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Crisis of drinking water

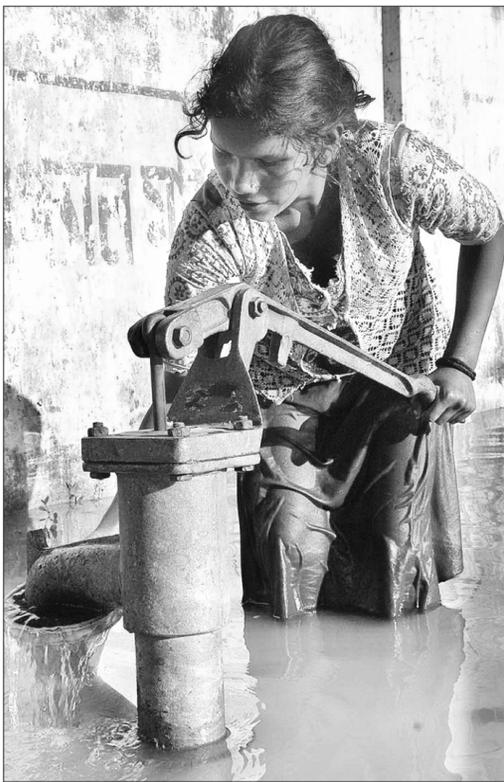


PHOTO: AFP

Understandably, lack of safe drinking water is the main cause of widespread diarrhoea in the flood-affected areas in Bangladesh. Flood in Bangladesh, among other things, is always associated with monsoon rain, and I do not understand why the ICDDR,B or the Disaster Management Bureau does not advise the flood-marooned people to store rainwater for drinking and cooking purposes during the crisis period lasting hardly one to two weeks. This is probably the safest source of water (after a couple of minutes of shower) at hand in such a situation.

It may be mentioned here that almost the entire requirement of freshwater for drinking and cooking is met from storing rainwater in the Maldives.

Dr. K. Maudood Elahi
Professor, Dept. of Environmental Science
Stamford University
Bangladesh, Dhaka

Deluged country

We have faced unexpected floods almost every year which affect both rural and urban settlements. This year the devastation has been colossal and the whole country is passing through a crisis.

So extend a helping hand to the victims.

Md. Moniruzzaman
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Rajshahi

No money, no relief

One evening, I was walking on the Sirajgonj Protection Embankment situated beside the Jamuna river where thousands of flood-affected people have taken shelter. Their sufferings are unimaginable and immeasurable. I made me so gloomy. Suddenly, I saw a person named Bablu Mia who was trying to calm his crying kids. I asked him why they were crying.

Bablu Mia was a casual labourer of Quami Jute Mills Ltd situated at Sirajgonj. The government closed the mills from August 1, 2007. The management did not pay 25 weeks' arrear wages.

Where will he go? Who will give him a job? How will he survive? What is his last destination? I could not give him the right answers. I left the place without delay giving him a hundred taka note. What has happened to him after that, I do not know.

Md. Golam Mostafa
Uttara, Dhaka

Cricket coach

After a long time, true cricketers are leading Bangladesh cricket.

It has come to our notice that you are considering Dave Houghton as a possible coach for Bangladesh team and this has shocked us. Houghton was the person condemning and criticising Bangladesh cricket's achievements even till the last World Cup 2007. Such a man, if appointed as coach, will certainly make Bangladesh cricket move back. How can he now apply for the lucrative position of the coach of a cricket team which he viewed only a few days back as a no-brainer and no-achiever?

We would make an alternate proposition to consider Bruce Yardley as the coach. As the commentator in Bangladesh-India series, we found him encouraging our players and also criticising them whenever necessary. I was enthralled to hear his shouting "Shabash Bangladesh" when Mashrafe bowled Jaffer out twice in successive innings. Bruce was the unquestionable architect of Sri Lankan cricket but had to leave for his eye-ailment and Dav Whatmore took charge and became famous as the coach of the World Cup winning team, though he was with the team for a short period.

I hope you experts will find the coach suitable for Bangladesh.

Bangalee
Toronto, Canada
Who cares for

beauty?

