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Terrorism and public awareness

There is a positive sign that the people are quite conscious about the vicious acts of the terrorists at home and abroad. They are aware and ready to respond to combat terrorists in our country. The government should seize this opportunity to make a very con-

certed anti-terrorist campaign to mobilize the people to wipe out this evil force from Bangladesh.

I think the electronic media and the private telephone companies can and should play a greater role by projecting good and positive educational adver-

tisements/serials to keep up the positive mood of the public, especially younger people. We have already seen their strong and effective creative work in other fields to get across the message to the target groups. It is time for them to launch a national campaign against terrorist acts. The work might seem easy, but I think it is a delicate job to make the message educational and motivational with no political string attached.

One thing is very important to keep in mind that terrorism has no boundary, no religion and no ideology, but has political ramification if not well defined and appropriately targeted without any political intention or recipe to combat the terrorist acts. The JMB is more powerful than we know about. They might take full advantage of our current political transition.

The politicians are divided and not necessarily concerned about the real danger of playing with the terrorists for political gain.

A reader
One-mail



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Early marriage

The state of getting married before being mature enough to get married is simply referred to as early marriage. Like most of the countries in the developing world, adolescent and child marriage in our country seem to be a strong social evil, mostly for girls living in rural areas. The young girls, the worst victims of forced marriage, are not having a sigh of relief from the malady of early marriage. Statistics show that as many as 75 percent of rural girls in Bangladesh get married before the age of 16 and only 5 percent between 18 and 20.

The drop out rate of female students at secondary level is alarming as far as the newspaper reports are concerned, with about 30 percent dropped out at this level. Early marriage, however, is believed to have been the main reason behind the situation. Among other reasons for the drop out are inability of guardians to bear the expenses of education and lack of security, superstition and lack of awareness which, we believe, instigate the guardians to marry their daughters off earlier than expected. On top of that, the obsolete mindset of our parents towards their daughters has often been blamed for the social disease, as in most of the cases they feel anxious as long as their daughters do not get married.

Needless to say, much has been done against the ill practice but nothing pragmatic came out. Special law to prevent early marriage is in operation but sorrowfully with no proper implementation. As a result, it has taken a drastic condition, worsening the situation more and more. On an average, girls married off as adolescents attain lower schooling levels, have lower social status in their husbands' families, suffer higher rates of maternal mortality and domestic violence. The consequences of this strong social norm are many, including higher population growth, greater spread of disease, and a higher incidence of orphaning.

The socio-economic and psychological effect of the ill custom has always been far-reaching. The inherent development of talent of the young girls meets premature death due to the archaic custom. In no way should the ill practice be allowed to go on. We need to work together to root out early marriage from every sphere of our society.

Sarwar Hussain

Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering

University of Chittagong

New government's performance

People, especially young and first time voters, voted for the Awami League (AL) in a free, fair and peaceful election on 29 December 2008 as the AL committed itself to bringing about a change.

It came up with a manifesto: a charter for change, which is also known as Vision-2021 or Digital Bangladesh. In its manifesto the AL promised to bring down the price hike, try war criminals, establish rule of law, alleviate poverty and establish good governance and so on.

After attaining a massive victory in the ninth parliamentary election, our Honourable Prime Minister (PM), Sheikh Hasina, actually brought about a change during the formation of the cabinet. She picked up comparatively young, honest and meritorious leaders like Faruk Khan, Sohail Taj, Dr. Dipu Moni and so on. They are performing their duties.

However, it is a matter of great regret that we have been observing violence, gun-battle and extortion at different educational institutions perpetrated by the BCL, the student wing of the AL. Our Honourable PM cannot control or is not willing to control the BCL.

It is more disheartening that she blamed a section of the media for criticizing the government too early. She complained, "Their (journalist) pens were not as sharp back then, as they are now."

We all know about corruption, militancy, price hike, JCD's violence, extortion, occupying of dorms etc. during the BNP rule (2001-2006). Therefore, the people of Bangladesh rejected the BNP-led four party alliance in the general election.

