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People's expectations

As soon as this government came to power, we thought that at least this time around we would see a change in the political culture of our country and we believed that this time around the government would continue the anti-corruption drive initiated by the immediate past caretaker government.

However, unfortunately, recent developments have made us more pessimistic than optimistic about what the future holds for us. To start with, with so many lingering problems already afflicting the country--the crippling power, gas and water crisis; the tragic BDR incident; prices of other essentials rising etc--the government it appears is more interested in giving priority to evicting the leader of the opposition from her house in cantonment, rather than putting more emphasis on the day to day problems facing the citizens. The opposition for its part also appears more energetic in holding rallies to raise protest only against the lease cancellation move, rather than highlighting the problems of electricity, gas and water and thereby holding the government more accountable for its failure to provide the basic services to the people.

In addition, the resignation

of the ACC chief and the confrontational stance in which we find the ACC and the standing committee on Public Undertakings (PUC), make us doubtful about the government's sincerity in continuing the anti-corruption drive. The move by certain bigwigs to apply for the withdrawal of their cases also makes things cloudier. To prove that they are innocent, it is best that they face the court and prove themselves not guilty. Moreover, the land grabbing spree of the associate front organisations of the ruling party makes us feel pessimistic.

One hundred days may yet be too small a time for the government to be judged on its performance fully. However, we expect that the government will take immediate concrete measures to solve the power crisis; ensure that farmers are not discouraged to cultivate rice crops; that prices of other commodities do not go up; ensure that the budgetary allocations are properly utilized; ensure that the health and education situation improves and finally hold trial of the BDR incident perpetrators and trial of war criminals.

Instead of keeping itself too busy in only attacking the opposition, the government must move forward with its tasks without delay.

Wasif Wahed
One-mail

Begum Zia's house

There have been a lot of talks, passing of opinions and hot debates between the pundits on both sides on the legality of lease and cancellation of lease etc., since the prime minister invited Begum Zia to return the government property in the cantonment, leased to her by the Ershad government.

When we listen to those pundits' arguments on their side of logic, we get confused as to who is right. To us, it seems both sides are right. Whoever may be correct or whoever may be incorrect, we believe Begum Khaleda Zia is living in a house that belongs to the government. Either legally or illegally allotted, she is occupying this state property on lease. She is not the real owner of this house. She was given this house out of sympathy because her husband had been killed in a coup attempt. She has been occupying this temporarily allotted government property for more than 27 years and wants to keep it forever.

She is no more insolvent. Since the birth of Bangladesh, many widows of freedom fighters like her did not get any such help from the government. She was twice prime minister, and her family is rich now. So, she has enjoyed enough help from the state. How long does she deserve this facility?

Now, the authorities have served her a notice to vacate it, and if the law cannot protect her legally, she will have to vacate the house after the legal battle is over. Will it be a nice exit? I hope she should look for the answer.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

running the fans although the bus has it. Some buses run the fans initially but later on those are removed from the buses permanently.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

PM's visit

If the prime minister of Bangladesh feels the need to visit another country (DS, April 20) to discuss some important issues, that is certainly understandable. But I am not sure if our PM really needs to take a 35-member delegation with her. This is Bangladesh, not America.

And why on earth should the poor taxpayers of Bangladesh pay for these people's very expensive holiday? We will appreciate an explanation from the PM's office.

Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

Concentrate on serious issues

I would like to bring these following things to the notice of the government regarding their present stance on issues like Pilkhana incident, shortage of power and water supply, BCL violence, traffic, and noise pollution. I wish the government would concentrate more on these serious issues rather than a petty issue like Khaleda Zia's house in the cantonment.

The common people of Bangladesh are not interested in petty issues, all we want to see is constructive result. I work in an office in Uttara. The unbearable noise pollution is making it difficult to live here. But nobody is there to address the problem!

Azra Azad
Gulshan
Dhaka

A good initiative

Brahmanbaria Sahitya Academy, a cultural organisation which has already passed a long path in 23 years, celebrated the Noboborsha (Bangla New Year) in a festive mood. This organisation arranged a week long fair & cultural programme on the premises of the Industrial School here. Many writers, artists, intellectuals, politicians and journalists were invited to this programme.

Such type of carnival is very important to generate enthusiasm among people about our culture, history & heritage. Thanks to all activists & organisers of the festival.

Md. Rauful Alam
B. Baria

Job generation

The previous caretaker government launched the hundred days job generating scheme in order to create employment opportunity for vulnerable people, especially the extreme poverty ridden people of the northern region. At the outset, it generated employment on food for work basis. People of the poor community saw a light of hope initially, but ironically the elected representatives and government officials could not fulfil their expectations.

