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Population control

I read with interest recent letters in the DS regarding population boom, traffic jam situation, 'making Dhaka liveable' etc. The root of all the problems is our huge population. We do not know the actual number of population of Bangladesh. It is estimated to be anything between 140 to 150 million. They live in an area of 142 thousand square Km. All the fruits of policy planning, and hard work are being 'eaten up' by the huge population burden.

In 1962 population of East Pakistan was 50 million. Population control activities started in erstwhile East Pakistan during Ayub Khan's regime in the sixties. Bangladesh started with a population burden of 75 millions. Founder of our nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman realized the grave consequences of the population boom. Population control was one of the top-most priorities in his agenda. The next president Ziaur Rahman carried on the population control or planning activities. During his time two separate divisions were created- health and population control and two secretaries were appointed. So, disintegration was started and completed. The health secretariat was manned and administered by mainly medical professionals. Population planning manpower was mostly non-medical non-technical, less qualified. As health issues and population planning issues are interrelated, disintegration created lots of administrative and technical problems. Lots of problems cropped up in the field level. Even then population planning programme in Bangladesh is quite successful. Total fertility rate (TFR) and net population growth came down. Awareness was created. NGOs and the government played significant roles in bringing down the population. However, it is yet to achieve the desired goal of birth rate of below 2.

FWA, FWV and similar field level officials play very vital roles in rendering population control services. They visit houses, distribute or sell OCP, condoms and motivate people to adopt ligation and vasectomy. A few years ago the home visit programme was stopped at the recommendation of some interna-



tional agencies. They postulated that people have become well aware of population boom and will visit the centres by themselves to seek services foregoing cooking, cleaning, rearing up children etc. activities! HPs (health assistant) work in EPI, maternal health, neonatal health, ARI and other programmes. They are overworked and have to cover larger population than FWAs. In the meanwhile, tension was also broiling up among the health and PP personnel at all levels. Instead of becoming complimentary to each other they turned into rivals! There is also lot of overlapping in their programmes.

In 1996-2001, the government rightly felt the need for integration of health and population planning divisions for better co-ordination, cost cuts, optimum use of manpower, defusing tension, delivery of better services etc. and started the process. The process of integration was stalled during the next regime at the instigation of vested interest groups.

All these factors played significant roles in reduced population plan-

ning/control activities in Bangladesh in the recent years. Now, we need a 'surge' in activities which is only possible if all health related activities and population planning activities are planned, monitored, supervised and managed by a single authority. This means integration of both the divisions.

India will very soon surpass China as the most populated country in the world. China has been quite successful in controlling population with an iron hand. Those measures may not be feasible in Bangladesh but a policy of reward and punishment may be initiated.

We urge upon the present government and the next elected government to attach utmost priority to population control, else we are doomed to plunging into more poverty and poverty related terrorism, criminal and other negative activities.

Our goal of becoming a middle income country is bound to remain a distant dream if the government fails to act ASAP.

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

Woes of unsuccessful IPO candidates

Of late various problems are being faced by individual or small investors in obtaining or getting information about refund of money to unsuccessful IPO applications, viz.

1. Applications by Resident Bangladeshis (RBs) are relatively simple. Money is paid by cash or cheque to designated banks which issue a provisional receipt. After the lottery, refunds/allotments to applicants are distributed on a designated day by the organisation against the bank receipt. Unclaimed refunds/allotments are then sent by courier to the designated addresses and delivered against the bank receipt. This works fine.

Recently, refunds are being deposited directly to the bank accounts named in the IPO application form, which is even more efficient as it saves the applicant a long, tiresome and expensive journey to Motijheel or the company office usually located there.

Problem: a) Refunds/allotments sent by couriers are delivered at all times of the day, when the applicant may not be at home. b) Sometimes direct refunds to banks are delayed and it is also difficult to get information from some banks as to how much has been credited and from whom. Some banks even charge for this service. c) Allotment letters remain with the offices till collected. So if the bank is not cooperative, one never knows the position of refund/allotment.

