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Using land

Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world. The growth rate of population here is still high. But the land mass of the country does not increase, not even an inch. Besides, the agricultural land is reducing every day. Why not, every day new schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, offices, courts, playgrounds roads, homes,

markets bazars, trade centres, industries etc are being established on the agricultural land.

The planners should attach due importance to the matter.

Rejaul Karim
Lecturer, Dept. of History
Govt. Rajendra College
Faridpur

Power supply

At present load shedding varies between 1200-1500MW. Basic source of energy is gas and coal. Gas is in short supply. So its exploration needs to be expedited.

Large deposits of coal are available in Barapukuria. If extraction of coal poses a problem, it requires early resolution.

Serajul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Positive sign

The so-called Islamic militancy is an "unlawful war" of some misguided people against the civilized society. The members of the militant groups claim themselves to be Muslims and are waging war in the name of Islam. If we look at their latest front of war, they are killing fellow Muslims inside the very prayer houses i.e. mosques. For example, we are watching what is happen-

ing in Pakistan-- the so-called Islamists are killing their brothers and sisters in the mosques on special prayers day, the Friday. So, it is very easy to understand that the so-called Islamists are not real Muslims but they are using Islam and destroying its image.

In Bangladesh, the general public are aware of this and they oppose it. The recent clashes between the militants and the people in different places clearly indicate the fact. Even the villagers are passing information about the militants to the law enforcing agencies to capture them. This is a very good sign of our people's mindset about the militants.

The people have full support for the drive against militancy. What our government should do is create public awareness against them and continue the drive as hard as possible to elimi-

nate them fully from the soil of Bangladesh.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

ACC's role

The propriety of ACC's action in filling cases against people and the way it spent a huge amount of taxpayers' money have been called into question. Many people were put in jail, harassed and humiliated in connection with ACC cases. The role of the Anti-Corruption Commission during the two years of the caretaker government's rule has come under sharp criticism for the manner in which it instituted cases against political and business leaders, including two former prime ministers.

People have the right to ask the ACC to inform them about the details of the engagement of (how many) lawyers and expenditures.

Mohammad Rafique
Sheikh Mujib Road
Chittagong

Love for luxury!

Rashidul Hasan's front-page report of 20 April on the matter is an eye opener. However, the moot question is, did the minister approve the proposals for the lavish office decoration as reported in another daily as well as for the purchase of a luxurious SUV?

If it is yes, then the minister should resign taking full responsibility for the matter. If it is no; he should still resign for his lack of control over planning to spend so much for his office decoration and transport! If he cannot control his own office expenditure, then how can he manage and control the various financial decisions he needs to take for the works related to his ministry?

Given the circumstances, the Hon. PM should distance herself from such people in the interest of the government and the people. If this is not done, then we can draw only one conclusion that the plant of corruption has already taken roots!

Acitizen
One-mail

Why this prejudice?

Some days ago a man came to our office to buy an apartment from a particular project. He wanted to know whether any buyer from Barisal was there. According to him, it is impossible to live with a neighbour from Barisal. My other two co-directors smiled silently as I am a man from Barisal. Over two decades ago, I along with my wife went to the house of one of my acquaintances. There were a dozen people who were engaged in a debate over "who are the worst people in Bangladesh?" The conclusion of the debate was that the people of Comilla, Noakhali & Barisal were the worst! My wife also fell into this category as she is from Noakhali.

Interestingly, the buyer whom I have mentioned at the beginning of this letter is also a man from Comilla. I think many people have positive or negative ideas about people of some particular districts or areas. But can an area produce good or bad people? As our country is very small the geographical impact cannot be a big one to change the mentality of people to a great extent. But many people have such strong prejudices.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Opinion poll on student politics

Your recent opinion poll on 100 days of the present government is really a praiseworthy one.

The same way, if you can conduct another poll on STUDENT POLITICS, among the genuine and legal guardians of various educational institutions in our country, it may help as a prescription for healing the DEAF EARS of the authorities.

