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Price spiral



In poor economies like ours, unchecked price spiral is a regular phenomenon. To be precise, there are the following reasons behind it:

- i) Skyrocketing fuel price.
- ii) Supply side setback.
- iii) Demand-supply gap due to mismatch between GDP growth & exponential population growth.
- iv) Lastly & most importantly, irrational consumer behaviour.

Our media often highlight the mismanagement of the govt. & sometimes blame the skyrocketing fuel price as the reason for price-hike of essentials. But they fail to notice the reasons mentioned above.

In India, we notice that despite its huge population, it has been successfully checking its inflation which is hovering around 4% for the last couple of years. They

are also suffering from fuel price spiral. But it is its consumers who are very conscious about the reality. It is their buying habits that keep the prices contained. Moreover, they are not rumour-driven.

But in Bangladesh, we consumers are very much rumour-driven. When we hear that a particular commodity is running out of stock we rush to buy it. In that way every single household becomes hoarder, whereas media people blame the so called syndicates.

In open market economy, nothing like syndicate (in negative sense) exists. Rather, there are certainly CARTELS, that exist to control the unwarranted ups & downs in the price of a certain commodity. As for SYNDICATION, whom we

blame are those who keep the prices comparatively lower because they enjoy ECONOMIES OF SCALE for their bulk import. If we abolish them, then small importers will import those at higher prices.

We saw the price spiral during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. We saw the prices of onion, brinjal etc soaring day by day just before Ramadan. The media started blaming the traders. But what they failed to notice is that the supply of brinjals didn't increase instantly, so the demand outpaced the supply.

So what I think is that we consumers should be conscious, rather than blaming others for our plight.

Syed Muhammed Azim
Chittagong

about this matter and to cultivate values of deep respect for them. Parents can play a beneficial role in this regard. We should always care for those who are much older than us, as they are also human beings like us. We should show greater sensitivity to the issue.

Shatabdi Biswas
Officers' Quarter
RPATC, Park Avenue
Rajshahi

Family Day

Mr. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, Canada and leader of the Liberal Party, declared to observe the Family Day on Monday in the 3rd week of February, 2008. This deserves appreciation to revive the family bond and celebrate a day with pomp and pleasure among family members.

Charity begins at home. Equally, the spirit of love and sympathy to all citizens and everybody in the neighbourhood could be strengthened through interactions within families and friends.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Second Avenue, East York

National consensus government

In the backdrop of mixed reactions from the political parties and individual politicians, Dr. B. Chowdhury has now come up with little more information on his idea of national consensus government. He is talking about three phases, and at the same time setting some kind of conditions like denial of the idea would mean supporting terrorism, corruption etc, etc, and also talking about ultimate option for a referendum. We will have to wait for political reactions again. Hopefully, Dr. Chowdhury would ensure justice to his idea by making issues for consensus very concrete with clear agenda. The piecemeal approach and patchwork are not helping the march for clean democracy the people want to see in Bangladesh.

We think there is a sound rationale behind the reaction of the politicians and the political parties. Only after election the question of a broad based consensus can be mooted out, anything before might add a few more conditions imposed by a political party or political thinkers, and might also disturb the general election planned for October/December 2008.

We think the election manifesto of each participating political party would demonstrate the issues for seeking mandate of the people, and definitely this would include anti-terrorism, anti corruption role of the parties. The election manifesto would be the basis of consensus to be mooted out after the election. It is always advisable to pursue a political goal by keeping the spirit of popular democracy at the top of the agenda, which means open and unconditional general election. We are sure that neither Dr Chowdhury's nor any other political party in Bangladesh expects that the one-party government is reborn and the multi-party politics pushed out. Any national goal should be achieved in a bipartisan manner following the principles of democracy. It is natural that there would be two main streams in the parliament, one is government coalition and the other is coalition of the opposition. After all that happened after January 11, 2007, we expect that the politicians would surely learn to behave both inside and outside the parliament and follow the peaceful and constructive political path. And they should not bypass the basic rules of democracy to go to power.

A reader

One-mail

Top priority

We have heard a very useful discussion on BBC Bengali Service. Two senior editors have reviewed the status of politics and suggested needed action by the government. As an example of negative outcome, the current political situation in Pakistan was referred to. The case of Pakistan should be an eye opener for our government. The government may kindly listen to the third angle views very attentively and take a firm decision to reopen democratic practices in Bangladesh including a clear plan of action to make their repeated commitment of general election a reality to dispel any doubt anywhere. The editors have also explained the need for such an action by the government.

I think the government may also kindly consider the need for reducing the gap in mutual understanding with the students and teachers of Dhaka University arising out of an unfortunate incident. This is a contentious issue, and needed very compassionate approach for reconciliation.