A proverb goes that morning shows the day. So how the government will be run in the coming days can be understood in the initial activities of the ruling government. Therefore, our media people are cautiously criticizing the activities of the ruling government to rectify their mistakes.

Finally, I would like to appreciate our Honourable PM Sheikh Hasina for initiating some bold steps like giving subsidy on fertilisers, reducing price hike of essential commodities etc. Nevertheless, I would like to request her as a voter to take stern action against those unruly BCL activists because they are damaging the image of the AL.

Alas! Nobody listens to the advice of an ordinary man!

Suman Saha
MBA student
University of Dhaka

Slow poisoning

Once I had the opportunity to meet magistrate Rokonuddollah and he said that in many food shops he had seen textile dye for mixing with sweets and other foods. Like other children my children also love to eat coloured chocolates, sweetmeats, ice creams, soft drinks etc., some of which contain artificial dye. So I avoid giving them to my children. But many of my relatives and friends bring chocolates and ice creams for them. When my children take chocolates, I feel very helpless as I think they are taking poison. In my laboratory I have tested ice creams of some famous companies and some of them contain a huge number of bacteria--much beyond the normal limit.

Finally, I would like to say if this situation continue millions of people will suffer from cancer or some other fatal diseases.

I appeal to the authorities, especially health and food ministers, to look into the matter seriously.
Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacy
The University of Asia Pacific
Dharmondi, Dhaka

Role of ACC

I highly doubt whether the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), would ever be able to cure Bangladesh from corruption. It seems to me that the authority may not even be a kosher institution within itself and yet, it is supposed to deal with the problems of corruption. How could we expect an authority to be a prosecutor, jury and judge all at the same time? Besides, where can we find such great flawless brave individuals, who will always do the right thing despite pressure from all corners? This was indeed a utopian and popular idea, to quick fix the corruption but it failed to account for the successful prosecution with evidence and subsequent punishment of the culprits. I am sorry I do not see the required quality and transparency with the current ACC and that is why it is destined to fade away with the new democratic government. No doubt, the ACC has exposed some cases of corruption but it also harassed a great number of people for no good reason.

If the government really wants to root out corruption, it should strengthen the independence of the existing law enforcement authorities and judicial institutions. Only that would provide the long-term antidote against rampant corruption!

Shamol Saha
Boston University, USA

In response...

I am referring to an article entitled "Turkey's Islamists show their hand", where intriguingly the writer launched a campaign of fallacy.

Indeed it's rare that the Newsweek has published an

article of such low standard.

Why should we, the readers of DS, believe that DS would publish whatever Newsweek has in the basket?

Md. Shaifur Rahman
BUET

Call centres

Recently, the DS reported that the potential call centre industry in Bangladesh is facing a lot of policy hurdles. Indisputably, it's our bad luck because we are unable to take this great opportunity. All over the world this is a growing industry, especially in the developing countries. The global market is worth \$450 billion. How much percentage are we getting in this respect?

Study shows that sales growth in India was 89 percent, Brazil 38 percent and in Poland 23 percent in 2007, whereas it was hardly 10 percent in our country. VoIP is still illegal. In such a small country, our authorities have failed to coordinate among themselves. Our competitors are taking advantage of this.

Our government has promised to build a digital Bangladesh by the year 2021. For digitalisation, this sector should get priority. If proper steps are taken, with backward & forward linkages, within a few years Bangladesh will be a great venue of call centre business.

So, the government should start moving right now to minimize the gaps. On the other hand, private investors should be more enthusiastic to promote this sector in Bangladesh.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Propaganda or facts?

The BNP Secretary General seems to be upset, about lawmakers asking for information about Koko's illegal money transfer and ex-PM's 400 pieces of luggage while going to Saudi Arabia! Both the facts are verifiable and possibly on record. Koko's money laundering and getting money from Siemens was public news in US papers.

Regarding the luggage going to Saudi Arabia, it should be on the load sheet of the Biman flight on record on the trip when it was supposed to have been loaded. A scrutiny of that will reveal the logic or otherwise of the matter. Finding that from the record is not difficult. It is however unfortunate that both the issues are related to the ex-PM!