It is very clear that until and unless some serious move is made from the guardians' side on this issue, the government will remain indifferent to the problem. One more reason is that the top politicians of our country, being fully aware of the real atmosphere of education in Bangladesh, have arranged for their children to be educated in foreign countries, especially the boys. But they have no time to think about the problems of the academic arena in the country.

Suhel
Doha, Qatar

DHK's passing

Mr. Delwar Hossain Khan, popularly known as "DhK", probably the most widely recognized and professionally awarded personality of Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry, died on Wednesday (21st April morning) at a local hospital in Dhaka.

He started his career in pharmaceuticals in the late 60s and was engaged in the sector till his death.

His professional acumen in the pharmaceutical industry became evident when he joined Beximco Pharmaceuticals in the early 80s. He first introduced Market Research, Medical Services, Material Resource Planning and MIS in a national company back in the 80s. While accomplishing this, he developed a contingent of multidisciplinary professionals. This, actually, created the gateway of opportunities for many new skills and disciplines in the industry which never were explored before in this particular industry. Many of his team members are presently playing similar roles within and outside Bangladesh.

We mourn his death.
Momtaz F Chowdhury
Bengal Foundation

Discrimination in promotion

Education is the backbone of a nation which is imparted by the teacher. In the developed countries in the world, teachers are honoured in many ways. On the other hand, in our country teachers are neglected. There are many points to discuss but today we are focusing on one of the vital issues.

To get appointment as a lecturer in a non-government college, a candidate has to struggle a lot. After two years of appointment, a lecturer's salary structure is upgraded to Tk 7,400 from Tk 6,800 and then after 8 years it is increased to Tk 9,000. But this rule remains inoperative for the last eight years.

The most incredible and illogical decision which is imposed on the teachers by the authorities is that out of seven teachers, only two will be promoted to assistant professor. This is gross injustice to the teachers appointed at the same time. We offer the following suggestions to set things right.

1. Revive the senior scale of the teachers as before.
2. After eight years of service, every teacher should get a chance to appear in an examination through which qualified teachers will be selected for the next higher position and higher scale.
3. Nowadays promotion totally depends on the governing body or managing committee. This is not fair.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter.
Md Atiqur Rahman
Parimal Chandra Das
Badda, Dhaka

An appeal to lawmakers

I would like to draw the kind attention of the general readers and the lawmakers of the country in particular to the Section 18 (3) of the Arthorin Adalat Ain 2003 (Ain). This is a bad law as it discourages the investors to invest in the long run. No business can guarantee profit. If it could be

Hydraulic horns

You have published many reports about the sound pollution by "hydraulic horns" of heavy trucks, covered vans, trailer trucks, inter-district buses etc. in your daily. Unfortunately, the authorities concerned have not taken any 'positive step' to stop the menace. Day by day the number of vehicles is increasing, leading to increase in sound pollution. People are just helpless.

Most of the heavy traffic of Dhaka city pass through the residential areas of Moghbazar, Eskaton, Ramna, Bangla Motors, and Farm Gate areas because supply of essential food items like rice, fish, vegetables, fruits are brought to "Karwan Bazar" by large heavy trucks/covered vans. Large quantity of clothing materials comes from Chittagong for Dhaka garment factories at Tejgaon/other places. Most of these vehicles start to come to the city between 9:00pm to 12:00 at midnight and start the return journey between 3:00am to 6:00am. Hence you see that a large number of residents of Dhaka city just cannot "sleep" during the night due to the loud sound made by these

vehicles using the banned "hydraulic horns"

Therefore the authorities must take appropriate measures to "catch the culprits" and give them due punishment. Just a nominal "fine" will not deter these reckless drivers. One way to catch these vehicles is to put up "check-points" at Shahbag crossing, Moghbazar crossing, Bangla Motors and Farmgate every week by rotation. Magistrates should impose heavy fines along with prison terms to the culprits. They should also "destroy" all the seized hydraulic horns on the spot so that these can never be used again.

Another problem now being faced by the citizens is the construction of very large housing complexes in various parts of Dhaka city.

