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Recession and unemployment

The world has been experiencing a severe economic depression in the first decade of this century long after its appearance during the third decade of the last century. Most of the nations are now paying the price. From that context, Bangladesh is no exception as it is the victim of on-going global recession which, undoubtedly, is the result of western materialistic lifestyle and can be considered the major factor for unemployment problem throughout the country.

Recession has hit our economy in different ways. First of all, being a developing country, Bangladesh's economy is mostly run by remittance sent by Bangladeshi workers from different parts of the world. Due to the current crisis, host nations are sending back those workers. Moreover, Bangladeshi students obtaining foreign degrees from the UK, USA, Australia and some other western countries are in the process of coming back. They are also competing with the mainstream job seekers of this country instead of searching jobs in their host countries. This situation is not only reducing our remittance, but also adding extra burden to our current unemployment issue.

On the other hand, the RMG sector is

on the wane. It is the main export item which is earning the major portion of foreign currency. It is also a great field of employment from illiterate people to university graduates. For the moment, some garment industries are discharging a pretty good number of employees though, not in an alarming proportion as foreign orders have dropped due to the economic downturn. But this scenario sends us a strong message about the future. What will be the condition of this sector and millions of mouths living on it if the recession persists?

Now, it is time to think over the matter deeply. Why don't we develop our independent economic policy, strategy of our own setting aside the recommendations given by the IMF and the World Bank which always think about the interest of advanced nations?

I admit that in the era of globalisation the whole world looks like a village. We can make sure our prosperity by keeping warm relationship with other countries far and wide. But it doesn't mean that we will keep paying the price for the misdeeds of some developed nations.

Abu Tayub Mohammed Farhad
Chittagong

Transport problem

Only a few private universities have their own campus. North South University recently shifted its own building to Bashundhara residential area. At present, there are 6,000 (six thousand) students studying in the university. The NSU campus is a few kilometres away from the main city. It takes two hours and sometimes even more to reach the campus. It's a great loss of valuable time.

So, I would request the NSU authorities to arrange their own or hired bus or mini bus to transport the students from different parts of the city.

NIKHAN
Mirpur, Dhaka

Corporate social responsibility

Quite a large number of proprietor/partnership firms, private/public limited companies earn huge amount of profit at the end of each account-year. In many cases, large chunk of these profits goes undisclosed and remains outside the tax-net.

Barring a few, these establishments have a very scanty record of contribution towards philanthropic programmes targeting the weaker section of society.

In leading countries of the world almost all big business houses have some kind of charity programme for food, health, education, shelter etc. Many world celebrities of past and present are direct beneficiaries of such programmes.

It is learnt that some 62,000 boys and girls achieved GPA-5 in the last SSC examination all over the country. They are undoubtedly most brilliant product of the nation. Many of these students cannot pursue higher studies in an ideal atmosphere as per their choice due to dismal financial condition of their guardians. But if these talents are properly nourished and tended they will surely constitute a high-value human resource for the country in near future.

A large population uneducated, unskilled is just a mob, a liability and shame whereas a small group of learned and skilled is a team and indomitable force.

Having said so, I would humbly urge all our privileged fellow countrymen to include some kind of philanthropic agenda in their yearly business-plan, whatever little it may be, at least for the sake of their own legacy if not for anything else.

In the instant case they may pick some financially challenged GPA-5 holders for assisting their higher studies up to Ph.D level in an accredited institution anywhere at home or abroad.

We must not forget that affluence may suddenly vanish any time but virtue never withers.

S.A Samad
General Manager (Retd.)
Janata Bank, Dhaka

Landslides

Landslides are a natural phenomenon, but it is accelerated by human action. It is now a great concern in south-eastern parts of Bangladesh like Sylhet, Moulvi Bazar, Habiganj, Chittagong and CHT. It can be defined as the downward movement of a large mass of earth or rocks from a hill or mountain due to natural variability and human activity. Landslide is not a new theme in the context of Chittagong. During the last three decades, Chittagong suffered about 12 landslides. Death toll during the last three decades is around 200.

I think it is time to think how we can mitigate losses caused by landslides. At first we have to identify vulnerable areas by GIS based hazard mapping, plan to shift the people who are at risk to safe areas, kick off site and service scheme for urban poor etc. Hill cutting should be totally stopped, no agricultural cultivation should be allowed on hills, proper plantation of trees and creation of green belts on hills and quick drainage of rainwater must be ensured. Lastly, the local administration should be more active and people's awareness must be raised to avoid repetition of such incidents in future.