How would you feel if you wake up one morning, only to find that the roof of your house is gone? That's how we feel now without the big trees in front of our institute. Well, I'm not complaining, because the purpose is understood. But can anyone deny the fact that we've lost something that was part of the pristine beauty that the DU preserved? Old trees that witnessed days and years within this campus were cut down in front of our eyes...the question is, who cares for beauty?

Nirfa Arhaz
IBA, DU

Pensioners' savings scheme

Through your newspaper, I would like to draw the kind attention of the Hon'ble Finance Adviser of the caretaker government and the National Board of Revenue. A few years back, the government introduced "Pensioner Sanchaypatra" for retired employees of the government and semi government organisations. It was clearly understood that there would be no deduction or tax-cut from the profits payable every three months. Because of this assurance and commitment, many pensioners invested their entire amount received as gratuity and provident fund in this scheme. Until June 30, 2007 everything was all right with this commitment. In July, 2007 at the directive of the NBR,

Jatiyo Sanchay Bureau started deducting 10% of the profit earned on Pensioner Sanchaypatra. This is a clear violation of the commitment and assurance given at the time of investment in this scheme. This is a case of breach of trust. If we cannot trust our government—who can we?

To reduce the plight of the pensioners, I urge upon the appropriate government authorities to withdraw this order affecting the meagre income of the pensioners in these days of high inflation and sudden price spiral leading to vicious rise in cost of living.

I hope the government by cancelling this order will allow us to live in peace in our old age.

Dr. Nooruddin Ahmed Professor (Retd.)
Department of Chemical Engineering
BUET
Dhaka

Flogging the dead horse!

The decision of 10% cut from the profit accrued from the savings certificates has proved catastrophic to the small savers like retired government servants. Millionaire or billionaires do not keep their money idle in the savings scheme only for 12% profit. They are after big investments for multiple expansion of their capital. Even if there are a few big savers this 10% cut from their profit does not at all matter to them. But a retired government servant with his small capital received from the government as gratuity is hard hit. It will be like flogging a dead horse. I, as a retired government servant, make this appeal to the highest echelon of the govt. to withdraw this decision and save the retired govt servants and their families at a time when the country is gripped by a galloping inflation. In consequence of the govt. not reconsidering the decision, the savers— govt servants—are very likely to see alternate ways for investment by withdrawing their savings and looking for a better area of investment. In other words, they will lose inducement for savings.

Lastly, I may add that the profits earned out of such savings by the govt. servants should not be considered as profits from business. This is allowed on humanitarian grounds for survival of the govt. servants and their families.

S.M. Matiar Rahman
Joint Secretary (Retd) GoB

Views on news

What is the matter with this caretaker government? They have got their priorities all wrong! I saw in a daily today a picture of a young boy in Old Dhaka, who was carrying the Bangladesh flag, with 'Free Sheikh Hasina' inscribed in red paint on his chest, and a photo of Joy and Bangabandhu in his hands. He was doing no harm to anyone and not breaking any law. Nevertheless, he was arrested and is still being detained. One might well ask why?

Sheikh Hasina is in prison, expected to give an account of her wealth by a certain date. She has been put in an impossible position, as all her relevant papers were removed from her residence some time ago. On the other hand, I believe that none of the advisers of the caretaker government have submitted statements of their wealth, even though they are free to do so and surely should have done so before they took office.

There seems to be a plethora of laws at the moment which are applied to some, but not to others!

Nora Shariff
Forest Hill, London

Misinterpreted democracy

Bill Clinton, after Richard Nixon's death, eulogised the deceased rival party boss as someone whom he used to turn to for advice and expressed his grief for loss of a great counsel. The CNN-viewers of Bangladesh must have watched that. Mind it, Nixon sacrificed his first chance to win presidency simply because he valued American interest above his personal interest, and the Reader's Digest later showed had he told Americans of plans against the USSR, which would stymie the plans and damage national interest, he could have won.

Khaleda Zia, after Hasina's arrest, shed her tears and appealed for Hasina's immediate release! Mind it, too, that Hasina had never shown any Nixon-like interest for the country but for self-interest pushed the country to the brink of all-out violence. And Khaleda expressed this unprecedented feeling for someone she had been blatantly at loggerheads with—never while she was a sitting prime minister.

