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Public universities

Currently, Dr. Kamal Hossain is giving some sense of direction to the nation regarding socio-economic and political issues facing the country. His recent appearance in a round table discussion meeting and his comments on university education problem are very significant. He raised the question whether the autonomy act 1973 of public universities steered by him as the then law minister was wrong. I think, he should not lament because the act is good and will remain good. The problem is not with the law, the problem is with the implementer of the law. Try to identify the wrong implementer of the law and think about him or her professional and administrative capabilities to implement the law. Here lies the real problem which should be addressed. Kindly look at the process of selecting the VCs of the public universities, and selection of chairman and members of the UGC. The inherent right of every citizen is to enjoy the freedom of choice including freedom of exercising the right to politics. Therefore, one should not recommend any ban on the political rights of the students and the teachers. I have no specific proposal for reshaping student politics, but I think the current practice of politics by the teachers needs to be addressed to make it acceptable to the teachers and the society at large. However, any move to curb student politics would not be a positive move for the nation.

The teachers are more responsible, responsive and enjoy due respect and confidence of our society. They should be able to come out with better and non party political options. The use of colours (white, blue and pink) can no longer hide a teacher's party-political identity. Therefore, this so long "avinabo" idea should be discarded and discontinued by the teachers. The required election to various university forum should be

fought on individual basis, and not with any party-political affiliation. The political party reforms agenda might address this issue from the other end.

The government decision to reopen all public higher educational institutions is a good move. The success of the move will now largely depend on the conciliatory move by all concerned, and non-partisan approach to the auxiliary issue by the public university and college authorities. Perhaps the need of the hour, to have a stable situation, is to initiate a dialogue between, the students, teachers and the government agencies concerned to remove any apprehension of overdoing (Hoirani) by the law enforcement authorities. The lead should come from the government. We feel sorry for such a bad idea of instituting cases against thousands of unknown people, especially students which, hopefully, have not divided the nation.

Finally, I have a question to the Honourable VC of Dhaka University. As we know from the press report that during the last unfortunate incident in his university he was not in the country. Did he keep himself informed about what was going on in his university? Did he ever think that he should discontinue his stay abroad and come back home and handle the situation personally?

A reader
One e-mail

Bhuiyan and Saifur

I am appalled at the invitation (and the bad judgement) of Mannan Bhuiyan to Saifur Rahman to head the BNP. The former finance minister reportedly failed to pay his income tax when his personal taxes had become originally due. Does Mr Bhuiyan think that things are going to be the same as before after the lifting of the emergency? I sincerely hope not! When, if ever, are the politicians

going to learn?
DA Islam,
Leesburg, USA

University teachers

In the case of the recent turmoil in the universities, the government could have sat down with the Vice Chancellors, Syndicate Members and Honourable Teachers of the universities and chalk out a peaceful solution to bring back a congenial atmosphere to the campus. While the Chief Adviser's speech demonstrates a forward looking approach to matters that have been causing public concern, substantive actions should be initiated to bring back normalcy to the highest seats of learning.

Hope the government will trust the words of the General Secretary who claims to be speaking from the 'bottom of his heart' for such unavoidable circumstances at that very moment, and act accordingly.
Gopal Sengupta
Canada

The sea

Science-fiction writer Jules Verne in his epic work "20,000 Leagues under the sea" focused on the untapped vastness of the two-third area of the mother earth comprising the sea, while the rest one-third being the land on which the possibility of changes of lifestyle and living could be achieved in the future.

In the mid 1960s, the Balaka cinema hall in Dhaka ran this movie for a golden jubilee period. Then and now the citizens around the world are coping with communication by sea, fishing in sea, cruising on sea, holidaying in nearby seashores, scuba diving across the seabed, eating a variety of seafoods etc. Starting from the early 1960s with the Chinese restaurant Choh Chin Chow owned by F. A. Dossani at the once Gulistan building at the then Jinnah Avenue, Dhaka, we can now find the pres-

ence of a Chinese restaurant up to the upazila level, serving the same dishes. In brief, the citizens of Bangladesh are also getting accustomed to living with the sea, consuming and utilising its healthy and useful resources.