Md. Abdus Sabur (Hasan)
MS student
Dept. of Geography and
Environmental Studies
University of Chittagong

Six months of AL rule

In the backdrop of an uneasy two-year rule of caretaker government and subsequent landslide victory, the AL has passed its first six months in power. So far there is no major failing in any sector but we can't say that they could initiate the jump start people expected. The whole administration is in sluggish hibernation and inept ministers failed to tune up the left over government machinery of the BNP-Jamaat regime. The situation is comparable to the post-liberation days. The BCL and field level AL leaders are running for petty cash in local tender and toll collections in the absence of organisational control. The BNP-Jamaat installed/owned electronic and print media are magnifying the shortcomings while microphone loving ministers and leaders are making immature and unnecessary comments inviting controversies. Anybody is talking about anything at anytime.

People have great expectation from this government. So far the image of the government is good, at least much better than the previous government's. Sheikh Hasina appears determined to implement her election pledges. It is the ministries and the officials that are



No tree, no life

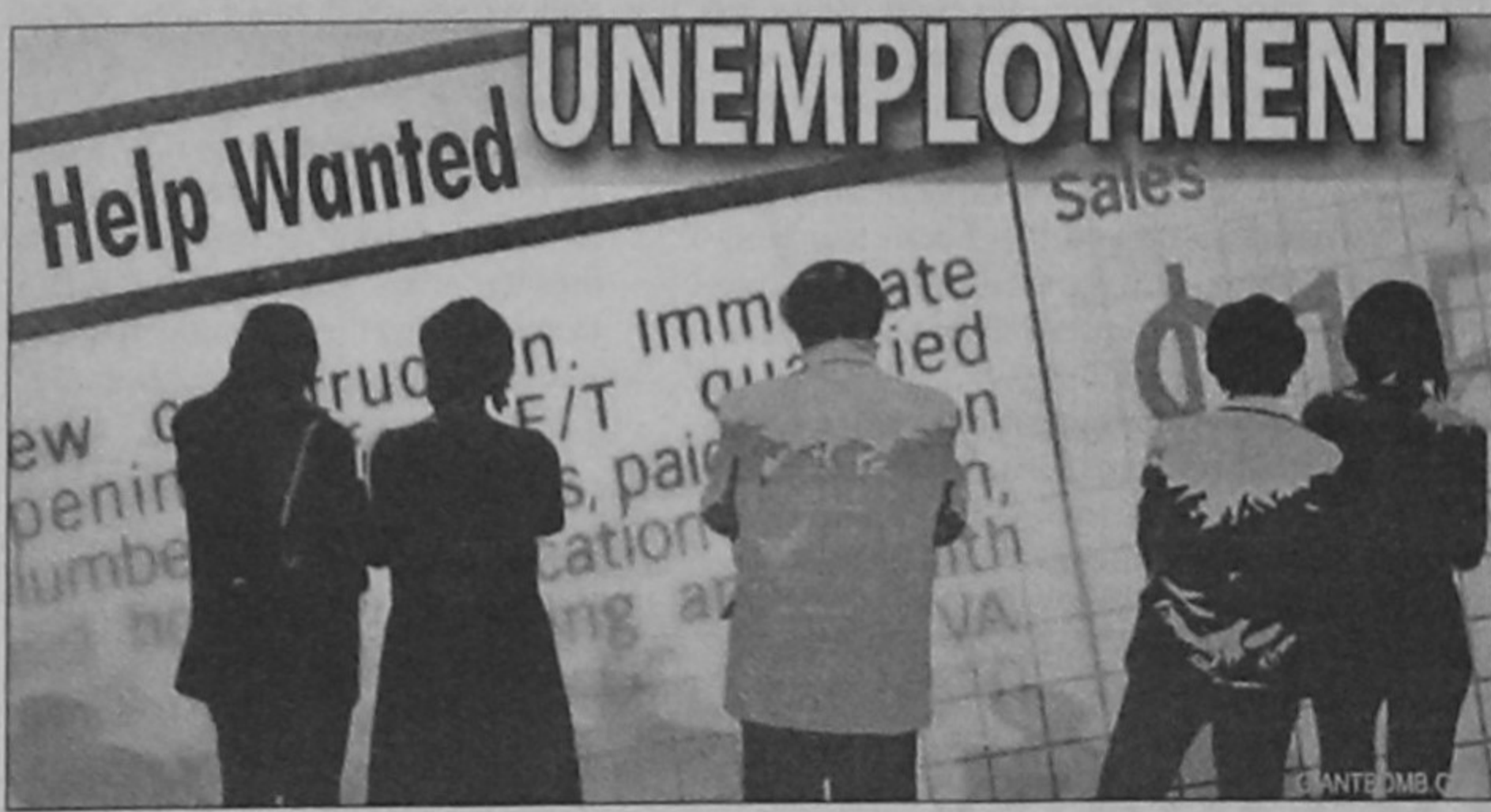
It is a matter of great regret that recently in our coastal area, Shitakunda, trees were destroyed unnecessarily. Without trees our existence will be threatened, and the tree is the great friend of humans. Trees control the environment to be in a balanced form by preserving humidity in the climate. Plants make the land fertile and cultivable.

