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Apolluted capital

A few months ago, I had got a chance to go to Dhaka in order to attend a debate competition and took the opportunity to see the important places in Dhaka city. Now it is a city of pollution. Air, water are polluted severely because of unplanned urbanisation and indiscriminate throwing of wastes. The entrance gate of Dhaka city was a shocking experience for me. The ponds beside the railway stations of Dhaka city (i.e. airport, cantonment, Kamalapur, Mughdipara & so on) looked like black lakes or ponds. I did not see the natural colour of ponds in the city.

So, I would like to request the authorities concerned to ponder over this matter seriously and take remedial measures.

Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
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No opposition!

Is the opposition fading away? Its contribution at the JS sittings is hardly noticeable.

The two-year interim period by the non-political caretaker government has opened the eyes of the political parties and the voters. Now the national events are being analysed in new perspectives. What is the regime offering?

The new political regime is faced with multi-problems of the changing society, and is yet to settle down to normal routine level. What is has offered during the first quarter of the first year is not enough to appease the expectations of the masses. What is required is internal change (from the heart) in the approach to national problems, and priorities. The old microphone techniques are out of date. The political 'mobility factor' has to rise. What is it? Ask the leaders.

The times are different. The global focus is on South Asia; therefore the local regimes have to sharpen their foresight and judgement values. Preventive measures have to be rehearsed for unexpected events like the BDR carnage.

Get out of the old grooves, and show the people new tracks. The poor standard of politics is akin to the current state of the neglected BR (Bangladesh Railways). The regime is hurrying with new mega projects (like another bridge on the lower side of the Ganges; and subway train network, instead of sky rail as a pilot project); and not paying attention to urgent BMRE schemes. Why the trial of the war criminals has to be held right now, and cannot wait till the end of the year?

Two cementing factors are missing: political consensus at the national level; and national division due to the rivalry between two dynasty rules. The old order is not changing; we are lagging behind the global caravan in the desert of wilderness.

Leadership is there, but where is the lead? We are dragging heavy lead (metal)! We Bengalees are a society of adda-baaz, and loiter about in leisure dress, unfit to climb the

Everest! There is no plain living in the plains of delta Bangladesh. It is akaash-kushum, plainly speaking.

A Husnain
Dhaka

Foreign exchange reserves

At this moment of great economic depression which has spread its wings all across the globe, it is indeed a surprising thing to see Bangladesh Bank declaring their highest ever Foreign Exchange Reserves which have crossed a little more than 6 billion dollars. Their ignoring the recession riddled economy and their complacency about the so-called highest ever Foreign Exchange Reserves have really stunned the whole nation.

Foreign Exchange Reserves refer to the deposits of a foreign currency held by a central bank that allow governments to keep their currencies stable and reduce the effect of economic shocks. The question is whether the whole credit goes to The Bangladesh Bank for achieving this amount of Foreign Exchange Reserves. If we roll back the film, the Anti Corruption drive by the recent caretaker government comes into picture which reduced business investment, trading and all sorts of activities to a large extent.

Investors are still confused whether to go for investment with their undeclared money for import of capital machinery which is definitely playing a role in keeping the foreign exchange reserves intact. Imports of fashionable items and more importantly the cut in import of petroleum products due to increased usage of CNG have also positively framed the current foreign exchange reserve. The increase in foreign remittance can also be considered temporary because people who are coming back after losing their jobs abroad are not taking risk of Hundi, rather they are sending the money through proper channel before coming back. New incentives should be considered by Bangladesh Bank so that such remittances come through proper channel in future also. Above all, huge numbers of immigrants who stay abroad illegally prefer to send foreign exchange through illegal means which does not come in the accounts of Bangladesh Bank as foreign exchange. A mechanism needs to be evolved to take account of this foreign exchange which will also add to the foreign exchange reserves.

It is time for Bangladesh Bank to concentrate and focus on banking activities so that proper investment is made in our economy.

A recent estimation by the Bangladesh Bank that foreign exchange reserves will cross 10 billion dollars can only be considered an authentic statement if measures to achieve it are spelt out properly and business and import houses are activated to attain the target.

