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Poverty and climate change



Poverty and climate change are the most critical challenge for the present world. Poverty is widespread in the rural areas. Because of this situation most of the poor people face many social problems. As a result, the target groups (poor, rural women, young generation and the unemployed) are also not conscious about environmental problems like global warming and climate change in Bangladesh. They cannot contribute to the campaign against environmental degradation.

The micro-credit programme has played a significant role in reducing poverty. Nobel Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus also theorised how the micro-credit could eliminate poverty.

If the government and NGOs are generous enough to expand this programme with low interest rate and flexible conditions to the target groups, then it would pave the way for reducing poverty from rural society.

Niranjana Malakar
Dept. of Public Administration
University of Dhaka

Prime minister, just a shopper!

It was around eight o'clock in the evening at supermarket Food Town Mount Eden in Auckland on July 19. I was on the queue towards a checkout to pay for my groceries I had in a trolley. When the lady just in front of me reached the checkout after staying on the queue for at least 10 minutes, the checkout operator surprisingly looked at her face for a few seconds and then said to her, "You look like Helen Clark". Guessing his implied question that if she was Helen Clark, she simply replied to him, "That's right". Yes, I then noticed that she was New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

She was in casual jogging dress. There were no security personnel, no aides or assistants, no party men, no journalists, no camera crew she was completely alone and just a general shopper. Other shoppers were not found interested in her. Only the checkout operator, a Bangladeshi national who is personally known to me, got excited seeing her on his checkout probably because he was a new migrant in New Zealand and from a different socio-political system like Bangladesh.

The New Zealand Prime Minister bought some personal and family items that included a cooked half chicken which was on sale for a discounted price. After making payment, she walked out of the market holding her shopping bag in her hands.

Later, the checkout operator quoting his workmates told me that the NZ Prime Minister often comes to this supermarket for shopping as she lives in the same area. I also noticed that nothing was published or broadcast in New Zealand newspapers or electronic media about the incident because it was not newsworthy as it was quite a normal part of daily public life!

Abul Kalam Azad
Auckland, New Zealand

Amending EPR

We could learn from the media news that the govt. is contemplating amendment to the existing EPR, particularly some clauses to enable the convicts to seek election. In the past the convicted persons who suffered three-year term of imprisonment were barred from seeking election.

The lawyers have observed that it is the voters' right to decide whether they will vote for the convicted persons or not.

My concern is that the loan defaulters may also go to the court on the above plea and can force the govt or the EC to relax the law for them too!

Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Eve-teasing on campus

Eve-teasing is a rampant social evil. This has become a common phenomenon on Bangladesh Agricultural University campus. The issue always surfaces when something ugly happens. Knee-jerk reactions such as police patrol, 'white' brigade actions, etc., continue for a short time. Public memory happens to be short and soon things return to the usual anarchy and we accept the fact that 'nothing much can be done.'

Where does eve-teasing have its roots? Is this seen in every country? Eve-teasing is a crude way of garnering female attention. One must admit that eve-teasing can most certainly be perpetuated easily by its continued glorification in movies.

Eve-teasing is not a victimless crime as it appears on paper. It has resulted in deaths, and when it goes unchecked could lead to public humiliation of women even in broad daylight. Eve-teasing also portrays a bad image of the country among tourists. The immeasurable damage to a woman's self-esteem, and the subsequent avoidance of public places by single women could hardly take us on the way to achieving gender equality.

Eve-teasing is a typical social crime, where the perpetrators and victims are ordinary people. Police prosecution can also never be severe because of the reluctance of victims to depose in court. A behavioural change is the only lasting solution to this problem. This requires an extensive public education aimed at every section of society at large.