2. Applications in Foreign Exchange by Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) are more cumbersome and complex. The exchange rate has to be found, foreign exchange draft made out and the applications with passport copies sent by courier to the company head office that may be in another city. The company is supposed to issue a money receipt but it never does so. I have never received a single money receipt against the NRB applications I have made this year. Problem: a) The applicant does not know if the application was received in time or not for at least 5-6 weeks. b) If the NRB refund/allotment is not collected on the designated day, the real problem arises. These are sent by courier and are to be delivered only against "bank receipts" but most investors only have a courier receipt as the relative money receipt is never issued. Why then does the company instruct the couriers to deliver the refund/allotments against money receipts (or bank receipts as the couriers call it), when they know that these have not been issued? c) Even when FC drafts are received as refund and deposited in respective banks, the proceeds take months to be credited.

I am yet to receive refund of Grameen1-Sch 2, Summit Port, Takaful Ins(partly), Standard Ins and Northern Gen Insurance. Would it not be more efficient to refund on-line to respective bank accounts in FC, just like RB?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Unbridled price hike

From time to time, at any time of the year, some of our semi-govt., autonomous organisations and public sector corporations increase the prices/tariffs of electricity, water supply, passengers' tickets, petroleum, kerosene oil and gas etc., etc., whimsically and arbitrarily giving us one reason or the other. And the sufferings of our people know no bounds.

Is it justified and right for our top government servants who are running our semi-govt., autonomous organisations and public sector corporations to raise the prices/tariffs of our various natural resources, imported and domestic goods, commodities and services at their sweet will?

What are the successes and performances of our bureaucrats who are running our semi-govt., autonomous organisations and public sector corporations to stop systems loss, minimise wanton expenditure on TA/DA, establishment costs, payment of overtime allowances and honorarium to the offices and staff of their organisations?

Are there any financial discipline, efficiency and coordination, monetary system and procedure of work, accountability, transparency, supervision and control in our country?

What are the aims, objectives and purposes of our yearly national budget, functions and responsibilities of our JS, works and duties of our Ministry of Finance and Bangladesh Bank for the welfare of the state and the people?

We have never heard before of Bangladesh Energy Regularity Commission or any such organisation eliciting public opinion on raising prices of gas, electricity or any other item or service.

Is it legal, justified, constitutional and democratic for BERC to raise or fix the price/tariff of any goods, commodity or service?

What sort of economy are we following in our country? Is it a free market economy, controlled economy of our bureaucrats or econ-

omy under World Bank and IMF?

Would our learned financial Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam kindly enlighten us on the relevant matters?

We suggest and strongly demand that in the midst of our present price hike of essential goods, commodities and services, the government refrain from increasing the prices of oil, gas and electricity.

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Government holidays

Some government authorities are seriously violating government orders on holidays given to Muslim and Hindu communities on different religious occasions. They arrange less important events or programmes like seminar, workshop, dialogue etc on government holidays in the name of national interest.

These kinds of activities are creating obstacle in the way to performing religious rituals by general employees from both the communities. Actually, such programmes serve only their ill motives, rather than national interest.

Sufferers
One-mail

People's worries

After listening to the televised speech of the chief adviser to the caretaker government in which he mentioned the particular date for the next general election, people are now almost sure that the country is now at the end of its present path to step into the path of democracy.

It is certain that all the people of all classes are not fully aware of the importance of democracy but at least they want to see a new government formed by the parliamentarians voted by them.

All steps taken by the caretaker government like drive against corruption, arresting a huge number of politicians and businessmen, sending them behind the

bars and setting many of them free on bail, dialogues with the political parties, recent declaration of a date for election proved the government's sincerity in handing power over to an elected government.

The people are very much reluctant to pay attention to some news reports coming out from certain quarters that the election will not be held at all.

But they are a bit worried if they can cast their votes without any fear. Because they have past experience of not being able to cast their votes without fear or as they liked.

At present, the government seems a bit lenient to the political parties in meeting the various demands they have been making since the imposition of emergency.

This is also one of the demands that the emergency be lifted before the election. What will the government do? What are the people going to see at polling centres if the government really withdraws emergency? The same big show of muscle power or... These are the things the people are thinking about. But they believe this government is efficient and prudent to do what should be done and will leave nothing behind for the people to be worried about.

Kshitish Chandra Milan
Bhaipajra Mazar Lane
Bogra

Shortage of books

I am a student of SUST Business Administration department. We have a library but there is shortage of books. We can't find the necessary books in the library when these are mostly needed.