It is, therefore, necessary that the law enforcers, the department of environment, and the ministry concerned look into these problems faced by the citizens and take URGENT remedial action.

Mrs B. Khan
Eskaton, Dhaka



Battle for the house!

Although the steam is getting less powerful, the BNP activists are still holding the street to retain the house. A newly empowered heavy weight politician of the BNP, who happens to be a lawyer, is really out to make all kinds of arguments to retain the house of his leader. Bangladesh is a country of extraordinary judicial culture--for some one's mistake or favour the country will have to pay for it. Even constitutional protection is given to protect an illegal and immoral act of individual and of the government. The learned lawyers of the BNP might find a way out to save the house so that they are not evicted from the place of birth and bastion of power. This is well said by the SG of the BNP according to him, "Minus cantonment means minus politics or minus one" what an interesting admission of the political ideology of the party. We feel baffled learning that the house is donated to the entire family of president Zia, which means they will inherit the right from generation to generation and the basic political ideology will carry with them. I thank the political mentor for taking such a far-sighted action for the newly born politi-



cal party in 1975. This is called political statesmanship. The learned lawyers might be saving the heritage whether it is illegal or immoral by any standard.

We only hope that the spirit of unadulterated law will be upheld in the court of law and justice will be delivered to undo an illegal and immoral act of the past and the present. The people will thank the Zia family if they voluntarily vacate the house since they have more than enough resources to build such a memorial house outside the cantonment. Please take a moral view and not lawyers' advice.

Areader
One-mail

Putting railways back on rails

Your timely editorial, highlighting the sad plight of railways on April 18, deserves the government's serious attention. This matter is of national interest; since railways provide the cheapest mode of passenger and goods transportation. The task is mammoth, but it needs to be done, maybe spread over a number of years in order of economic priority, as it will require huge investment mostly in foreign exchange.

As stated in your editorial, rolling stock inventories have reduced overall by over forty percent from the 1972 benchmark figures! However, the locomotive to wagon ratio has not changed substantially. From 1:31 in 1972, the ratio now is 1:33.2. This means two extra wagons per locomotive. May be this could be the result of improved traction efficiency from converting almost all steam locomotives to diesel or diesel-electric drives.

The recipe outlined by you is

quite judicious. It has however missed the important aspect of upgrading locomotive and rolling stock maintenance and upkeep backed with sufficient tools and spares. This is the key issue: in keeping the locomotives in efficient running order at all times, with full power available.

The government's first priority should be cash flow stability, by doing everything possible to recover the outstanding amount of Tk.12,000 crore, plus possible penal interests. This could only happen and continue because of undue political interferences over the years, along with possible corruption of railway officials. The funds are government's, so they should take all steps necessary to recover this huge amount without fail, and as soon as possible!