The present government suspended this scheme and assured us that it would be restarted after proper investigation.

The poor are leading their lives in a miserable condition. If this scheme is not recommenced, soon they will have to face a very difficult situation.

Mohammad Rahisul Haque
Manager
Business Development
Rapid PR

Prime minister's security

There is no denying that our prime minister's security is a matter of great concern. Many a time she was the target of direct attacks. The August 21 grenade attack was the most severe one. It was His kindness and sheer luck that saved her. Now, the terrorists are so desperate that the foreign secretary of a neighbouring country had to rush to Dhaka to ring the warning bell directly to her. We thank the Indian government for their very good neighbourly gesture. But the question remains can we all the time depend on the intelligence of a foreign country? Like many other things we should be self sufficient in collection of intelligence reports and other related matters. We should develop our own civilian intelligence agencies capable enough to protect our interests both internally and externally. This needs proper handling. The Cuban experience may be an example, where President Fidel Castro survived the onslaught of world's biggest power just sixty miles away from their coast. But please remember it should be a civil affair professionally crafted.

M. Sanaul Haq
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Dream of Digital Bangladesh

Digital Bangladesh is our dream, our weapon for changing the country, an expectation of people and a supervision of nation.

'Digital Bangladesh' means it will be an e-state; all of its activities like governance, commerce, education, agriculture etc will be powered by computer and the Internet. In short, it will be computer and Internet based Bangladesh. Today the entire world is gradually becoming a digital planet. Almost every state is heading towards a knowledge-based society and Bangladesh cannot stay away from it.

Both the ruling and opposition parties of Bangladesh emphasized ICT development as a core issue in their election manifestoes. The election manifesto of the Awami League pledged introduction of ICT in every sphere of our national life.

The main opposition party BNP also mentioned a number of times that they started the programme in their tenure and would complete it earlier than 2021.

A very first step for digital Bangladesh would be to spread the ICT education throughout the country. Every primary and secondary student should have access to the computer and computer based education. Mid level education and short level education or training should be readily available throughout the country and higher level education on computer science should be qualitative. Internet is not available for all computer user students at present in our country. So, Internet facilities should be made available in the remotest corner of the country at a cheapperrate.

However, the mass people expect that the government will take all possible steps to create a SMART (simple, measurable, accountable, responsive and transparent) Bangladesh and a knowledge based society within 50 years of its independence by 2021, which will be called "Digital Bangladesh".

Shimul Smile
LLB (hons)
Dhaka University

Farmers' plight



FIROZ GAZI / DRIKNEWS

The price of rice to the farmer for growing his crop is an important economic index for the country. The selling price of the rice grown by the farmers must provide him a reasonable return on investment. However, an analysis carried out by farmer Khandokar Abdur Rouf giving the detailed cost of raising the crop and its selling price was presented by S. Seraj of Channel i at a seminar on 11 April. This presents a very adverse and depressing situation. It will naturally discourage the planting of rice--the staple food in Bangladesh!

The analysis carried out in northern Bangladesh reported that one bigha of land produces 17 maunds of rice for Boro cultivation. The cost to the farmer for producing this rice, starting from field preparation up to sending the rice to wholesale market (Roth) comes to US\$130 (\$1= Tk.70).

The best selling price the farmer can get is US\$5.12 per maund of rice. The farmer's total income from one bigha of land (17 maunds) comes to US\$87.04.

The farmer therefore loses (130-87.04) US\$ 42.86 which is Tk. 3000 per bigha of rice planted! Given this set of numbers: just to break even; the minimum selling price of Boro rice should be (130/17): that is US\$7.65 per maund of rice.

Given these alarming numbers; one

wonders how the farmer makes up this seasonal losses? May be the profit from Amon planting possibly makes up the losses. However if this equation of cost vs. selling price is not sorted out; we can never improve the quality of life of our farmers.

Rice market experts should seriously study this issue; and come out with pragmatic suggestions in the overall interest of the country. I congratulate Mr. Seraj for raising an important national issue, and bringing it to our attention.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

The recent drop in the price of rice could be a boon for the consumers but definitely not a blessing for the rice growers/farmers. Because irrational fall in price means less return on investment, often it is difficult to recover the cost of production.

I think the government should take some pragmatic measures to protect the interest of the rice growers.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Our favourite singer



PHOTO STAR

Our music arena is swelling up with new artists and bands. There are some bands with a real treat; some are struggling to reach a height. Music and lyrics have really scaled a good height in some bands' renditions and certain solo singers are also putting their mark on the track --- Habib, Bappa Majumder, Fuad and Tapu along with Juli, Anila, and Nancy, to mention a few.

