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Anti Corruption Commission

After reviewing the story of corruption in Bangladesh, I would recommend that three separate and independent Anti Corruption Commissions be formed namely:

- Anti Corruption Commission responsible for dealing with persons at the receiving end of the corrupt deal.
- Anti Corruption Commission to deal with the persons initiating a dubious deal.
- Anti Corruption Commission to deal with persons involved in moral corruption. Here we need a clear definition of moral corruption and a legal framework to handle the matter.

Basically, we have two major groups. Group one is involved in financial corruption, and group two in moral corruption. We have seen so far that people involved at the receiving end

are being prosecuted, but those initiating the process are moving around freely (reference to high level political corruption).

The question might come how one would coordinate the efforts of these three organisations. There might be other good suggestions. But I would recommend setting up the office of the "Ombudsman" with powers to oversee the activities of those three organisations. The immediate past government set up the office of an "Ombudsman" for the financial sector. We do not know anything about its fate. This was nothing but upward mobility of a bureaucratic position. Hopefully, this position still exists.

A reader
One-mail

National budget and the disabled

Salvation for the Deserving (SFD) requests to allocate 5 per cent of the national budget for the development of the disabled.

After coming to power through a critical situation on 11 January 2007, the caretaker government is going to present the national budget for the fiscal year 2008-2009. After assuming power, the caretaker government has taken many significant initiatives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and for sustainable development. In the previous national budget, the government issued a special grant like 3 per cent of development budget and 5.8 per cent of revenue budget for social security and welfare. That proves the strong commitment of the government to ensuring sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

But it is very much disappointing for us that the present government, like the previous ones, has not been considering the role of the disabled people, a big portion of the total population, in the development process. According to the census of 2001, about 12 per cent of the total population is disabled in some way or the other. It is clear that no sustainable development will be possible by ignoring the huge section of the population. We believe that the disabled people can be treated as asset rather than burden through proper planning.

It may be mentioned that the present caretaker government signed the 'UN Convention on the rights of the people with disabilities'. Furthermore, the national office of the 'National Foundation for the development of the disabled persons' was shifted from the 3rd floor of a multi-storied building

to a separate one-storied building. Such kind of initiatives shows the government's sensitivity to the disabled. Now, it is time to implement the clauses of the UN Charter. For the successful implementation of the Charter, special allocation in the coming budget is very much essential.

Besides, we also request the government to use a portion of Jakat funds and other benevolent funds for the development of the disabled and the deserving. We hope that the government will consider our proposal and take necessary steps for the development of the deprived groups.

Nasir-Ur-Rahman Sinha
Founder and Chairman
Salvation for the Deserving (SFD)

Lively cricket!

As Shoaib Akhtar picked up the wicket of the ace (Indian) batsman Virender Shehwag and Gautam Gambhir, the entire Eden-Garden crowd burst into a roar, vociferously cheering a distant glimpse of victory. Perhaps, for the first time in their lives the crazy cricket lovers of Calcutta applauded the triumphs of the nightmarish Pakistani fast bowler. Subsequently, megastar SRK was seen to be dancing to celebrate the crucial turn of the match. No, I'm not depicting a bizarre dream sequence. DLF IPL has successfully obliterated the fragile boundary that existed between the facts and fantasies of the cricketing world. In this groundbreaking competition we have witnessed the glorious return of legends like Shane Warne, Pollock, Glen McGrath, and Gilchrist, as if they have been reincarnated to represent this exciting version of cricket. We have also seen world-class cricketers of the same national squad aggressively battling against each other, and we

have seen the gracious intermingling of cricket and the glamorous world of Bollywood. I think DLF IPL is a creative concept that's not only promoting the prospect of Twenty-Twenty cricket but it's also providing an opportunity to the international cricketers to get used to this relatively new format of the game. At the same time, the tournament is entertaining the cricket lovers around the world to a great extent.

Asef Safa Kabir
Lalmatia, Dhaka

FBCCI's demand

Recently, the FBCCI president requested the government to offer black money whitening facility for the last time. Interestingly, it is also the last year of the current non-political government.