On the general election issue, one can feel that the dilemma in the Election Commission is quite

visible from the repeated media briefing by different commissioners at different times on different issues. If I am allowed to comment on the issue, I would prefer the general election first, and for that purpose the EC should devote all its resources and authority.

The independent character of the EC can only be demonstrated by its sound policy, planning and action geared up towards arranging a free and fair general election. It is difficult to find a clear picture on this aspect right now. That is why some doubts have crept in.

A reader

One-mail

US domination

Americans in general have been brainwashed to think that Iran is preparing for a nuclear war. Senator McCain said recently, "There is only one thing worse than military action against Iran and that is a nuclear-armed Iran." It is American belief that Iran is going for nuclear weapon. If America can have nuclear warheads to destroy the world a few times over, on what moral ground can they deny Iran the use of nuclear power for peaceful purpose? Why should America be so adamant to stop Iran in its pursuit to use nuclear power?

Evidently, they do not trust Iran and hence won't feel secure if Iran possesses one nuclear bomb. On the same analogy, could the world feel secure when America has got so many nuclear bombs in their arsenal? It is America who caused havoc to Japan when they destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. They are not throwing any further bomb because the adversaries also have nuclear bombs. This deterrent is working fine. America should be content with the status quo, rather than the position of a master.

Wake up all the peace loving citizens of the world and exert your moral force to hinder the evil design of America to put the Middle East in disarray, before it is too late!

Commodore Ataur Rahman

Chairman

Faisal Investment Foundation

Our police

Once I came across the souvenir published by the trainee Outsider Cadets of the Police Academy, Sardah, Rajshahi. I went through the publication carelessly as one always does. But I observed the qualification of a cadet to be a B.Sc. in chemical engineering. It seemed unusual to turn an engineer into a police sub-inspector. I went through the other pages carefully and became astonished to discover that out of 829 Outsider Cadets passed-out in 2005, 250 of them are graduates, which is the minimum qualification of a police sub-inspector. Eighty-five cadets graduated with honours in different disciplines. At the time of recruitment they were students studying in post graduate classes but could not complete their courses for their training in the Police Academy. But many of them earned their post graduate degrees in the meantime. Two-hundred

and one cadets earned their post graduate degrees (after graduation without honours). The majority of the Outsider Cadets are highly qualified having graduated with honours and then earned their post graduate degrees from different universities and affiliated colleges of the National University.

Of the graduate cadets, there are B.Sc. engineers, LLBs, system analysts, BBAs.

A few cadets earned their degrees from abroad.

The Bangladesh Police possesses highly qualified human resources. The potential of this force is enormous. But the nursing of the meritorious and training for the officers is very poor. I think Bangladesh Police have all the qualities to be an efficient, honest, enduring and capable service delivery agency.

Razzak Raza

Magura

Arrested university teachers

The way the two senior most university teachers were picked up from their quarters at night and then were made to parade in front of the nation on the electronic media, while seeking forgiveness for the alleged offences, only reminded us of those dreadful days of Pakistan.

Thus what a legacy we have created! What could be more tragic than this? I could not bear the sight of the helpless and frightened faces of the elderly learned teachers. They were being harassed and treated like any other ordinary criminals. What are we trying to achieve by belittling our torchbearers of knowledge and education in such a despicable way?

Of course, it is equally unforgivable and unacceptable

that one unruly segment of the people, most probably encouraged and supported by the two major political parties, went on the rampage. Those perpetrators who could commit such unthinkable and heinous crimes deserve to be dealt as harshly as possible so that none dares to repeat such actions in future. There can be no compromise on it.

But please for God's sake spare the learned and aged teachers from further agony and torture. They had enough probably for no fault of their own. They should be released forthwith and some one should console them with soft words to put their minds at rest.

We are setting a very ugly example for our future generations.

M. Monowar Hossain

London, United Kingdom

Adieu, Obaidul Huq

Great souls never die but they live on amid their good deeds! The late journalist Obaidul Huq was such a great soul who will never die in our minds. We will remember him in his pious works. Obaidul Huq was an outstanding journalist, litterateur and a social reformer. Personally, I had the opportunity to come in touch with him. He used to encourage me in my writing while I used to write in the 'Young Observer' page of 'The Bangladesh Observer'. Indeed he was a soft-spoken, gentleman with exceptional human qualities. He was a great teacher who had all the skills to navigate his students in search of knowledge. I admire him from the core of my heart.

I was deeply shocked when I came to know about his death from a TV broadcast. Editor Obaidul Huq's demise is an irreversible loss to our nation! May Allah grant eternal peace to his soul!

Professor M Zahidul Haque

Chairman

Department of Language
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University



Rights of tenants

I am all too aware of the plight of the poor in Bangladesh but request some concern for the plight of those of us who are middle class and discovering that we seem to have no legal redress against the abuses of power of some Property Companies who are our landlords.

