was

Saber Hossain Chowdhury when he zoomed in on the topic at the last BBC Sanglap? Will we feel the difference?

For the past four years, we have been groveling, pleading with leaders of the AL, the party that rightfully claims to have created history, to stop treating Road 32 as the doormat to its personal banquet hall and political convention hall under the trees by the Dhanmondi Lake, but to no avail. No party celebration is too small, no national event too insignificant but up go the outdoor tents, the mikes that seem to need an hour of "Ullo, Ullo, Ullo, Ullo, Ullo" to confirm to the party enthusiasts that they are indeed in good working order. Strangely enough, the mikes are not pointed inwards towards the tents but outwards towards some 40 families who live on Road 32 and the street that faces it across the lake.

The sound of the thundering speeches and songs, which ensues, is enough to compete with the din of hell itself. Some celebrations, such as the birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujib, are important enough to warrant three whole days of thunder and attempted melody by tykes so young that they can barely lisp their names or carry a tune. Every time these events happen, residents on Road 32 and nearby have no choice but to rush to close their windows, lock themselves regardless of the weather, and reach for the bottle of Panadol, that has become a friend, so as to rid themselves of pounding headaches.

When the AL is in power, things can get much worse. Then is the time to assault us with not only sound but fear. The police take over our verandas and rooftops on the excuse of providing security to high AL officials. Any attempt at demurral is turned into evidence of lack of patriotism. No matter how urgent the nature of our errands outside, they must be put on hold for hours. Should we happen to be out of our homes and wish to return, we are locked out and have to wait it out in blazing sun or rain, on the streets that lead to Road 32.

How could the AL have so deluded itself into thinking that its historical role gave it licence to reduce a whole residential street to a doormat at the entry of its banquet halls and convention centre?

Sultana Alam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Democracy and tolerance

This is with reference to a TV-show titled 'Shongbad Protidin' (CDL-sponsored) broadcast on Banglavision. I call to attention the episode from the night of May 28, 2007, featuring eminent Barrister Tania Amir as guest speaker.

On the topic of the ongoing reform of political parties, it was said by the host that our constitution fundamentally reflects democratic values and the parties must start to reflect that too. Adding on, the respected guest also questioned whether political parties whose political-ideologies do not reflect democratic values should be allowed to practise politics in the country. A rhetorical question was posed, "Weren't these parties (indirectly) committing treason?"

My takeout from this session was that anyone choosing not to subscribe to the democratic ideology - is a traitor ...guilty of treason! And treason, as any Will-Bill-George knows, is a punishable crime. Both the notion and its source are alarming.

I do not treat this matter lightly for it comes from a barrister. These are the people who will demarcate the fine line between Legal and Illegal in the future. And she suggests that nurturing a political view other than democracy is treason ...and hence, a crime!

I support democracy and want its institutionalization. But it should not be democracy that decries all other opinions and condemns it to the point of making it a crime! It can become like freedom in a prison-cell.

Adnan R. Amin
Dhaka

Corruption vs. kindness

Some bizarre & amusing arguments are being put forward by certain groups in favour of the "successful" candidates against the backdrop of the gross corruption charges in the 27th BCS. Some are appealing to the govt. to consider the matter from a humanitarian point of view arguing that many of the successful candidates are about to get married! Now, if the result is cancelled, then what would happen to their proposed marriage? The cancellation of the result will lead to the cancellation of marriage! What a silly thing! If it is so, then what would happen to the rest of the deprived candidates? I am afraid they would never be able to get married.

If the successful candidates & their well-wishers urge the govt. not to cancel the results for sake of their wedding, (ignoring the charges of gross irregularities), then it is ratio-

Environment



In Bengali, there is a common proverb "udor pindi budor ghare" (to blame someone who is not responsible for the wrong). In the case of 'Environment' which is the most burning issue now, the proverb is very appropriate, especially when we hear the developed countries talking about 'Green House Gases'. The developed countries now claim that the developing ones are also responsible for excess carbon emission and they (developing countries) should take proper steps to tackle the issue. It is true that the developing countries are belching out a huge quantity of carbon, but I am not in the same frame of mind about the issue that they should stop the emission until the developed

countries provide them the alternative environment friendly technology. This supply should be provided as an aid. Because half the population of developing countries still live in poverty and they earn less than a dollar per day.

