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Price hike
After a long time the common people of Bangladesh were optimistic that they would recover from the days of Khaleda and Hasina. In the initial days of the CTG, they did a lot of revolutionary work like the drive against corruption. But the price hike has actually neutralised all that has been done in public interest.
Mohammad Alam
One-mail

Withdrawal of all cases against Hasina?
It is reported in the front-page news of 2nd July DS that the Awami League (AL) will include among others, demand for withdrawal of all, what they called false, cases filed against their party chief Sheikh Hasina. Previously, the party was demanding her release and sending abroad for her specialized treatment of serious ear and eye ailments.

This demand for 'withdrawal of false cases' is a new one and almost impossible for this government to accept because it will create many legal complications. Firstly, this govt cannot accept, irrespective of the merits of the cases, that the cases filed against her were 'false'. Secondly, if her cases are withdrawn at this stage without following the judicial process, the others who have really committed heinous crimes like murder, extortion, misuse of power and helped militants to kill their opponents will raise their heads and demand for unconditional release under the shadow of Sheikh Hasina.

We have heard a leader of a political party openly equating a young son of their party chief with Hasina. Their party supporters will immediately start agitation for the release of their leaders citing the release of Hasina. I think the AL should not allow them to use the name of their leader as a shadow for other real criminals. It should not join those who do not want a free, fair and credible election in the country.

The AL has already earned credibility among the people for their

democratic exercise in taking decisions in the last few days. They should not place such demands as will undermine their credibility.
Shafiqul Islam
One-mail

Manners and mobile phone
Further to my letter a few months back about manners and mobile phones, there was another incident to which I was witness that shows how ill mannered people can be when it comes to their precious mobile phones. In a seminar, a professor from abroad was giving a talk to Bangladeshis about the problems of Bangladesh. At the end a gentleman from the audience asked him a question through a microphone when the musical tone of his mobile phone started ringing. He continued asking the question with the music in the background now amplified by the microphone, so we had music with the narrative! When he finished the question and the professor started addressing him with his answer, the phone rang again. Without any hesitation the man answered the call while the professor went on speaking.

This is the kind of behaviour that sets us apart from others!
Fuad Mallick
Gulshan
Dhaka

Admission in college
Currently, admission into the college is made on the basis of grades obtained in the SSC examinations. On the other hand, in case of the same grade, relatively higher age is considered as criterion for admission instead of merit. This year the number of successful students with golden GPA-5 is very high compared to the previous years. The figure is about 10,000. Whereas, the number of seats in the renowned colleges of the capital is relatively much less. Moreover 10% seats in the capital colleges will remain reserved for the rural students. Thus it appears that many meritorious students having "Golden GPA-5" may not get chance of studying in their pre-

ferred renowned colleges, simply due to their relatively lower age. It is observed that most meritorious students of the capital get admission in the primary classes at the first attempt. Those who fail to secure admission at the first attempt, try again. As a result, their age gets higher and higher.

It is a fact that students who obtain 'Golden GPA-5' securing 90-100% marks are much more meritorious than that of 'Golden GPA-5' holders having 80% marks. But due to the criterion of higher age, many 'Golden GPA-5' students having relatively higher marks with lower age may be deprived of admission.

In view of the above, it is necessary that the age criterion among the same grade holders be abolished. Alternatively, in order to do justice education boards should provide mark sheets and admission may be offered to candidates who secured higher marks. The admission test may be the second option in this case.
M. M. Hossain
Paikpara
Mirpur, Dhaka

Power crisis in Chittagong
A very interesting and informative front-page news on the subject was published on July 3 in a local English daily.

The CTG proposes to rent a large liquid fuelled power plant for a short period (?) for Chittagong - an expensive and Tuglaqi decision!

On the other hand, the same CTG has entered into a MoU of around Tk 17,500 crore to buy airplanes, which are normally available on hire (charter)! If ever there is a case of putting the cart before the horse and subjective decision making, this one tops them all! Even the corrupt and self-motivated earlier political governments never took such an illogical and farcical decision, as far as I can recall!

The scarcity of gas was passed on to high gas consumption across the country! So the CTG wants us to reduce if not stop gas consumption.

