

Brain gain

For modernisation and attainment of self-sufficiency by 2021, the major challenges for Bangladesh are poverty reduction and sustainable development, but neither of these are possible without a very strong science and technology base education.



AHMED A AZAD

It would be wonderful if Bangladesh could be transformed into a modern, technologically advanced and prosperous country by 2021, the 50th anniversary of our independence. It is a long term and ambitious objective that is definitely attainable if we can provide modern and appropriate education and training to our young generation, make research and innovation the major focus of our higher education sector, and use science and technology as the major tool for meeting our development goals. Without these, Vision 2021 and "Digital Bangladesh" will be no more than mere election slogans.

Emphasis on "Digital Bangladesh" is correct, as there is a strong correlation between economic and social development of a country and its proficiency in science and technology. If the ultimate objective is the realisation of Vision 2021 then there has to be sustained support of science and technology at all levels. It is, therefore, mystifying that the Science and Technology portfolio has not even merited elevation to cabinet level.

For modernisation and attainment of self-sufficiency by 2021, the major challenges for Bangladesh are poverty, reduction and sustainable development, but neither of these are possible without a very

strong science and technology base underpinned by excellence in education at all levels and a well-trained work force.

What is our real economic and technological standing within the community of nations? Bangladesh is classified as a least developed country (LDC), and is only one of three LDCs among the OIC-member countries. Dhaka University, which used to be referred to as the "Oxford of the East," does not even rank among the first 1000 universities in the world, or even among the first 30 in the Islamic world. This is mainly because of the absence of a research culture, serious lack of research facilities and opportunities, politicisation of academia, and anachronistic rules for appointment and promotion.

If the government is serious about "Digital Bangladesh" and Vision 2021 then it needs to find ways to promote research and innovation so that Bangladesh can become internationally competitive. Bangladesh has a very high population density and very few natural resources. So there is a need to become a "clever country" based on intellectual capital and to devise strategies that allow our youth to get involved in nation building activities.

Educating our youth is an investment in our future, but should this education be for the development of other countries at the expense of our own? There is certainly

something wrong with the obsession to export our youth to earn foreign exchange without first meeting our indigenous needs.

There is a lack of educated and trained manpower in essential sectors of our economy, yet a very high proportion of our newly trained doctors, scientists and engineers eventually emigrate and find employment in other countries. In many ways, our education policies and curricula are geared to the R&D market in the US and Europe.

The major reasons for the brain-drain of our professionals are the outdated education system and the absence of conditions for utilising the talents and expertise of our scientifically educated youth. Every effort needs to be made to arrest and reverse the debilitating brain-drain by creating conditions that allow our best and brightest scientists to carry out internationally competitive and rewarding research in areas of national priority while living and working in Bangladesh. This will help to retain our most productive people in the country and induce others to return home.

Bangladesh already has a small but very highly trained scientific manpower within the country and large numbers of talented scientists and technologists spread across developed countries all around the world. Many expatriate scientists would be happy to contribute, in many different ways, to the development of Bangladesh if given the chance.

Developing conditions conducive to research and secure employment in Bangladesh will result in "brain-gain," which is a prerequisite for modernisation and sustained development. The government could choose, whenever possible, to obtain independent expert advice from scientists of Bangladeshi origin without wasting exorbitant consultancy fees on so-called foreign experts from the developed world.

I hope the government will review its decision on cabinet portfolios and allocations and consider the formation of a Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Innovation in line with its long-term objectives. This would also allow the current Ministry of Education to concentrate and focus on overhauling the primary and secondary education sector, which, without any doubt, is the basic foundation for national development and must be set right.

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Righteousness not sin

I am concerned about the moral and ethical values of any religion. We Bangladeshis are outwardly very religious. But unless the human values of any religion are in practice in our mundane life nothing will improve.

MARTIN ADHIKARY

LEADERSHIP is primarily the responsibility of faithful stewardship. Stewardship is the faithful use of all resources and opportunities that is within the care of the government. It is entrusted with the sacred responsibility of profitably using all the resources -- man, material, merit -- for the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the people.

Doing that is extremely difficult in a context where democratic principles and culture are still at a basic level.

One basic tenet of a true democratic society is "Righteousness." It is acting justly in real life situation. Amos, Micah and Isaiah cried out for justice for their people and decried external ceremonial cleanliness. Not acting or living justly is sin.

An elected government's supreme responsibility is to ensure that justice to people is maintained. It is a challenge for our new government to create and promote the environment where authentic righteousness, especially for the poor and helpless millions, is ensured in every aspect of life.

Our country is a developing one where around 80% live below the poverty line. Like poor people in any other nation they get exploited and are deprived of their due share in the resources and opportunities.