Now who will give the guarantee that their undue demand will not go further high under the next political government?

Saif Tinku
Baridhara, Dhaka

Our football

The Bangladesh football team left Dhaka on May 27 to take part in the upcoming SAFF football championship. With the deterioration in world ranking every month, the tournament appears to be an acid test for our booters. Now, the team will play in a situation when the Football Federation has an organiser like Salahuddin as its leader. Besides, this time the booters seem to be more confident than before.

However, I was shocked to see the booters being taken to the airport by an obsolete local bus! When our cricketers travel by air-conditioned bus, the booters deserved something better. I would request the current sponsor Nokia and others to come forward and to arrange something good for our

football.

I would like to convey my good wishes to the boys. I am very much optimistic that the mission to retrieve our lost glory shall commence with this tournament.

Moinul Alam
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

VIPs and roads

I had just got out of a screening of the film "Brick Lane" on May 13, when my cell rang. It was my sister. Without listening to her, I started telling her about the movie which I liked quite a bit. But, on the other end, she didn't seem to be listening and was rather quiet. I soon learnt that she was at the local clinic with her five-year old daughter who was being given saline. My heart jumped. I remembered that, in the afternoon when I last saw them, she had vomited a few times and now the doctor is saying that she is dehydrated. I felt so bad for her - the poor little thing!

Immediately I remembered the scene of that afternoon. I was on my regular visit to my ailing mother at lunch time. My car was on one of those few school free roads in Gulshan, a rare thing in our residential areas. But that afternoon, the road was chaotic and jam-packed with all kinds of vehicles and pedestrians. I didn't understand what was going on. So I got out of the car to see what was happening. I found that all lanes leading to Gulshan 2, road number 71 were blocked. My heart started thumping! I knew that this was the time when my 71 year old mother comes back after her 4-hour dialysis from the Apollo Hospital. After her dialysis she is usually very sick & weak and hardy waits to come home and lie down. What will happen to her if she is stuck in this chaotic traffic?

So I left my car behind on road number 74 & started walking towards road number 71 where my parents live. The road looked very scary to me with not a single moveable thing on the road 71 except some armed soldiers standing all over the road. As soon as I reached the intersection a soldier came to me & said that I could not even walk on this road because a VVIP was coming to the United Hospital. I was so concerned about my mother that I didn't listen to him & walked away from him towards my parents' building. I thought it was very unfair that, at this time of the day, the VVIP would be sitting in an air conditioned car while these little kids & their parents, who have already been out waiting in the hot weather to pick up their kids from school, would be sitting for a long period under the blazing sun! There could be very sick people on the road too.

I finally managed my way through that restricted area & was relieved to see that my mother had managed to escape this horrific situation by just a couple of minutes. But the thought of poor sick people who were still on the road after their dialysis or after other medical procedures made me feel sick.

My sister's kids regularly come to my parent's house since it is close to their school. They are privileged and don't have to fight through heat & traffic every day like other kids. But on that day it took them 45 minutes to get home after school. They were cranky, dehydrated & sick. After seeing them I couldn't dare to imagine how many other kids & their parents, who are not as privileged as my sister's kids, are heading for extra miseries due to that day's 20 minutes road block! Any sensible person living in Dhaka could easily imagine how horrific the spill over impact of this 20 minutes road block could be. Still these miseries are not worth to be considered for the sake of our

VVIP security!

Initially, I thought that maybe there was an emergency; maybe our VVIP was so sick that they needed this kind of traffic free road. So I turned the TV on to see whether anything was wrong. No news, apparently it was his regular check up. If it was essential to have a traffic free road, couldn't they find another time to bring him to the hospital when you could minimize the sufferings of others? With some thought and planning, people who are responsible for the VVIP security could do their job while also showing sympathy for these innocent people.

Atiya Mahmood
Gulshan-2, Dhaka

Female commuters' problem

The number of women coming to the job market is increasing. Their daily commuting often becomes a nightmare as most of them cannot get on a bus easily and they are often harassed by the men surrounding them. Several attempts had been made to introduce separate female bus service in the city but they failed for obvious commercial reasons.