Due to heavy population pressure, only 6% of Bangladesh is now covered by trees and even that is now decreasing due to the ignorance of people and lack of environmental awareness. Trees

provide fuel, food for people and livestock, building materials, soil fertility etc.

So, we should take necessary measures to preserve trees for maintaining the environment equilibrium. We all should participate in the tree plantation programme.

Md. Nur-e-Alam Siddique
Faculty of Agriculture
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University
Dinajpur



BSMRAU

Since its birth in 1983, the Institute of Post Graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) flourished as one of the truly potential academic institutions with its academic excellence within the shortest possible time. However, it turned into a fully-fledged university with the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU) in 1998 with its true potential and the growing demand of higher study in agriculture. Currently, BSMRAU has been running with three faculties and twenty departments in light of some characteristic features which were missing and are still missing in many of the public universities in Bangladesh. What is very special about this university is confirmation of the superior accomplishment of the academic tenure of the student in due course of time: no session jam even for a day. The second important feature of this university is everybody appreciates that there is no campus violence here. Thirdly, the campus is totally neat and clean, there is no hand writing on the wall or anywhere else.

And, finally, the university always retains a friendly environment in which educators educate their students with intensive care and counselling. As a whole, the university is unique and might be a model for others.

Md. Mofakhrul Islam Shah
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BSMRAU, Gazipur

Apartments and earthquake

In case of high-rise buildings not only the foundation, the ground floor must be made sufficiently strong, so that they can withstand the pressure in times of earthquake. I believe developers follow the design properly in foundation. But in ground floor maximum buildings are standing on some columns only as Rajuk does not permit building apartments on ground floor which is to be used for car parking. In engineering terms, this type of ground floor is called soft-storey. But thinking about the earthquake and other disasters, the ground floor should be made stronger and we can do it if we make apartments on ground floor. The empty ground floor is really risky.

Traffic jams are a burning question particularly in Dhaka

where people should not be encouraged to buy cars which are also a reason behind jams. We should travel by big buses before introducing underground rail lines. In our existing laws for buildings, people are encouraged to buy cars as high-rise buildings have parking facilities.

So, the laws should be changed considering the risk of earthquake.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Defaulters and finance minister

The finance minister is reported to have declared that "whatever powerful one defaulter may be" he will catch hold of him and recover loan money. In the past we heard similar vows from his predecessors but none succeeded. The reason for all FMs' failures in the past, was not the defaulters alone, it was system of recovery, the banks' own faults and the government's faulty initiatives with absence of dynamism.

The other day, the new Governor of the Bangladesh Bank expressed some of his views on this default culture. He openly admitted that it was not the sponsors alone responsible for defaulting loan, banks and the government are also responsible in many cases.

The whole-sell blaming of the sponsors for loan defaulting is not correct. I know many were made defaulters due to banks' faulty age-old rules, bad or no after-sale services, non-payment of promised working capitals, disbursement of loans without verifying the capability of sponsors in exchange of some personal benefits of some bankers, non-checking of ability of utilisation capacity of some sponsors and many more. So, one thing is sure, not all defaulters are intentional loan takers with the ulterior motive of not paying back the loan. Also the government's policy support to the sponsors was absent in many cases. The banks delivered loans without checking financial, technical and the sponsors' individual ability etc.

When all these anomalies will come up to initiate actions against the defaulters, I know the finance minister himself will shy away as did his predecessors. Bangladesh has marched ahead due to the initiatives of private investors. Today, it is the private sector including RMG, spinning, weaving, small industries that have generated more than 80% of jobs in the country.

If all defaulters are caught, the entire work force will lose their jobs. They will bring down the government in no time.