By the end of 1990s, 20% of the world's people living in the rich countries had 86% of the world's income; the bottom 20% had only 1% of the world's income. By the end of the 20th century, the top 20% received 75 times the income of the bottom 20%.

Currently, 90% of the world's income is owned by the top 10% people and the 90% poor people own only the remaining 10%. So justice for them is of greatest priority. We might recall that already we have crossed half of the time-frame for the Millennium Development Goals, whose number one goal is Poverty Eradication.

With the national election, we have reached a kind of bend on our path to the realisation of our vision for a nation where all people will live in human dignity. This is a bend, not an end. We need to take the right turn towards materialising our vision. The mahajote government will do well if it

can capitalise on the mandate that the nation has given to it to lead us towards justice, peace and progress.

It is nice to remember that army chief General Moeen U. Ahmed spoke about skillfully using the 30 crore hands of our 15 crore people for ensuring our economic growth and progress.

This can only be ensured if there is good governance, valid and pro-people planning, and leadership of people with integrity and righteousness. What is of significance is the patriotism manifested by what is in our heads and in our hands, and used in our honesty. I remember that when I was a young boy there was a social club at Barisal town named, "The 4-H-Club." The 4 Hs stood for head, hand, heart and honesty. I believe that nation can truly advance with these Hs in every area of life.

One can say that the election results proved the truth of what David, one of the greatest ancient rulers and also a prophet, said: "I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more, though I looked for him, he could not be found. Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace. But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off." (Psalm 37:35-38).

This scripture should be paid attention

to by everyone as these words were not written for any particular group or people with any particular political adherence, but for all people.

I am concerned about the moral and ethical values of any religion. We Bangladeshis are outwardly very religious. But unless the human values of any religion are in practice in our mundane life nothing will improve.

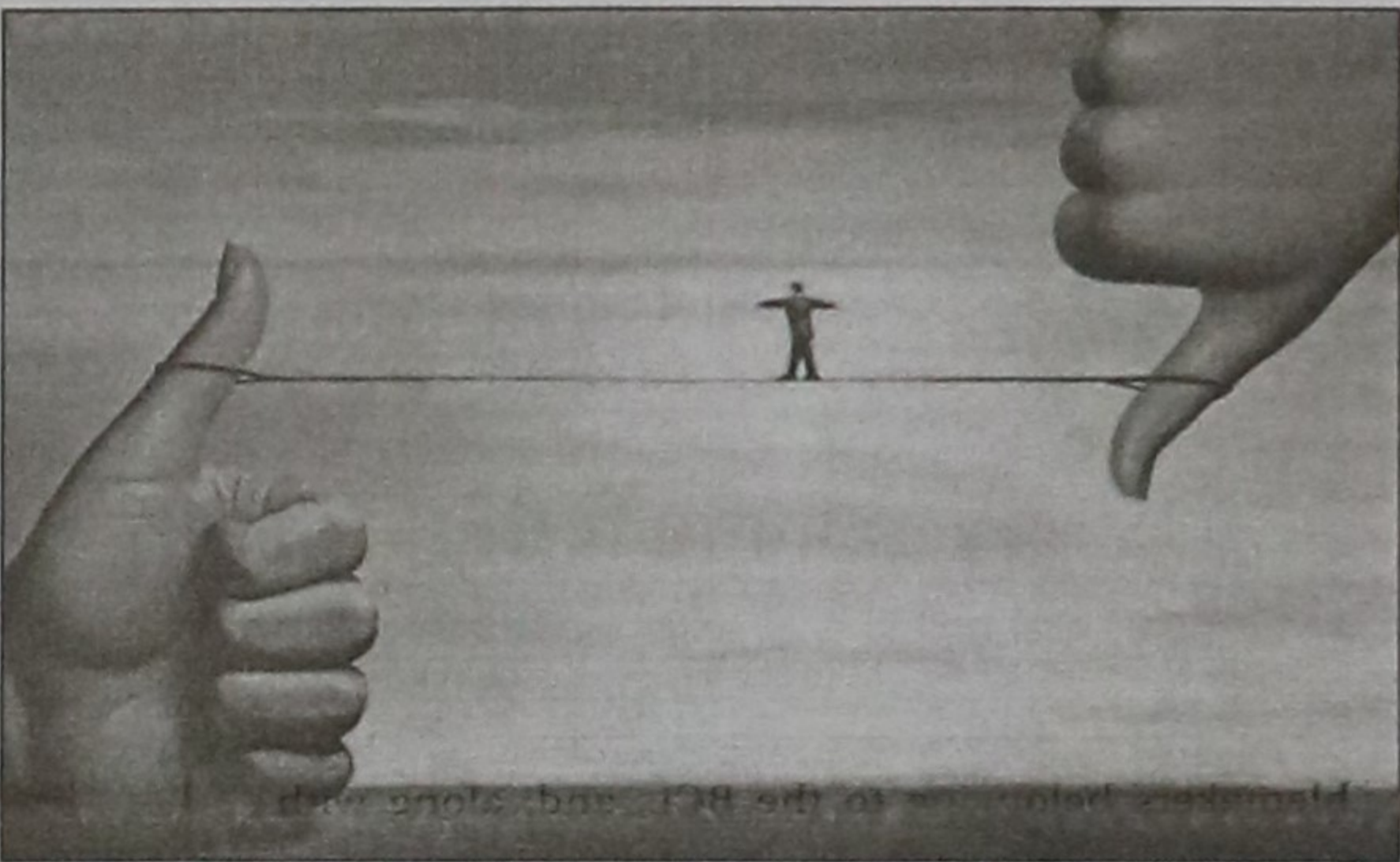
Around 80% of the people live in poverty, while there is a microscopic minority getting richer? Among the plethora of the issues and challenges that the new government faces, bringing down prices of food items is of immediate concern.

