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We still have a dream ...

This year's Victory Day proved to be one of the most significant events of our history. It's so inspiring to see that people from all corners are getting united to realise the demand "Trial of War Criminals". We made mistakes in the past and do not have to make the same mistakes over again. The very issue has been used for Political Mileage many times. The usual Professional Intellectuals are already on the road again. We need to protect our greater interest. Let's not forget the "Spirit of the Liberation War" while we are chasing War Criminals. The widow of Birsreshtho Flt. Lt. Matiur Rahman the other day appealed to implement the "Spirit of the Liberation War." Do we really understand what is it? "The spirit of Partition" in 1947 was shamelessly used to assert political/colonial aspirations. We had to swallow that Pakistan was created to protect Islam !!! What a total crap !! For Bangladesh, It seems we got stuck in 25/26 March '71. We are still fighting to establish who declared independence!! Totally ignored the ASPIRATIONS of the people who voted and decided emphatically in 1970 to have a self-reliant Bangladesh. They had a DREAM !! What happened to that DREAM ?? Yes, Trial Of War Criminals is a priority demand, but it's still just a bit of our "Spirit of Liberation". Of course we need to try them. That's one of the many tasks still open for the country's administrators. But at the same time we need to put the "Spirit of Liberation" in correct perspective. That includes our history too. It's sad to see that our wartime Chief Executive/Prime Minister was given yet again a backseat during this year's Victory Day programmes. I followed all major Bangladeshi electronic media for the last few days. What a sad story !! As if Tajuddin never really existed !! We forgot that Tajuddin actually LED the Liberation War! He led it from the front!! If we are chasing the War Criminals in the same spirit, I am afraid we will make a mess of it like we did with the Declaration of Independence. It's the People who declared Independence!! It's the People who responded to realize their DREAM !! They did not run away. They took the war criminals head on and won !! And that is the strength of the "Spirit of Liberation". The DREAM lives on. Let us rise to the "Spirit of Liberation."

M.N.Ali
Dubai, UAE



"Food for vultures and foxes"

Yes, it has been rightly said by Professor Anwar Hossain detained at the Dhaka central jail for reasons still unknown. Unknown because no verdict has been given against them yet. Yes, Professor Hossain is correct in the sense that we have been used as food for birds and animals for a long time. But we no longer want that situation to continue.

It is good to hear that the government has appointed a committee to find out the right academics for the right places. Nothing has been revealed to us about their search. Are they looking for new 'our men'?

Professor Hossain has rightly used the imagery of poet Jibanananda Das and I feel shy when teachers fail to raise their voices unanimously against the harassment of fellow colleagues. Think how pertinent the use of imagery is! I am also included here because my university teachers association has failed to raise its voice.

We do not want to be vultures and foxes. We want to be real truthful, committed, dedicated teachers as well as guardians. For that if any

amendments are needed, let us do it for the betterment of the country.
A teacher
Chittagong University

World Bank's role

Mr Proful Patel of World Bank has offered an unsolicited suggestion to expand the size of the Advisory Council in order to ensure the GDP growth of at least 7% as stipulated to ensure the targets of PRSP. This observation was contradicted by the Adviser for Agriculture last week.

Thus this has generated a debate in the country. Most of the economists have observed that we should get rid of WB as quickly as possible. They have dismantled our tradition of planning process and thereby deprived us to have long-term vision of our target-oriented planning. We emphasise the ADP, forgetting the five-year plan and 20 years perspective plan and they have made us dependent on them.

We should mobilise our internal resources and bridge the gap of 25% shortfall in financing the budgetary allocations and try to stand on our own feet.

Time has come to realise the truth and utilise our own wisdom for the greater interest of the nation.
Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
On e-mail

Attestation of mobile form

If an applicant for mobile phone is allowed to get his/her application form attested by a mobile phone owner/subscriber of the same service provider, it will no doubt ease the difficult situation arising in case of re-registration of mobile phones purchased before February, 2006. There are now over 20 million mobile phone owners/subscribers in the country. Therefore it would be easier for an applicant to get his/her application form attested by an active mobile phone subscriber who may be a friend or a relation. The government agencies concerned and mobile phone service providers may consider this proposal as another option for the applicants.

One can understand the difficulties of gazetted govt servants and ward commissioners who now attest application forms.
Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Rangs Bhaban incident

The incident that is hammering my mind for last few days is perhaps bothering many others as well. A number of hard working workers' lives were lost for no fault of theirs. The only reason they were there was for earning from honest labour. They died ignominiously. This death was not for them. Yes, I am feeling angry and humiliated as a human being who had to witness such deaths in the capital city of a sovereign country, which was too earned through a bloodbath in the same month of December a few decades ago.

Now, many enquiry committees are working to find out the reasons for the accident (?), which I don't want to accept. Perhaps, reports will come out, people will explain technical reasons on how the structure failed in well attended seminars, workshops or symposia, have discussion and foods, and numerous reports will highlight this to enlighten the intelligentsia. But, lives lost will not be back and the sufferings of those poor families will not end.