Experts forecast that in the near future parts of the low-lying countries like Bangladesh will go under water and the apprehension has already been proved. Two islands of the Sundarbans have gone under water.

This is appalling news for us.

Md. Asaduzzaman
Department of Sociology
University of Dhaka

nal to surmise that they would only serve the interest of their would-be in laws. Secondly, they are trying to persuade the govt. by saying that many of them have already resigned from their previous jobs after the results. My humble question is, has the govt. asked them to quit their jobs? If not, what was the problem with continuing with the jobs? The medical test & the police verification don't require resigning from jobs. When they will be appointed (if not cancelled) finally, only then they will be required to resign.

I do believe that the govt. won't be misguided by such tricky arguments.

Nasim Jamil
Dept. of English
University of Dhaka

27th BCS

It is highly appreciated that at last the CTG has requested the PSC to take fresh viva of the successful 27th BCS candidates with a view to establishing transparency in the recruitment process and bringing back people's confidence in the PSC

M. Omar Faruq Khan
East Razabazar, Dhaka

Postal department

Sometimes back I visited my village home and I came to know that being in Munshiganj, just about 25 miles from Dhaka, letters reach them in days not in hours. I do not know what happens when a letter is dispatched to far away districts.

It is indeed necessary to improve our postal system at par with any other country in Europe or America, more so when it benefits the most common people of the country. Our postal system is outdated.

Couldn't we seek help from the developed countries in this area?

M. A. Bari Mian
On e-mail

Leader's responsibility

During his time at the White House, President Harry Truman used to keep a plaque on his desk that read "The buck stops here"; in plain English the phrase meant that the ultimate responsibility for the action of his administration rested with him. Though he didn't come up with the phrase, he surely made it famous through practising a no-nonsense brand of leadership that emphasised the importance of owning up to one's responsibilities. Would it be tantamount to "day dreaming" if I expect the "top two" to take this phrase into their hearts and for once, just for once, admit that they bear the ultimate responsibility for all the ills their party men have caused over the past fifteen years and apologise to the nation for not living up to the responsibilities of their sworn offices?

I can't help but shake my head in despair and disbelief every single time I see and hear "them" on the Bangladeshi cable channels that are available these days in North America. I still cannot figure out what sin we have committed to deserve such visionless, feudalistic leadership for such a long time. But what adds most to my unfathomable despair are the cronies of "the two" declaring that their respective parties don't have dynastic rules! I wonder how these people will respond to questions like, Is water

wet? Does fire burn? Don't you people have any shame? From what I have seen from them so far, "No" will be a high percentage answer.

Anwar Babar
Dallas, Texas

Science and technology

Science and Technology is not an issue anywhere in Bangladesh, not in national budget discussions, not in newspapers and talk shows of TV channels, not also in the scientific communities etc. Neither the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences nor other scientific professional organisations try to draw the attention of the government to give due importance to scientific research. The present CTG has taken many initiatives. There is discussion on reform in every sector but science and technology. Shouldn't we discuss our backwardness in science and technology?

Let's try to make Science and Technology an issue in Bangladesh.

A Bangladeshhi
Melbourne, Australia

What about the deprived?

My attention was drawn to the news that 248 out of 302 Upazila Election officials failed to get the pass marks, which justifies the allegations brought against them. My opinion is that their appointments should be cancelled immediately. Not only that, criminal charges should be brought against them if they are found guilty of adopting unfair means in the exams. My concern here is that what steps the govt. will take about those unfortunate but competent candidates who were denied the job because of these partisan elements. Who will pay the compensation for those who could have got the job if there was no corruption or political nepotism? Instead, it is being heard that the EC is considering the matter from a humanitarian viewpoint arguing that many of them got married & have families. And they are the bread earners of their families. What an argument! I would like to say it very clearly that no one has the right to compromise with corruption and there is no scope for showing "humanity" to the products of corruption.