As a result, we have to either buy the books or borrow the same from others which is very troublesome for us.

Will the authorities look into the matter?

MD. Saiful Islam
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Maritime boundary with Myanmar

Over 25 years ago the UN law on the maritime boundary was enacted. Those of us who are responsible for demarcating our maritime boundary were napping and chose to do nothing. We have now about a year or two to meet the deadline. Myanmar has placed a rig in the area that both Bangladesh and Myanmar claim to be their own. Now my question is why had we been sleeping for such a long time? Should we not hold those people who are responsible for demarcating our maritime boundaries accountable for their criminal negligence? We recently had a meeting with India on maritime boundary demarcation. The whole meeting was centered on Talpatty island and the course of the Hariabhanga river. There was discussion on the maritime boundary. They are going to waste time on non issues and when the time will expire we will be compelled to accept whatever we are

offered. If we do not have the expertise in the field then we should hire experts from abroad, so that we are not deprived of our legitimate right to the resources that lie in our territory.

We just cannot afford to get our rightful share of the resources of the Bay because we do not have the expertise in the field. More important than expertise is the will to get our rightful share of the Bay and resources that are there. We do not have any time to waste. The authorities must form a special task force working on this project with the help of foreign experts. Wake up Bangladesh!
Salahuddin Ayubi
One-mail

Obama's win

We have just witnessed history being made. The speeches by McCain accepting defeat and offering his hands to Obama to work together to take the country forward were just as outstanding

as one made by Obama accepting the differences but uniting the nation for a brighter tomorrow. This has been a victory for democracy, victory for freedom, liberty and equality.

There is a connection between the people of the USA and Bangladesh which is the spirit of Revolution. In 1775 the American Revolution was launched against the British colonialism and in 1971 we fought for our Independence from the Pakistan military. This tie between the two peoples have been so strong that even when the Nixon Administration opposed our liberation war, the American people including the media gave full support to our cause. Today we are about to have another connection between the two peoples as we in Bangladesh get ready for our own election on December 18. Let us hope we can also say, loud and clear, that we want a change and YES, WE CAN do it! It's time for our politicians to understand the changing world and times. The nation needs leaders with vision to

take us ahead and face the challenges of the new century. We need to move forward and make space for the new generation to take over and lead us. We need to have leaders with ideas, vision and determination to overcome all odds.

Now is the great moment for us to rededicate ourselves to the cause of nation-building as we prepare to celebrate our 38 years of Independence this December.
Akku Chowdhury
One-mail

Barack Obama, who won the US presidential election, is known as a lucky man.

What do we actually want from him? Peace? The answer must be in the positive. But will Obama be on the way of peace or push the world to violence?

Power is such a thing that compels everyone to commit misdeeds. GWBush is an example!
Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadiil Madrassa
Chaitenyarhat
Chittagong

Elections in the USA and Bangladesh

The USA developed economically from the period of President Roosevelt to 1970 by creating wealth for the nation. The income was distributed according to contribution, made by the entrepreneurs, technologists and skilled professionals. The income of the non-skilled personnel declined showing disproportionate distribution with large gaps among different factors. The leaders thereafter reduced taxes of the richest citizens moving towards bond culture. The present income of the USA is 250% of the gross domestic product of the country. The middle class gradually adopted the credit culture that assisted them in consuming more than their individual income. It helped the rich to become richer, whereas the USA had to maintain about 700 military camps in 130 countries of the world. President GW Bush accelerated the downfall by invading Iraq & Afghanistan and threatening Iran and many other countries, whereas the national exchequer declined due to reduction of tax and greater volume of expenses for maintaining forces in different countries. It endangered the economy of the country. At the moment, people are required to buy at higher prices that exhausted strength of many who failed to pay the committed instalments; the entrepreneurs failed to maintain earlier level of sales and the economy crumbled. The economists of the country clearly observed the situation, whereas

the leaders cannot go backward. It made 2008 election important for the citizens of the USA and the world.

Similarly, election in Bangladesh in 2008 is also important. Surgical operation on India and Pakistan by the leaders resulted in the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971. Ordinary citizens dreamt of a good future. The leaders came with slogans of development, but all in vain due to inherent defects in the compliance requirements.