From time to time, France had been carrying out nuclear detonations in the Oceania but the adverse affect on humanity, creatures in the sea and cracked ocean floor have put an end to it. In general, the ordinary world citizens are day by day coming closer to the sea and learning to utilise its resources but the national leaders, scientific advisers and environmental experts collectively are trailing behind with their contributions for the utilisation of the sea and its resources.

Golam Ashraf
BTI Mayfair Apartment
Gulshan, Dhaka

A proposal

We observed destruction of public property by our students. We don't want to see such kind of vandalism in future. So, some steps should be taken into consideration by the govt. and law enforcement agencies. I would like to propose the following.

1. Use video camera on the spot to identify the subversive elements, as there are so many high tech devices available now at a reasonable cost.
2. Encourage the professional or amateur photographers to sell their sensitive snaps or video footage to the law enforcement agencies.
3. Open a call centre to receive public call without any charge from the caller.

I think this is the easy way to bring the culprits to justice. Punish them by imposing a fine according to the damage done.
K.M.Shamsuzzaman
Moscow-Russia

Leaders and teachers

It is an addition of another page to the tragic as well as shameful chapter of the history of Bangladesh being written, a cause of no pride and joy to us, Bangladeshis, both native and expatriates. Those eminent teachers entrusted with the responsibility of shaping the minds of the future leaders of the nation are within their rights to show their indignation. But their choice of leaders, for whose cause they are taking a stand, cannot be condoned. Those two ladies have failed to serve the nation, an opinion that needs no explanation.

By any standard they (two ladies) are in a way qualified to lead a nation. Their claims to leadership, claims that they themselves have forfeited due to their object lack of qualities as leaders, stem from their relations to past leaders. The present political situation in the country, intolerable as it is, is the product of the inaptitude and stubbornness of them. Those professors, instead of being the brain trusts of the nation, were themselves engaged in partisan politics influenced by political ideals.

Mohammad A Meah MD
Paramus, New Jersey, USA

Public expenditures

A report that appeared in your daily highlighting the necessity of forming an adhoc Public Accounts Committee is an eye opener to the present dynamic regime. The matter is of great public interest due to the accumulated huge backlog of unresolved government expenditures.

The CAG's suggestion is very worthwhile.

Aminul Islam
Baiti Para road
Khulna

Ambulance and fire brigade vehicles

Ambulance and fire brigade vehicles cannot move from one place to another quickly enough when other vehicles are not helpful to clear the road. The roads are always busy. Most of the drivers of our country are not well trained. They drive recklessly. The drivers are not willing to obey the traffic rules and they want to drive at their sweet will (whimsically). The number of traffic policemen is insufficient. The tendency of overtaking is also responsible for these problems. Most of these problems occur in the congested areas where the roads are very narrow.

The ambulance which carries a dying patient cannot reach the destination in time. It needs no telling that the fire brigade vehicles are also the worst sufferers.

The authorities concerned should address the issue immediately.

Md. Ekram Hossain
Dept. of English (4th batch)
Asian University of Bangladesh
28th BCS

As a developing country, Bangladesh is entering into the

vortex of globalisation. Bangladesh is changing very fast in all sectors. For ensuring an efficient civil administration, the PSC has contributed towards developing it but nowadays we see that the PSC is not concerned with those who are exceeding their age limit. As citizens of Bangladesh, we have the fundamental right to get the opportunities in the country.

Why will we be deprived of the opportunities?

The government should keep in mind that the unemployed are extremely frustrated. Please announce the holding of the 28th BCS as soon as possible.

Shakil Ahmed
ICMAB

Mobile re-registration

The BTRC has ordered the mobile phone operators to register all their subscribers. It's fine and we respect this consciousness, though it's coming a bit late. Mobile phone operators are encouraging their users by advertising the same. Users have to go to the service centres for registration with their photos, SIM card, photo identity and necessary papers. But there are some problems. If the user has to go to the service centre himself, then why should the user take the overhead of printing their photos again. One user may have several operators' SIM, almost everyone has. Then if one has 3 SIMs, each SIM needs 2 photos which takes Tk 8 each to print; then how much one has to pay only to print his/her photos? Is it the customers' responsibility only to get re-registered?

I think the operators can use the Internet facilities for this purpose.

