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Let's stand by Myanmar cyclone victims



Cyclone Nargis swept Myanmar's Ayeyawaddy (Irrawaddy) delta and the country's biggest city, Yangon, killing tens of thousands of people, and leaving many more without food, drinking water and shelter. The cyclonic storm was heading toward Bangladesh, but changed its course and turned to Myanmar to batter the coastal region of that country.

A cyclonic storm, brewed in Bay of Bengal, almost always ends up with hitting coastal Bangladesh. Sometimes it misses Bangladesh and hits the coast of Orissa. But not in recent history has a severe cyclone hit the thickly populated Irrawaddy delta. So the storm caught the people of that delta and the government of that country unprepared for the disaster, which shot up the death toll.

The inexperience on the part of the Myanmar government in coping with a natural disaster of such a huge magnitude will increase the sufferings of the affected people.

Naturally, the government of Myanmar will stand, with everything at its disposal, by the victims of the storm; but it needs international aid in its efforts to help the victims. In fact, the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, Nyan Win, has already said his country would welcome international aid.

As a next-door neighbour, it's our moral obligation to stand by the people and the government of Myanmar in their distress. We must not forget, during our time of distress we get aid from other countries.

We have long experience in coping with the aftermaths of cyclones and tidal bores. In short-term assistance, the government of Bangladesh and some NGOs of our country may immediately send people experienced

in disaster management to Myanmar. Our experienced field workers with water purification equipment may be sent there. We must immediately send medical teams and medicines to nurse the wounded. The medical teams may even be from our armed forces, who have long working experience in foreign countries as UN peacekeepers.

Myanmar is a food surplus country. What it needs at this moment is the means of bringing the food to the victims in the remote storm-affected coastal region and islands as quickly as possible. The Bangladesh government may provide the government of Myanmar with some helicopters and motorised boats to be used for carrying food, medicine etc. to the cyclone-battered islands.

In the long-term assistance, Bangladesh may help Myanmar with the technology of building cyclone-shelters. We may share our experience and help the government of that country to build up an advance cyclone warning system as well as a disaster management system. Our disaster management system has drawn international acclaim. Let our neighbours as well as other countries benefit from our expertise in disaster management.

Till Monday last, 20,000 people have been reported killed by the storm. Hundreds of thousands of people have been left homeless. Information is still being collected. The casualties will be rising further with the coming of new information from the devastated remote areas. We hope international politics will not hamper the foreign aid flow to the people of Myanmar.

Faruque Hasan
Dhaka

Ban student politics

Student politics at DU has assumed a turbulent form after a short-break. Student wings of different political parties are bringing out processions on the campus frequently.

We want the government to ban student politics at DU, which is responsible for many of the ills plaguing the university.
Mostafa Kamal Molla
Dept. of English
University of Dhaka

US visa

On 30 March 2008, I applied for tourist visa for my wife and myself for a short visit to the USA to see our son who is a legal US resident. I am a retired Senior Executive of a corporation and my wife is retired principal of govt colleges. I have visited USA three times-the last visit was in 2001 & had 5 years VISA which ended in Dec 2005.

We appeared for interview on 1st April '08 at about 3:00pm at window # 7. We stated our purpose - just to stay for 1-2 months with our son and said that we would manage the trip from our own funds. We submitted the paper stating our housing properties, savings, monthly income etc. Within 2 minutes of our interview, the VISA officer gave us a letter which states that - it was not convincing that we would come back and so VISA could not be granted. It further stated that we could apply again if our position changes but with fresh fees (another Tk 10,000/- approx for each).

VISA officers are in a sense ambassadors of the country. They meet more common people than the Ambassador himself. I would therefore request the US Embassy authorities to advise the VISA officers to apply their logic before reaching a conclusion.

Zahidul Huq
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Pedestrians in peril

Thousands of pedestrians of all ages, young and old, men, women and children, school boys and girls are required to cross the Folder Street, Wari, several times daily to go to various places and return back to their residences amid running vehicles at great risk to their lives.