The price of each life is fixed at take one lakh. Once given out all

will be forgotten. To be able to fix a monetary price for life is perhaps the logic behind the perpetration of a wilful crime against humanity. Whatever the authorities may say to save their face, nobody can fix the price of life! Once that is accepted, no one can be less serious in handling any situation where people will be working.

What would happen if Rajuk would strictly apply the provisions of Public Procurement Regulations' qualification criteria? The engineers at Rajuk are now explaining in vivid technical terms where the contractor has failed. Where were they in the process of selection of the contractor? If they understand all these reasons for which a failure might occur, where were the safety clauses?

In fact, instead of selecting a duly qualified contractor to do the job, they wanted to do it cheap. They did not set the appropriate qualification criteria for the contractor. It should be a common practice not to award the contract to a contractor who does not have previous experience of at least 80% of similar works in magnitude and complexity. To demolish a 22 storied concrete high rise situated right on one of the most busy roads, which almost always remains full of traffic (vehicular as well as pedestrians), they have selected a contractor whose experience was only with demolition of one (or some) three storied isolated buildings. Moreover, to demolish a building's upper portion only, allowing people to remain and work below the demolition work is another crime.

Rajuk probably thought that if they made the stringent qualification criteria, then costs would be higher. I do not understand what on earth would go wrong if we had to engage foreign contractors for the work? Are we not engaging foreign contractors/consultants even where they are not needed? Well, here the bargain is between a few lives of poor workers and money! So, go cheap, save money, even now, if Rajuk has to pay compensation, it will not exceed the contract value with a duly qualified contractor. So, pay the price with human lives! Does it sound absurd? Look at the reality.

Great Rajuk! We, the city dwellers, are depending on your technical competency when you are the sole authority to approve all building designs, low and high-rise.
Acty dweller
On e-mail

Wasting public funds

Everyone wishes to greet relatives and friends on special occasions during the year. Ideally, one would like to meet the person to greet him. Since this is not always possible, we take the help of greeting cards. To meet the demands, greeting cards are manufactured and sold. When you send a card to greet a friend or a relative, you expect it to be reciprocated.

As a teacher in a university, I receive several dozens of greeting cards every year from such persons as the Honourable President of the country, the Vice Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors of a good number of universities and Deans of the various Faculties of my University. These personalities presumably use public funds to procure the greeting cards. I have to spend money from my own pocket if I have to reciprocate. I must admit I have never reciprocated. I don't think I would, even if I were very rich because I believe they would not have the time even to look at the card sent by me. I wonder some times if I would do the same if I were in their positions. What would be the purpose? I can't believe they send a card to me because they remember me. I am sure some of them don't know me even. Similarly, I don't know some of them at all. May be they want to declare to persons like me that they are holding a high office, which we have not been able to hold. What do I do with the cards? I find it difficult to accept it as a greeting.

I would humbly like to tell these personalities that they are wasting public funds, which could be definitely put to better use.
Professor M. M. Rahman
Dhaka University

Collaborators

The nation is really confused. How are the collaborators of 1971 openly challenging the big parties? It seems some foreign powers are behind them. Otherwise, the party, which cannot muster more than 2% votes and at the moment there is a strong national demand for trial of the leaders of that party as war criminals, could not take such a defiant stand.

They are very shrewd and growing stronger every day. We should be careful about their long-term plans which surely are ominous.
Shafiqul Islam
On e-mail

Yaba addiction

The Daily Star has been publishing many articles on drug addiction. Addiction to intoxicants is not a relief from pain, but rather a disease that prevents one from taking medicines.

So, the problem has to be dealt with on the basis of a sound plan.
Azmi Syed
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

South Korean scene

December 19 was not only election day for South Korea but it was also the 66th birthday and 37th wedding anniversary of the leading contender--Lee Myung-bak. Although Mr. Lee has enjoyed top position in the opinion polls (with over 20 points ahead of his main rivals), his campaign seemed to lack the fire and enthusiasm which were usually present in previous South Korean presidential elections. But then again he was the favourite to win because his two main rivals --Lee Hoi-chang and Chung Dong-young--failed to grab the public's attention and support. In other words his rivals failed to provide any sort of competition.

The prime reason behind people supporting the former Hyundai executive is that they want to see a fast-growing economy achieving a growth of 5 %; they want changes in the education system and many Koreans demand a comprehensive social-

security system. And they believe that Lee could fulfil these aspirations.

But if he fails to live up to their expectations, than his popularity will soon decline swiftly. So he has to make things happen; making promises only will not do.
Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS

ICT revolution

Thank you very much for your interview-based article on the "High Internet Tariff" in today's (17/dec/07) Star Business Page. This is a long-standing issue which needs mass awareness and campaign to make Internet a commodity for the public and businesses in Bangladesh. Internet is a global phenomenon in this highly interconnected world. It is in fact a boon to LDCs like us, which can catalyse our developments and exports growth. As the BASIS President aptly put High Internet Pricing is seriously holding back our ICT exports growth in Bangladesh.