In the mid sixties, I was serving as an apprentice marine engineer at a marine workshop in Karachi. In those days bus was the mode of transport I had to use. It was uncomfortable but I could not afford anything better.

In all the buses in Karachi I saw that the front compartment of the bus was separated from the rest of the bus. There was a front door for the front compartment which was reserved for the female passengers. If there was no female passenger then the space would remain vacant but no male passenger would be allowed to enter the compartment. I think this could be a solution to the sufferings of the female commuters of the city. It can be made mandatory for all buses to have separate compartment for female passengers.

I hope our policy planners would give our women folk the break they badly need.

Salahuddin Ayubi
One-mail

Fraudulent 'tuition media'

Working as tutor is a vital source of income for many students. Students, who don't get notable financial support from their families, often depend on tutoring to get themselves through their student days. Some others, despite being well off, prefer it as a source of some extra income. In Dhaka and some other cities, many organisations are playing the role of mediators in providing such jobs to the people, largely students, who are interested in tuition. These organisations call themselves "Tuition Media". Nevertheless, how reliable are they?

In June 2007, my roommate decided to earn some extra money by tutoring during our summer vacation. We went to a renowned tuition media in Kakrail and met the head of the organisation. He demanded Tk. 200 as membership fee and said that one has to pay half the first month's salary in advance. My friend accepted all his terms and conditions and paid the membership fee. The director assured that he would get a tuition job with a salary of more than Tk. 5,000 (Five thousand) per month within one week and took another Tk. 1,000 in advance. Since then, my friend has been going to that office almost every week but he still does not have the tuition job. When he demanded his money back in October, he was advised to contact them next year! Recently I found out that another friend of mine had

paid the same amount of money to the same organisation and was cheated. He was given an address that turned out to be a fake one. I became sure of the fraudulent nature of the organisation by seeing their same advertisement in newspapers over and over again.

Now I wish to warn other students about such cheats in our society. I don't want others, like my friends, to fall victim to these fake businesses and I also request the authorities concerned to take necessary measures against these fraudulent 'media'.

Syed Rajaul Akmal Sajid
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City transport system

The CTG has taken a bold and practical decision to construct link roads between the old airport road and Agargaon, by using the marginal strip of the old airport at the city end.

But the long-term outlook is bleak. There are several (unintentional) human bottlenecks between the old and the new airport roads: a) the PMO's office complex; b) the Jahangir Gate (Cantt zone); c) the old airport strip extending into the city area.

The PMO complex is occupying a vital area needed for more roads—hence relocation (with BMRE) review has to be kept in mind on long term basis (why not shift to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar).

The proposed elevated highway there is not an elegant solution for future development.

The cantonments in old Dacca city were located well out of the then town areas. Now the situation is different (population around 12 million). Hence some marginal areas should be surrendered to the civil authorities for town planning, including the old airport area. Dhaka is surrounded by wetlands and has to expand northwards into higher grounds. Without decentralisation, new projects would be a waste of funds (the floating population in Dhaka is too high).

Now we are facing new economic problems—the high cost of fuel might increase greater use of cycle rickshaws! The social and economic impacts of the suburban zones around metropolis Dhaka cannot be detected easily as in the industrialised countries (families with own transport, and excellent public transport systems). The LDCs and DCs cannot blindly imitate the West, as the average income slabs of the vast majority of the families are much lower, whether in the cities or in the villages.

We badly need bicycle and rickshaw lanes in future planning at all divisional headquarters (labour incentive ventures to provide employment). In Dhaka, underground rail system is difficult to operate and maintain, as O&M have large systems losses (also the underground water levels are going down rapidly). Elevated rail may be considered; first as a pilot project. But the problem with mega projects is the percentage syndrome (we have had bitter experience for

several decades!). Can't imagine how Dhaka city would look by the end of the century!