The two ladies say they uphold democracy and love people. Then we have to redefine democracy as getting power and amassing wealth at any cost. No wonder, they get steeped in apathy, indolence, embezzlement and transfer of funds abroad.

Contrast that with the age of presidents Grover Cleveland and William McKinley and the rise of tycoons like Stanford, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller—all put in genuine hard labour for economic development

and social progress in the US. Economic development and social progress do not follow from misinterpreted democracy (Singapore is an example).

Eklmur Raza
Lalmatia, Dhaka

CTG's performance

Like many people it's my observation that the incumbent caretaker government has already taken some laudable initiatives with popular mass support. Now it seems that general people are not too enthusiastic to bring back the BNP or the Awami League to power. Rather, people are supporting the present government. The ongoing anti-corruption drive has brought a tremendous change in people's outlook.

Still, some politicians are citing general people in their statements like before. Undoubtedly, the caretaker government is not only more committed but also more powerful to combat irregularities and corruption of all previous governments. But one thing that seems very shocking to me is the needless demolition of establishments, illegal buildings and slums. I personally don't support that culture. I know that every caretaker government has demolished some illegal establishments but after its departure the same establishments have been reconstructed. Instead of the demolition drive the government may take the establishments under its control and can use them properly.

The BNP and the AL may form an alliance but this time people's stand is dead against any such alliance. Keeping it in mind, the government should move forward.

Emdadul Haque
Lecturer of Law
Prime University
Mirpur Dhaka

Crackdown on businesses

After seeing the government go after companies for corruption, I'm now worried about my employment and that of my comrades. I've heard stories that anyone can lodge a false complaint against any business and that business will be persecuted for no real reason, the law enforcers always take the side of the complainant and treat the businesses very badly.

If this continues, we will be laid off. What is the government doing to boost business and protect employment? They should be looking for ways to create jobs, create wealth and collect taxes. Wealthy people are considering cutting their losses and moving abroad to friendlier environments. Many bosses of big companies are not attending office.

I know many of them were corrupt and they have to be dealt with firmly. But now even good companies are being harassed for nothing.

Bilal
Chittagong

Freedom of expression

I wish I could be a reputed journalist to join any newspaper for enjoying freedom of expression without fear or favour. Nay! I am too old to redirect my career and become a journalist. Any way, coming back to the events you have narrated in the "Commentary- August 13", my humble suggestion to you would be to kindly review thoroughly the current procedures of appointment to the constitutional positions, including the highest judiciary. There must be transparent screening procedures including media access as we can see in developed countries. Our poverty and ignorance will not be a barrier to adopting a good and transparent democratic system. We need a strong and unadulterated democracy to fight poverty and ignorance, and also to establish the rule of law.

I have a humble submission regarding the observation of the CJ, such as, the vision and thought of our highest judiciary would help remove the present political dilemma and pave the way for an elected government as soon as possible.

A reader
One e-mail

Eve-teasing

In a letter published in The Daily Star on 7 August 2007, Taylor Cook stated that "Eve Teasing" is an undesirable manifestation of South Asian patriarchy. It adversely affects development, growth and has harmful social, cultural, psychological impacts on women. However, the concerned individual's perceptions about gender, development, society, culture, magnitude of the problem in Bangladesh are biased and uninformed. Taylor Cook has ambiguous views of the term verbal harassment; women can commute safely in Bangladesh and men who grope women publicly would be lynched. In developed countries, women may be assaulted indecently, but this does not imply that these societies are unstable or their economies are not prosperous. Hence, contrary to Taylor Cook's view, eve-teasing does not take place unabatedly in Bangladesh. Legislations, policies, strategies, development interventions, institu-

Father or founder?



For the last six months we have been passing through a rather strange time. Events are taking place, people are changing colours, ideas are cropping up, friends are parting, uncertainty is deepening and all sorts of utterances are heard from all kinds of people. Last night, I was shocked and surprised when Ferdous Qureshi, who has recently surfaced from oblivion, was telling in ATN late night news

that "in all the countries there are founding fathers and not Father of the Nation. Hence, in Bangladesh we should recognise six such founding fathers whose photos should be hung in one frame in our offices and houses."