The prime minister has vowed to make Bangladesh a digital country by 2021 and a middle-income group economy. The country's future development entirely depends on the investment from private sector.

All defaulters are not ministers, secretaries or powerful politicians, whom the FM vowed to fight to recover defaulted loans, the overwhelming majority are not that powerful and genuinely want to get rid of long outstanding loans. I am sure the government will not be able to recover loans by court cases, intimidation or arresting them, it will have to sit with the defaulters, scrutinise the reasons of default and allow them to repay in their respective comfort.

The banks will collapse if they cannot deliver their liquidity to the loaners. I hope the finance minister, instead of issuing warning signals, will sit with them to find ways to recover loans.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Chinese restaurants

I was rather amused to read Mr. Kutubi's letter dated July 12, 2009 under the above-mentioned heading. My family has frequented Chinese restaurants for many, many years and in all these years we have yet to find anything even remotely resembling the writer's description! Of course I can only speak about the restaurants of Dhaka city, not those of Chittagong city. Almost all of these places are well lit, not dark as pointed out in the letter. Some are expensive though, others are not so expensive, but all of them serve fairly good and tasty food combined with excellent and courteous service. The clientele are decent people belonging to the upper economic strata. One can spend a very enjoyable evening there with one's family for rest and relaxation.

The writer has tried to generalize the conditions of all Chinese restaurants of the country from his one bitter experience at a seedy place. Instead of going to places situated in areas near educational institutions, why doesn't he try some places located in the posh areas of his city, e.g. along O. R. Nizam Road near GEC corner and see for himself the difference?

S. Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Volleying back....

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BSF won't kill innocents (July 15, 2009)

The BSF has to give definition of the word 'innocent'. Did BSF kill any big terrorist or criminal? All who fell victim to BSF killing are either farmers or businessmen. If there is any unfair trade, the guilty persons can be detained and taken to the court for punishment under the existing law of the land. Why kill them?
Kazi Nasim Ahmed

BSF, please keep your promise.
Islam

It is not a simple incident now. The BSF regularly killed innocent Bangladeshis. The border people are generally very poor and survive by cultivation. If the BSF shows zero-tolerance to the Bangladeshis, how can we consider them our friends?

Please find an acceptable solution, so that poor villagers can survive without fear.
Mizanur Rahman

Good declaration on the part of the BSF that no innocent people will be killed by them. Hope the BSF will go by their commitment. The BDR should also ensure that illegal activities

come to an end, and maintain good relations with the BSF for avoiding unexpected situations in border areas.
Hasan Kamrul

All the time the BSF killed innocent Bangladeshis. They don't care about our people.
MAbedin

Bangladesh should take lessons from North Korea. When confronted it responds with force, not dialogue. The six-nation talk dissolved into understanding with the biggest bully in the world. We may not have anything to rattle with like DPRK, but we have diplomacy. When put together we can be an effective negotiating partner. We need somebody who is discreet yet firm.
Shakib

There seems to be a flaw in the Indian promise. What do they mean by innocent citizens? This issue should have been clarified. Indian smugglers intruding inside Bangladesh are not killed by our BDR. Why shouldn't they follow the same

instead of shooting them down? Moreover, Bangladesh is a good market for Indian cattle. Why should they kill the traders?
Yamin Zakaria

Over 50 canals near death (July 9, 2009)

Good drive --these natural outlets are very much needed for both healthy and natural environment. Do include the Segun Bagicha lake type canal (once there was a plan) to keep it connected at both river ends-- from the east behind Motijheel to the west through Ramna Lake behind Shabbagh and all the way to the western part which is Dhanmondi.
Rafiq Hussain

It has not happened in one or two years. It has been happening for the last 8 years.
Israt

The current emphasis of The Daily Star on the environment is praiseworthy. I think the campaign is helpful to convince the government of taking drastic

measures to save our waterways.
Malay Mridha

The govt should take effective measures to free these canals from encroachment to make Dhaka city free from water-logging.
Rokshana Yesmin

Dhaka cannot survive without these canals and surrounding rivers. The water networks of Dhaka were the main features which had encouraged the Mughals to establish a city here. The govt. should initiate a mass awareness programme as well as formulate tough laws against pollution without any delay.
Abu Rayhan

People made their houses by encroaching on canals and lakes. The govt should demolish the structures and make the rivers and canals free. Then they will think twice before grabbing canals or rivers.
Sabiha Sultana