However, while talking of pop music and its way in our culture one has to go back and fondly recall the maestro musician Azam Khan. This maestro is the pioneering singer who ushered in the genre in our music with a bang! "Ore Saleka, Ore Maleka", "Ami jare chaire", "Obhimani", "Ashi ashie bole tumi", "Rel lainer bostite", "Bangladesh" "Didi Ma", are the songs worth mentioning! Guitar play, that has a rock fusion in it, lyrics that is embedded with our emotions, and his rocking vocal are the trademark Azam Khanian! This Azam Khan cult is still popular among the music lovers of all ages in the country --- present singers with conviction and talents start their renditions with paying respect to the pop king!

Azam Khan is a freedom fighter too. He took part in our glorious liberation war in 1971.

These days when we see him sing occasionally on TV with all his devotion and love and his trademark gestures, our mind starts dancing to the rhythms! In my opinion, Azam Khan is our Mick Jagger, as far as talent, popularity, and capacity to move the music lovers and a rock n roll physic are concerned!

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Setting priorities

The mass people have given the mandate to them to govern this country for at least the next five years. If they can convince the people that they are capable enough to govern the state properly, of course people will bring you to power again. But through their unplanned activities if they make it clear that they have no faith on people and by occupying power they would like to hold it forever, the mass people of Bangladesh will not tolerate it.

The Upazila Parishad Act-2009 has gone totally against their election manifesto. Most of the elected chairmen are from the ruling party. Why are you pushing them to the street to move against you?

On the other hand, the government has cancelled lease of Khaleda Zia's Cantonment house 'due to a number of anomalies in the allotment within the military zone'. What does the government want to achieve from this decision?

Imrul Hasan
Subid Bazar, Sylhet

Uncomfortable buses

For reducing traffic jams in Dhaka we have to take steps for total ban or less plying of smaller vehicles like rickshaws, cars, baby taxies etc. On the other hand, big buses have to be introduced in greater numbers. In fact, most people travel by buses in this capital city. There are some AC buses whose fares are comparatively high. To travel by a non-AC bus is definitely a bothersome matter, particularly during the summer.

To mitigate the troubles of people including children and women, every bus should have fans in it. Some buses do have it but most of them do not have this simple service provider which can provide comfort to a great extent. Some drivers/ conductors are not very much interested in

Zebra crossing at Wari

After repeated requests, Dhaka City Corporation has kindly put Zebra crossing mark on Folder Street in Wari residential area at Sher-e-Bangla Girls School and Dawn Garments point.

We express our thanks and gratitude to the DCC for the work done for the safety of school children and members of the public.

Earlier, many accidents took place at the Sher-e-Bangla-Dawn Garments road crossing point, some people were killed and many pedestrians were injured but the authorities concerned including the DMP did not take any preventive/precautionary measure.

We would however like to mention here that the above Sher-e-Bangla Girls School-Dawn Garments Zebra Crossing has proved ineffective. All types of vehicles neither stop, nor slow down before the Zebra Crossing. The school going children, pedestrians, women and aged persons continue to face great risk of life as before.

We feel it is imperative that a traffic signal light, red and green, may be installed ahead of the Zebra Crossing for the sake of safety and security of all types of pedestrians including school children.

We would also like to add here that occasionally for one or two hours we find a traffic police constable standing lazily or sitting idle on a chair on the corner of the lane of Sher-e-Bangla Girls School but he does not control or supervise road traffic!

We would also like to draw the attention of the DCC to the fact that the southern footpath of Folder Street is quite high and it is very inconvenient and difficult for the school children, women and old pedestrians to climb up and get down from the footpath. It is necessary that small stairs are constructed at the southern side of the Folder Street footpath.

Would the DCC and the DMP kindly look into matter and do the needful in the interest of public service?

OH Kabir
Hare Street
Wari, Dhaka

Our natural wonders

We are aware that a campaign launched by new seven wonders foundation was going on in order to select seven new wonders of the world. Can we guess which one came first in the group G? Cox's Bazar!

Cox's Bazar is one of the most attractive tourist spots and the longest sea beach in the world (approx 120 kms long). With miles of golden sands, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colourful pagodas, Buddhist temples, delightful seafood, Cox's Bazar is the tourist capital of Bangladesh. The warm shark free waters are good for bathing and swimming, while the sandy beach offers opportunity for sunbath. The

beauty of the setting-sun behind the waves of the bay is simply captivating.

Moreover, the Sundarbans, came third in the group E as the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangrove forest in the world. It became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1997.

People from all over the world are invited to vote for their preferred spots. Votes are taken in the web site of <http://www.new7wonders.com/nature>. It is our duty and responsibility to project out beautiful spots like Cox's Bazar and the Sundarbans through voting for them.

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