Similar is the case with the 27th BCS. After all, civil service is not a charity. So, whenever you take any decision, if you want to show humanity show it to all. Never forget the victims of corruption.

Muntasir Mamun
Dept. of Finance & Banking
University of Dhaka

'Minus two'

The government's 'Minus two' plan was much talked about. I strongly believe that it would have been a wrong step on the part of a sincere government.

The law should take its natural course.

Shawkat Hossain
Chief Operations Officer
BRAC Afghanistan Bank
Kabul, Afghanistan

Positive impact

The present caretaker government took charge of the country while the nation was passing through a critical situation. Immediately after taking

charge, the present caretaker government has taken some good initiatives. As a result, every government agency is running smoothly. Political activities being banned, social stability has been restored. The occurrences of theft, robbery, mugging, corruption have decreased rapidly. Bribery in government offices is hardly observed. If anybody is found taking bribe he is caught and punished instantly. The standard of service in different offices, banks, hospitals and institutions has improved. Regularity and punctuality regarding arrival, departure and duties in the offices have been established. Traffic rules are being applied and followed properly. So the traffic jams on the roads and streets are seldom seen.

The overall situation has made a very positive impact on the national life.

Md. Abdur Rahim
Asstt. teacher
Nawab Faizunnesa Govt. Girls' High School
Cornilla

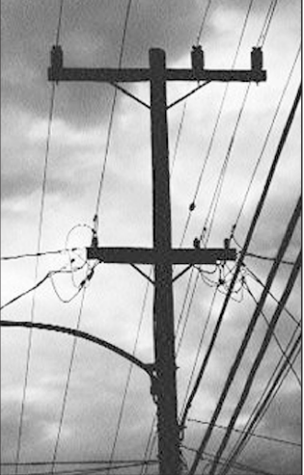
Allocation for ICT

In the 2006-07 budget, there was no separate allocation for Information and Communication Technology. It has been put together with education budget.

Since it has been identified as a potential sector for growth and development, shouldn't it have a separate budgetary allocation in the national budget for 2007-08?

Saif Tinku
On e-mail

POWER CRISIS



Power collapse, if we term it so in our extremes of despair, has been obstructing our day to day life that includes, most threateningly, the worst for the Higher Secondary examinees. It is, however, to be mentioned that children, students, patients at homes and the elderly people fall victim to this.

Regrettably, successive governments, especially the previous BN- led four party coalition government, did nothing in this regard.

With the present caretaker government in place, we expect that this crisis will soon be resolved.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong



A simple congratulation or a letter of thanks would not be sufficient to acknowledge your contribution to our national cricket. You know that you have plenty of fans in our country. The whole nation has noted your recent contribution to cricket and they will pray for you in the days to come. Many of the famous cricketers associated your name and fame with some other legends of world cricket which is truly deserving. We would also like to see you at the highest altitude of name and fame.

But, Mashrafe, I am truly worried about your future bowling fitness. You must remember that you are a fast bowler and your fitness is extremely important for you. You must remember that many of the great fast bowlers of world cricket who used their power and strength for bowling succumbed too early even before they really enjoyed the game. Look at Waqar, Shoaib Akhter, Aqib Javed, Bret Lee, Irfan Pathan, Srinath, Ambrose and many others who always tried to be the fastest and greatest bowler. These bowlers always used more of their power than their techniques. As a result, they have suffered multiple injuries and could not continue for long. On the other hand, bowlers like Wasim Akram, McGrath, Chaminda Vaas, Flintoff were and are using their techniques and power and have succeeded for a long time.

We would request you to be more serious about your physical fitness. Don't take much stress on your body while bowling, try to be technically sound, use your head, take care of yourself, don't drive a motor bike, if you are using a car - please don't drive yourself, take proper rest and always think of your further development.

So, we will request you to learn from your life. Good luck!

Munir Uddin
An admirer