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Tipaimukh dam



Recently there have been protests from different forums and groups about the dangers and consequences that the Tipaimukh dam will cause to Bangladesh. The prime minister of India laid the foundation stone of this dam on 24 November, 2004 and the Indian government is already going ahead with the controversial Tipaimukh dam project with a target to complete it by 2012. The dam will be over the cross-boundary river Borak, 100km upstream of eastern border of Sylhet district. It will be 1500 feet long and 500 feet high and will cost around Indian Rupees 9,000 crore. Once constructed, this dam would spell an ecological disaster for Bangladesh through desertification and flooding in our eastern region.

Bangladesh has been suffering for decades from the Farakka Barrage, another death trap made by India. There were many protests, meetings, the historic long march, against Farakka, but all were in vain. Now, we are at the mercy of India about the share

of the Ganges/Padma water that is crucial for our economy and environment. After completion of Tipaimukh dam we will be rendered further helpless. History proves that we always failed in realizing our legitimate shares of water of the common rivers from India which is not going by international law and all along showed no interest in Bangladesh's proposal to solve the problem.

The announcement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to form an all-party parliamentary committee to visit the Tipaimukh dam site to gather information and technical details of the project to enable the Bangladesh government to determine its policy is a welcome step. But if we have learnt anything from our past experience then there is no scope of solving this issue without involving the UN or at least Nepal which may cooperate with Bangladesh for a reasonable solution to this water-sharing conflict.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

SSC results

According to the results published on Tuesday (26 May), in the Secondary School Certificate exams of 2009, a total of 45,934 examinees achieved GPA-5, while it was 41,917 in 2008. But the overall success rate has declined a little compared to that of the previous year. The percentage of passes in eight general education boards is 67.41 this year, while the rate was 70.81 in 2008 under seven education boards. Explaining the reason for the decline in the success rate, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "The pass rate has declined slightly as the examinees could not adopt unfair means this year."

A total of 10,58,674 examinees appeared in this year's SSC and equivalent exams under ten education boards, and 7,50,538 of them have passed. The boys' and girls' percentage of success is 73.13 and 68.41 respectively.

The madrasa board's students have outshone the students of the other boards with a pass rate of 85.85 per cent.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil
Madrasa
Chittagong

'No' to hartal

It's not far away when the streets are going to be chaotic again to the utter disgust of the city-dwellers. Political weather forecast signals so.

During the tenure of the past caretaker government, the political arena of the country was relatively calm and quiet. Unlike the regimes of the political governments, the tenure of the caretaker administration was bereft of political activities and programmes like street agitation (processions), hartals, siege, blockade etc. The countrymen had the rare opportunity to experience moderate political stability during that period. People could heave a sigh of relief in the absence of agitation.

Hartals were not there which contributed to the curtailment of people's woes and miseries to a considerable extent. It needs no telling that hartals pose a serious threat to normal or smooth functioning of the economy. They essentially inflict a colossal damage to the national economy. The ready-made garments sector, for instance, is jolted by shutdowns enforced by the opposition political parties.

But the general people obviously want to rid themselves of any sort of political unrest. So, they seriously want to see an end to all types of street agitation, hartals, siege and blockade programmes etc. They want the political parties to reach a consensus on this issue.

Will their dream ever materialise?
M Anwaruzzaman
Comilla

We demand...

We strongly endorse the views of our Foreign Minister Dipu Moni demanding Pakistan's apology for its troops' genocide during our 1971 War of Liberation.

Simultaneously, from the core of our hearts we demand

an apology from the UK for committing genocide during the Plassey war and the 1857 independence war.
OH Kabir
Dhaka

Drivers asking for too much

It has been observed that the Dhaka city taxis and auto-rickshaws do not take any passenger on "meter". They will demand a fancy and unreasonable amount from the passengers. You have to meet their demand to hire these transports. For a short distance the autowalas' demand is at least Tk 50/-. They will not take anything less. The taxis demand Tk 100/- for a short distance. For any long distance they demand whatever they feel like. Now the passengers are in distress and have no alternative but to accept their unreasonable demands.

It may be mentioned that the auto-rickshaws and the taxis have fixed meters but they always defy the law and get away with it. There is no one to save the "passengers".

We now have a strong elected government, police force, Rab etc. But it is apparent that all have failed to control the drivers. Shame!

As a citizen, I request the authorities concerned to wake up and take drastic action against the lawbreakers and save the passengers.
A citizen
Dhaka

Why a luxury car?

