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Water management and women



The relation between life and water is inseparable. But if you closely observe, you will find a deep relation between water and women. Women take the

responsibility of water management in a family.

We are living in the 21st century and still women in the developing world are wasting

their valuable time just to fetch water. On an average they are wasting four to five hours every day only to fetch water. As a result, they are deprived of participating in social, cultural, economic and political activities. Women have vast knowledge about water sources and water management.

We should recognise their knowledge and experience to develop water sources and to be successful in water management. Analysing statistics I have found that water crisis has the worst effect on women. Because women are the prime collectors and users of water.

Mohammad Shajadul Alam Khan, On e-mail

These groups of officials vie for overseas trip or other facilities compromising the interest of the State and people at home. They are far behind in terms of capacity and moral stand in negotiating with their counterparts from donor agencies or states.

There is an urgent need to bring all the different entities working on counter trafficking and safe migration issues in Bangladesh to enhance collaboration, share information and experiences and strategies for a common plan of action. There is the need of accountability and transparency. The government has to take the lead. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is reportedly supporting the relevant ministry and agencies in Bangladesh in enhancing their capacities to ensure safe migration.

The media needs to be cautious while reporting on the issue of trafficking. Journalists need proper training in this regard.

I would like to put forward the following recommendations for immediate implementation: adopt a national migration policy, extend opportunity for acquiring skills, language training for potential migrants. Effective legislation in both the sending and receiving country is needed to safeguard the rights of the migrant workers. Crack down on unscrupulous recruiting agencies and agents, create a community knowledge base which will help the potential migrants to make an informed choice.

Uddata Bikash, Ph.D.
Human Rights Researcher and Trainer, Dhaka

First yarn recovery plant

Islam's report published on 2nd April in your pages on the commissioning of a Swiss-Bangla joint venture; the first plant in the country for recovering yarn from waste cotton and waste cloth. It is a worthwhile achievement, and the private sector investor deserves our congratulations for this innovative industry for recycling cotton and garment wastes. I believe this enterprise has a good potential in Bangladesh and is an important import substitution for reducing the need for imported raw cotton and yarn.

In this context, the government should discourage the export of waste cotton and waste cloth, which is a raw material for similar yarn recovery plants operating overseas, and maybe exporting the yarn to Bangladesh! Since our national budget is under preparation, the government should add or increase the export duty on waste cotton, waste yarn and waste cloth from Bangladesh. This will enable our yarn recovering operation to thrive and grow, providing more employment and value addition locally.

Authors like Laura Maria Agustin argue that where freedom of movement is restricted by stiff laws and stringent border controls, many aspiring migrants have little choice but to seek assistance from the dodgy middlemen. She further argues that the anti-trafficking crusade is restricting international freedom of movement. She justifies that the figures of trafficked victims are based on 'sweeping generalisations and frequently on speculations'. This is very much correct in our context.

This is the high time for a country like Bangladesh to promote and ensure citizens' access to safe migration with dignity and protection in the destination countries. Given the huge volume of potential migrants and demand overseas, there is no room for delay.

It is unfortunate but true that some of the senior government officials on different occasions just read out the script ignoring the consequences of what is reportedly supplied by the NGOs concerned.

Food habits

It is time we should bring about substantial changes in our lifestyle with regard to food habits particularly amongst marginal and vulnerable groups. Indeed, there has been a worldwide food grain and cereal shortage. Global climate change has an adverse effect leading to sea level rise, increase in floods, cyclones, tornadoes, drought and loss of biodiversity. Many factors including climatic changes resulted in unprecedented price escalation. We have witnessed over the last one or two years unprecedented political turmoil, flash floods and devastating effects of cyclone Sidr resulting in totally chaotic consumer market scenario. Misdistribution of fertiliser and/or pesticides, too much profiteering by the middlemen and increased cost of transportation have certainly contributed to the unaffordable price of rice, oil and edible oil.

The long-term prospect even seems to be gloomy. All the rivers are silted up and the irrigation systems are gradually becoming unworkable because of low water level during the lean season. The cycle of drought, hunger and poverty are perpetuated by successive onslaughts of flash floods mercilessly washing away households, cattle and the poultry. Before long term measures are undertaken, we may motivate our vulnerable population to look for alternative sources of calorie; for example, potatoes and maize. We should look for cheaper markets for rice and edible oils.

I think, the need of the hour is to hold a dialogue between nutritionists, economists, policy makers, social workers, NGOs and the government officials. Effective, flawless short-term measures are earnestly solicited without delay to minimize the human sufferings.

I hope The Daily Star will take the lead in this direction and include amongst others Prof. Yunus and Shaikh Siraj. MR Hossain
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Dual citizenship

It is wonderful news, published in your daily and issued by the foreign ministry on 24 March, that British passport holder Bangladeshis from now on will retain their Bangladeshi citizenship automatically under a new rule of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This rule will scrap the previous notification, circulars, orders or instructions of the government.