Meanwhile, they would like

three-wheeler autos to run on costly imported petrol! They also are surprised at the many captive power plants running, although the quantity, cost and poor quality of the power supplied by the public sector power plants have been a fact since the 70s. May be, many in the current crop of advisers and special assistants to the advisers are Johnny-come-lately to Bangladesh having lived abroad for many years.

They are further surprised how we can consume more gas than what is written in the Master Plan - their holy book? The special assistant's statement is: "As per the Master Plan, the demand for gas in the country should be 0.6TGF in 2009-2010". "How on earth can we consume this now" was the implied conclusion!

No wonder there are no coal-fired power plants, and no coal mines coming up, may be it is not there in the "Master Plan", so how can we start putting it up? So this is how goes our wise and master plan based logic and thought process. What a classically new and ingenious way to "pass the buck on"! This very unique concept of the reasons behind our gas and power shortfall is indeed the best on offer and cannot be bettered! It is the lamest of lame excuses on record! Long live the "Master Plan"!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

New campus?
It is learned that Dhaka University is planning to set up a new campus in the vicinity of the city to accommodate more students. While the government has to provide huge subsidy to Dhaka University at the cost of the poor tax payers, setting up of a new campus is felt to be most ill conceived. Students studying in Dhaka University are mostly the children of the richer section of society. That means poor people are subsidizing the education of the children of rich people! It is not also possible to raise tuition fees of Dhaka University or, for that matter, of other public universities to a reasonable level as it may lead to an uproar among the vested interest groups. People do not mind paying high tuition fees to private universities.

So, additional need for higher education should be met by the private universities and they may be encouraged to open new campuses on the outskirts of the city. The government may offer some grants to them for constructing buildings to meet initial expenses if they fulfil some criteria for providing standard education. This will save the government from huge chronic subsidy from the public exchequer.

So, the Ministry of Education is requested to look into the matter from a pragmatic angle.
Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury
Fulbari, Sylhet

Back to square one?
AL chief Sheikh Hasina has been freed from executive-jail on executive orders and she is now in the USA for treatment. The common people really do not know why she was detained and under what arrangement she has been released. The whole process is shrouded in mystery. On the other hand, the detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is also probably going to be released very soon, apparently under a similar arrangement, along with her two sons who were arrested on specific corruption charges. The government is claiming that everything is being done as per the law and for greater interest of the country and the people.

This CTG started a holy war or Jihad against corruption and formation of ACC is a giant step forward for implementing this agenda. Many bigwigs and high-ups were put behind the bars and in the meantime many have been convicted along with their spouses. But it is very surprising that there is no declining trend in graft practices, despite this historic anti-corruption drive. A recent TIB survey found that corruption in education, health, land administration, local government and in different utility services sectors has increased.

So, what is lying ahead for us? Waiting for a political government elected through impartial, fair and a credible election! In Pakistan, a similar election brought Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, who was once known as Mr. Ten percent, at the helm of power and some opposition parties recently threatened to disclose his billion rupees corruption stories. Law also followed its normal course there and acquitted Mr. Zardari of all cases against him after the PPP's victory in general election. Next December, we will also see a similar election and hopefully either of the 'Minus Two' will be again installed as the most powerful person to regain their lost empire with renewed determination to serve the country and the people! Of course, that will also bring the opportunity to rebuild their own fortunes that experienced a jolt during the tenure of the CTG. But there are clear indications that the nation is going back to square one.
Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Barbed wire on road divider
It is with great concern that I note that someone has ordered putting up barbed wires to fence in the road divider along Gulshan Avenue.

While I can hazard a guess as to why this has been done, I must comment that this is unsightly and, more importantly, very dangerous. I would urge whoever is responsible to think of alternative ways of achieving whatever the barbed wires were supposed to have achieved.
Fahima Chowdhury
One-mail

Water logging
A letter of mine on water logging was published in The Daily Star almost one month ago. In that letter I requested the authorities concerned to take effective measures so that we do not have to suffer in the rainy season. But the authorities seem to wake up very late!
On Tuesday last, there was a terrible traffic jam in the city due to water logging. Is anybody listening?
Mushfiq Wadud
Department of English
Stamford University Bangladesh

What is going on?
Who will say that Bangladesh is a civilized country? People are going to be paupers or may die due to the unprecedented price hike, whilst our advisers don't see anything. Their activities seem to beep up friendship with those who are hoarding different commodities illegally. General people know everything as to how the businessmen are hoarding commodities. But what measures has the present caretaker government taken to stop such activities?
Nemo
Faridpur

High duty on children's books
Children love to paint. It is an exercise that helps their mental growth. You just have a look at a kid's painting. What strikes you is colour-green, yellow or red run riot through the whole piece. The point is that a child is liberal as far as putting colour on paper is concerned. A child, in other words, paints a dream-like image. There is something special about children's painting: it manifests imagination in the raw.