Every action is performed with an intention. The intention behind eve-teasing is to catch a girl's eye and to arouse attention in some way; and more importantly this harassment is an early manifestation of patriarchal masculinity. Gender segregation and a 'boys will be boys' attitude furthers this behaviour. Some movies and recent dramas show that eve-teasing eventually 'wins' a girl's attention. Changing this behaviour is easier said than done. However, if things are left alone, they could hardly get better. Active solutions should be sought. For a starter, a massive sustained campaign by women's organisations highlighting this evil must be initiated. Debates on this issue must be organised in colleges, varsities, TV shows, etc., with responsible moderators who would listen and reason an argument instead of sounding outright biased. Parents should talk to their son about this. Cinema is a powerful medium to highlight this issue. Maybe when a movie addresses the fear and humiliation a girl experiences will people think about this 'other side' of eve-teasing. A civilised society

cannot afford to ignore such an issue.
Adit Mozumder
Student
Bangladesh Agricultural University
Mymensingh

Liberalised economy

When it comes to the economy, the of-repeated drumbeat is monotonous: the demand from the third world to liberalise its economies as a 'requirement' for development. Looking at the international development, that has taken place in the last three decades, we see the domination of capitalism. It has completely monopolised economic development and enforced its formula upon the world.

The IMF and World Bank have spread their capitalist-oriented notions like a tsunami. These monetary institutions claim that industrialisation in hand with the diffusion of liberal economic ideas would positively transform traditional economies and societies. It is argued that these influences would

place poor countries on a path of development similar to that experienced by Western industrialised nations during the Industrial Revolution. The models presented to fortify this stance, are the Asian tiger economies-China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. These countries are held as successful nations who adopted liberalism and progressed.

However, that stark reality stands in sheer contradiction with this policy. Today Poverty is the state for the majority of the world's people. Three billion people in the world live on fewer than two dollars a day; another 1.3 billion people live on less than one dollar a day. Moreover 1.3 billion have no access to clean water; 3 billion have no access to sanitation and 2 billion have no access to electricity.

It's clear without an iota of doubt that Liberalism has actually been a significant cause behind the wealth disparities and poverty that majority of the world's people face. A number of surveys have high-

lighted that liberalism has created even more poverty stricken people in the world. A United Nations institute -World Institute for Development Economics Research' conducted a global study. A mere glance at some of its findings leaves one spellbound. After gathering research findings from countries all over the world the study concluded that the richest 1% of the world owns 40% of the planet's wealth and that only 10% of the world's population owned 85% of the world's assets.

The tragic fact, camouflaged in glitter, is that Liberalism has resulted in the Western world feeding of the remainder of the world. Liberalism in no way helped alleviate poverty, it actually contributed to it, and hence any continuation of liberal economic policies in the third world will result in the poor getting even poorer. It's time, we break this monotony of global capitalist hegemony.

Reviving an alternative system of governance and economy that emanates from the Islamic ideology may well be the only panacea to the ills that have been brought about by the capitalist economy.

Sharique Naeem
Lahore, Pakistan

SAU

This is high time to check what's happening in SAU. Our university was opened on 14 July after 39 days, but nobody can say when the classes will start.

The students of SAU demand things that are available in any other university.
Md. Shobuj Chowdhury
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Sher-e-Bangla nagar
Dhaka

Punish the war criminals

Recently, a freedom fighter was assaulted in a Jamaat-backed so-called freedom fighters' meeting. We would urge this silent government to wake up and try the razzakars and war criminals without further delay. They were identified in 71, there is a list of collaborators, and everybody knows it. There is no need to find out a new process or way to detect them in order to prove their crimes. This essential task has to be accomplished before the national election and all religion based political parties should be banned in order to bring about the change that we need.

Md. Shahjahan Mia
Development professional
Satmasjid Road
Dhaka

Inflation

A couple of days ago a policy suggestion made by IMF caught my attention and forced me to write something. They suggested that the central bank go for a contractionary monetary policy (less expansionary according to them) to stabilize the price level. I, with many of the general people, failed to understand how an organisation like IMF could suggest such a preposterous policy. The uncontrollable inflation in Bangladesh is not caused by excessive money supply. Had that been the case, then the banks would not have raised their interest rate on deposit to solve their acute liquidity crisis and the business people would not have claimed that they are facing shortage of credit supply. That clearly suggests that there is not enough money in the money market that could create inflation. From our experience, we have been watching that inflation in our country stems from the ever-rising fuel price, shortage of supply, artificial supply crisis created by our suppliers, increased labour and import costs and above all the huge population that is creating tremendous pressure on the limited supplies of economic goods and services. Rather than solving these problems, if we go for reducing money supply, it's certainly not going to do any better. Instead, such a contractionary policy would be detrimental to our economy by slowing down the economic growth through reduced investment and consumption expenditure.