There have been many road accidents, injuries and deaths to pedestrians, but who cares?

Now that the much talked about Jatrabari-Gulistan fly over construction has been cancelled, we would once again request the DCC and DMP to set up a zebra crossing and post a traffic policeman at Wari Sher-e-Bangla School point, Folder Street, without further delay and to construct a foot overbridge or underground passage for the safety and security of the pedestrians.

O.H. Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

An appeal to EC

I'm a resident of 'Dania Union' under Jatrabari thana and have unfortunately been deprived of enrolment to 'National Identity



Workers' rights

We have been observing May Day for a long time. The main purpose of observing this day is to ensure labour rights. But fulfilment of labour rights is still a far cry. Garment workers are working for almost 12 hours a day. So, what have we achieved?

Mushfiq Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University

RMG workers

Just before the International Workers' Day, RMG workers, as was reported in DS, once again blocked roads in Dhaka and Chittagong to press for payment of salary arrears. What an irony!

RMG workers of our country have grown over the years a propensity to block roads or highways whenever it comes to the issue of 'forcing' their employers to pay their salary arrears or to raise their wages. It seems that they have no other option at hand. So they do it disregarding the sufferings of commuters and causing loss of valuable working hours of other people. I don't understand why the owners of garment factories aren't brought to book for their unjust delay in paying the meagre salaries to their workers.

Monir Huseyn
Jatrabari, Dhaka

Monkey business!

I was shocked by the news on 5th May which said that the Dhaka zoo managers were planning to purchase fifty monkeys for Tk. 5 lakh. It meant each monkey would cost around Tk 10,000.

When the special assistant to the chief adviser was asked, he appeared to be uninformed and referred the matter to the curator. It sounds funny, doesn't it? A few days back, the misery of the Hanumans of Keshabpur Jessore was reported. It was said that because of scarcity of food the Hanumans are at risk of extinction.

When our monkeys and Hanumans do not have food to eat and face extinction, the purchase seems unnecessary. It was also reported that the price of each monkey is around Tk 3,000 at the local market. Therefore, the possibility of corruption cannot be ruled out.

Although the curator has said that the monkeys are to be bought because of visitor's demand, the government should look into the matter seriously. Moreover, the authorities concerned should protect the Hanumans of Keshabpur and other areas from possible extinction.
Moinul Alam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

What's there in a name?

Every society names their children in their own language. One well known example is the famous/infamous foreign minister of Iraq during Saddam's regime, Mr. Tariq Aziz, who is a Christian. The other day I went to meet an official named Ms. Mira al Habibi. In my picture, I envisioned an Iranian woman full covered with a black scarf. In her office a middle eastern looking woman in western attire welcomed me. In the process of our introduction, she asked me which country I am from; so I got the chance to satisfy my own curiosity to unearth her identity. In reply to my query, she told me she was a Jew with a Hebrew name!
Qamar Shams
Sydney, Australia

Postal service

In our good old days we had "Dak-horkoras" and there were "Dak-bunglows". In the distant past, messages were communicated through pigeons and horsebacks. As kids we have seen the postman (Dak-Peon) knocking at our wooden doors by ringing the iron bell when a letter used to arrive. It was indeed a sweet experience and one could instantly recognise the sender by looking at the handwriting. Letter writing was an art, which of late has become extinct. I wonder if those radio bond letter writing papers, faintly blue in colour, are still available. The fact is that one gets nostalgic.

But, Sir, that's not the issue. We must admire our postal department, in spite of hundreds of complaints, constraints and frustrations. Postal network encompasses every nook and cranny of the country; although delays and losses are there, but even then the system works. They have dispatched millions and millions of taka by money order, greeting cards, official and private letters and parcels. They have been issuing commemorative stamps on various national and international occasions. What a sweet experience it is to stand in a queue for the "first day covers". And probably stamp collection is the "king of hobbies". The postal department has other responsibilities also including postal deposit schemes, collection of MV taxes, distribution of textbooks and probably many others.

