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Role of a university

Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet, has been playing a revolutionary role in extending a wide range of scientific and technical education throughout the country since its establishment in 1987. The most remarkable thing is that this university has recently innovated an easy, quick and simple digital admission process for the session 2009-2010. This method of admission is expected to reduce the hazards and complexities of admission seekers. Besides, it will save both the money and time of the applicants concerned. However, the present government pledged extensively to digitalise Bangladesh by 2021 during electoral campaign. Perhaps SUST as well as other universities of the country can play a leading role in transforming Bangladesh into a modern, digital and financially sound country. It is also believed that Bangladesh will be recognised as a democratic and prosperous country through the relentless efforts of the universities like SUST. Finally, it is recommended that the government raise supportive hands setting up more academic buildings and research centres within the universities to facilitate this sort of innovative and cost effective effort.

Md. Abdul Hannan

Dept. of Public Administration

SUST, Sylhet



Swat killings

It was reported in the September 15, 2009 edition of the New York Times that the Pakistan Army in the Swat Valley has retaliated for the heavy army casualties inflicted by the Taliban by resorting to torturing, maiming and killing civilians. People in Swat Valley have disappeared for days and later their bodies were found dumped in mass graves.

Residents of the Swat Valley have nervously complained of the arbitrary and unpredictable army rule. Predictably, the Pakistan Army has strenuously denied any involvement in such killings.

This is all too familiar. Anyone who lived in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971 will testify that the Pakistan Army is very capable of indiscriminate murder and rape. Three million Bengalis died in 1971 at the hands of the barbaric Pakistan Army.

We know the old cliché: "What goes around, comes around."

The killings in Swat Valley would not be taking place if the 1971 war criminals, including members of the Pakistan Army, who committed genocide in Bangladesh in 1971, were tried by the International Criminal Court at The Hague. The Pakistan Army needs to learn to abide by international laws and norms in areas of conflict, even when dealing with the intolerant Taliban.

Syed Karim
Baltimore, Maryland
USA

Passport issue

I went to the bank that deals with passports. They told me that they were considering discontinuation of passport issuance, renewal etc. services. When asked about the reason for such a decision they expressed dissatisfaction, annoyance and anger with

the fact that passport authorities in Agargaon are not cooperating with them. Passport authorities are not issuing or renewing passports on time. So, the bank is facing lots of unnecessary problems with passport seekers and customers. The bank officials informed that the illegal income of the 'passport people' has decreased to a large extent due to the public friendly arrangement, and passport men want to sabotage a public-friendly service! Submission of applications for passport issuance or renewal at the bank has brought down public sufferings to a great extent. In other countries, passport forms are submitted in post offices, designated banks and passports are mailed to the address or collected from banks.

The present arrangement ought to be continued for public convenience and interest. The home ministry should look into the matter.

Dr. SN Mamon
One-mail

Traffic rules

There may be many reasons behind traffic jam. In my experience, so far I have noticed that most of the people whether he or she is a car owner or not, men or women don't obey the traffic rules. Compliance with traffic rules is needed for reducing traffic jam.

Md. Humayun Kabir
Deputy Manager (ops)
Palli Karma Sahayak
Foundation
Agargaon Administrative Area
Dhaka

For a better Bangladesh...

The government is committed to building a non-communal democratic Bangladesh where people of all faiths will leave in peace. People of every religion and ethnic group would leave in this land with dignity and

rights. With the adoption and practice of secularism there will be no discrimination due to religion. People of all faiths will be treated in the same way without any difference whatsoever. Is that enough to protect the fundamental rights and interest of all class of people of the state? What do we find today? Interest of people having different political faiths is molested ruthlessly. One needs to be a qualified person of the ruling party to get appointment, transfer, posting, promotion, tender, work order, chairmanship, directorship, varsity admission, seat in the hall etc. etc., even VGF cards.