The recent budget clamped a 25% duty on picture books meant for children on the ground that those books undermine our culture. We cannot but say that this is silly logic. Being a developing country, Bangladesh should give maximum priority to education. As such it will be unwise to do anything that discourages the pursuit of learning.

In this poverty-ridden country, few children are privileged enough to have access to standard elementary education. The recent increase in the prices of books will make elementary education more expensive. It will push standard elementary education out of the reach of the middle class.
Zabed Wali
Pahrtali, Chittagong

Ground reality
Students who came out successful in the SSC examination this year with flying colours are in fear of being denied admission to the colleges of their choice.

For one thing, seats in country's good institutions are disproportionately small to the number of students even with GPA -5, let alone the other students. And for another, there is no chance for taking admission test for them to prove their worth to be a student of a renowned college.

It seems that the recording-breaking success has become ironically disheartening for high-achievers. Their jubilation did not last long as soon as they realised

Lost glory



Dhaka University's main contributions are its role in the Language Movement and the Liberation War. Independent Bangladesh has turned 38. Now time has come to assess what DU had achieved under a sovereign state. Its research portfolio and indigenous and global applications of the research have to be quantified to evaluate the university's performance in an independent country. In this matter everyone will not give good marks to the university.

One can remember that in the golden days of DU, Prof. S. N. Bose (1894-1974) of the Physics Department of the university modified and corrected a fluid mechanics theory of

Albert Einstein, the famous physicist. The theory is called Bose-Einstein theory after the names of the two co-researchers and pen friends. The most widely accepted Internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia states: All force carrier particles are bosons. They are named after Satyendra Nath Bose.

(See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosons>). To bring back the glory of DU, teachers' recruitment, promotion etc should be based on merit.

Now it is widely expected by the people that as the oldest and largest university of the country DU will soon regain its glory.
An ex-student, DU

the irony of their stunning success. Now they are in limbo.

To my mind, arranging admission test and introducing double shifts at renowned colleges as a quick fix can raise their hopes.

So, let their dream come true. They might live up to their reputation as they move into the higher education arena.
Asir Faisal
Shah Amanath Housing Society
Sholokbar, Chittagong

Recognising Kosovo
It now appears from a UNB-Dhaka report carried by a daily on 02nd day of July 2008, Bangladesh has not yet been able to decide on matters pertaining to recognition of Kosovo. Despite persistent diplomatic efforts by US Ambassador James Moriarty and others, it also appears the move towards recognising Kosovo by Bangladesh is restricted by factors associated with "perceived national interest" - according to the foreign affairs adviser.

Kosovo, like Bangladesh, achieved its independence through, among other things, the horror of war, sacrifices, deaths and destructions - relative to time, space and other variables, though. The people of the two countries share inter alia certain common interest, values and expectations in an ever competitive, progressively re-integrating, increasingly resource-starved (in particular, usable resources) and continually uncertain universe. Decisions pertaining to recognition of Kosovo are not, at this point in time, an uncommon matter because a number of powerful and influential countries of the world have already accorded recognition to Kosovo.

Taking into cognisance above and other considerations, it is not clear - at the moment - to ordinary people of Bangladesh (I mean, to whom it might concern) as to how and to what extent the recognition of Kosovo by Bangladesh could

affect the country's national interest. Is it the fact that the country does not want to create a strain in the existing relationship between Bangladesh and Russia - via according recognition to Kosovo - at a time when prospects for communist re-grouping are, in a sense, seemingly brightening? Is it the fact that the army-supported government is not presently in favour of taking a decision on the Kosovo matter due to, say, possible constitutional disabilities associated - either directly or otherwise - with it (I mean, the Kosovo matter) or due to geo-political factors and considerations - both existing and emerging - attached to decisions of above nature or both?