Different international organisations are using the underdeveloped and developing countries as guinea pigs to experiment with their formula of development panacea.

Yasir Md. Farabi
North South University
Dhaka

Poverty free world

As mentioned by the Nobel Committee chief during his visit to Bangladesh, proper education is the only instrument to overcome global crisis of terrorism, social unrest, food shortage and corruption.

If people are educated properly and employed, there will be no need to misuse natural resources.
M.S. Farazi
Jeddah, KSA

Blood donation

"One's blood, another's life" the slogan of a voluntary blood collecting organisation has to be appreciated fully. Last Friday I donated blood for a teenager at the Orthopaedic Hospital in Dhaka for the first time in my life. I felt so good after donating blood. I thought, how close one can become to another human through blood transfusion! My blood is flowing in somebody's vein and working for her betterment--what an incredible feeling!

One should donate blood spontaneously. Physiologically, it is a very easy and harmless process.
MD. Faisal Bin Karim
Dept. of Pharmacy
Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka

Killing of BDR men

On July 18, 2008, we lost two BDR soldiers in a shooting by Indian BSF. BSF killed so many people of Bangladesh near the border areas over the years, but when they killed BDR members it was a different story. Any country's border security force is a symbol of that country's sovereignty. Therefore strong protests should come from the political parties as well as the government. But we are unlucky. We don't find any voice being raised from our political parties, especially the big ones!

Lutfur Rahman
Seoul National University
Korea

GPA based admission

Form newspaper, I got to know that the education ministry is planning to introduce GPA based admission system in the Intermediate level. They found that it would stop the unholy business of the coaching centres.

Our present exam system is not quite up to the standard. Anyone can earn a good GPA even A+ by memorising the answers to the questions of the last exams of different boards. This system is not enough at all to judge merit. So admission based on GPA obtained in such exams is questionable.

So, the authorities should not take any decision which will not serve any worthwhile purpose.

Md. Nazul Islam Khan
Ahsanullah Hall
BUET, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Voter list

Can the EC explain to the nation how they have maintained the required transparency or public information to prepare correct and complete voter lists? We are aware that the contracts were awarded to the NGOs for public information and mobilisation purpose, since they have not visited homes for voter listing as done before. At least, I apprehend some gaps in the entire efforts and that many voters have been left unregistered. Yes, we know they can register now, but why it has not been possible to register them during regular listing?

The system adopted for publication of the draft and the final list is not transparent and is creating some room for doubt about the public access to verify the accuracy of the system and the voter listing.

We very well understand the reasons for expressing full confidence in the preparation of the "historic" and the best voter list of our times. There is very little option to critically look at the entire process. I think we should not jump to any conclusion to certify the voter list before the entire list has been finalised and is ready for public scrutiny.
Reader
One-mail

Earthquake preparedness

An earthquake is the shaking of the ground caused by a shift of rock along a fracture in the Earth known as a fault. It results in the abrupt release of energy in the surroundings from the Earth's surface. Myths and religions Scientists believe that most earthquakes are the result of the motion of the plates that exist inside the earth surface. Our Earth's inner mantle is a thick layer of solid, dense rock consisting mainly of magnesium and silicon. The outer crust is made up of a number of plates that float on the molten rock of the mantle. These plates are forced to move across the convection currents caused by the heat rising from the centre of the earth. The rate of plate movement can be measured by accurate techniques.

Earthquakes are also premonitions of oncoming volcanic activity leading to an eruption. In a volcano, magma pushes its way upwards against the rocks which vigorously shake the ground. Meteor collision with the earth surface and nuclear explosions contributes to the occurrence of

earthquakes too.