It appears to be politicisation from A to Z. In this way the democratic right of equal justice to all is violated and the people of other political faiths are being deprived of their fundamental rights, ultimately causing loss to the nation. So, we need a non-partisan character of the govt. and the state. So, the state and government should be democratic, secular and non-partisan. It is observed that we are very much vocal for secularism but not for a non-partisan government.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Admission in universities

I was reading "The Daily Prothom Alo" on 1 September 2009. The article was written on the different opinions of vice chancellors of the universities on giving admission form online.

What strikes me is the opinion of Vice Chancellor of the University of Dhaka. I graduated from this premier University, and I always expect something exceptional from this university but the standard of this university is deteriorating gradually. When I studied in this university, the quality and standard of the teachers had been questioned by many students, those who would like to see this university as the Oxford of the East. It is needless to say that this university was the harbinger of providing quality education among the national and international students but what happened today is everybody's question, not only mine. The Vice Chancellor of this university said "The processing of admission has already commenced, let it be completed like this" He also said that the directive of the government was positive. I don't really understand what it means.

Md. Zahidul Islam
MSc Development Studies
London South Bank
University

Extension of service

Two top bureaucrats have been given two years of service extension, each right before their retirement, depriving the next deserving senior civil servants on the plea that they are their own unwavering stalwarts (The Daily Star: 13.09.09). It is the repetition of the previous governments' practices. It's a sheer transgression of the civil service norms and discipline. Honourable Prime Minister, being a citizen of this country, I suppose I have the privilege to ask where are the 'days of change' you pledged in your election manifesto?

Opurbo
Dhaka

Of traffic and transport

The minister for communications has recently taken up a 'few' mega projects to help the development of the transport sector of our country. These projects are all set to commence by 2011. I congratulate him for all the hard work he's done, but I would have preferred a more efficient solution to our transportation problem.

A few months ago on The National Geographic Channel I had seen a documentary about Magnet Trains that run on the power of magnetic fields created by electricity passing through a wire, rather than electricity itself.

The cost of operating this type of train is nominal, but the cost of building one is very high. Taking into account our minister's plan, I believe this would be more efficient than the ones he has planned. This train will also be much faster than underground rail while providing a solution to allocation of our electric wires. People will be more encouraged to use this than their own private cars since it is fully air-conditioned. There have also been two crashes of these types of trains and in none of them were there any deaths or burn injuries, since the train runs on sheer magnetic force, no other forms of energy are involved and there is no fire hazard.

I would request our minister to look into this matter.

Tasbib Ahmed Arnob
Uttara, Dhaka

Education policy

To have a proper and effective national education policy may be a great boon to the nation. It is good news that we are going to have a new national education policy. Positively, we hope that it would bring about a radical change in our education sector towards betterment. The class range of primary and secondary education along with other facilities is appreciable. Moreover, the decision on 'decentralisation of National University by setting up centres in all divisions is also highly admirable. But it's really shocking that MPs will have direct influence on governing bodies of the educational institutions. Would it be fair to have political bodies' influence upon educational institutions?

It is widely known that our education sector is a common victim of political chaos. So, we hope the govt. will think about the matter over and over again, and place the national interest above party interests.

Indrajit Das
Department of English
Chittagong College

No hartal, please

The national committee to protect oil, gas, mineral resources, power and ports called 'hartal' on 14th September, 2009 protesting the government's decision to award three offshore gas blocks to international oil companies with provision of gas export.

After two and a half years, our nation once more witnessed 'hartal' and we, the common people will never support such activities. Hartal and strikes can never bring any good to a country's progress. No dictionary can evaluate the importance of 'Hartals' in a positive manner. We,

the common people, are already in deep crisis, with electricity crisis, traffic congestion, soaring price of necessities and the world recession's effect on us. With our back against the wall, we thought the national committee would not harm us through calling a hartal. But sadly, they did it!

We must remember that there are many ways to protest and we should come out from the culture of destruction. The energy crisis and poor infrastructure facilities harm our country's economy on a daily basis, and we, as a nation cannot afford to waste more, in the name of hartal.

