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Politicians' work?

Congratulations to Shahnoor Wahid for reminding the politicians of our expectations, published on September 29. However, I believe the politician's understanding of their work is different! After all the musician's work is to make music, the statisticians produce statistics, the electrician does electrical work, and the anaesthesiologist gives anaesthesia.

Similarly, comedians provide fun, and politicians naturally do politics. They are experts in this subject, second to none!

How can he imagine that our politicians should actually work? Work is for the workers, as washing is for the washer, painting is for the painter, and so on and so forth. If we want politicians to work, then we must change their name. May be we should call them 'workiticians'; or call them political workers.

However, in Bangladesh context, they are the professionals chanting slogans, proceeding in processions, attending meetings and all such activities, for which they are paid on daily rate basis, or on contract including painting of slogans and banners!

Finally, we have the political activists. In the days gone by they were called goondas or goons! Now they are professionals, covering activities like man-handling, beating, snatching, rioting and robbing etc. Sometimes it may also include killing!

They are the highly paid part of the political spectrum,

and working on regular wages, or on percentage basis. It could be even on job contract with undefined working hours, physical risk and the chance of being state guests behind caged rooms with full board included and all at no charge, however, with total outdoor restrictions!

Given this logical (?) definition and brief job description, our politicians are top class in politics, their fulltime profession! One cannot demote and degrade them by asking them to work! That is possibly the concept held by politicians!

Awriter
Dhaka

Rape victims

The recent report in The Daily Star regarding the alleged abduction, rape and torture of a schoolgirl by BCL activists is extremely disturbing. As the victim and her family appear to be almost imprisoned by the alleged perpetrators and their political big brothers, the first step would be to free them from their clutches. In Bangladesh it is very difficult to achieve unless human rights and/or women rights activists come forward and play their due role. In the prevailing situation, I urge the honourable Judges of the Supreme Court to be proactive and issue a suo moto rule on the issue to bring the culprits and their protectors to book.

The future of the ruling party also looks bleak if the leaders do not give up their greed and petty mindedness, rise to the occasion and control the unruly members.

Nuruddin Azam
Australia

Recent reports in various newspapers relating to rape of teenage girls by BCL leaders are a matter of great concern. The grafting of CD, DVD and mobile camera has added a new dimension to moral perversion. No sensible person can bear all this. Like always, we read in the news media that victims are afraid of lodging complaints with the law enforcing authorities.

The culprits deserve exemplary punishment.
Rubab Abdullah
Residential Area
Dhaka Cantonment
Dhaka

Fools' day!

The first day of April is traditionally the fools' day in the western countries. Bangladesh, not to be left behind, has now caught up with them, a laudable achievement, under AL patronage! We will now have the Fools' Day on every first day of October--the clock time has got us all fooled!

A week back we were told to set the clock back by one hour all over Bangladesh. Lo and behold, it all seems to be a dud! Did anything happen? Were the clocks set back as ordered? It seems that nothing happened and clocks stayed put! The clock time was not changed. May be we moved from daylight saving time to what? May be we are in moonlight wasting time!

Well, what do the readers think?
Acynic
Dhaka

Indian superstars

I never understood why as Bangladeshis, we are so enamoured with Indian/Bollywood stars. I bring this issue up and it is most definitely an issue because of the love I see in my fellow countrymen for these so called superstars. I myself have seen one Bollywood movie in the past twenty years but I do know my mother loves Shabana Azmi as an actress and has been her fan since Shabana Azmi's debut on the golden screen. Recently, Ms. Azmi made an appearance in Bangladesh. She made an appearance last week at a prominent business tycoon's residence for dinner and snubbed a lot of these ladies (adoring fans) attending the party. Superstars never should forget what got them there - their FANS! Ms. Azmi should do well to remember that the high precipice that she walks on was built by her fans. She should not be riding such a high horse just because a few adoring fans wanted their pictures taken with her.

Recently, I had the pleasure of working in an establishment where an evening, Mr. Tom Cruise was dining with movie producer/director David Cronenberg. Midway into their dinner, another guest at the establishment walked up to Mr. Cruise's table and started inquiring about Scientology. I thought you would have to be a complete fool to do something like that but surprisingly Mr. Tom Cruise spoke at length to this gentleman for at least 45 minutes (letting his entree go cold) and even got up and gave this person a goodbye hug. WOW! I was blown away. This is why, Tom Cruise is one of the biggest superstars on the planet. He always has time for his fans. Even I got in on the act - story for another day.

Ms. Azmi was a guest of Dhaka Club and was attending a soiree in her honour the following day. My mother wanted to meet Ms. Azmi and was invited to the function. When she got back, naturally I was inquisitive. My mother was very sad and irritated.

I echo these sentiments exactly. Apparently Ms. Azmi came to the event, complained about the smoke (non smoking room) and took off with her nose up in the air. I might not watch Hindi movies but I am pretty sure she has not been in a hit-movie for quite sometime. I actually feel sorry for old actresses who cannot hold candles anymore to the new breed and are withering away like dead flowers.