I do not consider it an inadvertent mistake of the politician or his lack of knowledge. This is a deliberate distortion of facts to suit some purpose. A simple reference to

Mahatma Gandhi, M.A. Jinnah, Ho Chi Min, Fidel Castro and Kamal Pasha will expose the inanity of his assertion. Kamal is called Ata Turk, which means Father of the Turks. In the recent past, we have been watching vain attempts by some quarters to mislead people.

Ali Hussain Akhand
Uttara, Dhaka

tional mechanism, social reform movements and systems have been instrumental in curbing eve-teasing and other forms of gender based inequalities, discrimination, violence.

They have generated awareness and mobilised socio-cultural resistance towards these trends, perceptions and practices!

Faisal M Rahman
One e-mail

Sheikh Hasina

As an ordinary citizen of this country (I am not a member of any political party), I strongly oppose all the write-ups targeting Sheikh Hasina. Pertinently, I would ask my fellow writers to find a single leader since 1975 who was 100% honest and sincere in running the affairs of the state. I suppose there could hardly be any positive answer. If no honest politician could be found in the past 32 years, how can we be so sure that we would find a bunch of them in future? We can only say a person is honest after evaluating his/her performance, not before that.

After all, we are yet to get such leaders who would not hesitate to declare their assets and properties at the time of assuming power (including the source) and also at the time of relinquishing the same.

In the ultimate analysis, democracy develops through trial and error. There is not a single country which established true democracy by fiat or by regulations dictated by any authority which itself is not democratic.

Hafeezul Alam
Former civil servant

Seeing off at ZIA

True, special security measures are needed to keep Zia International Airport safe. But a mother has also the right to see off her son going abroad for education at the departure lounge of ZIA.

Hence, arrangement should be made at ZIA for seeing off the beloved ones!

Prof. M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Road accidents

Road accident has become a common occurrence in our country. Everyday scores of people are killed and maimed due to it. Families affected by this have to bear the agony all through their lives.

From the August 13 issue of an English daily, we learned about an accident which is so tragic that words are failing me to express my sorrow. It is stated that five members of a family were killed and eight others injured when a bus rammed into their microbus when they were going to Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong to receive someone.

There are many factors behind the accidents, which are taking place on a regular basis. Unfit vehicles, untrained drivers, overloading, crossing speed limits, giving a damn to traffic rules, all these contribute to accidents. For

Extortionists in green



I am perhaps the umpteenth protestor on this issue. The CNG-run three-wheelers are most essential when it comes to commuting on the roads of Dhaka, especially on the roads where rickshaws are not allowed. But unfortunately this is the opportunity that is seized to take money from us, the commuters, by unfair means. Majority of these drivers always demand at least Tk 10 more than the meter or agree to go on "contract", whichever is more

profitable for them. If you ever challenge these green thugs regarding the fare they will always have the ready excuses of long lines in CNG pumps, high deposit money, etc. Some even drive by without bothering to take you. In the end we are the victims.

I appreciate the fact that mobile courts are now imposing fines on these drivers, but is that a permanent solution? Why are the law enforcement agencies sitting on their hands? What does it

take to pass a law that will ensure a fair fare for all? I once saw one such driver getting beaten up mercilessly because he refused to go to a destination. It only took a couple of young hot bloods to do that and in the end he did go. So can we assume that this can be a good way to convince them to listen to us?

FBR
On e-mail

Price hike

When the country is badly shaken by the unprecedented floods there is yet another alarming factor—the price hike of essentials that is slowly but very steadily engulfing the usual life of the common people. It is appalling that one kg of green chili costs you Tk 200! There are no vegetables that cost you less than Tk 30 per kg! At this point, the government, as many social experts suggest, should pay heed to the eminent economists' suggestions; it can hold an open discourse with them as to how to keep things under control.

The government can also welcome the business community in the discourse.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Chittagong



PHOTO: STAR