Zahid A. Choudhury
Dhaka Cantonment
Dhaka

Create job opportunities

People have had the experience of being ruled by a non-elected government for more than two years. Especially, the economy of Bangladesh became infertile during that time. Before the election, spontaneously and surely, this government made us very optimistic. But already four months have gone by, and it is high time to perform better.

As the consequence of global recession, the private sector has been very hesitant in creating new job opportunities. But the number of jobless people in the country is increasing sharply. The government has to address the issue with a sense of urgency.

Please take necessary action to create more employment opportunities for the new generation.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
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Pepsi programme

Soft drink giant Pepsi organised the 'Prove yourself day programme' on 13 May for the short listed candidates who participated in its recent promotional scratch card offer. It was a very nice idea. According to this offer, the people who drank the highest number of Pepsi during this campaign period were invited to participate in the 'Prove yourself day programme' which was held at the Mirpur indoor stadium. I was one of the participants of this programme and hence I went to the Mirpur indoor stadium on time at 11:30am.

After going there, I had to wait for an hour in the scorching summer heat and finally they let me enter inside at around 12:30pm.

But we were told that inside there was another batch of participants who were being interviewed and so we had to wait under a Samiana till 4:00pm. The organisers gave everybody breakfast in the morning but after that we were simply waiting there without any food or drink. They even didn't let us go outside. But we were waiting helplessly for our turn and finally when our turn came, we went inside. But this time we saw many people who were already there before us and I realised that my turn would not come before 6:00pm.

But it was impossible for me to stay there since I was feeling extremely hungry and so I finally gave up and left the place without participating in the contest. Later, I came to know that many other people also left like me without participating. I was greatly disappointed.

Nazmus Saquib
Dept. of English
Stamford University
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

NSU incident

On 13 May 2009 two articles were published in the DS that addressed the recent clashes at North South University and some other relevant issues regarding our private univer-

sities. The article entitled 'The NSU incident- a Microcosm of Bangladesh?' was written by Mr. Mridul Chowdhury and the article entitled 'Fees, Students and Private Universities' was written by Mr. Badrul Ahsan. Although the authors addressed a few significant issues regarding the NSU incident, as a student of the university I couldn't help but disagree with their views on several crucial points. For instance, in his article Mr. Mridul argues that if there had been a 'student council' in the university, it might have been able to prevent this fees hike crisis through peaceful negotiation. I think the author doesn't understand that as students we do not go to an institution to formulate points of negotiation, to hold meetings and to engage in 'political' activities (I'm not referring to party politics).

Instead, today financially better off students prefer private universities to public ones because private universities generally offer an atmosphere that is free from political turmoil. The author also fails to comprehend the fact that in our public universities associations similar to what he euphemistically regards as 'student governments' have recurrently paved ways for mischievous conducts that have repeatedly hampered the academic processes of these institutions.

Moreover, if there are 'student councils' who will elect their leaders? The election processes will inexorably bring more 'politics' and favouritism. The consequent conflicts between different groups of students will further jeopardize our academic endeavours.

In Bangladesh's context, student councils will certainly attract party politics because here political parties are keen to place their representatives in crucial organizations so that they can use them for political purposes. I'm not cynical about the basic characteristics of our youth. However, I cannot be optimistic either about the overall political culture of our country, various elements of which might mislead our naive youth.

Moreover, an ineffective 'student council' may provoke students to be unruly about trivial matters and make them oblivious to their more sacred obligations. About the NSU fees enhancement the author argues that many students who have been paying the 'Campus Development Fees' will never be able to attend the new campus because they will graduate by that time. However, the university authorities cannot predict which students will attend the campus because how long it takes for a student to graduate depends upon his/her academic aptitude and his/her personal choice of taking courses.