All in the corridor of Power became rich, whereas the dream of common

people were butchered at the altar of power and greed. Now the students are busy doing the assigned tasks of politicians for money and honey without learning the subjects properly. The credit culture opened the door of making money by issuing bonds. Entrepreneurs in the productive sectors are required to face the tyranny of regulations, threats of thugs and muggers.

I pay my respect to those who are trying to pull the nation up.

Md. Islam
An ordinary citizen of Bangladesh



Pope Benedict's warning

In a local daily the following news item in short form under the above heading was published on 6th October, 2008 is quoted below:-

VATICAN CITY "Modern culture is pushing God out of people's lives. Pope Benedict warned yesterday. Nations once rich in faith and vocations are losing their identity under the harmful and destructive influence of a certain modern culture: he said. He was speaking at the opening of a bishops' Synod on the relevance of the Bible to Catholics."

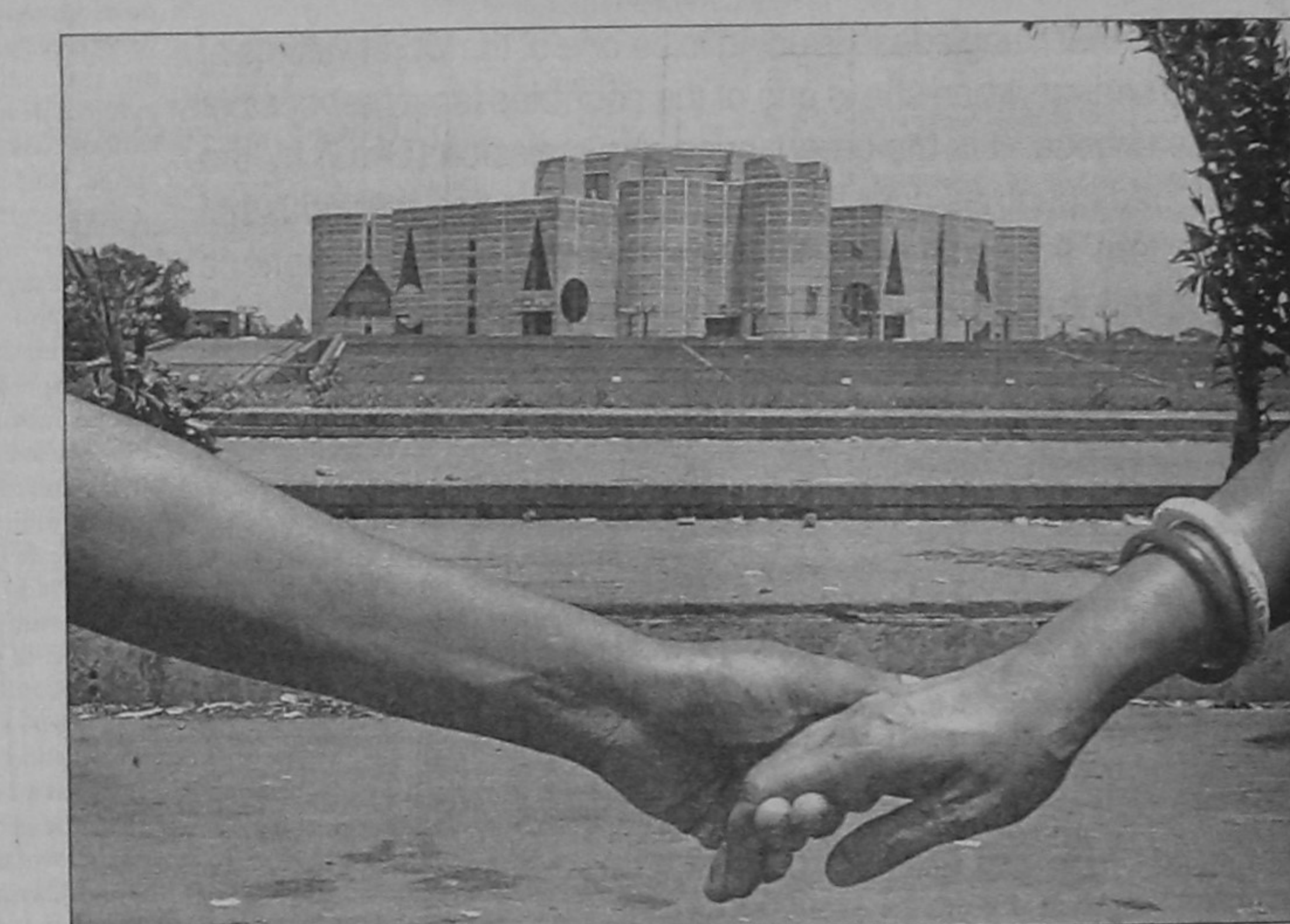
I think the time has come to take Pope's warning seriously. His wise comments quoted out of his vast experience and deep observations are timely and worth-noting by the nations all over the world. May be human civilization has already reached its peak and now it is declining. Looking at today's legalized nude clubs, gay and lesbian marriages (same sex marriage) what is so unnatural that the Pope felt concerned and expressed his views. Family set ups are breaking down. Numbers of single mothers are on the rise. Most countries have become breeding grounds of all sorts of corruption. Even world leaders are no more an exception. Justice is becoming a far cry. Moral degradation has become the order of the day. All above must have prompted him to warn the nations.