Moral of the story - next time give the money to charity when intentions are getting stars of Amisha Patel's calibre (have no idea who she is) for opening of clothing stores or even washed out Shabana Azmi for God only knows what and pronounce with a huge sign at the door that the money was donated to the charity instead of the presence of so called superstars. I think people will appreciate that more.

Fazle Haque
One-mail

'Killing' of a playground

We were shocked and angry to read the news in The Daily Star of 30.9.09 that some 'filthy' rich people are conspiring to convert the Dhanmondi playground in Road no.8 into a stadium etc. This is a sinister move by 'bhumi dacoits'. In our opinion they are crossing all limits of greed. We wonder what benefits the residents of Dhanmondi will reap from this conspiracy to hijack the playground. They have also shown the audacity and evil 'intelligence' of using Sheikh Jamal's name and goodwill to advance their conspiracy. This is a blatant emotional blackmail of the Awami league and the nation. Probably we, the common people, love and cherish the memory of Sheikh Jamal more than these 'new rich matlabis'.

We urge upon Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who happens to be one of the early residents of Dhanmondi, to cancel the whole 'game' and also the residents of Dhanmondi to rise and foil the conspiracy.
Dr. SN Moon
One-mail

Terrorism

The assertion by the Honourable Home Minister that terrorism came into being with the assassination of Bangabandhu is not correct. Terrorism has been there since time immemorial. With the assassination of Bangabandhu terrorism has become multi-faced.

We can easily trace the roots of terrorism in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, when the invading British forces in connivance with Mir Zafar terrorized the people of Bengal. Thereafter the people were again terrorized by the communal riots of 1947. Late President Ayub Khan terrorized the people by imposing martial law. The 1965 India Pakistan war terrorized the people. In 1971 late President Yahya Khan imposed martial law thereby terrorizing the people once more. In December 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent country after nine months of independence war.

Our memory is very short lived, most of us must have forgotten by now that the people were again terrorized by the JRB with the introduction of one party rule. Then came the nightmare, Bangabandhu was mercilessly killed along with other members of his family on August 15, 1975.

With this changeover terrorism became multi-faced in Bangladesh. Shanti Bahini started terrorizing the people in the hill districts. With the assassination of late President Ziaur Rahman, another phase of terrorism was unleashed with the imposition of martial law by President Ershad.

That is in brief the history of terrorism in Bangladesh.
Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Price spiral

The govt should find out the unscrupulous traders who create artificial scarcity of goods like rice, sugar, etc.

The retailers blame the trade syndicates for price hike and the traders blame the international market.

Many ruling party men have their control over the market. In this critical situation the govt can take stern actions against those syndicates to ease public sufferings. It's clear that the businessmen make the market unstable for making extra profits.

The people would urge the govt to monitor the market strictly and control the soaring prices.

Farida Begum (Popy)
One-mail

Legacy of a poet

Our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was a poet, musician, revolutionary, and philosopher who pioneered poetic works espousing intense spiritual rebellion against orthodoxy and oppression. His poetry and nationalist activism earned him the popular title of Rebel Poet. Accomplishing a large body of acclaimed works through his life, Nazrul is officially recognised as the National Poet of Bangladesh and revered in India also.

Nazrul's writings explore themes such as love, freedom, and revolution, he opposed all bigotry.

Shohag Mostafiz
MBA- Stream: Strategic & International Management (SIM)
University of Dhaka

Iran going nuclear

This is with reference to Point Counterpoint: "Nuclear Iran and the Middle East," by Abdullah A. Dewan (Oct. 1).

Former Iranian President Rafsanjani, considered a moderate, speaking in a Friday sermon promised: "If one day, a very prominent day of course, the Islamic world will also be equipped with the weapons available to Israel now, the imperialist strategy will reach an impasse, because the employment of even one atomic bomb inside Israel will wipe it off the face of the earth, but would only do damage to the Islamic world." Even the damage that such a bomb might do to Iran would apparently not be a deterrent.

But Rafsanjani may be reminded that Islamic world has already had the atomic bomb when Pakistan exploded its nuclear device in 1999. And look what hap-

Tea industry



A.M. AHAD / DRIKNEWS

I must congratulate Mr. Sarwar Ahmed for his write ups, especially on tea in Tetulia where he has really highlighted a hero-- Mr. Mosharraf Hossain.

Tea will dry up for domestic consumption soon and according to him by 2016 we will have to import it!! That would usher the beginning of the end of 155 years or more of the tea planting industry, a very organized sector in our part of the world, with all its evils creeping in then. And like our jute industry failure, tea growing will then be destined to fail. What is the catch 22 then? How do we avoid having to import tea?

Expanding land is getting difficult and it would not be the answer, contract farming even in the present plantations and vertical and higher unit productivity and quality production may be an opening and some light at the end of the tunnel.