Shinjan
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Statement of assets

It is a welcome decision that the govt is going to introduce the system of submission of statement of assets and properties possessed by the govt servants.

It will be an important step towards ensuring transparency and accountability of the govt servants who actually constitute the permanent set-up of the govt in our system. In this matter the govt servants should include the employees of the corporations, autonomous bodies and the like. It was once incorporated in the government servants' conduct rules and was also given effect to in the early eighties. It continued for two years or so. But without any cogent ground the system was discontinued. Was it not the result of an unholy alliance among the people in authority?

Not only it should be reintroduced, but it should also be reintroduced with retrospective effect.
S.M. Matur Rahman.
Joint Secretary (ret'd) GoB
Mirpur, Dhaka

Nuclear power plant

Recent newspaper reports indicate that Bangladesh may have asked Russia for help in setting up a Nuclear Power Plant! This (highly knowledgeable?) move is totally wrong and dangerous. We are approaching the only country who managed to have the LARGEST and most DANGEROUS nuclear reactor accident in the last half a century of nuclear reactor operations! The very idea is mind boggling!

The safest (proven accident proof), simplest and the most cost effective nuclear reactor is the "Pebble Bed" design, which is built in South Africa, and runs their nuclear power plants. A number of such power plants are running in South Africa for over a decade. It can be built in modular units, adding on capacity as the demand and resources justify.

One wonders why most members of our scientific community (including Dr. Majumder from Germany) who wrote in this column on Sept 10 are unaware of this fact. The information is available only a "click" away in the Internet! One also wonders why our (wise?) government; even today has kept South Africa incommunicado; by not having any postal, fax or email link with the most prosperous and developed African nation! Probably no noting has been put up by any of our (erstwhile "Charidik Samlatay Paray" CSP) high flying bureaucrats, for the government to take the needed steps in opening up contact with South Africa; a country more technologically developed than many countries in Europe today!

But we unfortunately "see no good, hear no good and do no good" unless a direction is received from the powers that be and a note initiated and properly put up to start the unending bureaucratic crawl along the hierarchy till it is translated into action!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

FLOODS



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

The world has now developed technology to warn in advance the advent of the flood & also the countries where it will strike using the satellite system. Bangladesh, being a low-lying country, all sorts of natural calamities including floods strike frequently. From our long experience we can see a permanent signal, warning us that flood will come to Bangladesh on a routine visit. We watch floods coming in, staying for a few weeks or a month causing what floods usually do, that is damaging everything that comes their way, and then go back leaving a warning to visit again. So it is no surprise for the people of Bangladesh and low-lying countries.

There is no doubt that the government and several other social, national & inter-

national groups/agencies are contributing in many ways to mitigating the sufferings of the flood stricken people.

From my experience I would like to give some suggestions, which I believe, will come in handy to mitigate the sufferings of the flood affected people and reduce losses substantially:

1. The government should procure a good number of dredgers. Dredging of rivers should be done throughout the dry season.
2. All rich people of the villages should make their houses high above the flood level. If this can be made by bricks or alternatively if it is a tin-made house, it should have brick floor or at least the boundary of the floor should be made with bricks.
3. They should also place their cowsheds much above the flood level.

4. They should sink tube-wells
5. Almost every school, madrasa and college should have small or big playgrounds. This ground should also be raised high above the flood level, so that affected people with their cattle can take shelter there.
6. I have seen beautifully constructed cyclone shelters in the coastal areas. Similar shelters should also be made in some places for seriously flood-affected people.

Meanwhile, the government should continue all long & short-term projects to contain the recurring floods in Bangladesh.

M A Alim
Ex. Banker
Indira Road, Dhaka

Politics

There is no last word in politics. But there is! The nation has hailed the decision of the government to lift the ban on indoor politics. During the process of absorbing the announcement of this decision, I could not but think that we should wait and see until the last word is heard. We have heard it. The decision to lift the embargo is limited and subject to 11 conditions or clauses of clarification in the perspective of the emergency rules as mentioned by the respected law and information adviser to the BBC Bengali service.

Looking at the scene in front of the BNP office in the electronic media, one cannot but assume that party politics is falling from fry pan to fire. The break-up might be quick and might lead to a legal battle between the existing factions. Hopefully, the process would not be a deterrent to following the election roadmap.