Ultra modern women are no longer modestly dressed, a clear fallout of modern culture. Women are challenging men at each and every step instead of living coherently.

I think each and every child should grow up after having basic religious teachings which will last forever in their later life and guide them to the right path. They should learn to fear ALLAH and be afraid of moral degradation. Also a proper dress code should be introduced by the religious ministry. I thank Pope Benedict for his timely warning.

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Returning to democracy



The general elections to the ninth Jatiya Sangsad are scheduled to be held on December 18, 2008 as announced by the chief Adviser of the caretaker government recently. The countrymen have hailed the decision as they desperately want to see an elected government with the advent of the new year. They earnestly hope and desire that the upcoming polls will be free, fair and credible. The general people will exercise their franchise free from all sorts of intimidation, use of black money, muscle-power and brandishing of firearms. People will vote to power honest and eligible candidates who will form an effective and meaningful parliament. Good governance will bid adieu to all sorts of misrule and mismanagement. The new government will hopefully guide the country in the eight direction.

The country achieved independence some 37 years ago but the fruits of independence still continue to elude the general masses. This is not the country for which 3 million people laid down their lives during the War of Liberation. The ultimate victory of the people, i.e., the economic emancipation of the toiling masses and establishment of an exploitation-free society is yet to be achieved. The hopes and aspirations of the common people remain to be fulfilled. The dream of the Bangladeshis to transform the country into Sonar Bangla is yet to be materialised.

Our country is beset with manifold problems. Poverty alleviation is the major challenge. The solution to the problem of unemployment continues to remain a far cry. The economic development and advancement of the country is being persistently hindered by political unrest and instability. Foreign investors are increasingly losing their interest to invest their capital in our country. Political instability has been a major challenge to the optimum growth of our economy.

The people of the country want to live peacefully, free from all sorts of chaos, conflicts and confrontation. They want a balanced development of the economy and the country having a bounty of golden prospects.

They seriously want to see an end to all kinds of street agitation, hartals, siege and blockade programmes etc. The political parties need to reach a consensus on this issue.

The caretaker government after their takeover launched a vigorous drive against corruption which, needless to say, is the number one problem in our country and is a major hindrance to development. The newly elected government will hopefully carry on the ongoing war against corruption and misappropriation.

The hopes and aspirations of the common people ahead of the next parliamentary polls are not few. It is, therefore, their responsibility to choose and elect honest and competent candidates. On the other hand, if the political parties really want to usher in a new horizon in the firmament of our political arena, they have to shoulder the responsibility to ornament the ninth parliament with members/representatives having honesty, integrity, political wisdom and above all, acceptability to the people. The losing political parties will have to respect people's verdict by accepting the polls results.

The next general elections will obviously facilitate the smooth transfer of power to an elected government.

The countrymen are desperately looking forward to them (the upcoming elected government) for good governance in order to bid farewell to those black days of misrule and misfortune.

M. Anwaruzzaman
Jhawata, Comilla