The point at which the earthquake centres is called the focus. When the waves carrying the energy come in contact with the surface, it becomes the epicentre.

Bangladesh is situated in a high-risk earthquake zone. But the most important question that arises regarding this issue is: are we prepared for an earthquake looming ahead of us? The issue deserves a closer look.

Shatabdi Biswas
Grade IX
Paramount School and College
Rajshahi

Dealing with the corrupt

It won't be an easy task to bring back all the high profile people who were involved in corruption and fled the country. But at least the ACC or the government can set up a special unit to find out where these people are currently living and can request the governments of those countries to extradite these corrupt people.

Rubaiyat Haider
Michigan, USA

Floods

It seems another flood is at our doorstep as many places in Eastern India have already been flooded. It doesn't need to be a rocket scientist to predict that if Eastern India is hit by floods now, we are also going to be affected by it pretty soon.

But surprisingly enough there is no talk about this flood, neither from the government, nor the media.

Everybody seems to be too busy with this city corporation election. To my mind, taking precautionary measures for the floods is much more important than preparing for these elections.

We have seen election after election in the last 38 years. These haven't taken us anywhere. I would urge the media to draw the attention of the authorities 'unconcerned' early enough so that we can remain prepared for the floods.

Mohammad Farhad
USA

Taxpayer's appeal

I am a retired government servant. During my long service-tenure of three decades no itching palm disturbed me. I submitted my tax returns regularly for a good number of years. When no tax was imposed on my income for five successive years, my tax adviser instructed me not to submit returns anymore. After retirement I started living on my tax-free pension and the profit of a few Bonus Sanchaypatra (10% of the profit earned was regularly deducted). For the last three years, I have been earning a small amount every month for my participation in television programmes on a private channel. The channel authorities regularly deduct tax on that earning of mine.

I want to submit tax returns once again and be sure if I am to pay any further tax on my income which has always been lawful. I would earnestly request the government to kindly give me a last chance to declare my lawful income during the last three years and pay the due income tax (if any) without any fine or penalty. Thousands of honest and law-abiding citizens like me, who have not paid taxes in the past due to ignorance, lethargy, fear or other reasons, will be benefited if they are given a last chance without penalty.

Abdullah Syed
Lake Circus, Dhaka

Needed: good management

What is common in the behaviour patterns of our Stock Exchange and the RMG industry? Lack of regulation or lax implementation? One outside example: bridges are constructed under government projects without approach roads; lying unused for years. It reminds us of the popular slogan "roads, bridges and culverts" used by the political masters. The attitude is a disease of society. Why there are no mergers and fall-outs in the 4,000 RMG factories, (I ask as an outsider, i.e. newspaper reader)? Too much freedom

resulting in cut-throat competition, and lack of labour amenities?

The inside views have to be covered by the mass media for formation of correct public opinion. News of demands and complaints are not enough. Violent demonstrations are occurring more frequently in the garment factories; but vested quarters have vested viewpoints (note the demand for food ration outlets). There are grey and non-transparent areas in management, which are not being exposed impartially (so as not to harm the duck that

lays the golden eggs).

The latest TIB report on Bangladesh is not surprising-the undercurrents do not generate visible waves! The crowding effect in the RMG sector appears to be similar to the chaotic road traffic in Dhaka--no maa-baap! Curb blind imitation.

Question for BGMEA: how are the ailing factories being handled? The public are not well briefed on internal reforms being carried out at regular intervals within the biggest industry in Bangladesh. The bad news is one-sided, while the good

news gets the headlines.

Latest: the government has taken administrative action on ensuring freedom of news. The very environment is contagious--what about the practice of democracy within the political parties?

Our pharmaceutical industry is now export-oriented; but the QC has to be strict. The finished leather goods industry is also developing fast; but the regulators have to streamline the PR (public relations). PR is a tricky jugglery--how to be neutral.
A Husnain
Dhaka



TAMR AHMED / DRINKNEWS