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Climate change & poor countries

At present the global climate is changing rapidly and contributing a lot to environmental degradation all over the world. And it has been a serious concern for the poor countries like ours. The most industrially developed nations are mainly responsible for global pollution. The Kyoto Protocol, an agreement on the environment and sustainable development, has not yet been ratified by the United States, the largest polluter of environment.

As a result, the poor countries are facing natural calamities like Sidr.

Md. Masum Mia
Moghbar, Dhaka

Election -2008

Dr. Fakhrudin Ahmed promised general election by the end of 2008. Many of us are apprehensive and even scared of the return to same old politics and misrule by the corrupt politicians. The last one year of emergency rule by the CTG brought relief and hope amongst most of us. The CTG performed admirably and coped well with natural disasters.

We are impressed. We must not forget the 15 years of abuse of power by the groups of selfish and corrupt people hiding inside deformed political parties. I do not see any principle or honesty in the major political parties. There has been no credible leadership. The nation deserves a lot better than two squabbling families. We still have a few good and reliable leaders who can steer the nation towards freedom from all evils. We all must pick the right people and give them support.

The EC and law abiding intellectuals have a major role to play in setting up the roadmap to proper democracy in Bangladesh. We are still far away from reforming the existing political parties. Nobody wants to see the old riots and hartals back on the streets. The politicians complain because the CTG is doing much better than them. Neither of these too ladies ever apologised for messing up our national assets and democracy itself over the last 15 yrs.

Make way for the honest and decent people to come into politics and establish the rule of law for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

Dr. M. Motahar
ANRB

Comments

Thank you for the write-up under the above title published in DS.

All we need is a Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore or a Mahathir of Malaysia to run Bangladesh for 5-10 years and we will not remain poor any more!

Why do we keep electing these women and thugs in the parties to run the country, despite the fact that we have no shortage of honest and competent administrators (as we can see in the present caretaker government) to run it?

Please keep writing, and soon we will find a solution.
MH Rashid
London, UK

How do I return home?

I am 75 and still work 8-10 hours every day. I commute by rickshaw from my rented flat in Niketon to office in Banani via Mohakhali Road. I do not have a car or even a mobile. For the last few months rickshaws have been banned from Mohakhali Road, so twice every day I am summarily ejected from my rickshaw by the dozens of cops on duty (have they nothing better to do?) and forced to walk the 1 km portion of Mohakhali Road like thousands of men, women, children, old, infirm, disabled, sick, students, small traders etc. etc. I manage somehow during the day but returning home after dark poses a problem. I have also undergone bye-pass operation. At that rush hour it is impossible to get a CNG or taxi. Even if I can, they refuse the short distance fare and laugh in the face of the policemen

who interceded on my behalf once or twice.

After dusk, Mohakhali Road without lights and with uneven, occupied and incomplete footpaths, is practically impassable due to my falling eyesight and wobbly legs further blinded by the glare of cars racing down the pot-holed road. Already I have collected multiple scratches from tripping and falling twice. It is only a matter of time before I break a few bones and do irreparable damage to my by-pass incision.

Allow me therefore, to come back to the above and a few more questions.

1. How do I and thousands like me, get home cheaply, comfortably and swiftly to/from our workplaces?

2. Is it not better to let the poor rickshaw-puller earn an honest living and maintain his family than to put him out of work by restricting his movements? Is that not his constitutional right?

3. What do you think he will be doing if not pulling his rickshaw? Take to mugging, dacoity, theft etc thereby compounding law & order problems?

4. The fares earned by rickshaws remain in the country, add to GDP and generate mass employment. Letting free access to a few privileged car owners augments the coffers of multi-national oil, vehicles and other companies from our valuable foreign exchange. Are you not aware that oil is already \$100 per barrel and rising? Is this sound economically?

5. Cannot motor vehicles and rickshaws co-exist and run smoothly till sufficient CNGs and taxis are put on the road and rickshaws gradually phased out? If you think that is impossible, then you

have never been to Dhaka Cantonment and seen what uniformed discipline can do?