I am not very certain what the news actually means. I have both Bangladeshi and British passports but does this new rule mean that I can travel any time with any one of the two passports, provided I have visa for the countries where I intend to go? No. The experience I had was bitter. What happened actually is that I came to Bangladesh with my Bangladeshi passport in 2003 and after spending two years and seven months, I was going back to London with my British passport as I decided to go to the USA and going with the Bangladeshi passport meant that I needed to obtain the US visa. Unfortunately, at Zia Airport I was told that I could not go with the British passport as I came to Bangladesh with my Bangladeshi passport. The other reason was that according to the British immigration rule I could stay in Bangladesh or any other place for a maximum period of two years. Although nowdays British Immigration Authority is very tough and they want to know why one needs to stay abroad for even two years when he chose Britain as his place of residence. Since I stayed in Bangladesh for two years and seven months, I would not have got the re-entry to London with Bangladesh passport. But I failed to make the Dhaka Immigration Authority understand my position. So I had to come back home and started thinking how I would be able to get dual citizenship.

Next day I visited a few people and found out what I would have to do to get the required Bangladeshi citizenship:

1. Collect form from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Nationality Department) personally.
I am sure all of you know very well how difficult it is to get entry to the secretary.

2. After obtaining the form, complete it with photographs, pay fee to Bangladesh Bank and then submit it to the Ministry of Home. They will send the form to the special branch of police in Rajarbagh from where after a few days an Inspector will go to your house without any appointment to interview you. You will have to pay "bakshish" to get a correct report which would go back to the home ministry where the official will write a note for Assistant Secretary/Deputy Secretary/Joint secretary and Additional Secretary who eventually will issue the citizenship. Then again you will have to go to the ministry or send an authorized person to collect the certificate. Remember that this is not a dual citizenship certificate but simply a citizenship certificate of Bangladesh. The heading on the certificate is "certificate of citizenship of Bangladesh".

Under clause (2) of article 2B of the Bangladesh citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order 1972 (PO no 149 of 1972), this means that former governments of Bangladesh never thought of issuing a certificate which would say that the person who got the citizenship is a dual citizen. I found it a bit strange as in my Bangladeshi passport it is written that my nationality is Bangladesh. It may be mentioned that most of the countries issue passports to their nationals after giving them citizenship certificate first. Then why it is different in Bangladesh?

However, after collecting the new citizenship certificate everything is not over. You need to take your passport, both Bangladeshi and British along with a completed form to the office of the superintendent of police, Rajarbagh where some entries will be made in their computer to become a dual citizen.

I regret to say whichever office you go for meeting the formalities, you should be ready to offer something.

It would be better if these formalities are scrapped all together. And those who have two passports should be allowed to travel anywhere with either one of the passports (provided the visa for the destination countries are obtained). Nowadays we need to have the stamp "no visa required for travel to Bangladesh" from Bangladesh High Commission and this means that I am a citizen of Bangladesh.

Therefore my humble suggestion to the Bangladesh government is: accept those people who have no visa requirement in their British passports as dual citizens.

A sufferer
Dhaka

Price spiral and students

Price spiral has recently become one of the burning issues. Although it is a global problem, Bangladesh is experiencing this



Iran's nuclear programme

I am writing with reference to Point Counterpoint: "Forty-year old nuclear programme," By Jamal Ashraf (April 8).

Iran is only taking tentative steps toward developing its own nuclear device and already, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is threatening to wipe out Israel from the face of earth.

But more than Israel, Iran's ruling Shia Mullahs are a greater threat to their own people and the neighbour Sunni Arab states. As Prof. Azar Nafisi, who was expelled from her teaching position at Tehran University for refusing to wear veil, tells us how the Mullahs are brutalising the country in her book-- Reading Lolita in Tehran. Her story of Iran is a country where the Shiite Mullahs regularly "hang people in the streets," a country where educated women are considered enemies of the state. Atomic bomb in the hands of such fanatical Shia Mullahs is a greater threat to their own people. By failing to improve the economic condition, Mullahs

have lost all their popularity among ordinary Iranian people and only way they can stay in power is by intimidating their critics. A nuclear bomb will provide them with such an instrument of intimidation.

Most Sunni Arab countries are afraid of any nuclear weapon in the hands of Shiite Iran. Although the Sunnis are a majority in the Muslim world, they are concentrated in non-Arab countries like Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while Shiites are concentrated in Iran and Iraq. This gives a strategic advantage to Shiites in Iran and Iraq. By installing a Shiite-majority government in Iraq, the Americans have actually strengthened the hands of Iran's Shia Mullahs who are now dictating the political future of the Middle East. This has made the richest Sunni country, Saudi Arabia, greatly concerned about Iran's aim to end the Sunni domination of the Middle East.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Economic "nationalism"

Right at this moment our country and its policymakers need economic management on the basis of economic nationalism. Let me clarify.

monising the farmers on how to produce boro or how to protect potatoes. Actually BTV is run by taxpayers' money but they are not doing enough



Food prices have gone up internationally. It's not an excuse for the present CTG but a reality. Why don't we change our food habits, not for these "hidden hunger" days but for the years ahead. Not only potato, which had a bumper production this year, but other cereals could be added to make it a balanced diet. We need publicity. BTV can do that instead of ser-

to promote national interests.

