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February 25



It is a matter of great regret and shame that on February 25, 2009 some ill motivated BDR personnel brutally killed a number of military officers. The nation was deeply shocked and paid homage to the valiant sons of the soil.

Due to this heinous act of some derailed BDR personnel as well as considering the present perspective, the

nation now wants to see immediate structural/fundamental and radical change in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). It should be renamed BTSF i.e. Bangladesh Territorial Security Forces.

M. Hamidul Haq Bhashani
Kayotkhali
Mymensingh

Communicative English

Communicative English is a form of language which is used as the colloquial medium of communication.

There is still a debate prevailing among grammarians as to which is the better form. Some say that the conventional written form is full of clichés. To conceptualise and express a thought, or an idea, more words are needed in the written form.

English grammar is the basic foundation of English language. The communicative form does not introduce any idea of grammar to the students of primary classes. It has been five or six years that this system has been reclaimed by the teachers for the students of our country. All the grammar books are being changed and also some grammatical mistakes are found in the books.

The decision makers and educationists should look into the matter.

Imamul Hasan Lincoln Student
Dept. of Textile Technology
Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology

Opinion poll

I have gone through the opinion poll report published on 16.04.09 with interest and would like to put forward some of my observations on thereport.

The item "Right or wrong direction" should have been the result of all other indicators' results, not as a separate item.

The item "Economy" is an academic one which is difficult to be perceived and the results of opinion poll may not be satisfactory.

The item "Inflation" is understood by the prices of essential commodities.

The opinion poll on this item can be perceived and is well reflected.

The results of "Issue for attention" indicate that price inflation got 28% of vote, whereas power/electricity and reducing price of agricultural

inputs each got 6% (seems unrealistic).

The results of the item "Administration and judiciary" are 26%. 'Don't know' indicates that it is difficult to perceive. The opinion vote may not reflect the real situation.

In "Digital Bangladesh", survey results indicate that (23%+52%)=75% said, "Not clear about it, no idea as such and can't say," then how could this be one of the unique selling points of the AL in the election? The opinion poll results do not seem to reflect the real situation.

The observations may be taken into account, if found reasonable and acceptable.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura
Dhaka

Long term plans

The present government's long-term plan is to celebrate the country's golden jubilee in the year 2021 as a middle-income country. Also, with the use of high technology, it wants to see Bangladesh as a digital nation. All these plans and programmes seem attractive and people are enthusiastic about their success. To attain success on these plans, the present government must identify the priorities and prerequisites first. This time, the people are hopeful and ready to have patience, which means people want to give time to the government. But definitely they will watch the track of the line of actions that this government is taking.

Not to mention the production situation in the industries due to acute shortage of electricity, the normal life in Bangladesh has become almost unbearable due to frequent load shedding. An individual may suffer for a few hours for load shedding but hampering of production is a serious threat to the existence of industries and jobs for the workers. Here the government has no other choice but to act and arrange electricity for the industrial units. I believe, this should be the first, foremost

and number one priority of the government.

Blaming past governments will not help enhance production. The people will also not accept the excuses for a long period of time. The prime minister hinted at her opening deliberations on many occasions that if need be, she will import electricity from India and Nepal to meet the immediate requirements. She also hinted at starting immediate power production at private level. But we are not hearing anything about them any more. Her finance minister rather discouraged people by saying that it may take three years to normalize the power supply situation.

This has worried the entrepreneurs.

We believe the prime minister will do something at her own initiative to ease the situation.

The number one priority must be attended to.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Role of media

In our media, especially TV channels, journalists fail to bring national issues of real significance, and are not giving a true picture of our socio-economic problems, with very few exceptions. One of the main reason is that they fail to delve deep into a problem. I believe there is lack of 'cross examination' in journalism. The government is not clamping any censorship on media, still people depend on rumours and foreign media outlets like BBC for knowing the truth.

BTV news covering krishi samachar, without including the opinions of agronomists, is giving people the idea that agriculture in Bangladesh is booming, which is not always based on statistics. This amounts to lack of accountability while spending taxpayers' money.

I think journalistic ethics is under a question mark. Can the information minister take some responsibilities, please??

Dr Azizul Karim
GP, Australia

Australian H.C. clarifies

Thank you for publishing my response to the article by Syed Ashfaul Haque, "Students Down Under Look Down the Barrel" in The Daily Star of 27 April 2009. I just wanted to take this opportunity to more fully outline Australia's policy on international students.

Australia values highly the contribution of international students to the Australian economy and we hope the skills these students receive through their studies improve their career prospects and benefit development in their home nations.

A student visa's main purpose is to give international students the opportunity to undertake education in Australia. As part of the process to gain a visa, students must demonstrate they have the means to support themselves, so that once they are in Australia they can concentrate on their studies and meet academic requirements. The Australian Government grants international students permission to work part-time (and full-time during holidays) while in Australia. But this work should not be their primary means of support. Those wanting to focus on employment in Australia should apply under other appropriate visa types.