Is it the fact that Bangladesh has started directing its policies, programmes and efforts towards, for example, repositioning the country in emerging global power matrix in a more constructive and futuristic fashion? Is it true that the government prefers to leave the matter to the next parliament for decision? What will be the status of the country's comparative, competitive and other advantages and disadvantages - both existing and potential - if it recognises Kosovo at this point in time?

Those are among a few questions pertaining to Kosovo's recognition. It is expected the government, the media (print, electronic, others), civil society (those concerned), intellectuals - think tanks, and all others concerned will assist the people of Bangladesh in the effort towards taking and implementing - in an informed manner - the right decision at the right time and cost about Kosovo. It is also expected Ambassador Moriarty and all others will not hesitate to share, as required, their views and justifications concerning recognition of Kosovo with Bangladeshis in a more open, and clearer fashion. Let us now explore collectively and meaningfully the Kosovo case for a mutually benefi-

cial decision - I mean, beneficial to, say, Bangladesh and Kosovo - in not too distant a future.

The last word: Bangladesh should not forget - it went through, immediately after the independence in 1971, situations and experiences that were same or similar - either in part or in full - to those of present-day Kosovo.
Dr. M. S. Haq
One-mail

Spelling
Why do we not change the English spelling of our towns the way they are pronounced in the vernacular? For instance why do we still write 'Comilla' for 'Cumilla'? Mr. S Rasul (30.06) and Mr MM Rahman (2.07) also gave many instances of how we changed Dacca into Dhaka and the Indians changed Calcutta to Kolkata and Bombay to Mumbai and Madras to Chennai etc.

I think from their correspondences it is clear that such name or spelling changes can only be achieved by government gazette notification or some other esteemed publication (say Bangla Academy) officially notifying these changes. It cannot simply be undertaken by the general public as this would give rise to utter chaos. For instance Cumilla can be spelled also as Kumilla, or Koomilla, or Coomilla, or Koomillah etc. The English spelling during the time of Chaucer and Old English were similarly chaotic and standardisation were brought in after the invention of printing machines, by the print setting houses for their own ease which was soon followed by the people. Even now English has many varied and accepted English and American spellings and pronunciations for many words.

In this connection I would suggest standardising the English spelling of indigenous names of people also.
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London

Expansion of the city



It's about time that Dhaka should go for vertical, instead of horizontal expansion. It is learnt from government and NGO statistics that the city has a population of 1.80 core, which is something one gets to see in developed cities like London, New York or Sydney. I have no actual figure of how much the Dhaka city is in square kilometres, but I can say it's about time that the people and the government think about expanding the city vertically.

My suggestion to the people and the developers will be to start some sort of a commonwealth as far as the lands are concerned. Those who have lands ranging from 1-10 kathas should merge. This merger will give us enough space to build 25-35 storied residential buildings in a healthier environment. This will give us enough room to make 50-60 feet wide roads, easy movement of traffic, enough space for pavements and planting trees. The big question will be how to merge these small plot/land owners. This can be done by the government. A new law needs to be enacted, keeping in mind that a building is shared among the landowners according to the land

they own. This is certainly debatable but for the sake of the city and the country, I believe this or a similar idea can be implemented. If this can be done, we can have a city where the roads are like a grid and one can commute to another place without too much problem as far as the traffic is concerned. To start with, the government will have to stop all land sale & purchase and stop all construction which is going on, especially in the western and eastern parts of the city by land filling.

For the readers' information, the so-called new residential areas don't have space for footpaths and the roads are not wide enough for vehicles, especially for the emergency services like ambulance and fire-brigade trucks.

This sounds easy, but will certainly need a lot of funding, demolition and construction. This is for our future generation and we, the present generation, will have to sacrifice a bit for them.

The planned city expansion will also increase foreign investment in the country.
Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Vulnerable women

I felt so sorry to learn that five women were slaughtered at Mehendiganj in Barisal. Such heinous crimes are still committed in our society. It is an example of how vulnerable women are in this male-dominated society. Repression on women is increasing day by day. In June 2008, 333 crimes were committed against

women, among them 73 were rape cases and 9 acid throwing.

I would request the government to take stern action against the elements engaged in women bashing.

Sakina Khanam
Kobe university
Japan