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National budget

'All is well that ends well' is perfect in case of Awami League's overwhelming victory in 2008 general election and subsequent formation of govt by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

However, it appears that our 2009-2010 budget is not perfect and realistic.

The marathon budget speech of our Finance Minister AMA Muhith appeared to be a political statement, rather than a clear-cut and fool proof financial statement of our annual income and expenditure, up to date outstanding amount of our foreign loans, cash in hand in our public exchequer as on 1st June 2009, our future development projects, accountability and transparency of our various undisclosed huge expenditures on payment of total salary of our ministers, govt officers and employees, foreign tours of ministers and govt officials, purchase of govt transports and their repair, maintenance and payment of honorarium and over-time to the officers and staff members, payment of electricity and telephone bills for govt offices etc.

We wonder how we are going to implement our ADP of Tk 32,000 thousand crore when we are running a deficit of Tk 43,000 thousand crore?

Are we accustomed and habituated to taking more and more foreign loans at the cost of unbearable burden on our poor people: Is this applicable for construction of Padma Bridge, underground Dhaka railway and many other projects?

Why is there frequent electricity failure and load shedding and untold sufferings of our people when our Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, our ministers, MPs, political leaders, top govt servants, rich people's residences, offices, posh hotels and restaurants, foreign embassies, public and private establishments have been installed with air-conditioners, IPS, and electric generators?

Is our national budget 2009-2010 consistent with Article 19 (1) and (2) which says (1) The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens, (2) The State shall adopt effectively measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic.

Would our finance minister and law minister kindly clarify the relevant matters in the interest of public service?

O.H. Kabir
Dhaka

Cars for ministers

No one could answer how much land a man requires. But our government agencies know how many cars a minister needs. Some for himself, others for PS and spouse. We, the poor taxpayers, are only helpless spectators. Is it the clean government for which people of Bangladesh voted so overwhelmingly and rejected

4-party alliance with so much disgrace? What about other ministers and their PS/spouses. Are Matia Choudhury, Nurul Islam Nahid, Mannujan Sufian examples or exceptions?

Honourable PM, please take care. We have put enough faith on you. Don't disappoint us.

M.S. Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Intelligence agencies

Almost every country in the world possesses intelligence agencies, the agencies responsible for taking proactive initiatives against anything threatening national security from both internal and external sources. We, too, have a number of agencies--namely DGEI, NSI, SSF and so forth--that work for finding out such cases.

But the performance of our intelligence agencies has not been satisfactory. The government should look into the matter.

G.M. Farhad Kabir (Aabir)
Dhaka University

"Stabbing spree"

"Stabbing spree" headlined in your newspaper dated 09 Aug 2009 in which an innocent child of 4 years was killed and many others were injured must have saddened everyone. It is also reported that the killer was a drug addict. His urine test will of course show what drug or drugs he has been abusing. It is most likely that the offending drug could be cannabis or ganja as is commonly known to us.

Cannabis is thought by many to be a mild "if not a harmless substance" and is used for pleasurable experience as well as during some religious rituals. Its misuse is not only widespread in developing countries like ours but also in developed countries like the USA where its rampant use is well known. Cannabis often helps people to relax and at times go off to sleep. But when used for a relatively long period it can make people lethargic and 'amotivational' that is their motivation to perform or progress in life is totally diminished. But another effect of the drug is to make people aggressive and paranoid i.e. experience persecutory beliefs. It can worsen schizophrenic symptoms of a person who has already been suffering from the disease. In the middle ages in Persia (Iran), one of the components of the drug cannabis called "Hashish" (Charas) which is the derived from the flowering tops and leaves of female cannabis plants were given to killers before they were sent to their murderous missions. The English word assassin has come from "Hashish". Another phenomenon of cannabis abuse can be a sudden phase of excitement, anger and violent aggression when the person can attack and even kill people. This is called "Running Amok". The unfortunate tragedy of yesterday might be an example of one such episode.