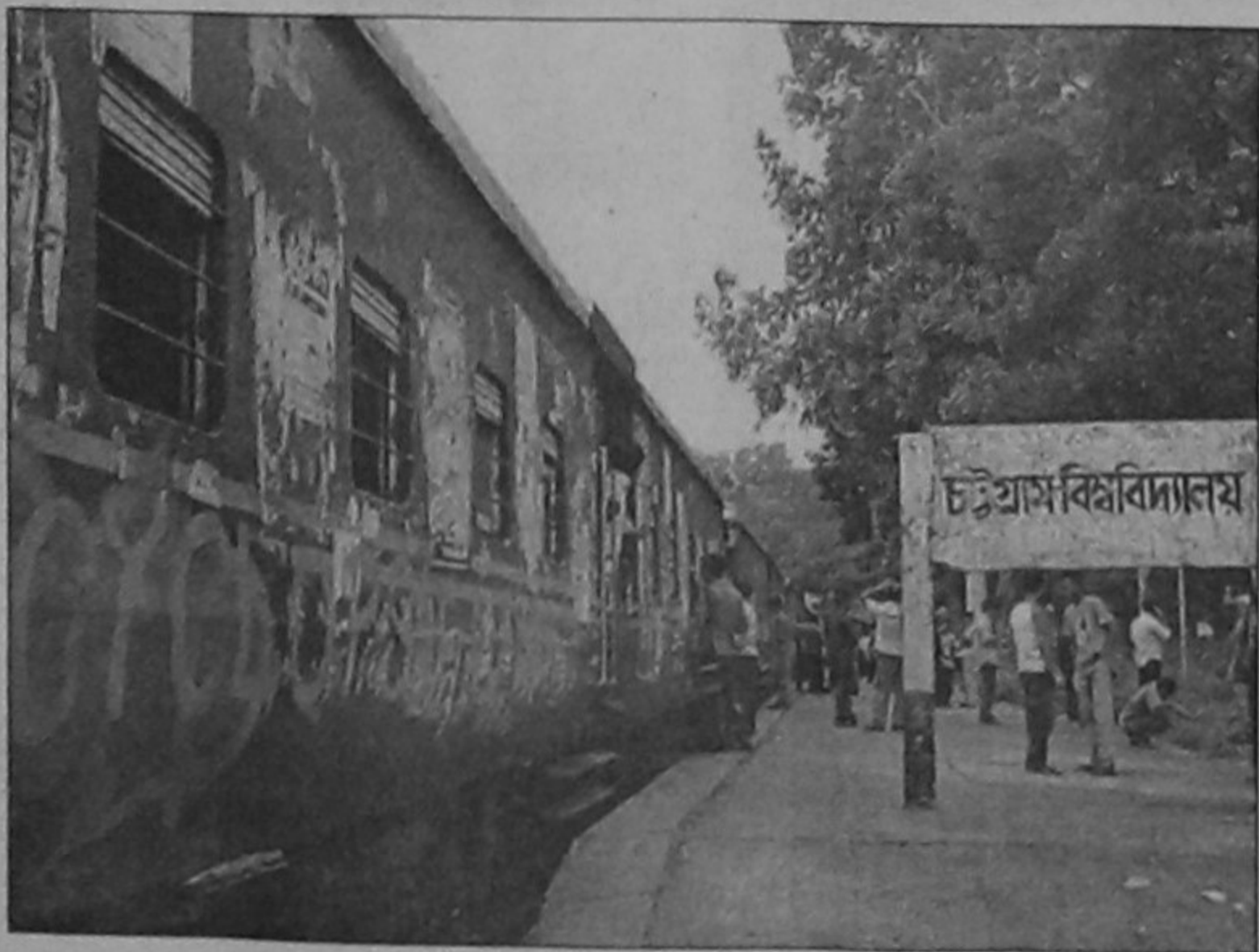
Next is railway land illegally taken by exploiters, not without political favour of one kind or the other! This is in effect govern-

ment land, and the government should leave no stone unturned to recover this illegally occupied lands, again without fear or favour, as they are doing with the ex-PM's residence.

Once railway is financially and operationally strengthened, we

may go for interlinking various modes of communication. Hopefully, this will not give rise to another superimposed bureaucratic body and the resulting drainage of public funds creating unnecessary paperwork!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka



ensured, then everyone would start a business. In practice, only 3-5% of the world population are risk takers i.e. the entrepreneurs, the prime movers of the economy.

This law has been enacted ignoring the fundamental rights of the investors who borrowed funds to set up industries, created employment opportunities and contributed to the economic growth of the country.

As I know, some borrowers lodged money suits against banks much before the promulgation of this law and in some cases the borrowers' claim is much higher than the bank's claim in Artho Rin suit. It will not be out of place to mention here that if the bank wins in the subsequent Artha Rin suit, the borrower company's existence will be in total jeopardy to meet the said decree, in spite of having more claim pending in the earlier suit against the bank. Whereas if the borrower company wins in the earlier suit there will be no such problem for the bank.

