



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# Poverty



I was reading in newspaper the other day that in India a newborn baby was found in a field when a farmer was plowing the soil, the child was still alive as God saved it. The child's poor mother buried him or her alive because of poverty.

Another shocking news I read in the Guardian, Monday 9 July, 2007, that a 16-year old Afghan girl was sold by his father to repay the loan for buying nine sheep. This is really inhuman. The root cause of this kind of immoral action is also poverty.

Saddened by these two stories I am thinking

about the poor people of my country affected by floods, cyclones, and river erosion every year and deprived by a few corrupt people gobbling up everything. More than 45% of the people in Bangladesh live below poverty line. The definition of poverty line is the minimum amount of income that a family needs for food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities.

As the world's most densely populated country we should think about how to alleviate poverty.

Laizu, Thailand

## Power generation

Sabrina Rashid's letter on the matter (23 July) is fairly premature. Planning to generate "x" megawatt of power, and making it available in the grid are two separate matters. Planning is expression of intention, while executing it is performance. Between the two one cannot ignore the oft-repeated saga of Bangladesh that confirms the popular saying "there are many slips between the cup and the lips".

When we really have the additional 345MW by July 2008 over the present generation level, only then congratulations can be extended! That will be the beginning of the promise. Additional cumulative generation of 1050MW by July 2010, will be keeping of the full promise. Meanwhile, a number of present generating units will go for needed scheduled maintenance and overhaul during this period. Have these figures of additional generation been given considering these realities; or is it just additional capacity projection, and not grid

availability figures.

We hope the homework has been properly done before these figures were given and public anticipation and expectations unnecessarily raised.

In fine, as we say "the proof of the pudding is in the eating". True evaluation remains pending till the brightly lighted nights of power with net increase of 1050MW by July 2010 occurs, and load-shedding becomes a dirty word of the past! Will the Financial Adviser kindly give us the basis on which these figures have been arrived at; so that there is no misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

We the consumers will not end up with another excuse when July 2010 comes around.

S.A. Mansoor  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Comments

"Command economy" failed in the long run, that is for sure, but it gave the USSR and others a boost that could not have been possible in any

other way. What took Western Europe hundreds of years it only took a few decades for Russians to achieve that. It did not continue forever but while it did, look where it brought Russians, from peasants to industrialists. You can see the blessing of command economy or command politics everywhere from Chile to Singapore, Taiwan to South Korea. Textbook democracy, on the other hand, killed so many in Africa and elsewhere—they were much better off being under colonial rulers than being democratic states. A child needs a helping hand to learn how to walk first and later he will do on his own. My father helped me learn how to practise writing, now I have a beautiful hand writing. You talked about the wisdom of masses—can you see yourself defeating Hazi Selim or Pintoo in an election. I have seen so many criminals and murderers being so popular among the masses; your talk of wisdom I don't see in many places.

British won Palashi not on the battlefield, did that disqualify them

In the case of Bangladesh, if we could eliminate rampant corruption especially by the high-ups, break free from the international lenders and make proper use of our human and natural resources, we can achieve the level of development equal to that of Malaysia within a short span of time.

Abu Abdullah  
Karwan Bazar, Dhaka

## Dhaka University teachers

In several newspapers today (21 July), I find the report that some teachers of the Dhaka University are going to protest the arrest of Sheikh Hasina and the confinement of Khaleda. They are even considering boycott of classes as part of the protest. University teachers are highly educated and are believed to be the conscience of the nation. However, I would like to ask the teachers who have affiliation with political parties, is it a reasonable

for them to get involved in such type of activities? Over the last 15 years we saw what happened in Bangladesh. In the name of establishing democracy, the AL and the BNP plundered the nation.

Relentless and ever increasing corruption has made the country the most corrupt in the world; this is the only success they can claim! What's the percentage of the people who have been involved in corruption? Could be less than 1%, and among these, politicians and bureaucrats are the majority. It can be argued, but most of us would emphatically say that these top two leaders (Khaleda and Hasina) are to be blamed for tarnishing the image of the politicians. They could have done a lot to stop the spiralling corruption and weakening of the governing institutions. Of course these two leaders have some successes but those are largely overshadowed by their wrongdoings.

You talked about removing obstacles; don't be romantic about textbook theory, where do you see bigger obstacles in Bangladesh today than Khaleda and Hasina? When a person becomes bigger than his state there is a problem, their mere presence on the street will confuse the mind of the masses, for they will vote for Hazi Selim or Pintoo or anybody else for that matter if the leader so wishes. It's very easy to write, a bit harder to do.

