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Promote jute

Many developed countries like Canada and Britain are trying to discontinue plastic bags in favour of cloth and paper bags. This provides an excellent opportunity for Bangladesh to promote jute bags as an eco-friendly and cheap commodity. Paper bags are hardly environment-friendly as they require trees to make paper, leading to de-

forestation. Only jute and cotton bags are eco-friendly as they don't lead to widespread deforestation. Imagine what the result will be if jute regains its status as the principal packaging material. Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Canada



How much land does a man need?

It is a story we read in our school life. It was an interesting story for teenagers and I believe most of the people of our age must have read it in the Rapid Reader. However, for the information of others who have not read it, very briefly I put here the gist. The story went like this-- a rich man having huge landed property wanted to help his one-time friend, who was very poor. One day he called his poor friend and told him that he would give as much land as he could circle around by running from sunrise to sunset. Accordingly, on a fine morning, in presence of some witnesses, the poor friend started running from a fixed point to circle as much area as he could circle by sunset. From the very onset, the man started running as fast as he could covering more and more better lands he found to bring into his fold. He totally forgot that he would have to return before the sun is set. The greed overtook him and failed to notice that the sun was gradually setting on the West. His only concentration was covering more and more better land he found on his way. While little time was remaining for the Sun to set he was standing far away from the starting point and out of reach. Sensing this difficult situation he increased his speed at the top of his capacity. He used all his physical powers to return to the starting point before sunset but all in vain. Finally, while he was just a few yards away from the touching point he fell down on the ground and died of exhaustion. The rest of the story need not be mentioned here.

Rajuk's new rule

At last the cat was out of the bag on 29 May 2008. The government issued the gazette notification on the building construction act dated 27 May 2008. Our long waiting and anxiousness has come to an end after a year and a half. For the first time appreciable guidelines/rules have been incorporated in the above gazette, to be followed by the developers and the land owners.

But the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) table is a shock and more of a frustration than anything else to the small land owners holding 2 to 10 katha plots. As per the table, plots of 2 katha or less has to give up 32.5% of the land, besides keeping proportionate land vacant for the future expansion of the adjacent road/roads up to 20 feet, meaning further curtailment of the plot area. This ratio applies to the larger plots step by step with a maximum FAR of 50:50. Now can anybody with a bit of common sense assume what habitable abode can be constructed on the remaining land of the plots?

May I ask our policy makers: who were behind initiation of this gazette, some of whom must be having mansions constructed on 1 bigha of land as per the oldest FAR of 20:80. Are they prepared to halve their mansions to conform to their latest rules and thus set examples for us to follow? Moreover, how many vacant plots are there left in this city to comply with the latest rules?

One cannot understand the objectives of our policy makers. It is also not comprehensible as to what harm has been caused to the city environment by those mansions constructed as per the oldest FAR and what benefit will be derived by the buildings to be constructed on half of the plots as per the new FAR? Here in U.K. even detached houses are a few feet apart, but with front and back gardens. We can hardly afford such luxuries in our country where land is so scarce and is the most sought after property.

I urge the authorities to reconsider and review this FAR table, taking into consideration all aspects and perspectives and permute a new table, as per expectations of the majority of small land owners. A.B. Mohammed Zakaria Stanwell, Staines UK

No dearth of talent

I was quite amazed when I saw a report in your daily on July 10, 2008 about a young boy of Dinajpur who had invented an environment-friendly power plant that can be operated without any fuel input like gas or coal. The report also specifies that it will also not emit smokes. This again proves that our country really has talented people. All we need is a visionary leader to guide these talented people towards betterment of the country.

But I was shocked to see this great news in an inside page of the newspaper. We always see news of politics in the front page of all the dailies. Please note my point. Minhaj Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

Indo-Bangla mobile phone service

I was wondering if mobile phone service providers in Bangladesh could come into an agreement with their counterparts in India and

US envoy's response

I was surprised by your editorial of July 17, which implied that foreign diplomats should not talk to politicians. In my role as a diplomat in Bangladesh, I need to understand the issues of the people and the government here. The only way to understand is to communicate, to listen and question the person on the street as well as the leaders of the government and political parties.

Recently, I have spoken to Imams studying English, had tea with political party leaders, enjoyed frank and lively discussions with madrasa secondary students, met with rising Bangladeshi leaders in various fields who have recently returned from studying abroad, and discussed multilateral issues with foreign diplomats based in Dhaka.

I travel outside the capital to hear the views of Bangladeshis and see, with my own eyes, the issues that are dominating their lives. I will use the knowledge I gain in these conversations to help ensure that my Embassy's activities support the US goals of democracy, development, and denial of space to terrorists.

Let me assure you that this is neither insidious nor unusual. Bangladeshi diplomats in the United States and elsewhere communicate regularly with the politicians of the nations where they are stationed. If they did not do so, they would be failing in their duties. James F. Moriarty US Ambassador to Bangladesh

offer cheap call rates for the benefit of the peoples of both the countries. It is not that we cannot reach our relations and friends in India over our mobile phones but the rates are so high that you have to think twice before dialling a call. It is an irony that we can call on our mobile phones to our relations and friends in Europe, US and the Far East at a concessionary rate but making a call to India costs three times more!