Tolerance from all sides is the need of the hour and should be the last word.

A reader
One e-mail

Good articles

Thanks for some resourceful articles by Mr. Mamun Rashid, Mr. Abdul Bayes, Mr. Zulfiqar Ahmed Amin and so on.

People trust nothing but the numbers and I think the term 'Economy' fully depends on human manipulations (individual efforts).

The IMF, WTO & WB etc. prefer political economy. They like long term policy and ignore mass con-

cepts. Make a parallel line (policy). Since we have to import more food items, is it really necessary to float the exchange rate all the time? Importers have a peak season also.

Now it is a question whether it should be fixed for sometime in the interest of the country. Prices set collectively are less harmful than the prices set by the individuals. We have good professionals (economists, bankers etc...) and I think they know the best approach. Collective knowledge, collective strength, collective decisions cannot be poor.

Rony
One e-mail

Police behaviour

Chowdhury's observation about police behaviour (Sept:10) is the bitter reality in Bangladesh; possibly inherited from their old Pakistan days tradition! The unfortunate fact is that most of us consider police as something to avoid. We never go to them; unless and until it is a very serious and pressing matter, that has to have their involvement. The reason is that, any police help even for a right reason; involves "hidden costs", failing which the full power and authority of the police can be against you; both judicial and extra-judicial. Fortunately, there are some

exceptions, which as the poet said "a few, a few, too few for drums and beat".

Despite all the good words of advice from the IG and DIGs, the rank and file of the police force know their powers and relish demonstrating it, whether needed or not! They tend to be aggressive, often far more than necessary. Things may improve in the decades to come. Let us hope and pray for the best.

A citizen
Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

APEC summit



PHOTO: AFP

Like G-8 nations, Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC/Apec) assumes importance for stability of world economy. These countries also are responsible for the negative effects of economic growth at a fast speed. Twenty-one world leaders - including US President George W Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin were attending the APEC meeting for talks on climate change, regional security and free trade held at Sydney, Australia.

Several bilateral discussions took place on the sidelines of the APEC forum. Officials from the 21 countries attending the talks agreed to the scope that discussions would take on key issues at the APEC summit. Trade and foreign ministers would conduct further negotiations.

Bush was one of the first leaders to arrive in Australia for the forum, followed by Hu. Bush held a preliminary talk with Australia's John Howard.

Like issues of climate change and security, product safety was also expected to be on the agenda. Hu had already addressed the issue of the safety of Chinese-made products at his news conference with Howard. China took product safety "very seriously" and was willing to work with the international community to step up quality inspec-

tions and examinations, he said.

In recent months, Australia, Japan and the US have been strengthening security co-operation, in a move that has worried China. But Howard said there was no hidden agenda. "The trilateral dialogue between Australia, Japan and the US is not directed at anyone, any more than the strategic dialogue I have just announced between Australia and China is not directed at anyone," he said. The USA and Australia would use the APEC opportunity to impress upon China about the need to keep Asia-Pacific region tension free.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard urged fellow Asian leaders to find a new way forward on climate change. Speaking ahead of an APEC meeting, Howard said flexible targets should be adopted to cut emissions. Australia and the US are the only industrialised nations not to sign the Kyoto Protocol, arguing that capping greenhouse gases would harm growth. Howard's stance has been criticised by environmentalists.

The US-led war on terror has angered the Australians and they were protesting against the war mongers at the APEC summit venue and elsewhere in the country. The Australian government spent

A\$169m (£68m, \$138m) on security for the event over six years, with media dubbing the barrier the "rabble-proof fence". The 5km (three-mile) barrier is intended to protect the 21 leaders attending the meeting from thousands of protesters expected at the summit. Fighter jets and police helicopters patrolled the skies above Sydney, while Australia's navy deployed ships, divers, water police and special forces in Sydney harbour.

The recent G-8 summit ended inconclusively on certain core subjects, handing down disillusion to the world. The USA remains the largest polluter of atmosphere, closely followed by China and India and unless these countries reduce carbon emissions, there is very little the world could do to save humanity from dangerous pollution owing to the wrong policies of these countries. One does not know if planned economic development helped countries like Russia to control enormous carbon emission to the atmosphere.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
Freelance writer, India