The approval for purchase of 440 Pajero Jeep for the upazila chairmen is a glaring example of misuse of public funds. Still a pauper country, Bangladesh can ill afford to expend such huge amounts of hard earned foreign currency for the symbol or spectre of power the chairmen hold. As if when they will come to Dhaka this will be proper to show off their status, as also to the village folks who elected them for their development, not to get amazed! Their seat of work is in the upazilas, the headquarters of the rural unions/areas where there are hardly roads for easy and safe ride, and obviously this will cause unabated drainage of money for the upkeep of this inordinately pricey vehicle. This is a sheer unproductive outlay.

It seems the government led by Sheikh Hasina also runs by the theory, 'There is no death of money'. When, among myriad other colossal problems, millions stay in the shanties and nothing can be done to salvage them from their wretched condition of living, when sanitation and drinking water cannot be provided to them and when many of the primary schools do not have black boards and benches for the students for want of money, how is it morally proper to exhaust public funds only for the sake of status of the chairmen? To work for the rural folks, the chairmen do not need such big luxury vehicles, except for luxury ride with "sango-pango" and family members.

Go to West Bengal which is economically better off than us and see what sort of locally made cards their ministers use, let alone their local body chiefs.

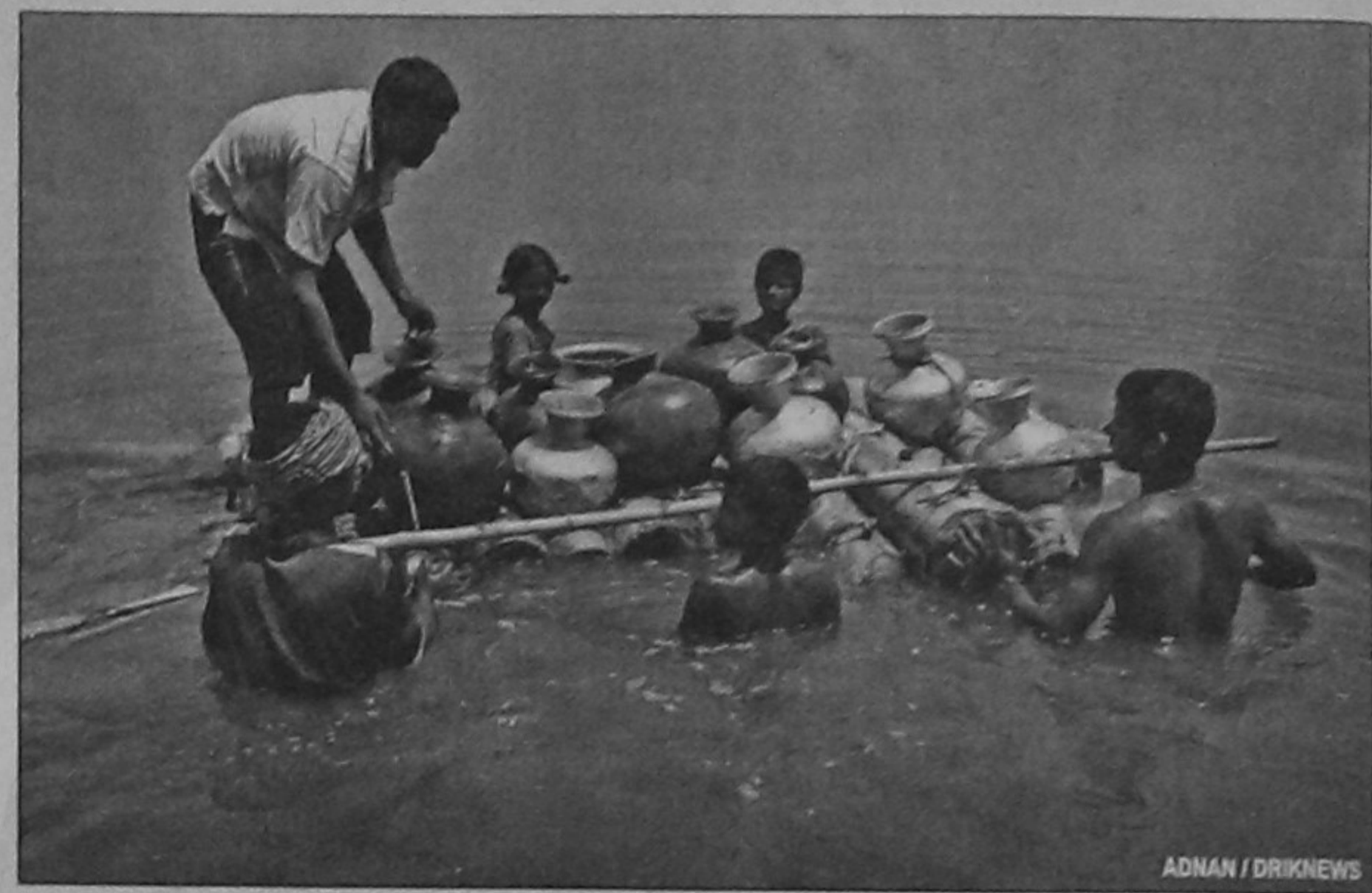
Ahmed Niaz
Shekher
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Water for cyclone victims