AMawaz
One-mail

Unfair
The CNG fares in Chittagong are being raised abnormally. It happens every day because the CNG drivers are reluctant to take the meter-based fare. Consequently, the passengers have to pay excessively high fares.

The matter deserves a closer look.

S.M. Rumen
Investigator, Examinations Services
British Council, Chittagong

Manpower export

The decision to cancel licences of 32 agencies for manpower export irregularities was made at a time when the issue has become cause for great concern.

Law enforcing agencies in an investigation have found that those travel and recruiting agencies were involved in illegal human trafficking. Some other agencies also send people abroad illegally, including women and children. Those are also under investigation.

It is no secret that a section of recruiting and travel agencies in Bangladesh indulges in manpower export through illegal means.

Mahmud Kabir
New High School Road
Gopalganj

Workers abroad

It is indeed quite unfortunate that one of our workers in Bahrain committed such a heinous crime as murdering his employer. And for him now around one-lakh Bangladeshi workers' fate is in jeopardy as Bahrain has decided not to renew their work permits. But the question is one should not judge an entire country through the misdeed of one person. There is also an element of discrimination here displayed by the Bahraini lawmakers. Had he been a worker from the USA or Europe they may have refrained from such stern actions. So, we hope that our diplomats will manage to handle the situation appropriately and soon come to a pragmatic solution. In addition, our workers are also the victims of shady manpower agencies. For example, 27 Bangladeshis had to return from Iraq. They were promised by the unscrupulous agents that they would be taken to Dubai but they ended up in Iraq! Thanks to IOM that they have helped to repatriate 118 of our work-

ers from Solaimania. Then there is the case of 45 workers returning from Malaysia with fake passports as their original passports besides being not paid their due wages. Similar is the plight of workers in Saudi Arabia.

So, such harassment of our workers abroad is very disturbing. The government must find out the false recruiting agencies (as they have already started doing so to some extent) and make sure that such agencies are scrapped. In addition, our embassies in those countries should be more conciliatory and helpful instead of ignoring or neglecting the workers' plight. We must remember that it is the remittances of these workers that are contributing a hefty amount to our foreign exchange earnings. It is our utmost duty to ensure that they lead a hassle-free life abroad.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Show self-respect

Should weak nations always keep quiet to exploitation by rich and powerful countries? The very few incidents that prompted Bahrain's decision of expelling Bangladeshi workers are regrettable. But the fact remains that Bahrain has decided to collectively punish all Bangladeshis in Bahrain in response to the criminal offence committed by only a few of them. This is a clear violation of human rights and can not be acceptable to any sensible person. We have seen enough of subservience by our government. I am disgusted to see our

government not saying a word about poor Mizan's execution in Bahrain. Please bring all our 90,000 citizens back home, instead of appeasing the Bahraini 'brothers'. Immediately shut down our embassy in Manama and sever ties with that outrageously arrogant nation for violating rights of our people.

Please show some self-respect. We are not beggars and the country will survive without the 'alms' earned from Bahrain.

Jamiul Walid
Dhaka

Foot-overbridge

There is a notice from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) in some important areas of the city telling us that we should use foot-overbridges, rather than crossing the road. No doubt, it is a good move.

But the authorities concerned may not

have any idea about the condition of these overbridges. These are simply not usable.

Mushfiq Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

Population boom



I refer to various letters on this topic. In particular the letters of May 26 and May 30 are most interesting in that these assert that "population problem is the root cause of all the problems of our country".

I am sure every sane person would agree with such diagnosis of the chronic ailment of our nation and would welcome the principle of homeopathy to deal with this first. Unless the root cause is treated and the ailment removed, tackling of other problems are only a waste of time. Eliminating the root cause would automatically improve the health and wealth of the nation on existing resources and activities.

Redoubling of national effort therefore seems necessary to send the population in a slow downward trend. To reduce the population by chance like natural disasters, famines or pestilence or by design like warfare are no longer commensurate with human intelligence or dignity and Bangladesh has the ability to be leader amongst the emerging nations in this matter through women's education and development and encouraging policies which reward a smaller family.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