The praiseworthy works done by The Prothom Alo are appreciated by everyone in this country as far as awareness about the evils of drug misuse and its prevention are concerned. I would like to

thank the newspaper for all they are doing but would also request them to try to do more to make people aware of the harmful use of drugs.

Dr. Abu Muzaffar Ahmad
MBBS(DMC)
DIP Drug Addiction (Lond)
Dhaka

HSC results

This year the pass percentage of the HSC examination is remarkably less than what it was one year ago. The news analysts have put the blame on the new method of English teaching--namely, the introduction of grammar in the second paper. The distribution of marks of the said paper is as follows--forty marks for exercises related to grammar and sixty marks allotted to composition---short essays, letters and so on.

It is believed that there is a shortage of skilled teachers across the country--especially in the mufassil areas and in the villages who can teach English properly. Therefore the rural urban gap is widening as far as the said examination is concerned.

One point: "the communicative method" which has been in use at the secondary and higher secondary levels over the last seven years is in dire need of scrutiny. The textbooks of the first paper of these two levels are written according to the said methodology. The students are required to write only one paragraph in that paper containing hundred marks! The remaining questions are mostly gap filling exercises.

In fine our students are taking the English second paper with a frail foundation of the basics of the mechanism of the language and this goes on to explain the poor performance of the college-goers.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Look into it

I would like to draw the kind attention of the DMP authorities which are managing transport to and from Shamoli crossing to Adabar. Every morning around 8:00am, I used to face a serious jam at Shamoli crossing while coming out from Adabar area by car due to huge influx of cars, minibuses, mini buses, large buses plus rickshaws. This is pick hour. So, all the people in and around Shamoli crossing need to go to offices, schools and to their respective destinations. It is very surprising that there is a useless road connecting Adabar ring road to Mirpur road near the bus counter of Hanif, Super Bus and other bus counters, the road is blocked by some pillars at the end approaching Mirpur road. So, no vehicle could go through it. Why is this road not usable? If this road is opened to public transport, then all the transports taking left turn coming from Adabar

Rural youth and unemployment

Among the population, 80% are youth. Roughly 50% rural youths belong to less-landed families and live in hardship. Most begin life as child labour. About 80% rural youth in Bangladesh are engaged in the agriculture sector as labour. Often utilized by vested groups, they unwillingly get involved in anti-social and illegal activities. Because of institutional and situational barriers, efforts of the enthusiastic rural youths for entrepreneurship often go in vein. Most of the rural youths hardly have any opportunity to have employment and developing saleable skills. They have no access to educational facilities. Majority of the rural youth are burdened with "double poverty"--their own poverty because of unemployment and poverty of their family. Hidden unemploy-



PHOTO: MD. NUR-E-A-ALAM SIDDIKE

ment is highest among rural youths, especially among the female youths.

So, it is need of the time to reorganize our traditional education system in line with scientific, tech-

nical and vocational education required for making our youths work oriented and practical in life.

Md. Nur-e-a-Alam Siddike
Faculty of Agriculture
HSTU, Dinajpur

ringroad do not have to come to Shamoli crossing. All the transports going towards Gabtoli/Technical can use that connecting road from Adabar ring road to Mirpur road.

Please look into this matter and open the road for all of us. Make it one way, so, this will be a nice partial solution to the traffic jam at Shamoli crossing. What do you think?
Nazakat Ali
One-mail

AL at 60

The best years for the party were surely the period between 1966 and 1971. Its seminal six point plan for regional autonomy in Pakistan and its triumph at the general elections of 1970 were subverted by Pakistan's ruling military junta.

Yet, there have been the moments when it veered away from its democratic ideals. Such a tragic turn in its political course occurred in January 1975 when it moved to replace multi-party democracy with one-party rule, banning all but four newspapers and placing those under the control of the government. SM Nazmul Hoque Emon
Santahar (Chabagan)
Bogra

Train accidents!

Of late, accidents of Bangladesh Railway (BR) trains have increased alarmingly. One of the points of accident is the level crossing. These are not closed well ahead of the train's passing. I would suggest the BR authorities install vehicular traffic blocking bars at a distance from the railway tracks and at least three gatemen should be deployed to work in each level crossing.