Now, time has changed. People rely on fax, SMS, couriers, and e-mails all in one palm. So it is natural to think that the flow of letters and telegrams will soon reach a level, which may be labelled as negligible. In the light of the above, I humbly suggest that all the post offices in the country be equipped with email, SMS, fax and electronic money transfer services/facilities.

I would humbly suggest also that the postal and telegraphic facilities be integrated at the district and thana levels to provide coordinated "One stop service" facilities. Otherwise, these two huge organi-

sations with countrywide network built with taxpayers' money will remain maximally under-utilized.
MR Hossain
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Brand in Bangladesh

I was watching a talk show on the subject in a private TV channel. It felt me good to come across such a meaningful and visionary discussion. Normally, TV talk shows reel around political crisis but it was a bright exception.

We are not aware of our own branding. If we common people become aware that we have promises to deliver in each transaction we do with each other, especially with outsiders, it will bring positive change to our attitude. It is true for every sphere of life whether it is social, business or personal. More or less we know about the term 'brand' used in the corporate world, but the brand image of a country, person, culture etc. is thought-provoking. The organisers deserve thanks for such a visionary and farsighted initiative. We have a tendency to expect initiatives from the government for almost everything. But, this initiative came from a few young people who think of tomorrow's positive Bangladesh in a far competitive world.

It was nice to learn that they have a plan to go to the district level with their message.

The media should come forward to create mass awareness on brand image and contribute to spreading the message around, it is our expectation.
Intiaz
Utara, Dhaka

Help us

We the residents of Gulshan 1 (Road # 29) have tried many things to tell the authorities how five business houses are creating immense security problems for the entire neighbourhood. I don't know who gave these business houses permission to operate in a residential neighbourhood. There's a garment factory just in front of the house that I live in. On

the right, there are two manpower offices. On my southeast, a private university has settled in. And behind me, there's another manpower office.

The garment factory has about 20 vehicles of different sizes. These vehicles occupy all the roads coming to my residence all day and all night! Most of the time our own cars don't have passage to enter our own building. When we tell them about unruly parking of their cars, they, the drivers of the garment factory, become aggressive. We get scared and don't tell them anything.

A crowd of 15 to 20 officials of this garment factory is always on the road, either smoking or chatting. Mobile tea and cigarette sellers come here to sell their commodities to these officials.

A group of 50 to 60 people is perennially present on the road because of the three manpower-recruiting centres.

Quite often the university authorities organise open-air concerts that continue till midnight. When they do this, it becomes impossible for us to stay in the house. These concerts create problems for not only the families living in our building, but everyone in the neighbourhood. When we request them to stop their drums and music, they say they had taken permission from the police station to stage the concert. We went to the police station and the law enforcers said no one had taken any permission from them and the police are not the authority to allow those concerts, the community is helpless.

So you see! The community is helpless.

We went to the City Corporation and submitted an application. No one did anything about it. We have also spoken to Gulshan Society, but with no result. We appeal to the authorities concerned to help us. At the same time, we appeal to the government to take all sorts of business houses away from the residential areas of Dhaka.
Residents of Gulshan Road 29
One-mail

Faujdarhat Cadet College

I immensely enjoyed Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's article on the Golden Jubilee of the founding of Faujdarhat Cadet College (FCC)



Water is a renewable resource and crucial component of ecological cycle and life. But nowadays its scarcity is acute as the groundwater table has gone down considerably in recent times.

The issue needs to be treated on a priority basis.

Siddiqur Rahman Apu
Soil Science Discipline
Khulna University

in Chittagong. Indeed, personalities like Col Brown, Gen. MAG Osmani, and many others mentioned in the article were great contributors to the young nation of Bangladesh. The nation is fortunate to have a fine institution like FCC for training the future leaders of the country. I might mention that several other cadet colleges were set up in Bangladesh during the 1970's.