You speak for good—no doubt about that. But a strong measure is needed to clear up the build-up of years of corruption, wrongdoings and bad practices. I welcome this interim government as heroes that we have been waiting for a long time. Let's all of us give our share of support to them.

AKM Momin  
Florida, USA

## A coincidence?

Is it a mere coincidence that the governments of all the major countries of the Indian sub-continent are now being headed by former World Bank officials?

Unless we can break free from the clutches of the two most affective tools of the modern day colonialists namely, the IMF and the World Bank, all our efforts for long term national development and standing on our foot will fail.

We have only to look to the happenings in Indonesia and other South Asian countries that occurred a few years ago. The fallout from WB-prescribed floating exchange rate had such a devastating effect in Indonesia a country of about 250 million people that there was tremendous economic and social upheavals including food riots. The economy which was approaching a per capita GDP of US\$ 1,500.00 was reduced by almost two-thirds and hundreds of thousands of industrial and business concerns became bankrupt, millions of people lost their jobs and livelihood.

As the country was brought to its knees, saviours arrived and who are they? Obviously the IMF and the World Bank. They offered new loan proposals with of course their conditionalities. So, the game goes on and on.

The only country that was able to avoid the economic catastrophe was Malaysia because under the wise and honest leadership of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad Malaysia ignored the WB's suggestions and refused to implement the floating exchange rate formula.

In the case of Bangladesh, if we could eliminate rampant corruption especially by the high-ups, break free from the international lenders and make proper use of our human and natural resources, we can achieve the level of development equal to that of Malaysia within a short span of time.

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AKM Momin  
Florida, USA

# Global warming



According to the campaigners, global warming will force out more than 1 billion people from their homes before 2050, as they warn in a new report. Climate change will create a world of many Darfurs. Average temperatures will rise and cause floods and famines and spark the world's largest ever movement of people from their homes.

The report also said that low lying areas such as Bangladesh, parts of China, the Nile delta in Africa and small islands will be threatened by rising sea levels and countries such as Myanmar, Sudan, Iraq, Ivory Coast where thousands of people are already facing human rights abuses or wars, will be the worst sufferers.

It may seem hard to believe that people can actually change the Earth's climate. But scientists think that the things people do that send greenhouse gases into the air

are making our planet warmer.

Whereas climate change may be a big problem, there are many little things we can do to make a difference. If we try, most of us can do our part to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that we put into the atmosphere. Many greenhouse gases come from things we do everyday. As we have learned, these greenhouse gases trap energy in

the atmosphere and make the Earth warmer. Driving a car or using electricity is not wrong; we just have to be smart about it. Whenever we use electricity, we help put greenhouse gases into the air. By turning off lights, the television, and the computer when we are through with them, we can render valuable service!

Shafiqul Alam Emon  
Altmore Avenue  
London, UK

## One-mail

## Teachers in distress

The present caretaker government is taking many effective steps in each and every sector for the greater interest of the nation, which have been appreciated highly at home and abroad. Education sector is one of them. The govt. should give more importance to this sector as it is said that education is the backbone of a nation, while the teachers are called the nation builders. But these teachers were very much neglected in the past. Each and every man wants to lead himself and his family decently but the thing which plays an important role in this case is money. The teachers who are engaged in the non-govt. educational institutions all over the country do not get their salary given by the govt. in time. So what can they do? And how will they support their families without money? I cannot but mention a point here that even the declaration of the salary for the month of June 2007 for the non-govt. teachers has not been given till today. They are waiting for it. Actually, the role of the non-govt. teachers are no less important in respect of spreading knowledge among the learners than the teachers of the govt. schools and colleges. The government should address the problems being faced by the teachers of non-government schools.

Md. Abdus Salam  
Assistant Teacher (English)  
Joypara Pilto High School  
Joypara, Dohar, Dhaka

## Law and order slide

The caretaker government despite making serious efforts apparently could not make much headway in two sectors e.g. improvement of law and order and arrest of the price hike. Both the problems directly affect the day to day life of common men. Murder and mugging are rampant in cities, whereas incidents of dacoits are on the rise in rural areas. On the other hand, prices of essentials are increasing almost everyday. The government has deployed all its resources to improve the situation. But the result is far less than satisfactory.