Australia's immigration policy, including access to students visas, is non-discriminatory and Bangladesh applicants are assessed within the same framework as other major countries in the region. Recognising that many Bangladeshis are unable to afford education overseas, the Australian Government through AusAID committed over A\$6.5 million to scholarships for Bangladeshis to study in Australia in 2008. Australia also directs a large part of its development cooperation programme in Bangladesh to primary education, recognising this benefits the greatest number of people.

In sum, Bangladeshi students in Australia are permitted to work in the world's 14th largest economy. The Australian economy is coping relatively well with the global economic downturn at present, but nonetheless international students' main focus should be on their studies. They should avoid a situation where dependence on employment will affect their key goal of academic success and skills transfer.

Justin Lee
Australian High Commissioner in Dhaka

cultural change or creating a class to dominate the affairs of the state. Nevertheless, thanks to Mr. Choudhury and his respected guest for presenting a befitting Urdu poem having high relevance to our present status of governance and people's sufferings. We expect more to come from Mr. Choudhury's show which might include our lost heritage and pride of the upper class.

By the way, recently VOA aired an interview with famous Indian celebrity- Rituporna Sengupta. The interview was worth watching. It is good to know that her parents were from Bangladesh--Bikrampur and Manikganj. She presented a wonderful cultural aspect of her life and choice. Thanks to Mr. Ehsanul Haq of VOA for excellent moderation.

Quadir
California, USA

Prime minister's trip

Why is it that our leaders feel that once they are elected to office, they are free to use the taxpayers' money for their own, private expenses? In my opinion, it is entirely unacceptable for the prime minister to go and perform Umrah at a time when the country is suffering through a severe energy crisis. Not only is she ignoring the plight of the citizens, she is wasting the taxpayers' money by going to perform Umrah for, perhaps, the billionth time and that, too, not only with her own family but that of others' as well.

Why is it that a big issue is not made out of things such as these? Why do we continue to take these things into our stride and accept it as another one of those things that the politicians get away with? How can anyone justify spending so much money at a time when there are still people living in this country who go to sleep in an empty stomach?

Ameer Sobhan
Student, North South University

Poor waste management

Chittagong is one of the busiest places in Bangladesh, but the waste management system of Chittagong is really baffling. Dustbins are not enough for the waste materials in its streets. And we have become accustomed to hurling trash here and there and making our streets dirty. While crossing the dustbins, people are often seen trying to hold their breath due to the unpleasant odor produced from the dustbins. But it is a matter of great regret that the authorities concerned are not performing their tasks properly and common people are not aware of their duties. It is not only the duty of the authorities but also the duty of every single citizen to show concern for our environment.

How long must we put up with such unhygienic environment?

Nasir Uddin Tumul
Department of English
Chittagong University

Newspaper Employees Act

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, while addressing the AGM of the DUJ as the chief guest, disclosed that the government was contemplating

Empowerment of women

Empowerment of women is a process through which women in general and poor women in particular get the opportunity to join the workforce, contribute to family income, and have a place in family as well as social affairs. In the past women were segregated from out-of-home productive work. They were kept within the four walls. The hearth became the place for them. So cooking, cleaning, washing, giving birth and rearing children became their jobs. Men became the wage earners and all other activities became their responsibilities.

In our country, the position of women is precarious. Majority of the women have no economic freedom. From their birth till death they depend on men. Though many of the women, especially the rural women, perform the job of rearing ducks and hens, post harvest activities etcetera, nobody gives any credit to them. They are regarded as a liability of the family. Until and unless they attain economic freedom, women's empowerment will not be possible.

Besides, social prejudices and customs tend to degrade women's position. When a girl is born in a poor family, it is not regarded as a happy event. They think that she has come as if to add to the sufferings of her parents. They seldom think of sending her to school. The parents try to find a husband for their daughter even before she attains physical and mental maturity. Then she enters her husband's family, that is often hostile to her. Most of the times if the dowry falls short of the expectation of her husband and his parents, they will insult and mistreat her. She may be threatened with divorce. She may also be assaulted and in extreme cases she may even be tortured to death.

Women are nowadays as important as men in society. They constitute nearly half our total population. So there can be no denying that they too possess equal rights and duties as men. They have noble missions to fulfill as men. If they get opportunity, their genius and capacities will bloom fully. No nation can make real progress keeping a full half of its population in the dark. So women's empowerment is essential. Some practical measures can be taken for the empowerment of women:

- Women should be made conscious of the fact that they have got all the potential to participate in the socio-



economic development of the country.

- They should be made self-sufficient through proper education and employment.
- It should also be ensured that at workplace women get their desirable and just wages against their contributions.
- The social prejudices that exist regarding the girls must be changed.

Our Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, "The paradise (of the offspring) is under the feet of the Mothers."