I would also like to applaud the author for his recommendation to make the FCC a standard-bearer in all-round education and a foreign exchange earner for Bangladesh. Based on this idea, I recommend to the FCC and Bangladesh Cadet College Board to seek and recruit students of Bangladeshi origin living around the world. This will provide an

opportunity to establish an eternal link with the children of Bangladeshis born abroad with their paternal home in a meaningful and positive manner. These students of FCC and other cadet colleges, as leaders in business

and government in North America, Western Europe and international communities, will contribute to their paternal land in every possible way.

In addition, like past FCC teachers, Croft, Bishop, Watson, Shutt, and Macbeth, cadet colleges can be served by many internationally trained professionals of Bangladeshi origin, on sabbatical or on retirement, especially if their children are enrolled in the institutions.

To facilitate the admission of the international citizens of Bangladeshi origin, the cadet colleges will need to exempt these students from the entrance requirement of mastery of Bangla. They would pick up the language as they spend their initial years at the FCC and other cadet colleges.

To clarify any misgivings, unlike the Bangladeshi students, the international students should not be subsidized and must be charged full cost for their education plus add-ons towards the development of the institution.
Sultan Chowdhury, Ph.D
Maryland, USA

Food crisis

We are passing through a food crisis. Some people defined it as Hidden Hunger and some as Quiet Famine.

To overcome it, however, it is necessary to go beyond merely defining it.

Though there is the OMS system, it is clearly insufficient which is reported every day in the media. The government should take some positive steps as soon as possible to tackle the food crisis.
Bokul Das
Dept. of Law
Dhaka University

Shortage of medicines



For the last few weeks, we have not been getting the required medicines from the local chemist shops. We are informed that many grades of medicines are not supplied in full quantity by the manufacturers. Hence, the wholesalers are unable to meet the demand of the medicine shops within the Dhaka city.

It is therefore important that the government look into the matter immediately and take appropriate action for proper manufacture and distribution of essential medicines in the country.

Our present government is very active, and we hope it will take quick action in this respect.

Consumer
One-mail

Post-election scenario

What is going to be the roadmap in Dhaka after the fair and free general elections scheduled at the end of this year?

New teams (after screening by the voters) would be running the new regime with a new motto: country first, not the party. But coming down to working at the routine level would take a long time-after the political tsunami in Dhaka; and the 'meddling' by the CTG, ACC. It is like a family shifting into a new location (town, house, or flat).

In Bangladesh, we never get the time to announce 'everything operating normally'; even after three decades of devoted practice. We have to relearn operation/management and maintenance (O&M). The leaders announce 'popular' projects, and then dump it on the bureaucrats. They keep quiet about the backdoor activities: political angling and nibbling. Today the citizens have noted the lack of confession by the past political masters. There is only one monotonous theme: quick elections (for our daal-bhaat).

After the regime is saddled into power, there would be many orientation and tutorial courses for the old and the new entrants. Then comes teamwork (coordination). Other factors: the continuity

of the ongoing projects (never worked with the preceding regimes); and the public relations image. The internal house cleaning chores would take up a lot of man-hours. That is the internal environment.

External forces would continue to exert pressures at sensitive points--the hidden presence of black wealth--the backlash effect by those who were deprived recently of unhealthy gains, as in the preceding years. Add the secret schemes of powerful foreign cartels who now find South Asia worthy of investment and long-term settlement.

Bangladeshis are being

severely tested for truant behaviour in the past. We have a bigger homework: ditch the subjective mind, and be honest. The have-not mentality is tenacious (anywhere in the world). In this area, it is difficult to find the right type of dedicated leaders who are allowed to lead. The autocracy of the evil mind continues. Therefore it is not surprising to find that visa was issued to religious militants to act as sweepers of morality.

Beware of vacuums created by the past regimes. Air would rush into normalise the pressures (study lightning). Are we lazy guys? Then how to attract money?
A Mahasen, Dhaka