If she (ex-PM) considers these to be false statements made in the house; she and her son should take legal action. Mere talking to reporters is not the correct way to stop the rumours, when legal options are there.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

ACC vs. government

There was front-page news in many Bangla newspapers on 20 Feb. under the heading "kar katha shattaya". Many people, especially the ones who were charged, arrested and jailed for corruption were the most vocal against the ACC Chairman and DG.

One thing is sure, the people of this country, for the first time, could know the magnitude of corruption that was going on, could recognize the officials and politicians involved in corruption due to the independent working environment the ACC enjoyed during the CTG. This is the very ACC which could investigate the stealing of relief goods, taking of bribes from foreign investors and siphoning of wealth to foreign countries, evasion of taxes, extortion and many more crimes committed by government officials, businessmen and politicians before one-eleven.

The prime minister has declared that the anti-corruption drive will continue as it was going on. For the sake of independence of the ACC, they should be allowed to prove their statements with facts and figures so that the corrupt ones do not want the ACC to remain powerful, they want to see the institution as a tool of politicians, so that they always remain out of the drag net.

A vigorous anti-corruption drive is the pledge of the PM's election manifesto. Any action that might go against this pledge will be counter productive.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Let's learn from China

China closed 12 highways around the capital Beijing on 19.02.09 because of heavy snow brought on by seeding clouds with chemicals, according to the Chinese state media. This is exciting news as far as Bangladesh and its weather system is concerned.

All highways were closed in the northern province of China including the one which was directly connected to Beijing. The northern province is seriously hit by drought which according to Beijing is the longest drought in 38 years. Hebei got its first heavy snow of this year on 18.02.09. The provincial weather bureau said that snow too was "enhanced" by artificial seeding.

"The snow has brought moisture to the soil, which will help end the drought," according to a senior engineer of the provincial meteorological observatory. The meteorological office also said that 313 cigarette-size sticks of silver iodide were fired into the clouds

from 18.02.09 night to 19.02.09 morning, that made the snow.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, we sure do not want snow but to combat the draught which mostly takes place in the northern part of the country due to shortage of water, why can't our government request for help from the Chinese for making artificial rains throughout the dry season so that the farmers who harvest once a year do get the opportunity for a second.

With the additional harvest the growth and distribution of food within the country will also improve. This will also help the major rivers of the country to maintain navigation which often is lost due to the dryness/shortage of water of the rivers.

I hope our policy makers will certainly look into this.

Sohel Ahmed

Dhanmondi, Dhaka



IQBAL AHMED / DRINKNEWS

Digital Bangladesh

The term "Digital Bangladesh" has become a common one in our national life these days. We frequently hear of this term but almost all of us are ignorant of what it actually means. It has become so frequently used a term that it has affected all. In the near past the word "digital" was only used to mean something modern.

Our prime minister has ushered in a new era for the nation by using this term. The present govt. has promised to make a digital Bangladesh within 2021. So everybody wishes to experience what is going to be done by 2021.

Whenever we see something strange or extraordinary in our daily life, then we call it a symbol of digital Bangladesh. What's the truth of the matter? The government should act quickly.

Ramij Ahmad
Department of English
University of Chittagong

Withdraw restriction

The Bangladeshi ICL cricketers are still disallowed to play in any form of home cricket. Sri Lanka has already withdrawn the restriction on their ICL cricketers. If BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) gives them the permission to play in all forms of cricket, then our national team will become stronger. We must not forget that Alok Kapali, Shahriar Nafees and Aftab Ahmed played very well in ICL.

Why should we deprive ourselves of their valuable services?
Ahmed Kofil
Business Administration
Shahjalal University
Sylhet

Language issue

Reading your Ekushey edition, I was struck, once more, with the strange contradiction between the genuine feeling for the celebration - its history and meaning - and the shame that admits how badly your mother language is often spoken, especially by the young. Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury, in particular, spoke of this and the resistance to Bengali-speaking that exists among some who prefer English.

