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AZIZ RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

Our priorities

Our long-term national development projects, especially the one for energy and mineral deposits, have not been planned on regional basis--the northern districts are less developed than the South and SE. Is the extraction of coal in the North being deliberately delayed by vested groups? The record of the political regimes since 1991 has been dismal (too much lobbying through the backdoors).

For example, there is evidence of mineral deposits

and hydroelectric potentialities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The later (hydro, mini and normal plants) should have draft planned concept papers, starting immediately. The drafts on the tapping of the mineral resources are not getting the headlines. The CTG has a huge workload, but the ball has to roll, to keep up the morale.

Why so many NGOs are swarming the sparsely populated CHT? This is a border state, and its development would benefit the nation.

Recently, the government took some decisions on primary education in the CHT. No Bangladeshi minority group should feel that they are sort of aliens. Tourism in CHT would bring economic boom. The first phase of any new project is always thorny--the later phases fall into routine level. There are sporadic TV documentaries on biogas plants working in the rural areas--but no integrated project (for injection of investment, and banking facilities). AMahasen, Dhaka

Time has no value?

Last week, I faced a very difficult situation on my way to Khulna from Dhaka. My bus reached Paturia ferry ghat and it needed more than six hours to cross the Padma river in a ferry. That's why I missed my class test and attendance.

We need to have a more reliable system of transportation on this very important route. Arafat Naveem Economics Discipline Khulna University

Visionless parties

The CTG and the people behind them are trying to give an idea to the nation that politicians and student politics had created all the economic and political problems of the country. This might be a clever distraction and may not be the whole truth! Our constitution is not working from 1975 onwards and we know the consequences of that.

Having said that, it's not untrue that the political parties of Bangladesh don't have any clear agenda or mission for economy, social policy, health, education and they lack future visions. Dr Azizul Karim GP Australia

Climate change

Generally speaking, individuals themselves may not be able to take any significant steps about resisting the great threat of global climate change on health. Therefore, in this case, as in many other cases, the national and international policy-makers should think globally and act locally and there is only one suggestion for facing such problems: seek divine mercy. S.M. Rumen Invigilator British Council, Ctg.

DU teachers' stand

It was reported in The Daily Star on May 01, 2008 that a total of 201 white panel teachers of Dhaka University (DU) demanded immediate release of the detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia and other political leaders. In that

statement DU teachers said "Re-constitution of the Election Commission (EC), withdrawal of emergency and, above all, holding of the parliamentary election are needed for the welfare of the nation".

It's heartening that DU teachers remain concerned about socio-political situations of the country and express their valuable views publicly.

It would be even more heartening if they could do something like this when DU gets closed due to political clashes among the student wings of political parties and ultimately students have to suffer from unbearable session jams. It would definitely be a great help for the helpless common students who want uninterrupted and conducive academic atmosphere on the campus.

An optimistic student of DU One-mail

Hindi songs on Pahela Baishakh

This is in response to the letter of Mr. Nazmus Saquib in DS on May 12, 2008 regarding the above issue.

He said that James performed Hindi songs on incessant requests from his fans in that concert. I have to reiterate - with popularity comes responsibility. A singer is not supposed to swallow every request of his fans. He must have sense of appropriateness and should have reminded his fans of the spirit of an occasion that signifies the identity, culture and tradition of our Bengali nation, instead of gleefully singing Hindi songs.

Nevertheless, I do agree that we should not be complacent with our 'patriotism of one day'. Add to that, patriotism is felt in the way we act, no matter on an occasion or in our day-to-day life.

My dissent with Mr. Saquib lies in the sense of appropriateness. I think performing Hindi songs in a concert arranged on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh was inappropriate. Mr. Saquib thinks it was alright. Both of us have made our points clear and I hope the matter ends here.

Ahmad Perdous Bin Alam Department of CSE, DU

one of my previous articles in the national dailies.

3. Government employees or officials or both who deal with say, pay and audit matters of employees or officials or both of the present day powerful government organisations are perhaps engaged in using their official connections with staff members of those powerful organisations in pursuit of for example, protecting their relations - whether or not blood relations - and others from corruption related consequences or hiding corruption related ramifications from the public scrutiny, perse.

The last word: let us intensify and sustain anti-corruption drives in areas like income-expenditure profile of government servants; pay them (I mean, the government servants) wages and salaries on the basis of inter alia their respective job worth to be determined via a proper job evaluation exercise, market competitions and inflation, and a standard size family requirement; position their career expectations, career developments, career paths on a more solid, fair, legitimate, competitive and result-oriented ground; and enhance internal resources through elimination of wastage via anti-corruption and other means and methods.

Dr. M. S. Haq, One-mail

Rajuk and the new rule

We the small land owners owning property up to 10 katha in Dhaka city were very hopeful after the declaration published in the national dailies dated 28th march, 2008 by the ministry of housing and public works that the government had accepted in principle the idea of allowing the small land owners to build houses after giving up 30% instead of 40% of the total land area for the sake of creating better environment in this mega city.