As we evidenced with the booming RMG exports, many related businesses in the RMG Value Chain grew with the main RMG businesses. A countrywide ICT services export growth will also trigger similar patterns in our economy. But we must ensure the highest Internet connection reliability and significantly lower

bandwidth prices for that. We simply cannot remain 15 to 20 times higher in Bandwidth pricing than the Indian Bandwidth pricing. We must make that lower than India's to attract foreign businesses.

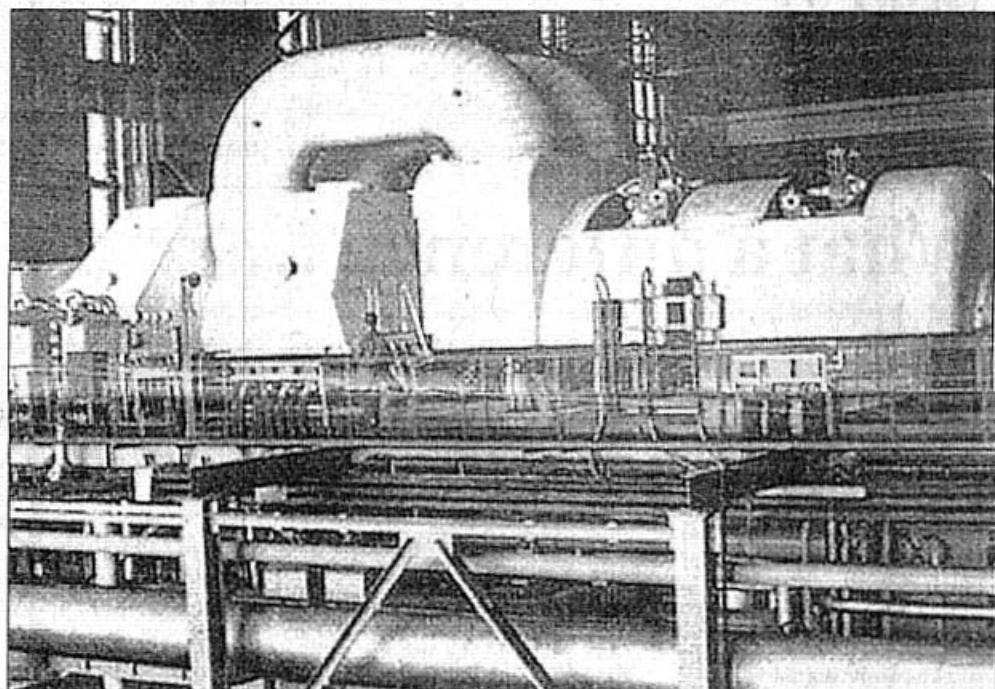
We should treat this Internet & related Fibre-Optic-Network Bandwidth price reduction as a long term investment for our country. With heavily reduced prices, the Internet will be all pervasive among most of the young population of our country. Our educational institutes and young students can use the Internet as a great R&D and knowledge platform.

We have opportunities in ICT R&D, where skilled HR is the main factor. We missed the Industrial Revolution. We cannot afford to miss the ongoing Global ICT revolution.

Success stories are always characterized by a combination of visionary leadership, determination, sensible government policy, effective coordination and cooperation across a range of industry stakeholders, prudent risk taking by the powerful ones, and a lot of hard work. In fine, we must act now with a strong commitment to succeeding in the long term by 'commoditising' the Internet with very low pricing.

Fokhriz Zaman
Co-Founder CTO, Millennium Information Solution Ltd
Dhaka

Power generation



Although this is a grave matter and enquiries are being made, I feel the following anecdote will lighten the matter somewhat.

A British energy minister was having a meeting with power generators and distributors about how to develop more power and distribute it quickly through the same grid to the consumers as the price of energy has risen sky high during the winter.

To his surprise, the experts said this was

impossible because of Ohm's Law. He asked the opinions of the civil servants who were with him at the meeting, and the civil servants also agreed with the experts. The minister was taken aback momentarily but then barked out, "In that case I must make every effort to repeal this foolish law as soon as possible!"

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Biharis as voters

The EC has adopted the right policy and the decision to enrol the Urdu-speaking Biharis on the current voter list except of course the ones who expressed their allegiance to Pakistan and have been living inside the refugee camps.

But it is shocking to know through the electronic media that some of our people have raised objections. This is most unfortunate. Those who were born in Bangladesh have the right to become voters here. The EC has very rightly explained that all of them have inte-

grated into society through marriage etc. Most of them are skilled and have also been contributing to the economy of the country.

AB Mohammed Zakaria
Mirpur, Dhaka