Since Saarc has failed to make any concession in telecom sector for the benefit of the peoples, it would be wise if private sector telecom companies are allowed to reach an agreement on concessionary rate for cross country calls within the Saarc region. Ziauddin Ahmed Gulshan, Dhaka

TV advertisements

Children love to discover new things from different sources, especially television. Generally, they are very inquisitive about everything. In this case, TV advertisements (Ads) are a great source of their entertainment as well as learning. But various advertisements present their message in such a way that the kids don't learn better things. Those Ads are misleading and sending incorrect messages. So, the authorities should be much more conscious in this respect. Some examples will help us to realise the issue.

When any guest comes to our house, we instruct our infants to show them utmost respect. If any guest offers somewhat to them, the babies don't dare to receive without the prior consent of the parents. But in an Ad it is shown that a boy is applying all of his best efforts to obtain Tk 3 from a guest so that he could buy the expected product. Another Ad advises mother(s) to stop the boy from speaking the truth, she should offer a bribe (Lollypop) of the given company. What does it pass onto us?

Dhaka's glorious past

All the mega, modern & prestigious cities in the world have a glorious past and all of them have cemented their glorious history by preserving the oldest part of the city. Dhaka, which will soon be celebrating its 400th birthday, also has a glorious history, culture and lifestyle but we have failed to uphold the history and glory of our city.

The old Dhaka has lost its glory, the look, culture and the lifestyle. Buildings/houses made in the last couple of centuries have almost vanished from the localities. Few of them still stand high, thanks to the authorities concerned for saving them from demolition.

The houses built during the Mogul & British rules have been erased and houses without architectural designs are being erected. The parks have turned out to be parking lots for trucks and rickshaws. I was shocked to see Kabi Nazrul and Jagannath College buildings recently. The original architecture has been overshadowed with a simple 4-5 storied building. Both these buildings have lost their originality. These happen to be government funded colleges. Like these buildings, most of the old structures of Dhaka are disappearing right in front of our eyes. The government should



immediately intervene and preserve these old structures.

The traffic movement also needs to be restricted in some parts of old Dhaka. Rickshaws and motorized vehicles cannot run side by side in those narrow lanes.

Some roads should be freed of vehicles (including rickshaw).

Commercialisation of old Dhaka must also be regulated. The areas which will attract tourists such as Ahsan Manzil, Lal Bagh Kella, Bahadur Shah Park should have enough open/vacant space for arranging cultural shows.

Sohel Ahmed Dhanmondi, Dhaka

A girl is pouring a bowl of filthy mixtures to its father's dress and members of the family praise her creativity! Is it possible? Mr. Producer, how will you react against such type of conduct of your kid? On the other hand, a gentleman (!) asks the school babies to make grubby of their fresh stockings. And then he proves that his brand can eradicate those very easily. Is it a meaningful task? What will the babies learn from this message? There are so many examples like these.

I feel that the producers, administrators of the companies, authorities of mass media should play a more cognizant role in this perspective. As the children like to replicate others, they will be influenced by such types of Ads. Please try to provide positive messages to our new generation, so that they can learn and give positive feedback to their families, society as well as the nation.

Md. Abdul Hamid Assistant professor Dept. of Business Administration Shah Jalal University, Sylhet

Flood resistant rice plant

Your report with photograph, published on 12 July on the subject, joint effort of IIRI and BRRI scientists, is the best news for Bangladesh today. It will herald a new era of rice productivity for us. I salute the scientists for their dedication and hard toil unknown to us!

As reported it will increase Aman rice crop production substantially. Today it is lost to seasonal flood which submerges and destroys the growing rice saplings. This new breed, will live even when covered under flood water! God willing, by 2010 or 11, we will reap this wonderful benefit of increased Aman rice harvest! I am sure all will agree that this is the best news of 2008 and nothing can surpass it for us in Bangladesh! These dedicated scientists deserve national honour and recognition.

What irks me however is that this trail blazing news of discovery was relegated to the back page. This battle by the scientists to grow more rice, our main food, deserved front-page banner headlines. The front page covered the dragging of political dialogue, and some leadership clash between two mayoral candidates!

It is known to be "For the politicians, of the politicians, by the politicians" and nothing else!

The IIRI-BRRI joint research effort becoming successful is great news. A science student Dhaka

Persistent load shedding

We have to suffer due to electricity disruption for at least five-six hours every day. Actually, sufferings of the general people have increased as the prices of almost every essential commodity have gone high. However, people work after sunset because daytime is not enough to finish all the works. The frequency of load shedding has gone up with the per unit cost of electricity. On the other hand, people need to spend money for making the provision for light at night.

The government should address the issue with a sense of urgency. Hasnat, AIUB KhilKhet, Dhaka

BRTA registration and annual tax

There have been numerous claims against false registration of cars as well as yearly tax deposit. Despite the various measures adopted by the government, some unscrupulous people in different post offices have made their fortunes by resorting to fraudulent activities. Most interestingly, one can't detect this until & unless the person is going to sell his/her car to somebody else. During this sale/purchase, the owner of the car knows the actual picture as the buyer who checks the same with the BRTA authority finds that the seller has 4/5 years' registration fees unpaid. In fact the seller paid his dues to BRTA authorities through post offices on yearly basis but those amounts were never deposited!