I moved into an apartment in Gulshan 2 last May, renting from a nice lady. I negotiated what I considered a fair rent, inclusive of services and hot water, but exclusive of electricity. From my time in a similar-sized apartment in Baridhara DOHS, where the electricity bill was an average of 2,500 a month with water heater, I assumed the bills would not exceed 3,000 as, apart from the water heater, I have the same number of electric fixtures here as there. I am alone with a responsible housekeeper who refuses to use the sitting-room a/c. Of course, I accept my share of the lighting of the 'shared space' i.e. staircase and garage.

Imagine my surprise when the bills for May and June were over 4,500 and then, while I was away in the UK, the July bill was over 2000! Then, on my return, the August bill was over 5,000 taka! I have discovered that there is a single electricity meter and the bill is just divided among the tenants and owners of the flats but, even with the separate metre I have been promised, how can I be sure that someone has not negotiated a 'slice' of the bill with the electricity company?

The provision of hot water and, indeed, the whole plumbing system is bizarre. The taps have to be turned on for anything between 5 and 15 minutes before the hot water gets through and sometimes it still does not come, for one reason or another, including, I have discovered from my own 'detective' work, if the pilot light has blown out in the boiler on the roof. The hot water comes to the kitchen tap much more quickly than to the main bathroom, where

the hand shower may eventually produce hot water but not the shower overhead, which is always cold! Oh, and no hot water at all comes to the spare room shower!

Complaints have no effect! Indeed, the general assumption in these parts is that consumer complaining is only done by 'bad people'! (A glowing exception to this general rule are the staff of the supermarket, 'Agora', who receive feedback positively and even enthusiastically!) But how else can customer satisfaction be gained? If one is the customer of a Property Company and one's genuine complaints are not listened to, is there really no system of appeal to consumer law? How can we get respect? I am sure I speak on behalf of many in a similar situation.

My only comfort is a nice tenant upstairs who says that he is ashamed 'that a hard-working foreigner is being treated as I am. Angela MV Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Che Guevara



"There are no frontiers in this struggle to the death. We cannot remain indifferent in the face of what occurs in any part of the world. A victory for any country against imperialism is our victory, just as any country's defeat is our defeat." That is the word of Che Guevara, inspiring epitome of all leftists. Che is the man who opposed the modern imperialism of the USA and alerted the global leaders against US invasion. He didn't limit his opposition to words; he used all his efforts to destroy the US position in Latin America.

Though the capitalist rulers killed Che Guevara, but he is still alive in the hearts of common men.

A.R. Omar
Kabi Jasimuddin Road
North Kamlapur
Dhaka

Corrupt power sector

A timely and interesting editorial on the subject (Oct 6) focuses on the load-shedding phenomenon and the associated excuses given fairly realistically on a regular basis. Even the CTG, like the past political government run administration, only makes claims, without relating it to the reality on the ground. On load-shedding any statement from any administration source or authority may be defined as only idle, ideal talks-- nothing more!

Load-shedding during 'Iftar and Magrib Namaz' was a fact of life, may be the frequency was lesser. What is more amazing is that often load-shedding occurred during 'Sehri and Fajr prayers'! Actually it is the period of minimum demand, and not, repeat not, maximum demand!

This is simply unbelievable and in any manner not sustainable! Possibly, the powers that be did not suffer this load-shedding, hence they may be unaware of it! 'Systems loss' has been coined to cover and camouflage both corruption and transmission and distribution losses. Normally, transmission and distribution losses over five to six percent is unimaginable! But in Bangladesh the unimaginable is the reality, and sadly the authorities do not bother

or care about it. Therefore the editorial is not wrong in concluding that the relevant supervising authorities are part of this 'systems loss' syndicate! One wonders why the 'Corropeati' meter reader is not taken to task by the CTG? Why is not he and his family members jailed for past misdeeds like businessmen and others. Why has property in his or his relatives' names not been confiscated and reported?

The mischief that meter readers can do is because of his accessibility to customers. This is not possible by even mid-ranking engineers. Meter readers can easily bypass the meter, say for two weeks in the month, and reduce the monthly power bill by 100 percent! Such opportunities of easy cash income on monthly basis is not available to even mid-level bosses. Meter readers and his colleagues (on similar level) can easily slow down the meter for regular monthly consideration. This was very easy with the earlier disc type rotating meters; which are still in use.