Water in the cyclone affected areas has been contaminated by saline sea water. There is hardly any source of drinking water. This problem can be solved if barges are converted into floating water storage tanks in the affected areas and water is transported to these water storage tanks by using the fresh water supply barges/vessels belonging to Chittagong and Mongla ports that supply fresh water to the ships calling at the ports. Small tankers preferably those that have coated (painted) tanks could be thoroughly cleaned and be used to transport fresh water to these areas. Water carried by the tankers

should not be used for drinking but could be used for all other purposes. If these measures are taken on an emergency basis by the disaster management ministry it will be of immense benefit to the cyclone affected people.

For future there should be a selected number of shallow draft tankers with coated tanks that can easily be cleaned and made fit to carry potable water to meet any eventuality such as the present cyclone. Small floating water storage tanks may also be built and kept semi-permanently in the affected areas.
Salahuddin Ayubi
One-mail



ADMAN / DRINKNEWS

BDR tragedy report

Thanks to the government committee on BDR tragedy for making the salient features public, a rare case in Bangladesh. We hope the government would continue the investigation to unveil the real cause of the BDR mutiny because the national security and political stability of the country are directly linked with the incident.

The quality of investigation and transparency should be maintained and strengthened as might be required to support further investigation with professional and technical support. The politicians are seen making blanket comments including rejection of the immediate findings and calling for publication of the full report.

I hope the government would listen to these politicians.
A reader
One-mail

ICB dividends

Payment of dividends against ICB Mutual Fund has been kept suspended for almost a year because SEC filed a petition to the court on some issue. As such the small investors, like retired officials, are suffering. The ICB is earning interest at the cost of the investors. As nobody is pursuing the matter, only God knows when the investors would get dividends.

The issue will get further complicated as the fiscal year is coming to an end and a new fiscal is nearing. What is play to somebody may be death to others!

May I request the ICB authorities to pursue the case and resolve the matter.
Mufazzel Hossain
One-mail

To the finance minister...

As you are going to substantially increase the salaries of the public servants with the taxpayers' money, please ask them to change their anti-people attitude and to be people and friendly not like masters that they think they are. Please brief them on how to behave with their real bosses -- the common people of Bangladesh -- and ask them not to take bribe for the public services they provide to their real bosses.
Dr MA Obaydullah
Melbourne
Australia

The flip side

In some Bangla newspapers of 27 May '09 there was a headline "Speaker entertained President with tea costing 90 thousand taka." This news item is reported to have been provided by the parliamentary sub-committee which is investigating irregularities committed by the ex-speaker of parliament. Ever since the committees have started their fact-finding missions, news reports of their daily findings are being leaked to the press. People are reading those reports with interest, the press is getting good sale and the investigators are feeling great.

I do not object to the investigations. Whatever high profile he/she may be, one should not go unchallenged and the parliamentary committee constituted by the present speaker is a right step. But one thing is true that the man who is reported to have committed such irregularities was holding the 2nd highest position of the Republic. So, the state has some responsibility to protect the prestige of that position and should not disclose some minor irregularities which might have been committed. This tarnishes the image of the nation as a whole.

Taka 90 thousand is equivalent to US dollar 1285.00. Say, if an average British or US citizen learns that the speaker of a country spent \$1285 for entertaining their country's president, they will laugh at us. Even in Bangladesh many small but high-tea parties held in the posh hotels are spending such amounts for entertaining a similar number of guests every night. In the present market it is not a "big deal" and the investigators should not have disclosed this trifling matter to public.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

How could this happen?