Lastly, let me 'congratulate' you for 'efficiently solving' Dhaka's traffic problem by banning rickshaws. Is that a fact or am I imagining seeing gridlock all over the city with nary a rickshaw in sight?

Will inconveniencing hundreds of thousands while favouring a few bring you popularity?
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Dhaka

NRB sermons

A well-publicised conference of non-resident Bangladeshis (fancifully called NRBs) was held in Dhaka last month with the expressed view of projecting the potentials of the NRBs in 'alleviating' the miseries of the lesser mortals who live in this country. In fact, almost every year, such conferences are organised in Dhaka for NRBs in different formats. These routine meetings (or get-togethers) give the NRBs an opportunity to make holiday trips to this country in winter using tickets from conference organisers in the name of visiting Bangladesh for participating in an international (?) conference. Such visits also help them to enrich their curriculum vitae as well as meet their relatives/friends, and buy or sell properties here. Lesser mortals or 'resident Bangladeshis' do not need to object to all these until we hear the NRBs lecturing us in condescending tones on how we "should" live our lives. It is surely welcome if the NRBs come here with capital to invest in employment generating enterprises (like the United Airways), but, certainly, we do not need any advice on floods or mass transit or urban congestion etc. NRBs please note that in Bangladesh we have a large supply of resource persons who have more experience in development works than most of you. One NRB, participating in the recent conference, even had the temerity to demand that the expatriate Bangladeshis holding foreign passports be allowed to head some of the development organisations and corporations of Bangladesh as if the executives and academics of Bangladesh are all nincompoops! It is unfortunate that the media did not see through the charade of the so-called NRB 'guest birds', who presume have by now returned to their cozy homes gloating over a make-believe contentment that he/she has their bit for their motherland, which they had voluntarily left!

Anon-NRB
One-mail

China-Taiwan ties
On January 12th, the KMT of Taiwan i.e. the nationalists, won the parliamentary elections as the ruling Democratic Progressive Party managed to win just 27 seats while the KMT grabbed 81 seats (there were in total 113 seats). Their victory means that relations between Taiwan and China are likely to improve, given the fact that the DPP was more pro-independence and more willing to unseat relations with the "mainland", while the KMT looks forward to warming relations with China particularly in terms of maintaining strong economic ties.

Two important factors, which may have brought victory for the nationalists, are that, firstly, on Dec 28, the high-court cleared the KMT's presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou, of alleged corruption charges, thereby uplifting his image. Secondly, the corruption charges encircling the DPP's president Chen Shui-bian and his associates plus the fact that they failed to handle the economy and his plan to hold a controversial referendum on applying to the UN under the name of Taiwan, raised concerns among voters. Now, all eyes will be on the presidential elections-- to be held in March where Mr. Ma will run against Frank Hsieh of the DPP. At the moment, the KMT looks to be the favourite and if they do win, then relations with the mainland will gain an impetus.

China is Taiwan's largest export market and Taiwanese firms have also invested huge sums on businesses in China. Mr. Ma promises to allow direct travel links with China and says he will allow Taiwanese firms to invest more than 40% of their assets in China. He also looks forward to signing a formal peace agreement and thereby smoothening cross-strait tensions with China. But he has said that he will only opt for reunification with a "democratic" China.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Politicians

Real faces of the so-called politicians have been exposed, especially after the current CTG took over.

As the campaign against corruption goes ahead, the frequency of expressing apprehension by the politicians goes up too!
Razib, Kahalu Bazar, Bogra

Savings Certificates: clear directives needed

Clear directives are needed from the NBR as to whether one person with different individuals, such as husband & wife, father & son, mother & daughter, mother & son, mother & daughter, so on and so forth, can purchase three-monthly profit giving Savings Certificates in Joint Names.

One of my relatives purchased two Savings Certificates (three-monthly profit giving) in Joint Names, one with her elder daughter and the other one with her younger daughter, amounting to three lakh and two lakh respectively from Dhaka GPO. When she went to collect the profits earned on the Certificates the pay clerk refused to pay any. According to Dhaka GPO, the same person cannot purchase Saving Certificates with different individuals in Joint Names.