A civilized world will never accept such form of 'destruction'. In the twenty-first century, 'hartal' and 'strikes', are considered to be a barbaric act. It is high time, we as a third world country, came up with an alternate to hartal, and be less self-destructive. We never expected this kind of shallowness from a committee, which consists of some highly educated and respectable personalities.

We, the common citizens of this land, no longer endorse hartals and we consider this act a bane.

Arafat Islam
Dallas, USA

Grabbers

We are really disappointed to see the jhau tree plundering along the Cox's Bazar coast. Though the PM is looking into the matter, but how did this happen? We have government officials at every level in a district. What were they doing?

They should be punished for their failure to protect the trees.

Sabina Parvin
Dhaka

Teachers' training

A process of restructuring the primary education system is going on. As a School Teacher, I feel that our teachers need to be reequipped. It is very painful to say that we pay our school teachers a scanty amount and we want a noble return. We don't even make sure that they live an honourable life.

Teachers' training is now the need of the hour. There is no alternative to training them to cope with the upcoming change in education system. I have a proposal for this. The government may allocate a part of infrastructure development fund for teachers' training in this sector. Only hardware development does not make sense if the software remains backdated. All the teachers of government schools can be brought under compulsory training through a long term planning. Also our politicians and wealthy people can come forward and contribute in human resource development by arranging free trainings for teachers in their country homes. This will be considered a great contribution for their country men. The trained teachers will hopefully play a significant role as good teachers. We should never forget that students and teachers are the two most essential elements of education. The government may take various ambitious projects to increase student enrolment, but the expected result will not come until they focus on teachers' skill development.

Sonia Nasrin
Primary School Teacher

Fertiliser distribution



The efficient management initiated by the agriculture minister of the distribution of agricultural inputs, together with a more or less assured supply of electricity in the rural areas for irrigation, had last year endowed Bangladesh with a bumper crop. Everything in the country seems to have taken a nosedive since then. After having witnessed the syndicate-raj tweak the nose of several ministries and reduce their vaunted claims of stable prices into whimpers during the past Ramadan, one wonders whether the syndicate-raj is going to call the shots once again by creating a fertilizer crisis and hold the government hostage during the ensuing Boro and Aman seasons.

We know that two or three of the fertilizer companies have been shut-down in order to make natural gas available in the kitchens of the urban centres. This will obviously cause a shortage of fertilizers in the country and large scale imports have to be undertaken now. We are happy that imports of such a scale are possible from a financing point of view because of the plentiful stocks of foreign currency that the overseas workers have put in the state coffers. We would like to be assured that the distribution and marketing of the fertilizers would be done so that the entire country is not held hostage by the syndicate-raj, by manipulating the supply and distribution system of the fertilizers. We have also witnessed how the bureaucracy had once again created their insidiously famous tangles and by forging an unholy alliance with these syndicates, had made sure that imported supplies

for Ramadan could not get to the marketplace in time so that the syndicate-raj could loot and plunder during this month. We would like both state actors as well as the private importers to make sure that L/Cs are opened for the fertilizers in time. We should also see to it that the government's efforts are not thwarted by friends of the fundamentalists of this country who, we are told, will be doling out Tk. 100 crore to see that this government gets a series of rubbings on several issues.

We would also want the concerned ministries to make sure that large-scale unloading and loading facilities, including transportation are kept in a ready-state so that the syndicate-raj is not able to create yet another throat which to strangle. We are not talking about small quantities here but a figure in the neighbourhood of 7 or 8 lakh tons. The magnitude can be conceived somewhat if we try to visualize that every 5 ton-truck in Bangladesh would have to make six or seven trips in order to move the fertilizers from the port itself to the distribution points. (but we know that most fertilizers are transported in bulk)

And finally, we would like to see the ministries make sure that the fertilizer distribution channel, down to the lowest levels, is not left solely to these wolves and their political cohorts who have so far been able to manipulate the supply and distribution systems. We also would like social activist organisations to get together to act as public watchdogs.