However, all said and done; compared to operation and generation personnel the PDB 'Distribution wallas' have a field day in milking the easily available 'cash cow'. However, the meter

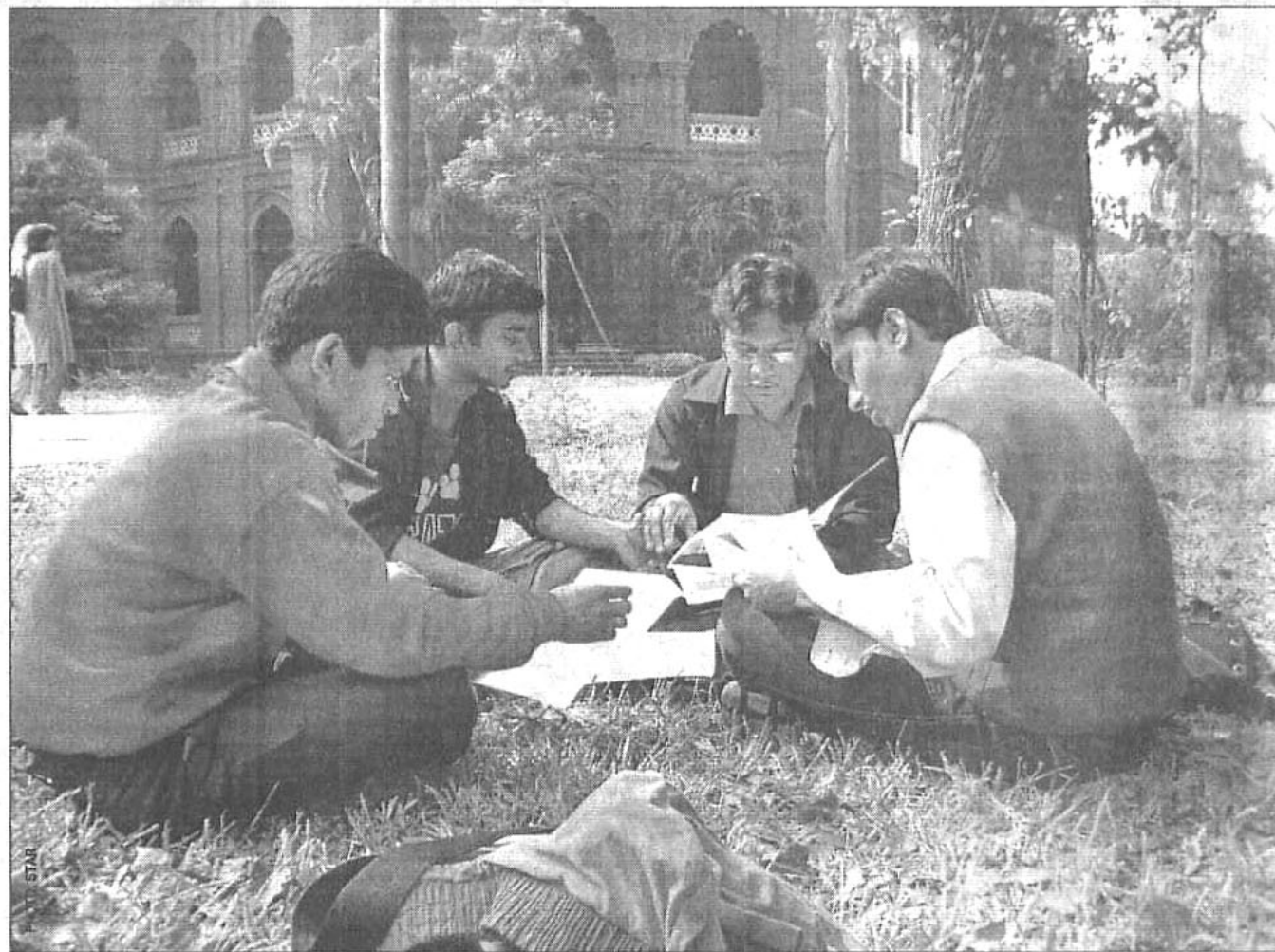
reader is always at the top of the totem pole, very much like border port customs, VAT and police and associated border guards who "Make hay while the sun shines"! S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Caring for the old

International Day of the Elderly was observed a few days ago, reminding us once again how much we neglect the old people. Our sense of respect and love for elderly persons who are just like our own grandpa and grandma have faded away. Nobody cares a little for them, but the most astonishing matter is that we tend to forget that we all will one day be like these persons, not capable of moving or eating properly. While riding a bus if we see an aged man not finding a seat in the bus, standing all the while during the journey, we should courteously offer our seat to him but the real scene is just the opposite. If eventually that person requests the young passenger just to give him a seat only for some minutes, then he feels outraged. This is shocking but it is the most common scene in our society. Some perverted teenagers even mock the octogenarian people.

It is high time for us to think

Session jam



The students of Dhaka University are going to face session jam once again. Time has value of its own, we all should realise that. However, we can just hope there won't be any more unfortunate incidents on the university campus.

Cantara Wali Ruhi, Dhaka