And our economic nationalism can be our bargaining coin for India and other countries. Moulana Bhashani and similar charismatic figures are absent in Bangladesh today. I will ask them to look at Malaysia.

Dr Azizul Karim
General practitioner
Australia

Clinton nostalgia

The Clintons have injected former President Bill into the battle to such an extent that an insulting (yet not inaccurate) word -- Billary -- is back in political parlance. In fact, the Clintons have played the Bill card so belligerently that you would think Bill is the candidate and Hillary his spokesperson! Obama was quite right in saying that sometimes he could not realize which candidate he was running against.

And the sharp reality of the resurrected past seems to be eclipsing the fuzzy nostalgia that preceded it. For me, that feels like Clinton

fatigue eclipsing Clinton nostalgia.

What makes nostalgia such a fine feeling is that often the past seems more pleasant in memory than it was in reality. Ordinarily, the reality of the past can't deny the delights of nostalgia because the past is, by definition, gone. But this is not the case in the election at hand.

The dynamics of the Democratic primaries (and of the general election, should Clinton become the Democratic nominee) have a lot to do with the tension between two conflicting forces: Clinton nostalgia, and Clinton fatigue. Voters who yearn for the fine old days of Bill's presidency tend to support Hillary. Voters who are glad the Clinton White House is over tend to support someone else. The question is, which force is stronger? I think the answer here is: fatigue.

If I'm right in deeming that the unwelcome reality of the past will trump the nostalgia of the present, then the longer Hillary and Bill are in the limelight, the more Hillary's candidacy will falter. Even if she somehow manages to survive her growing weakness throughout the primaries and become the Democratic nominee (a far-away possibility), Clinton fatigue will continue to worsen, and the Democrats would be sending a debilitated contender into the general election. Nostalgia is a feeble foundation for a campaign in a developed country like America. Not just because campaigns are and ought to be about the future, but because when reality intrudes upon nostalgia, it tends to ruin the reverie.

Nasim Jamil Joy
Elephant Road, Dhaka



acutely. The prices are soaring up day by day. The poor and middle class families cannot afford to manage two square meals.

The intensity of price hike is bitterly faced by students living in different halls. Therefore, it has become imperative for the government as well as all well-wishers of the nation to tackle this serious problem.

Md Habibullah Howlader
Dept. of English, CU

Plight of a public library

The Divisional Public Library of Chittagong is beset with many problems. To begin with, the library is housed in a building that was partially damaged by an earthquake-- the cracks on walls are still visible. Then the lighting of the reading rooms is less than adequate. As evening creeps in, the readers have no choice but to read in dimly-lit halls. The corridors have bad smell as the toilets are not cleaned properly.

The shelves have books that were procured decades ago. Some books are in poor condition: pages of those books have turned so grey that they will tax your eyesight. Especially, the books of the general reader's section are in pitiable condition. Although the library is visited by many students of colleges and universities, it has no photocopier, let alone the Internet. The room meant for newspapers and maga-

zines is not stocked with sufficient number of reading material.

In these hyper-materialistic days the habit of reading is waning. In this context, the importance of a public library can hardly be exaggerated. We hope the authorities will look into the problems that plague the library.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Set examples

Our country is facing many problems of which three appear most pressing. These are food crisis, shortage of power and financial crunch. The caretaker government is trying many options including disbursing valuable advices, of course free of cost! People demand something concrete. To alleviate the food crisis it is suggested that we change our food habit, take more potatoes to supplement rice. Can't we set some examples here? We may serve potato made items in our government functions, we may urge government officials to take their lunch made from potato and other vegetables. Those institutions getting government subsidies in food items may take 50% potato in place of rice or atta. The guest control law may be stringently followed to stop extravagant use of food items.

To make economical use of electricity, air coolers/conditioners may be put off in government, semi government

offices. Private sector offices should also be advised to put off their costly air-pervasive cooling systems where even corridors are cooled. We may open the windows and use electric fans. We should remember that majority of our population have never used electricity in their homes even to light a bulb. We should also rationalise use of gasoline both in public and private sectors.

It is said an example is better than a precept.
M.S. Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Top two

A local Bengali daily has carried a news item that the two leaders in jail will have to agree to "three conditions" to get released from jail. I have no intention to repeat the conditions mentioned, but the conditions look like an arbitrary formula of the government to pave the way for controlled democracy. I have doubt that these would be acceptable to the two leaders or to their party cadres. These conditions seem to be a hard line approach of the government, but the scope of negotiation cannot still be ruled out, hopefully.

The government seem to have taken a firm policy of "head I win, tail you lose". The people who are the source of all power of this Republic as per the constitution are not behind or with them.

Reader
On e-mail



Student politics

It was a different story when our teachers and students took action to emancipate the nation through the Language Movement and Liberation War. But the situation has changed. Now student politics is an entirely different proposition.

We should try to regain the lost glory of student politics.

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