Tariq Ali
One-mail

Unpardonable crime

Not only they took things that didn't belong to them, but their outrageous act now puts thousands of lives in danger as those trees were planted to create a cyclone-shield for the coastal people. Fourteen years of progress has been sabotaged in just a few days! All that money that was invested to plant those trees have now gone to waste. And that's not the end of our wastes. What about all the police/court time and resource that are now being diverted to this matter? Surely we are paying for that. And if those 30,000 trees are to be replanted, who is going to pay? We again.

Now the question is, what made those "local influential people" think that they can get away with such a crime in broad daylight? Why did they think that the law doesn't apply to them?

The answer lies in the fact

that we have developed a nasty habit of "selective application of law" in this country. Soon after the general election, we see cases against those "influential" people of the ruling party miraculously get withdrawn or just vanish into thin air! Policemen are sacked if they arrest anyone belonging to the ruling party and lawyers and judges are rewarded for letting those criminals walk free. No wonder some people think the law doesn't apply to them.

Of course, all those involved in this latest rape of our country, including the local police, forest officials and politicians, must be given the highest punishment available. Unfortunately, this punishment is not going to deter anyone from committing similar crimes again. As long as we are being led by such leaders who think removing someone's mural from a certain building should take priority over, say, upgrading our railway signalling systems

that was installed back in 1927, these sort of crimes will not only continue to happen but will happen with increasing frequency.

AL leader Sheikh Hasina and BNP leader Khaleda Zia are partly responsible for this latest crime because they deliberately created an environment in which crimes were encouraged and criminals were funded and protected (with our money).

Azad Miah
Oldham
UK

It is a heart-throbbing scene for us to see the devastation of 30,000 trees in Teknaf. A group of influential touts cut off the trees resulting in the denuding of the eye-soothing beachland. We are used to learning about such incidents round the year.

The government should take proper steps in this regard.

Bipra Kanungo
Chittagong

Zoo in bad shape

I had the opportunity to visit our 'great' Dhaka Zoo the other day. What a joke! There was rubbish thrown about everywhere. The animals looked depressed and underfed. The cages were too small. People visiting the zoo were teasing the animals with no zoo keeper to warn them. If the zoo authorities are incapable of maintaining it as per international standards, then there is no reason to keep this zoo open. I felt so sorry for these animals and wondered how these zoo keepers would feel if they were locked up in these cages instead.

Animals too have feelings just like humans and its about time Bangladeshis begin to realize this.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Easing traffic jam



How long does someone spend in the ever prevailing gridlock of Dhaka city? You are never sure when you will reach your destination, doesn't matter whether you have a very important meeting fixed at a certain time, or may be you need to attend a very serious patient. Nobody, from top-notch executives to day labourers, diplomats to garment workers can escape from these important hour losses. To make matters worse, we have sophomore CNG drivers and apprentice rickshaw pullers targeting some quick bucks during the month of Ramadan and on the occasions of holy Eid & Durga Puja. Even the number of street beggars has jumped manifolds, and not to mention our culture of going in

numbers for buying even a single article.

In the ever worsening situation there seems to be no authority; no guardian, no city corporation. The govt's initiatives were heard a few days back when proposals were made to reduce the number of private vehicles from the street and also re-arrangement of office & school timings. While suggestion for private vehicle reduction sounded very childish like the one made for electricity savings by not wearing suits at office, the decision on separate timing arrangement for schools & offices sounded quite plausible.

Among all these, the most necessary initiative is missing; the long term solution for the ever intensi-

fying traffic problem. We have grown into a mono-centric country even though we still have a wide open opportunity of making our country a multi-centric one. A comprehensive policy framing with tightly maintained implementation schedule driven by long term vision will bring better days. We possibly can give a dream to all our countrymen of having a vehicle of his/her own, not taking away the very few they have right now.

I want to rephrase the famous line quoted in every coaching school "No Dream Too Big."

Md. Kalim Ullah
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