However, may I point out that some of these 'English Language snobs' do not speak English well either. I winced when I hear some of them, showing off what they think is their mastery of the language. "I'm not good in Bengali!" they protest. "AT, I drone. 'You are good AT something!'"

JS, local development to sink in MP meddling, panic spreads as law enforcement slackens, gun-running rampant along SW borders, truck looted by Dinajpur BCL men, gang kills man & loots truckload of rods in N'ganj, mob clashes with BDR over smuggled goods etc. We see nothing bright!

And what tell-tale signals we get from these reports? It is not a hidden fact that a large chunk of the media has sympathy for the AL and we can get some early indications from the media reports about the tomorrows. In a post-editorial, Mr. Zafar Sobhan outlined some facts in detail about the not-promising coming days. He has drawn up a list of possible indications which will shed light on the direction the government intends to go. And many will support the views of Mr. Zafar Sobhan about the unclear & opaque process for the final disposition of the 122 ordinances passed by the last CTG, government's foot-dragging to approve the Local Government Commission Ordinance 2008 and its over enthusiasm not to ratify the ordinance scrapping the parliamentarians' privilege of importing duty-free luxury cars.

To succeed in any undertaking or mission, the beginning is very important. The AL should remember why the people rejected it in 2001 general election and act accordingly from the very beginning, so that history is not repeated.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Morningshows...

It is just more than a month that the AL-led grand alliance formed the government after its landslide victory in the last general election. Against the opposition & some media reports & criticisms, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister, told that it was too early to make any comments on the achievements of her government. This is very true but as the proverb goes that morning shows the day, the common people are losing their hearts. Look at some news headings from DS in the last few days which are: School shut as AL men occupy it for jatra, BCL dissolves JU unit after gunfight, MPs shout, bang desk at

I think the heart of the matter is that to speak, read and write either language (any language?) really well is a lot of hard work and some are prepared to do it and some are not. The basic problem is not preference but laziness! Moreover, some lazy children, when they discover that the early stages of English may be easier for them than the early stages of Bengali are very good at manipulating their parents!

When ideas for the reform of the education system are being mooted (including the horrors of a 'unified system') we must all accept that it is NOT true that 'Bengali-medium education = good Bengali-speaking and English-medium education = bad Bengali-speaking'. It is much more complicated than that! Hard-working students from good English-medium schools can be excellent at Bengali - and my hat comes off to those from Bengali medium schools whose English is excellent.

Yes, there are a few parents of pupils in English-medium schools who say, "I don't want my child to speak Bengali!" but, thank God, they are not many and the school authorities can stand firm. In a good English-medium school, however much they jump up and down, their child is not allowed to give up Bengali, even if their American passport is in their pocket....

Let us promote serious language learning in all places of education.

Angela Robinson
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

EC's decision

My heartiest congratulations to the Election Commission for appointing its own officers as Retuning Officers in the December 29 election for the first time in the history of the Election Commission. I served in the Election Commission for 21 years and fought for this cause but could not achieve the goal.

I feel proud that at last the Election Commission felt the necessity to utilise their officers for the purpose they were appointed. I would also request my colleagues, now appointed as Returning Officers, to smoothly conduct the by-elections to parliament and discharge their duties sincerely, neutrally and honestly.

A.S.M. Anwaruzzaman
Deputy Election
Commissioner (Retd)
Dhaka

Ekushey



SHAFIQUK ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

Language is regarded as the mainstay of a nation's culture. As an evil attempt to tarnish our culture, the erstwhile Pakistanis tried to impose forcibly an alien language on us by effacing our glorious mother-tongue forever. But on that day our invincible people realized it and came forward to protect our language. The unprecedented incident of Ekushey February is not merely an event but indicates a spirit that we got 57 years ago through the sublime sacrifice of those valiant sons of our soil.

Their supreme sacrifice remind us to be united to work together to build a new nation. Ekushey does not mean songs and wreaths of flowers only, but it also symbolises the determination to rise above selfishness and submissiveness.

Ekushey is our pride, our pledge to uphold our language above everything else.

Harun Ur Rashid
Student
Institute of Social Welfare and Research
University of Dhaka