Perhaps the real causes of the problems are not addressed. The causes of the problems may be inter-related. After the 1/11 change-over some steps were taken quite hastily like eviction of slums, hawkers or even wayside bazaars in villages. Thousands were made either homeless or jobless. These people both in cities and villages made small businesses of essentials with a small capital as well as small profit. Their eviction not only pushed the prices high but also led some of them to resort to crime for their livelihood. Many evicted persons returned to villages and finding no other livelihood might have started committing crimes.

A sense of uncertainty among the entrepreneurs has slowed down investments resulting in a vacuum in creation of new jobs. Many laborers have been retrenched from government as well as other enterprises. That has created more jobless people.

So, to break this vicious cycle more pragmatic measures are required. The authorities may please address both the problems together.

These two problems may offset many good deeds accomplished so far.

Sanau Hug  
Uttara Model Town  
Dhaka

# Rainwater



We all know that water is one of the Earth's most essential resources and life depends on it. A proper management system should be developed to capture rainwater. Water harvesting is a means by which rainwater can be preserved or contained in an easy way. With the groundwater level depicting rapidly due to desertification and over exploitation by cities and irrigation, the situation has turned critical. Access to safe water is an important condition for improvement and sustainable development of living condition of millions of people. Rainwater harvesting offers a simple and low-cost solution for the water shortage in many developing countries.

Moreover, rainwater harvesting can replenish groundwater resources. Rainwater harvesting in its practical term is collecting rainwater in different ways such as on rooftops, land surfaces etc. In sand dams water can be extracted from the sand by digging shallow wells or half open pipes on the riverbed under the sand.

Therefore, I would like to request our water experts and NGOs to come forward and design and construct rainwater harvesting systems, and preserve our precious rainwater for millions of people.

Humayun Hyder  
Zigatola, Dhaka



It is interesting to note that Biman is now a Private Limited Company (PLC). What difference does it make with seven government secretaries at the helm of Biman? It only means that all those secretaries would enjoy free or cheaper transportation for themselves and their families and recommend free tickets to their friends on Biman. Where is the time for these secretaries to manage everything in Bangladesh? A few things are important to run Biman profitably.

1. Biman should be able to recruit mid-management and senior management level personnel at competitive salaries for running the airline. The govt secretaries should be omitted forthwith from the list of Board of Directors and free transportation should be limited to Biman staff who work full time in aviation.

2. Purchase of new aircrafts should be made as done in private limited companies, i.e., without international tenders, and other time consuming fruitless exercises. It is well known to any airline manager/director that the best planes to buy today are: A320 for domestic/regional routes, A330/340/350/380 for

regional/international routes if one wishes to stick to only Airbus (which is not so wise). Alternatively, B737 for domestic/regional routes, and B747-8 Jumbos (& freighters), B777 and the B787 dreamliners if one wishes Boeing's only fleet. Biman can easily target a fleet of 60-70 aircrafts within the next five years through leasing and ordering NOW to own the aircrafts as deliveries will most likely commence after six/seven years based on the order backlog of latest aircrafts.

3. Biman being renovated from the scratch, should aim at new aircrafts and not old/junk/dilapidated aircrafts. The simple logic here is that all govt officials are given latest Pajeros/Prados/Safaris etc whereas for air travel these very people who drive new cars prefer the oldest model aircrafts for the public!! What a pity! Buying latest aircrafts will give Biman the new brand image, glory, and the ground for inviting private shareholders, besides being more fuel efficient (which is now 25-30% of the total operations costs).

4. Biman must implement best human resource practices so that the talented are welcome to join it and work honestly and

diligently. Biman must also forsake forthwith all bureaucratic facilities to their out-station staff/managers where their amenities cost much higher than their salaries.

5. Last but not the least, Biman must enter the information age vigorously and implement e-ticketing/tracing, etc., at world standard. New aircrafts with old methods will not produce any result. All internal and external procedures must interface with each other electronically. In addition, Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet airports need to be elevated to five times larger airports than their current sizes to be able to handle all sorts of aircrafts independently and should be open to all airlines to operate to Bangladesh through any gateway. Follow the open-sky policy. It is important to mention here that the CAAB (Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh) has been earning the highest airport departure tax in the world for the past 25-30 years and we do not know where the money has gone.

We hope that Biman will soon be a renowned and efficient airline. Qamruddin, On e-mail



# Biman PLC - some suggestions