Because of this law all the defaulting borrowers are deprived of their fundamental right (as laid in Part iii of the constitution) of being treated equally (Article 27) and the right of protection of law (Article 31). Finding no other remedy, some borrowers filed writ petition challenging the Ain to the Hon'ble Court to enforce their fundamental rights under Article 102 of the constitution. In most cases the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued rule in favour of the borrowers and stayed the Artho Rin suit filed by the bank till disposal of the rule. But this cannot be a permanent solution of the issue.

I hope the matter will be taken up by the lawmakers for rectification of the law and allowing analogous hearing of the cases filed by the borrower and the bank in two different courts. It will save the entrepreneurs.

Ruhul Ameen, FCMA
Former Vice President of ICMAB

Cancellation of lease

If it is looked upon from public interest and from the point of inadmissibility of conducting political activities in a restricted and sensitive zone, the proposed cancellation of the lease to Begum Zia of her cantonment residence in no way goes against the tenets or ethics. Earlier, as the people

were unaware of such a vast land being under the occupation of a single family, they had nothing to say against, but now they do not sympathize with the family.

It is veritably a million dollar question if the family of late Zia (announcer of the declaration of Independence and later President of BD) could be rewarded with such residences, why the family of the slain architect of this nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (only two daughters spared) and those of the many martyred freedom fighter military officers were deprived of such privileges? One military dictator made charities of two residences to the family of another dictator! It is morally unethical to keep such a vast land under occupation when there is acute shortage of a piece of land in Dhaka. When crores of people have no roof to live under, it does not seem rational on her part to keep so much land for her lavish use.

On the other hand, when the government is faced with many other vital issues to address, the step to cancel the lease right at this moment appears to be just injudicious. The government has in fact stirred a hornet's nest and the confrontational unrest that may follow will simply scuttle people's expectations of the change that the AL is committed to deliver.

The priority should be how to resolve, among many other grinding/crippling issues, the hellish load-shedding and rein in the rogues in the party organs who have already caused cracks in the image of the government, not the cancellation of the lease.

Ahmed Niaz
Shekheret, Mohammedpur
Dhaka

Disorder in BCL

Against the backdrop of BCL's destructive activities which have virtually closed almost all the major educational institutions in the country, our prime minister has stepped down as the organisational chief of BCL. Following her resignation, a legitimate question arises as to why she has done so. Does she mean she has failed to control the BCL? If so, then who else can bring the BCL back on the right track? It is also possible that she has resigned being frustrated with the notorious activities of her party's student wing. But her resignation will not bring any durable solution. She and her

government are responsible for restoring order in the BCL and create a congenial atmosphere in the educational institutions. Though our PM has sent a message of stern action against those BCL activists who are locked in fighting, extortion, tender manipulation and other criminal activities, this may not serve the purpose as her message of stern action is not a new one to the BCL men.

With the series of clashes within and between the student bodies, we may well ask what purpose student politics is serving. Shouldn't the major parties think seriously about banning such politics?

Golam Mostafa
Dept. of Mathematics
JU, Savar

Unsettled 21st century

Civilization is changing slowly but surely, during this 21st century the first and the third worlds are under continuous stress, as the rate of change is rising; and the global problems multiply. There is too much global garbage, to be carted away.

There are several mileposts: the 9/11: the rise of the religious extremists outfits; the current US leadership by an unknown Obama: the sudden collapse of the US dollar (the only global currency); many LDCs turning into disabled states; the G-20 summit; the limping of the UN organs: the split in the IAEA.

Now the rich countries have more problems than the poorer states.

The South's problems are well known (poverty levels, HR, birth and death rates; medical facilities; lack of micro-credit; and many others). The G-20 failed to come to a consensus; guns cannot control violence and political approaches are lacking in sincerity.

The new spotlight is on South Asia (where we live). The mighty US cannot afford to operate too many military fronts. Afghanistan, Iran, N Korea, Iraq and Pakistan and Bangladesh are under the magnifying glass.

The general elections in India (ally of the Americans) might be a Sabbatical experience for many.

It appears that now Islam is under severe test--lack of communication between the rich and the marginalized. First the inner faith: then the cosmetic show! **AMawaz**
Dhaka