In view of this situation, a lot of people has suffered & had to pay twice with their hard earned money the yearly registration fees and tax.

Recently, the government has made it mandatory to deposit car registration fees either in bank draft or in pay order which should bring a sigh of relief to the owners. But it would have been better if the whole deposit process for BRTA can be handed over to some private commercial bank to save time & money. Syed Shahid Hossain HR Dhaban Kakrail, Dhaka

School students' ordeal

In a recent news report covering a road show, we saw school students welcoming the dignitaries waving flags. It is good to see on television. But we do not see the other side of the picture. How long did these students wait in the road? We have no idea how many of them got sick for doing so.

School students are compelled to participate in such rallies or

similar programmes. They have been abused as decoration pieces on the road. Hundreds of students in school uniform really look nice, it is true. But, no one pays heed to the pain they need to suffer through while doing so.

After 1/11 we have seen that many positive changes have taken place. People will get benefit from those changes in future too. May we expect this government to consider relieving the school students from participating in these types of programmes. Political governments have not paid heed to their ordeal, maybe because they need more participants in their programmes to prove their popularity.

Guardians and students will be grateful to the present caretaker government if any state order is promulgated to relieve the students from participating in such programmes to welcome dignitaries. Md. Imtiaz Uddin Chy Biswas Para Uttara Kattali, Chittagong

BTCL: can it change course?

The state owned BTB has been changed into a company named BTCL and it started its journey from 1st July this year with its old staff and a huge liability on its shoulders. Everyone knows about the infamy of BTB. People heaved a sigh of relief when mobile operators came to the market. The line-men of BTB were more powerful than its chairman!

Well, we want to forget the past. We want service and obviously better service, competitive service. If they are able to change their mentality, we will again apply for a land phone from them. Harun-or-Rashid Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Transit issue

This refers to the news item 'Indo-Bangla FS level Meet, Water, Transit

to figure in talks' published in the front page of 11 July 2008 issue of The Daily Star.

Your staff correspondent noted that while talking to the journalists the Indian High Commissioner had said "...It's an economic issue, not political at all..." I don't understand why this is being made a political issue in Bangladesh.

I very much wish to know whether the Bangladeshi journalists could ask His Excellency why India didn't allow passage of trucks to and from Nepal through a small Indian corridor. Why the people of Dahahagram and Angorpota had to endure daily insult while coming to the main-land or return to their homes through a corridor only a few hundred yards long. How many years did it take for the people of those enclaves to earn this small right?

Had he been asked the question and indeed he gave an answer, then he would surely have understood why the cheeky Bangladeshis are making a fuss with such a trivial matter like transit, right across the middle of the country. Anwarul Azim Babar Road Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Daytime lorries

There is a law of the DCC that heavy lorries cannot enter the city during daytime from 8:00am to 8:00pm. But the truck owners are violating this law. As a result, city dwellers have to face huge traffic jam. Moreover, some accidents take place on a regular basis.

There is an allegation that traffic policemen allow trucks during daytime if the drivers bribe them. The Daily Star rightly highlighted this issue in its 13 July issue (Star City). The DCC should look into the matter. Mushfiq Wadud Department of English Stamford University Bangladesh

Doctors and hapless patients



When no one is accountable for one's own deeds and go unpunished for mischief year after year, then anything is possible in a country.

In any civilized country, Emergency Room (ER) is there to treat the patients on an urgent basis and the physicians are there 24 hours, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Depending on the severity of the ailments, either the patients get admitted to the hospital or are released from the ER after treatment. There is no day and night in any hospital and they cannot think of running the hospital without doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lab-technicians round the clock.

The concept of outdoor clinic is for those patients whose treatments are not urgent in nature. But if any patient goes to ER, they do not go unattended. The ER doctors have to fulfil their obligations.

However, it is possible only in Bangladesh that a patient will have to wait for six hours to get a physician's attention. Not only that the relatives of the patient have to carry him on their shoulders from door to door. These doctors, nurses, employees would have been in jail without bond by now in the USA. Most of the doctors here work 14-15 hours a day to a minute detail, still they have to face the court and law-suits of the patients because of unintentional mistakes or negligence. In Bangladesh, as we have no law and order, the doctors are roaming freely, no matter what irresponsible acts they commit.

There is no basic difference between these doctors and other killers and muggers. Unless the total hospital system is revamped, we will see more poor people die without any attention of the doctors, nurses, employees of the hospitals. Mamun Ahmed Las Vegas, NV, USA

Dilapidated cyclone shelter

As part of my office assignment recently I visited Subornochar, Noakhali. Local people requested me to see a cyclone shelter at Char Clerk. It was built a few decades ago. Its present condition is very dangerous and it may collapse any time. There is an adjacent school and playground. Its collapse can lead to a

disaster. The authorities concerned should address the issue immediately. Dr. Mohsin U. Ahmed International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Boro Magh Bazar, Dhaka