We are outraged learning that to unveil the plaque containing the pictures of the players of Swadhin Bangla football team, our national flag has been used as a stage curtain. By this action total disrespect has been shown to the flag and we are appalled by it.
Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Government's tasks

Since this present Awami League government took over power after the December 2008 election, the government has faced too many tough challenges. There were insurmountable problems already which this government had promised to solve if they came to power. Added to these "Already Established Miseries", more miseries followed. The BDR massacre is one of those added miseries which the government had to handle. Whether they handled the situation well enough is not the question but such an incident surely upset everything.

The government must know that they have too many difficult situations to handle and they have to overcome every situation one by one. They cannot just relax. This time people voted with great expectation and the government knows very well what happens when they fail to meet people's promises.
Minhaj Ahmed
Utara, Dhaka

Minister's observation

One third of the total examinees could not pass the SSC exams. The overall results of the SSC this year are not satisfactory, because the percentage of pass in the eight general education boards is 67.41 this year, while the rate was 70.81 last year under seven education boards.

The Sylhet Board secured the top position among the eight general education boards with a pass rate of 78.71 per cent this year, while the rate of the same board was the lowest last year.

So, could we say the examinees of the Sylhet Board have used unfair means in the exams this year? The education minister's observation that the pass rate has dropped because the examinees could not adopt unfair means does not sound convincing.
Shilpi
Udaykathi
Pirojpur

Attention: mobile operators

Different mobile operators are advertising call blocking option of their service. The technology is good, but I object to the idea of advertising it. The advertisements are presented in a way as if disturbing calls are a matter of fun. Such calls are a social crime and civic nuisance. Perhaps all mobile phones are now registered and it is possible to find out the caller. So there should be this warning message to disturbing callers. Sometimes disturbing callers do it in groups (!). How many callers' connection one can block or how effective the option is?

I request the mobile operators and telecom authorities to think about the matter.
Pradyut Kumar Saha
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Volleying back....

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

Lawmakers pledge to save rivers (June 2, 2009)

Thanks to The Daily Star Channel i initiative to save the rivers. Apparently, it seems that there is a very good consensus among the people (including lawmakers and civil society), yet it needs strict follow-up by all concerned to make the initiative successful. Dumping industrial waste into the rivers is suicidal for the populace of Dhaka city and all measures must be taken to stop it without any delay.

When the country has become overburdened with the population and infrastructure, and already struggling with the process of human waste disposal these sort of undue/extra misdeeds by certain people need immediate remedy to save the environment.
Dr Noor

It is a great move by The Daily Star and Channel i, the nation will be with it.
Zahidul Islam Biswas

My suggestion to the government-- please do something for the nation, for the country. If you can do that people will respond positively.
Jahangir Qureshi

We must save our rivers, which have been polluted. The govt. should take action as per the law without further delay.
Morshed

I would like to request The Daily Star and Channel i to take the initiative, so that the international community can also understand the real concerns of downstream Bangladesh. We have to come

together to protect the country and its environment.
Jakerul

It's surprising that the lawmakers are taking necessary action to save our rivers after such a long time. Why are we arranging seminars to save our rivers? The administration can take immediate action against those people involved in such crimes.
Tareq

A timely and a laudable step. The next private/public or civil society/state initiative should be for protecting agricultural land. Japan is a model in this regard. We want to see more such initiatives from The Daily Star and Channel i.
Habibul Haque Khondker

We really want to see action for saving our lifelines (rivers). It

should not be limited to seminars, roundtables or stage programmes.
Shofi Ullah

Fine, all roses for them, but very late. A lot of water has already vanished from the rivers when they were alive but sleeping. Why The Daily Star should come out for saving rivers when we have our government, departments and conscious citizens? All credit goes to The Daily Star for at least being able to awaken these powerful people.
Molla A. Latif

Better late, than never. If their initiative succeeds thousands of innocent victims will be benefited. Go ahead, 150 million Bangladeshis are with you.
Tanveer Ahmed Tomal

We want to see the implementation of the leaders' commitment.
Engr. S.M. Shoel Akter

I was brought up near the Buriganga, and I always silently cry when I see the river dying.
Sharif Ahmed

We should have a logical, realistic and specific target for the project. Our enthusiasm remains the same for 10 days or maybe a month, then we forget everything or turn to another issue initiated by the electronic or print media. So our request to The Daily Star and Channel i: please motivate the people so that real work is done to protect the rivers.
Tridib Tomohar Halder