But the said announcement though expected to be effective from the 14th April, 08 (Pahela Baishakh) has not been given effect to. We have been building castles in the air based on it. Now frustrations have started overwhelming us. We are standing still not knowing what to do. The majority of the landowners in this mega city where a piece of land is costlier than gold own mostly small pieces of land.

We hope the ministry will shortly make the rule effective as per the announcement taking into consideration the ground reality like areas having height restrictions etc.

We only fervently hope that the CTG will not keep us waiting. Abul B. M. Zakaria Eastsheurapara Mirpur, Dhaka

Brake on climate change!

I wrote various letters in your daily in the recent past scientifically queering the 'blind bandwagon following' of climate change adherents and the purported perils facing the world and Bangladesh from climatologists and economists.

Well, it appears that Al Gore and others (notwithstanding the Nobel Prize), are wrong and that the Earth (or in particular its seas) has actually been cooling for the past few years. The Leibniz Institute of Marine Science has announced through the world famous science journal 'Nature' that we have no need to worry about global warming for the next decade. There will be a lull, however (to be cautious) there may be cause to worry thereafter! This basic research has shown that warming and cooling of oceans take place on a fairly regular cycle irrespective of 'carbon footprints'.

I hope this breathing space will give Bangladesh the opportunity to rationally develop alternative and clean power sources without being pushed into it by a faddish frenzy. Engineer Shafi Ahmed London, UK

Electoral boundaries

The most debated issue is electoral boundaries reshaped by the Election Commission. Last night we had the opportunity to hear a former BNP lawmaker and a retired bureaucrat in gp-t-matra. DS has published an editorial promoting the idea to look at it from demographic consideration and arrive at an acceptable agreed solution.

What worries me here is the way the Election Commission has played with this important issue. It has not kept the political parties fully informed about this matrix they published. The former BNP lawmaker is raising a basic constitutional question. According to the constitution, the EC has no power to further delimit the constituencies as proposed and termed 'redefined' constituencies.

In the backdrop of those information, one can ask the media to feed us with the following information:-

a. Does the constitution empower the EC to redo the electoral boundaries?

b. We have two very well established parliamentary democracies-Britain and India where demographic growth is quite high since 1971. What law they have adopted to adjust the demographic growth? Have they redefined their electoral boundaries? When and how?

c. If demographic growth is the only consideration, as claimed, can some one like me ask why not increase the number of parliament seats, which might come for consideration in the near future?

As the BNP lawmaker was reading the relevant article of the constitution which empowers the EC to "define" the constituencies, if I am not wrong, we need to amend the constitution if we go for "redefining" the constituencies. Otherwise, the issue will definitely travel to the SC for interpretation of the constitutional provision of such "redefining". This is where many of us are afraid that the process will only delay the election beyond December 2008.

As a logical reference the tenure of this CTG came under discussion. The respected bureaucrat was quite confident that the present CTG has the constitutional mandate to remain in power till the elected government takes over. Here I have a question: if that is so, why the provision of 90 days is there? Is it nothing but an obsolete or contradictory clause to the provision of "till the elected government takes over"? Did the lawmakers foresee the present type of situation?

To finish this letter, I would like to express my appreciation to the former lawmaker of the BNP for playing the role of a politician in the talk show and asking for the delimitation to be done by the elected parliament and not by the unclear mandate of the EC. If necessary, the constitution could be amended by parliament.

A reader One-mail

Food shortage

I have read your editorial regarding global food crisis. But I think we should think about our food crisis, rather than global food crisis. Our main food is rice, not potatoes or bread. The main reason behind the food price hike, especially rice, is the irresponsible behaviour of the businessmen. Our businessmen are trying to be as non corporate as possible with the present non-elected government. The situation of our business field has always been bad. There is a lot of "middlemanship" in our present business. Businessmen can do anything with the price rate of their products, especially food products because they are united. I know the present government has imposed some impractical decisions which have gone against the interests of businessmen but that doesn't mean they have every right to do whatever they like. Our businessmen should import some "limited sense of humanity" for themselves.

I think the government should consider some harsh options to keep things under control. Mir Abidur Rahman Department of English South East University

Gerrymandering?

Well, one fine morning, Thursday, May 1, 2008 through the daily Prothom Alo, we came to know out of the blue that one hundred and thirty-three constituencies had been reformed. We understand a constituency can be changed for many reasons. There may be rationale for administrative account or may be for transportation or agricultural block development or anything else which are beyond the discernment of general people like me. But one thing comes to my mind that the Election Commission has just finished their pre-discussion meetings with different political parties, and arguably they got the opportunity to share their idea about constituency reformation. If they shared their views regarding this reformation there should be no objection from the political parties, while

Why this sweet name?

Cyclones are always devastating. They create havoc over the areas they pass through destroying houses, trees, cornfields and killing hundreds of thousands--a dark scar in the socio-economic condition of the people of those areas which takes time to heal.

Nargis is a sweet name given to a lot of girls/women in the subcontinent. It denotes beauty, sweet fragrance and softness. As such we should not give this sweet name to a natural calamity which destroys life and property and brings sorrow to the people. Have we ever thought about the psychological setback of thousands of girls/women in our country having the name 'Nargis'? Has any Bangladeshi been named 'Mir Jafar'?