The independence, not merely separation, of the judiciary from the executive branch, rural electrification, and pro-people investments in health and education sectors are by no means of small significance. Population control, reduction of unemployment, corruption in high places, and establishing rule of law are also areas of great priority.

Food eats up the lion's share of incomes. People have not forgotten that the Awami league had kept food prices low during its last tenure.

We are much more confident in our newly formed government than before. We heartily congratulate them as they have been given the responsibility to manage the affairs of the nation. We are encouraged by the political acumen and by the recently made statesman-like speeches of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. We only long to see the pre-election promises translated into action. We wish them all Godspeed.

Reverend Martin Adhikary is Director of Advocacy and Promotion of the Leprosy Mission Bangladesh.



On a moral tightrope.

CHRISTOPHER ZACHAROW

Population bomb ticks against Israel

The demographic picture continues to haunt Israel because the Palestinian Arabs have a higher growth rate. It can be translated into a scenario where the Arab population in Israel and occupied territories will rise to an estimated 8.5 million in 2020. This will vastly outnumber the estimated Jewish population of 6.4 million.

SYED MAQSUD JAMIL

THE UN partition plan of 1947 for British mandated territory of Palestine gave 56% of the land to 31% of the total population who were Jewish. Ironically, the Jewish land ownership in Palestine was less than 7%. The demography of Palestine at the time of partition was 1.2 million Palestinian Arabs and 0.6 million Jews.

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Israel's area rose to 77% of Palestine, but it was left with a substantial Palestinian Arab population. This non-Jewish character of the Jewish land rankled in the hearts of Israeli leadership. Its founding prime minister, David Ben Gurion, viewed the dilemma with anguish, exclaiming that a "Jewish state cannot survive being 60% Jewish."

Israel faced this problem by intimidating the Arab population with expulsion and by putting demographic facts on the ground. There are 121 Jewish settlements

in the occupied West Bank, which have 200,000 Jews and 2.5 million Palestinian Arabs.

The population ratio has been overwhelmingly in favour of the Palestinian Arabs since the times the Jews started coming to Palestine from 1880, when there were around 24,000 Jews and 4,000 Arabs.

Later, Chaim Aziel Weizmann, a noted British scientist and a Zionist leader, gained the support of the British government for facilitating Zionist settlements in Palestine. At the beginning, the Jewish-Arab relationship was amicable and the Arabs were attracted to the better skills and education of the Jewish settlers.

Later, it created tension and the Zionist design on Palestine was exposed. The first Zionist congress was held in 1897 in Switzerland under the leadership of Theodore Herzl. There, the vision of Jewish Diaspora returning to Palestine was revealed. Lord Arthur James Balfour, the British secretary of state during the



Palestine: Population explosion threatens Israel.

First World War, was the first to openly advocate a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The advocacy, known as Balfour Declaration, was publicly announced in a letter from Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild, a business tycoon and a leader of Zionist Federation in 1916. It stated: "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use its endeavours to facilitate the achievement of the object... I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of

the Zionist Federation."

It raised the hopes of the Jewish people but the demographic facts continued to remain overwhelmingly in favour of the Palestinian Arabs. The population of Palestine stood at 752,048 -- comprising 589,177 Arab Muslims, 83,790 Jews and 71,464 Christians.

Muslims constituted 78% of the total population while the Jewish were 11%, and the Jewish land ownership was less than 2%. There was a dichotomy between what the Zionist Federation enunciated in its avowal of pacifist means and what

its commanders said in support of their strong-arm tactics. The 12th Zionist Congress of 1921 avowed "to live with Arabs in conditions of unity and mutual honour and, together with them, to turn the homeland into a flourishing land."

Moshe Dayan, a formidable Jewish commander, bluntly defended their vicious policies saying: "We are a generation of settlers, and without the combat helmet and the barrel of gun we will not be able to plant a tree or build a home."