If they can't, then how they have been issued the certificates in the first place, GPO's reply - it was a mistake!

As per the guidelines stipulated in the application form for Savings Certificates, (1) A person can purchase Savings Certificates worth up to Tk 50 lakh in Single Name or up to Tk 1 crore in Joint Names.

(2) If a person, either in single name or in joint names, purchases Saving Certificates above the limits, no profit will be given on the excess amount.

The relevant rules on Saving Certificates, therefore, do not stipulate that a person cannot purchase Saving Certificates in Joint Names with different individuals.

Here, the key is the ceiling or limit, which is Tk 50 lakh or Tk 1 crore as the case may be.

The family, having been deprived of the profits, is now living in tremendous hardship. She purchased the certificates from the money her husband received as retirement benefits and they fully depend on this.

May we request the Honourable NBR Chairman to kindly dispel mis-interpretation of the rules in regard to Joint Names and issue clear directives to Dhaka GPO to mitigate the sufferings of innocent buyers of the Savings Certificates like us.

M.M. Rahman
New Eskaton Road
Dhaka

Commuter's plight

A good system of communication was introduced for the commuters of the capital city. That was the introduction of AC bus services from Uttara to Motijheel. Various types of buses were seen plying between different ends of the city and even to suburbs under the name of Premium, Nirapod etc. Commuters of all classes used to go to different places comfortably and safely. For sometime I used to stay at Uttara and visit different places in those buses. I saw lots of students studying in different institutions including Medical College & Engineering University travel in those buses. That system was serving so nicely that we used to feel like enjoying modern city life. Middle class people, particularly female travellers having no personal transport, were benefited so much because they could travel at any time in those buses freely and safely. It got popularity among the middle class people, a major part of taxpayers. We expected that the system would be expanded and more such buses would be added to serve more areas, but to our utter surprise we found two major transport companies soon going out of the business.

To travel by common buses that are now in service the travellers need to be physically strong! I would urge the authorities concerned to immediately restore the AC bus services in the interest of all concerned.

MA Alim
Ex. Banker
Indira Road, Dhaka

Pertinent point

Ref: Govt eyes consensus on crucial issues.

I would like to mention a point in connection with your above captioned news item which often remains unmentioned.

We all point our fingers towards oppositions' boycott of JS, hartal etc. These activities are only effects not causes. We should point our fingers towards the people/party in power and tell them not to create causes for the opposition (powerless) to take to the street. Our near past tells us how the party in power in parliament caused opposition to come to the street or to boycott the JS.

It is the party in power that should be accommodating, reasonable and take the responsibility of making a successful JS. The people give them power to be accommodating, not to abuse that power on the powerless opposition!

Sarwar
One-mail

Voter ID card

In the BBC phone-in programme a few days ago, one gentleman raised a very pertinent question regarding the technical quality and distribution system of the ID card. If his observation is valid and extensive, one should be concerned about the future of this project which has received appreciation at home and abroad. I was very cynical about the success of this project right from the day one, because I apprehended the problems narrated by a gentleman in the phone-in programme.

The other reason why I am concerned is timely completion of the project to have a creditable and acceptable voter list for the general election this year. Moreover, I am not sure how much vote rigging would be stopped by the voter ID card. My guess is that false voting cannot so much influence the result of an election compared to other rigging methods and devices involved which I need not explain much here. The election monitoring agencies, reputed to be neutral and enjoying public confidence, can give a better and correct picture. Because of all these reasons I was very sceptical about the electronic voter ID card, and wished that a manually completed traditional voter list

could be a more positive option to follow to have the promised general election in 2008. I wish the authorities would kindly look into the observations made by a voter in the BBC programme and opt for a practical solution, instead of a fault finding exercise. One can assume that the blame will ultimately be put on the newly adopted technology.

Since we are discussing the general election issue, one can refer to the ongoing news about the draft ordinance for the independent secretariat and independence of the Election Commission. We do not know the full text of it. But from the discussion in the media one can get the impression that neither the EC, nor the concerned section of our society, is satisfied with the reported draft approved by the council of advisers. The question of deputation of the chief executive officer from the cadre service, and the unclear issue of the Commission's authority to decide and act have to be resolved.