From the Internet, I could find that the list of

names for the storms/cyclones in the North Indian Ocean contains, among others: Nisha, Helen (Suggested by Bangladesh) Nargis, Laila, Nilofar, Bulbul (Suggested by Pakistan) Priya (Suggested by Sri Lanka) These are all sweet names of thousands of women in the subcontinent and we have no right to upset them by naming the devastating cyclones after them.

I would request our Metrological Department not to use the name of human beings or for that matter names/words with good meaning for denoting a cyclone which always takes a heavy toll. Rather, these names should reflect disaster, havoc etc. that they cause to us.

Wally Rahman, Vancouver, Canada



PHOTO: AFP

they publicly published it. But we know the situation is completely different as just after the publication of the new constituency definition, the Awami League, a large political party, rejected the new constituency reformation. Some other parties also raised objections. Now the question arises as to why the Awami League does not agree with the reformation. Do they find it some kind of gerrymandering? If so, gerrymandering for whose benefit and against whom? Why the EC is silent?

They should explain the rationale behind the reformation. We have the right to know. If they can prove they are right the general people will be with them, and if they cannot the people will not accept any imposed idea with some ulterior motive to manipulate the national election of 2008, which we view as a gateway to true democracy. Shamim Murad Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Nuclear power

I am writing with reference to letter by Nokib-e-Kibria (May 10). Nuclear power is neither clean

nor cheap and it is no solution to Bangladesh's energy needs. Contrary to industry assertion, nuclear power is not pollution free--uranium mining is highly carbon intensive and a major source of pollution. There is nothing clean about the radiation that nuclear power generation spreads from uranium mining to nuclear wastes. The highly radioactive nuclear wastes pose a great danger to many generations. The plan to bury them in deep underground storage is totally unacceptable as they are likely to contaminate ground water which is a major source of drinking water. Let's also not forget that uranium is a non-renewable resource and will run out fairly quickly.

The nuclear industry not only produces wastes, it apparently produces many self-promoting myths. Besides not being clean, it is not cheap. Several studies have found that the true costs of nuclear energy are underestimated by a factor of three. If the huge subsidies going to nuclear (\$75 billion in Canada) were removed, the cost of electricity from nuclear plants would rise to 300 percent.

To reduce greenhouse gases to avert cataclysmic climate change, we need to shift quickly to no or low-carbon energy sources, which means the renewables like wind, solar, hydro, tidal etc. Even without a level playing field in the energy market, wind and solar power are least-cost options to the cheapest source of power--coal. If we can stop nuclear industry from diverting scarce capital from making conversion to renewable, these energy sources will quickly become both practical and economical. Germany has already become a world leader in solar power generation and this is a country with long winters with far less sunny days compared to a tropical country like Bangladesh.

Baked by a tropical sun and lashed by monsoon winds, Bangladesh has massive supplies of renewable energy. Rather than looking at China, one of the most polluted countries in the world, Bangladesh should look to Germany which can provide it the technical know-how to tap the solar energy and Canada, which is going big on wind power. Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Canada

NWDP



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

The insurrection of the radical Islamists to protest the new Women's Development Policy has disappointed me extremely as I viewed the violent agitation as an impediment to the general progression of our society. It's regrettable to see that when the entire civilized world is prepared to uphold the principles of equal rights for women by giving up the egregious practices of gender discrimination, a few mullahs are raising voices against it in a country where the establishment of women's rights is absolutely imperative for the general socio-economic development.

They won't ever forsake their fundamentalist ideologies and narrow outlooks for the greater welfare of all. These people are apparently incapable of understanding the fact that Religion should be viewed as a general 'theoretical guideline' that can entitle us to a moral

lifestyle. It's better to regard Religion as an epitome of enlightenment, which encourages us to adopt ethical practices in our personal lives through worthwhile sacrifices, edifications and meditations. If we expect all of our modern-day national policies to be literally approved by religious zealots, then we might become inflexible as a sovereign nation. As a consequence, we'll never be able to keep up with a continuously changing world. Hence, we will fail to recognize the universal need for adaptation, which's essentially a process that systematically makes us more and more civilized. It's undeniable that religion is an integral part of our civilization, but we need to be guided by logic as well.

Kh. Asef Safa Kabir Lalmeta Dhaka

Food crisis



PHOTO: AFP

The world is going to face an acute food crisis as the production of food grain is not adequate to feed the population. Because of the shortage of food the third world countries may face a famine-like situation. Shrinkage of arable land, erratic weather pattern, desertification--these are some of the factors that contribute to the crisis.

To make matters worse, the developed countries, especially the USA, are growing corns to produce bio-fuel. Surely, this practice will result in a rise of the food price in the international market. On the contrary, the third world countries are facing a bleak future as the domestic production of food is not enough to meet the local needs.

Bangladesh, with its huge population, must prepare for the impending crisis. The country will find itself in dire straits in case there is a crop failure. At this point, the credit goes to the farmers who have toiled hard to ensure a bumper production of Boro crop.

Zabed Wali, Pahartali, Chittagong