When the second census was held in 1931, the total population of Palestine had grown to 1,036,339, comprising 761,922 Muslims, 175,138 Jews and 89,134 Christians. Muslims constituted 74% of the total population while the Jews were 17%. This was taking place at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs.

There was growing Palestinian Arab discontent with the increasing influx of Jewish settlers and the force they used in occupying Arab land. The outcome of this wrongful occupation of Arab lands raised the number of landless Palestinian Arabs. Riots and revolts followed as a backlash of Arab outrage, which resulted in even greater misery for the Palestinian Arabs. More than 5000 Arabs were killed and the Jewish fatalities were 400.

The British authorities confiscated 13,200 firearms from the Arabs and 521 weapons from the Jews! It led to the growing might of Jewish terrorist organisations Haganah (The Defense) and the

Stern gang. They went ahead ferociously with their plans for the demographic engineering of the population in Israel.

The 1947 UN partition plan of Palestine was so anomalous in its dispensation that, besides the Jewish population of 499,000, the state of Israel was left with a large Palestinian Arab population of 438,000. In the turmoil, and the first Arab-Israeli war that followed the adoption of the partition plan by UN General Assembly Resolution 181, between 700,000 to 750,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes that fell in Israel. They became Palestinian refugees.

The demographic picture continues to haunt Israel because the Palestinian Arabs have a higher growth rate. It can be translated into a scenario where the Arab population in Israel and occupied territories will rise to an estimated 8.5 million in 2020. This will vastly outnumber the estimated Jewish population of 6.4 million.

The population bomb is ticking against Israel. When Israel's hour of reckoning comes it will find that "the conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion, or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad).

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Fake it till you make it

NURY VITTACHI

YOUR humble narrator has been travelling for almost 24 hours, right across the world to Europe. I have just settled into a hotel room in The Hague, Holland. It's funny, in cartoons of Holland, you always see windmills and wooden clogs and tulips -- well, the real thing also has all those things in clear view.

What am I doing here? I'm not really sure. The organizers of Winternachten, a literary festival, invited me and lots of other writers to appear on stage.

The theme of the festival is "Fake It Till You Make It" so that suits me fine -- it's exactly what we were discussing the last

couple of days, by coincidence.

Back to the theme of finding the right job for you.

People going to job interviews inevitably take a stance of Humble Suppliant. Their heads shrink into their shoulders and they have a "please-please-please employ me" air about them.

No, no, no. People react negatively to desperation.

Instead, use the Fake It Till You Make it system to give yourself an irresistible air of confidence. Act you like already have the job.

Upon entering the office for the first time, walk straight past the receptionist, saying, "Hold my calls."

Ask someone for directions to the

boss's office, referring to him in a familiar way. "So where does Fat Boy JJ sleep these days?"

When you reach his office, march past his secretary, noting her name from her desk, and saying: "Hi, Connie, I need to see JJ RIGHT NOW." She'll assume you're the chairman's nephew.

Go in without knocking and sit down immediately, saying to the boss: "We need to talk." The boss will be wondering who you are, but since you are acting as if you own the place, he will be unwilling to ask directly, in case you DO.

He'll probably be on the phone to someone, so pass the time by pulling a tape measure out of your pocket and measuring his office, nodding to your-

self. This will focus his attention wonderfully.

When he lowers the handset, pick up the photo of his wife, grimace at it, and then replace it with the words: "Time for a trophy wife. Leave it with me. I'll get it sorted." Wink.

At this stage, he will probably ask a few questions to try to work out who you are. "Remind me, what are we supposed to be meeting about today?" he will say. Respond to all such questions by laughing uproariously, as if he has made the best joke you've heard for days.

After he has subsided into confused silence, lean over his desk. Refer to him by his family name. Use the plural pronoun for yourself. "Listen, Lee, old man, we

think it's best for me to be on your payroll at the moment. Until we sort things out 'upstairs', know what I mean? What have you got available?"

In response to this, he will name one or more vacant positions. Choose the grandest one, and then add the word "executive" to the front of it, as in "executive financial controller", "executive communications officer" or "executive toilet cleaner." (In modern Businessese the "executive" prefix indicates that the possessor of the title does no actual work.)

He will then try to use the "Necessary Bureaucracy" technique to try to find out who you are. "Sure, but we'll need to sort out your paperwork," he'll say. "Is your

resume on file?"

My recommended answer is: "Be a good little man and make something up for me." At this point, you may wish to pat him on the head.

Then stand up abruptly, telling him you will be back the following day and you expect your desk to be ready.

On the way out, give the secretary your name and your new job title. "Get some business cards made for me, gorgeous. I'd like them on my desk first thing tomorrow if it's no trouble."

This technique guarantees you will get the job.

Or at least die trying.

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