This fee must be viewed as a 'contribution' from the students, irrespective of their duration of study. And understandably it was not fair to charge different fees from different students. In his article Mr. Badrul Ahsan underscores different unwanted events that took place in private universities in the recent time. However, these incidents (although 'unwanted') are nothing

compared to the incredible skirmishes that frequently occur in our public universities. He suggests that UGC should determine 'fees ceiling' for private universities. But can the UGC also control the rising costs of the services that these universities offer? There are different categories of private universities. We know that the best English medium schools are the most expensive ones. Likewise, if a student wants to study in the leading private university of the country he should be ready to pay a high tuition fee. Moreover, the private universities offer merit-based scholarships, which's an option that impoverished students might utilize only if they can study hard.

I think the whole NSU incident is extremely regrettable. Misunderstandings can occur. The university authorities should have announced the fee-enhancement earlier. But that doesn't justify vandalism and uncivilized conducts by the students. Students should have been a bit more formal in expressing their demands. Perhaps, it was not fair for the authorities to call the police to deal with an internal issue. However, it's also possible that the situation had left them with no other option but to call the police. Similarly, the policemen should have been circumspect enough to understand the nature of the situation and not to assault the students in such a brutal manner.

It's easier to play blame games but it's difficult for us to find a solution to avert such incidents in the future. It has become a tradition in our country that no matter what we are, we always have to downgrade ourselves.

K.A.S.K
One-mail

Law and order slide

Law and order has been deteriorating since the Awami League government took over. Initially, it was seen as the teething period for novice ministers and transitional incompetence of the enforcing agencies. But after four months of incumbency no improvement is in sight. Rather, the downward trend has accelerated. Even the school going children are being subjected to gunfire. Collection of tolls by professional criminals has gone to such an extent that victims even fear to inform the police. Rab, the elite law enforcers, have lost their edge. The government has little time to spare.

We believe a major shake-up from the bottom may improve the situation. The immediate past four-party alliance government went for massive politicisation which made the police department highly incompetent. Many in the top brass still owe their allegiance to the past government. They have little will to rise to the occasion.

The government may seriously think to re-appoint some of the efficient police officers, those who were forced to retire on political consideration by the BNP government. Definitely, they, with their long experience, dedication and sincere commitment, will make things better.

Acitizen
One-mail

Trial of war criminals



AMADULL HUQ/DRINKNEWS

Recently, the report that Pakistan has been asked to seek forgiveness for the massacre and genocide they committed in 1971 was published in national dailies. The news came when Pakistani High Commissioner to Bangladesh Mr. Alamgir Babar Khan called on Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni recently. They discussed bilateral matters. At one stage, our foreign minister raised the 1971 genocide issue.

Eventually, our electronic and print media started to focus on this issue. Some days back, a Dhaka court summoned 36 war criminals. The media did not make any mistake to give it a huge coverage then. Later, a minister said that this case could hamper the real trial of war criminals.

Dr. Dipu Moni should ask the Pakistani authorities to hand over the 195 identified war criminals to Bangladesh for their trial. Because, officially these 195 people are identified as war criminals. They should face trial before others.

Ali Ahmad
One-mail

Sexual harassment

The High Court has laid down guidelines against sexual harassment of women.

This is good news, no doubt. In educational institutions women are harassed by their own teachers. So they have no security.

But the question is, will the HC ruling be enough to stop harassment of women?

Mahfuzur Rahman Manik
IER, Dhaka University

Thanks, fire brigade and DESA

We are accustomed to listening to such news that the fire fighting team arrived late and did very little to extinguish the fire, and many such things which degrade the reputation of the fire brigade. On Friday (15.05.09), there was a fire on electric poles adjacent to our residence in Mohammadpur.

I heard people knocking at our door when I was enjoying IPL on TV. Worried, I saw the fire turning out to be a disastrous one and with the help of my driver and a relative we could somehow managed to stop its spreading. I found thousands of people watching the deadly fire and our struggle to extinguish it.

My relative called the fire fighting team and within five minutes I could hear their siren and they came and brought the fire under control. They were accompanied by a DESA team which really surprised me. I would like to thank both the fire fighting team of Asad Gate and the DESA team for their quick response and active approach to help us.

I wish they had enough equipment to help extinguish fire at any level.

Hasib Family

Mohammedpur

Dhaka

"A dying city"

This is in response to the letter by Harun-or-Rashid (DS, May 16).