I hope the authorities will see reason and redraft the final ordinance. Currently, the EC seems to be more "de-organised" (not disorganised) rather than reorganised.

A reader, On e-mail



"Suharto, September 1965 and East Timor"

With deep regret, we would like to draw your kind attention to an article entitled "Suharto, September 1965 and East Timor" by Syed Badrul Ahsan, Editor, Current Affairs, published in your newspaper on 30 January 2008. It appears that the writer made a tendentious article and fabricated it with an ill motive against Suharto.

The first part of the article which discusses Suharto's involvement in the 1965 coup, shows the partiality of the writer. Its argumentation develops only on two contradictory opinions that could not be regarded as evidence. The fact is that the issue is very broad and complicated involving so many parties, including allegedly the western force, which makes no sense. Suddenly, the writer jumps to a conclusion that Suharto and Latif had planned to "kidnap seven generals" and stood behind the coup.

On this weak "assumption", the writer then develops the more controversial and speculative

statement that "the PKI... was not at all involved with the tragic event of September 30, 1965". While on the other hand, the Indonesian court's decision shows the other way, and it should be mentioned that "the 1965 coup" was not the Indonesian Communists Party's (PKI) first attempt at it. In 1948, the PKI, led by Mr. Musso, had also tried to seize power through a bloody coup in Madiun, East Java.

The fight against the communists in 1965 was backed by the Indonesian Armed Forces and the people of the Republic of Indonesia, especially by the Muslims. Through the People's Consultative Assembly's Decree Number XXV 1966 (the highest state body) Indonesia has banned the PKI. The writer's allegation of Suharto alone being responsible for letting loose "a bloodbath, killing as many as 2,000,000 Indonesians..." is again difficult to prove.

The facts indicate that former President Suharto is loved by the Indonesian people. When he was in hospital for intensive treatment people came to visit him and prayed for his well-being and they

mourned his death. Not only that, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia officially declared a seven-day long mourning in remembrance of the former president. H.E. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, has stated that with the demise of Suharto, "Indonesia has lost one of the country's greatest sons, a dedicated fighter, a true soldier and an honourable statesman."

Syed Badrul Ahsan's article is not only misleading but also contains some objectionable remarks which might hurt the sentiments of the Indonesian people.

At this moment, we should show respect to the man, because it was during Suharto's regime that Indonesia was among the first countries in the world that formally recognised the sovereignty of Bangladesh.

We appreciate the writer's interest in Indonesia; however the way he focuses his effort only on Suharto's negative sides has been disappointing.

M. Arief Ramadhan
Third Secretary
Indonesian Embassy
Dhaka

Jute bags



Recently, the Chinese government decided to ban the plastic shopping bags in their shopping malls because of extreme environmental problems.

In this regard, the Bangladeshi jute shopping bags might be a good substitute. The present caretaker government can start negotiating with the friendly Chinese government

to use this huge market and supply jute made shopping bags.

If Bangladesh is able to supply the shopping bags, it must be a huge market (1,300 million people) for our jute industry.
Dr. Md. Golam Mostofa Khan
Environmental Scientist
Chinese Academy of Sciences
Guiyang, China



IRAQ SCENE

Every time I think of Iraq, I feel sorry for the country, which is called the cradle of civilisation. This land has been ruined utterly and violence is erupting every day. From my childhood days, I was fascinated by Iraq. I used to read about Baghdad, Basra and other cities, prosperous and bustling with activities. I learned about Calif Harun-ur-Rashid roaming the streets in disguise at night to see how everything was going on and ensuring that all was well.

I read the book 'Thousand nights and one

night' which contains numerous stories in which many cities of Iraq are mentioned. 'Sindbad the Sailor', 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' and other stories are really very interesting.

But the childhood dream has turned into a nightmare. My heart bleeds when I think about the people of Iraq and I wonder what is in store for them in future. May Allah help them come out of the deep crisis.

Nur Jahan
S.S. Khaled Road, Chittagong