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Faidil Madrasa
Chittagong

MPs' funds

It was reported in your newspaper that "Members of Parliament (MPs) have been spending from their annual discretionary funds totaling around Tk 3 crore each fiscal year since 1992, while guidelines for the spending are yet to be formulated".

Guidelines or not, why should an MP have a discretionary fund for spending public money? MPs are for making law for the country, NOT for executing the law, or anything like that, for that matter.

Needless to mention that in most of the third world countries legislators interfere in almost every sphere of the administration and that is how the rule of law is violated and corruption, nepotism and favouritism thrive.

Tayeb Husain Lund, Sweden

Swine Flu

It is now cause for huge concern worldwide. The unusual strain of swine flu virus found in Mexico contains genetic material from pigs, birds and human and the death toll has already gone above 80 and is rising. The resulting hybrid virus can spread quickly because we don't have any natural immunity against it. Already spreading across the USA, this recent

outbreak has spurred concern of a global flu, and Bangladesh is also exposed to this havoc which have the potential to kill millions in a few days. We don't know what measures have been taken by our government so far to face such an outrageous thing. There should be immediate awareness campaign for healthcare professionals without creating any panic. We need to understand that there is no vaccine developed yet to protect against this swine flu. Forming committees with people who don't understand the issues well will produce no outcome. In case of a global pandemic we need to have an urgent rescue plan beforehand, and should have stockpile the antiviral drug Oseltamivir which is the only drug found effective against this flu besides zaminivir. The WHO guidelines for a country stockpiling this drug are also available online. Some of our local manufacturers have the capability to produce this drug and they should make immediate plan sitting with WHO, virologists, scientists and healthcare experts.

This is such an urgent health issue, any delay in taking appropriate actions can cost us dearly.

Shawkat Haider, PhD
Genetic Engineer
Dhaka

Follow shipping rules



The ship accident in Chittagong port channel put the vital life line in jeopardy. Though Bangladesh boasts of two seaports, practically Chittagong carries the maximum load. Lighterage ships are essential part of our transportation system as bulk of our imports are unloaded in this process. But unsafe lighter ships often create serious hazards.

This problem can be solved by following a simple existing rule properly. As per the rule, no ship can go to sea without a 'bay crossing' permission. Such permissions are given by shipping authorities after a rigorous test by experts. They test not only the fitness of the ship, rather quality of crew members as well. So far only a few scores of ships have obtained such permission.

In view of present climatic condition, the government should implement this rule rigidly to avoid any further loss of life and property. Merely imposing fine against defaulting vessels will fail to curb such incidents, rather such vessels should be debared from loading in the high seas. The Water Transport Coordination Cell (WTCC) should not give delivery order to lighterage ships without the bay crossing permission.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

PM issues cheque, MP's men take away (18.4.09)

Who is responsible for bringing this type of incidents to the knowledge of the PM? Press secretary or the personal secretary? Was this news report placed in front of the PM that morning?

What a shame! Please do not forget that Titanic also sank....

Faqrul

If this is true, no mercy should be shown to the offenders. I hope and pray that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will expel the MP concerned from her party.

Sajedul Chowdhury

rent-seeking and margin grabbing of the past which blemished the out-going government.

SM Husain

Maybe this is a common character of our politicians, except a very few! The question is how we can make a better society out of such mess that exists in our political and administrative systems.

Thanks to our journalists having the courage to open up the facts.

Imti

again the country will be sold to the fundamentalists.

Sameer

The govt's success in price control is not the success of its own. It is the reflection of world economic recession.

Ababeel

This govt has not learned any lesson from the past to be tough and committed to fighting corruption, terrorism and hypocrisy.

Shamsul Azam

veyed among Awami League supporters only!

Md. Abdullah

I think the govt has been successful so far in price control and fertiliser distribution. The govt. has also shown wisdom in handling the BDR incident. But they have to be more careful in controlling law and order all over the country including campuses. More precisely, they should handle the conspiracies against our nation very carefully.

Asif

This is a very unfortunate example of how sincere intentions and actions of the government to compensate the JMB victims are being frustrated through corrupt machinations of a law-maker. Such examples abound in cases of distributions of VGD cards, relief tins, etc. The government has to deal strongly with such corrupt practices or the nation will witness the repetition of

The govt ranks high on price control, low on BCL in 100-day show (16.04.09)
(The Daily Star--Nielsen Opinion Survey).

Actually, I think the govt is not doing well, especially on BDR mutiny case.

It's my personal opinion. If you people have different opinions, I don't mind. But, if the BNP comes to power

I think the overall performance of this govt so far is OK. And the govt should be able to deliver well if the present situation/political environment remains in force. It needs to work with a sense of dedication.

Dr.M.A.Matin

If 71% of them support government activities we simply can say it was sur-

Very good effort to rate the government's performance - a more detailed, thorough analysis should be done and printed at regular intervals.

Nami Khan

Honest evaluation would help the government to perform well. We support the government.

Iqbal