Another type of rail accident involves frequent derail-

ing of bogies or compartments. This is to be controlled through strengthening technical management and operational discipline of the Bangladesh Railway. According to a recent press report, the BR authorities are contemplating appointment of retired station and loco masters to meet up its acute manpower shortage. I think, this is a good step towards raising and maintaining efficiency of the Bangladesh Railway.

The Bangladesh Railway is a profitable economic sector of our country. BR can earn a handsome revenue, only if the journey by trains is made safe and secure!
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural
Extension & Information
System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural
University
Dhaka

Fasting during Ramadan

Fasting, the third pillar of Islam, means abstaining from food and drink as well as sex from dawn till sunset.

Fasting, according to Islam, is primarily a spiritual discipline and consequently it inculcates moral discipline. It is, indeed, the training ground where the faithful are taught the greatest moral lesson of their lives-- the lesson that they should be prepared to suffer the greatest privation and undergo the hardest trials. Another aspect of the moral development of the believers (to Allah and His dear Prophet) by this means is that they are thus taught to conquer their physical desires.

From yet another point of view fasting has an immense impact on society, for all the Muslims, irrespective of their

status, must observe fast during the same month. This brings to prominence the essential equality of all Muslims and this goes a long way towards creating in them sentiments of love and brotherhood. During Ramadan 'evil' conceals itself while 'good' comes to the fore-front and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity. Muslims are required to fast for the whole month of Ramadan.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil
Madrasa
Chittagong

Black professor & white policemen

July 16 saw the stupid armed White policeman being rude and crude with a Black professor at Cambridge, Massachusetts. The incident graphically demonstrated the crude attitude of the Whites towards the Blacks in USA. The Whites still in their subconscious minds consider the Blacks to be their slaves and servants! An article outlined this in detail in the pages of a local English daily on 3rd

August, along with the graphic picture of the White House party of 30th June.

Clearly illustrated the superior and arrogant attitude of the lowly police sergeant even in the presence of the US President! As the saying goes: "One photograph describes more than a thousand words."

The last paragraph, giving the views of UCLA law professor Adam Winkler, gave a logical analysis of the matter. This incident was an enlightening and soft reminder confirming (late) Mao's words. He said, "Power comes from the barrel of a gun." This was amply demonstrated by the overbearing impolite and uncultured policeman's show of power; which he believed was his stupid right!

The last line of the article, however, sums up the undercurrent of White American attitude; and I quote: "One thing for sure, race still matters in America." So much for the great exponents of democracy who do not practice what they preach! The cruel reality does come out, like it or not!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Only rickshaws responsible?



Recently I saw a very thought-provoking cartoon depicting the usual scene of flashy, stretched-out, Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs) stuck bumper-to-bumper on the city road. No other mode of public transport was visible - no buses, minibuses, haulers, CNGs, rickshaws etc. What was revealing were the thoughts of every driver and occupant of the cars. Each was saying the same thing "If all these idiots had taken the bus, I would be home by now."

This in a nutshell gives the basic cause (and perhaps, the solution) of our perennial traffic jams. It is the rapidly inflating EGOs of a major section of our nouveau riche, fuelled by easy money and the insatiable desire for flashy materialistic possessions.

Such people use their SUVs and other cars for the simplest of errands and for the shortest of distances, most often sending only their drivers in an empty car.

Banani Road No 11 is an excellent place to observe such shenanigans. What will be the cost of a loaf of bread if an empty BMW/Mercedes/Lexus etc travels say 10 km to get it, not counting the jam caused while making a U-turn on the narrow road. Soon we will hear of these same people living in specially designed places, palaces or residences, so that they can drive by mechanically driven Go-Karts from their garages to their living, dining and bedrooms. Sorry, bathrooms as well.