I thank the writer for raising this very important issue. It is not only about saving the capital city. Above all, it is about doing what is convenient for the people. Why should anyone have to travel all the way to Dhaka to get something done?

By relocating offices, different government organisations and their headquarters to different cities, the government will be able to provide jobs for the people of the host cities/towns. It would even be cheaper to run (cheaper accommodation).

It would also save our citizens their travel expenses particularly those poor people who can't afford the costs of hotel accommodation, restaurant food, etc. of the capital city. And, of course, it would reduce the capital city's congestion/population (as mentioned by the writer).

The government must make honest efforts to decentralise all those thousands of ministries and government offices. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever for all of them to be sitting in Dhaka.

Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

Same old story?

Modest and reasonable media coverage is helpful for keeping the people abreast with what is happening in the country. But excessive propaganda reminds us of similar activities of the previous ruling 4-Party Alliance and thus of the proverb "Old wine in a new bottle". Student, youth and volunteer wings of the ruling Awami League are getting increasingly involved in snatching tenders, contracts, extortion, occupying student halls, controlling admission in educational institutes in the rural areas, etc.

The party high command did issue a note of caution which was nipped in the bud and now it is either ignoring or overlooking, giving indirect approval of their activities. In the same way, the opposition 4-Party Alliance, in their efforts to bring down the govt., is using walkouts from parliament sessions and holding rallies like human chains demanding the fulfilment of those public demands just after four months, which they could not fulfil in four years.

So what is new? Where is the so-called "Din Badal"? Is there any change in the lot of the common people, except the announcement of the

change/shift of the clock by one hour from June?

And so, we, the potential investors living abroad, feel frustrated and disappointed.

S.A. Miah

Canada

Cantonment house

Begum Khaleda Zia, former prime minister, is adamant not to vacate the house leased out to her. By doing so she is not drawing sympathy from the people, she is rather belittling her to the public. She doesn't own that property. She is a tenant and the state is the owner. She cannot deny this hard truth.

Usually, any lease agreement contains a definite clause which empowers both the owner and the tenant to serve a prior notice, if either side wants to cancel the lease agreement before the expiry of date. I am not aware if there is any such clause in the lease agreement of the house given to Begum Khaleda Zia.

Whatever may be the case, I am sceptical about her position on the issue and her going up to the High Court for cancellation of the government order. Why is she so adamant?

Shafiqul Islam

NY

Nepal scene



The political crisis in neighbouring Nepal sounds the bell of alarm for all Saarc countries because pro-China Maoists may again try to create anarchy, after their supreme commander Prachanda's resignation from the post of prime minister.

In greater global interest, the UN should draft a democratic-system after studying the systems followed by various countries and difficulties experienced in following the same. Even suggestions can be invited from academics and experts for drafting the guidelines for an ideal democratic system of governance.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
National tourism worker

Shift of culture!

Looking back at our childhood, not so distant, the significant changes that society ran into at a great speed are questionable. I am not against change, rather I opt for positive changes that bring out the originality of self in respect of our culture, beliefs and religion.

The treasure we used to hold in respect of family bond, sense of responsibilities and simplicity is decaying under the weight of wrongly perceived and praised modernity. Our children are exposed to irresistible negative influences permitted and even promoted by the state itself. Our national policies are biased and severely dominated by influential countries. The colonial rulers rejuve-

nated their powers with the cooperation of ignorant and self-seeking leaders of the once colonized countries in the name of development and democracy.

I feel dismayed when I see the youth speaking in an uncouth language in the streets, in the radio and in the school and even in their homes. Their interest has veered into unproductive and self-destructive pattern.

I do believe in our nation's spirit of fighting back, though delayed. I trust people with a similar mindset would gather under one umbrella and speak out loud to the misplaced generation.

Zaiami Bodrudduza
Uttara, Dhaka

Neglected policemen



Police force is an essential organisation for any society or country. But from the very beginning, our police are alleged to be corrupt and rude. Here the question is, how much attention do we pay to this essential force? The police constables do not even get the basic benefits. All the

amenities go to the higher officials of this force.

The issue has to be handled efficiently to make our police effective.

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