As expected the axe has started to fall once again on the humble rickshaw. More roads and junctions have been barred to them. The relevant minister has also unthinkingly jumped into the fray. Speaking at the inauguration of the so-called articulated bus services, he expostulated that with the increase in such buses, rickshaws would be banned. Is he aware that buses and rickshaws do not replace each other? They have their own routes, passengers and usages. The minister can garage his private cars for a month and find out for himself.

So, what can be done? Good question! Does the government, NBR, DMP, BRTC, Customs & VAT, Port, Planning Commission, Banks and Financial Institutions, the hordes of City Planners, Experts and other authorities have any answers? NO! Then contact me and Dhaka can be made liveable in a few months!

Sikander Ahmed
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Volleying back....

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JS team sees no harm in Tipai (August 5, 2009)

The statements the JS team made on the visit to India about Tipaimukh projects may relate to a meeting and not to an actual visit for which they were sent. There is a difference between what India said and what the projects looked like.
Mobaiddul Huq

India would not take any project on Barak river which would harm Bangladesh, the JS team briefed after visiting Tipaimukh dam site over helicopter. Already, the Indian PM assured Bangladesh that India wouldn't take any initiative on Barak which would go against Bangladesh. But India's past records are not comfortable. India didn't go by the Ganga & Farraka agreement!
Hasan Kamrul

I hope Mr. Razzaq and his team learned a lot about Watershed Hydrology and Ecology of Tipaimukh dam area. I will now request the same team to go to greater Sylhet area and try to understand Watershed hydrology and Ecology there. They

should also include local livelihood system for study. I am sure if they study that, they will also start protesting against Tipaimukh dam.
Saif Iqbal

Be it a dam or barrage, one has to hold water to maintain water level for producing hydro-electricity. That means reduced flow at downstream, in this case, Meghna. How could the parliamentary delegation be satisfied with Indian verbal commitments? What is the guarantee of fulfilling those commitments? Farakka? It's a very good token of said friendship indeed! We should not allow any project on the international rivers that flow through Bangladesh. If India chooses to do it forcibly, it will risk earning increased hatred of the people of Bangladesh. Besides, India has to keep in mind that environmental refugees are going to become a serious problem in the near future. If Bangladesh becomes an unliveable place due to desertification and

salinity, where would crores of people move to?
Tanim Ashraf

It would be premature to comment on the total impact of Tipaimukh dam. Furthermore, when India does not honour the bilateral agreements, pay very little heed to international norms/conventions, how can we be convinced by their assurance that they won't do anything that would harm Bangladesh?
Mahamud FCA

A futile and unnecessary trip; wastage of public money. The hydro-data could be procured without going to India. The team led by Mr. Razzaq goes on to justify the project as it has a flood control element to prevent floods in Bangladesh! Great job done by Mr. Razzaq and the team!
Anonymous

All you need to do is to compile such Indian assurances, that India would not do anything to harm Bangladesh, by officials and top politicians including

PMs, over the last 35 years. The conclusion will be, it is utterly false. They never meant to be true. Our JS team's conviction shows how unqualified they are to be our leaders.
Shafi Khan

Gone insane for a son (August 9, 2009)

Many sons are such that parents would regret having given birth to them! This story is horrific. May Allah bless our nation with greater conscience.
Tarik

The Father of Babli should be brought to book....
Ekramul Hossain

Why do the men on earth forget that it's the man's chromosome that decides the gender of the child born. Is this just lack of education? Awareness? Or ignorance?
Kawser Jamal

Babli's father should be immediately arrested and given exemplary punishment.

I am a proud father of a son and a daughter. Without a daughter my fatherhood could not be complete. Best wishes to Babli, keep up your spirit.
Shamim

Thanks to my friend Alpha Arzu for reporting it. We want to see that ALL the girl children are safe everywhere and in every family. Because we do not want to go back to the age of Aiame Zaheliat, when the daughters were buried alive!
Parvez Babul

The story sounds like a medieval one. The culprit father must be punished.
Dr. Md. Sayedul

Please help me to understand if the government, justice department and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh can't punish this guy, how do we expect they will do anything to the 1971 war criminals? Where are our honourable prime minister, home minister and police chief?
Sawgat Chowdhury