Quoting the Frontier Sun, Guwahati, Saturday 06 February:

"The Indian tea industry has strongly opposed the government of India move to unilaterally allow import of tea into the country. The Indian Tea Association is of the view that by its very nature the policy regime works against the Indian tea industry. This opening up to unbridled competition will sound the death knell of the Indian tea industry."

The tea supply and demand situation of India in many ways is similar to ours in Bangladesh. The pressure of the Indian tea industry became so over-

whelming that the government of India had to stop importing in the manner they started off. We have to learn from history even if it is of a neighbouring country.

The trouble is as you might definitely know that in Bangladesh while the rate of investment in the economy is 17.00% of GDP per annum, the tea industry has only attained 3.90% investment of total turnover per annum over the last 23 years (1979-2002). The low rate of investment has led to a slow growth of 2.82% in tea production per year. This scenario cannot sustain the massive internal consumption of 10.89% per annum due to increased tea drinking habit, population growth and rapid urbanisation during 1973 to 2006. However, we still can do something to halt the decay and turn the flow of events. Mr. Mosharraf Hossain has shown some of the ways.

Now that the demand of tea is high and a far higher turnover is being achieved in tea, investment is going to be better. This will all evaporate overnight if we start to arbitrarily import tea. Greater care and widespread discussion with all concerned are a must, please don't let our tea estates perish without sympathy like jute. It will be a social catastrophe.

Nasim Anwar
Managing Director
Plantation Assistance Tea Estate Services, Chittagong

opened to Pakistan. With the Taliban slaughtering Pakistanis in the name of their version of Islam, bombing girls' schools, hotels and even hospitals, Pakistan's is facing a threat to its security from within. Pakistan is now a vast killing field where al-Qaeda/Taliban and their acolytes are systematically slaughtering fellow Pakistanis and instead of providing security, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal has become a prime target of the terrorists.

Similarly, after rigging the election, Iran's Shia mullahs are slaughtering fellow Iranians who dare to protest against vote-rigging. Protestors are mowed down by the Revolutionary Guards, or Pasdars in Farsi and Iranian people are facing long years of repression by the mullahs.

Acquisition of nuclear

bombs would give the mullahs an additional weapon to intimidate their own population. A nuclear-armed Shiite Iran would also be a threat to its Sunni Arab neighbours.

The recent nationwide uprising against vote-rigging in Iran has raised the regime's level of insecurity, and the same week the protests began, UN nuclear inspector, Mohamed ElBaradei stated that Iran might be seeking nuclear weapons to send a message to the rest of the world not to "mess with Tehran." The message is also meant for the opponents of the regime inside Iran.

But Iran's nuclear aspirations can be stopped non-violently. Iran's economy is totally dependent on oil exports and as long as oil prices are high, it can afford to pay for extensive subsidies for

the rural poor who are the regime's main supporters and at the same time afford its expensive nuclear programme. Saudi Arabia can easily put a stop to Iran's nuclear aspiration by boosting massively its oil production to bring down prices, causing economic turmoil in Iran. If Saudi Arabia acts, Iran will not be able to afford both, and the Shiite mullahs will be forced to give up their nuclear programme. Otherwise, they might face the discontent of the rural poor who are their biggest supporters. The regime has already lost the support of the urban middle classes and it cannot afford to enrage the rural poor. Instead of bombing Iran, Saudi Arabia must be prodded to use its oil weapon against Iran.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Hazards of cell phone

How much hazardous the radiation of the RF signals emitted by both the base stations and the receiving units of cell phone network is yet to be accurately determined. But it has been proved that the radiation released by cell phones is injurious to human health.

Here is a precautionary measure every cell phone user should follow, that is, when the battery of the phone is down to the last grid/bar as shown by the battery charge

display icon on the cell phone screen, do not answer the phone as the radiation is 1000 times more at that time. So charge the phone before the battery reaches its lowest grid/bar.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Bangladesh Agricultural University
Dhaka



Death of giraffes

Recently, some animals including two giraffes have died at Dhaka Zoo. It seems the zoo lacks experts in handling and treatment of these animals. If so, then the authorities should not import them at all.

I wonder whether some unscrupulous people are poisoning these magnificent animals for the sake of their

beautiful skins! Our people are capable of doing anything for money! At least, the police should investigate the disposal of their dead bodies to ascertain the truth.

Abul Mohsin
Siddheswari Circular Rd.
Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

PM's interview

Thanks to VOA for airing the interview of Sheikh Hasina on ntv. A leader can change her style, response to well articulated questions (including supplementary) related to national and international issues Bangladesh has to confront and address in the coming days. I think Sheikh Hasina did her best in this interview with Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury of VOA. One can easily get the feeling how the environment, well articulated questions and due preparation for an interview can produce best results. I am sure Sheikh Hasina would be very pleased with what she has said in the interview. This will also dispel a lot of our apprehension that she is missing the reality of the situation in her governance. Thanks to Mr Choudhury for his sincere efforts to get the best of Sheikh Hasina.

Nevertheless, Sheikh Hasina has a long way to go. She has to clear the weeds in the party and create a clean and transparent field to produce the best results. The opposition has taken a innovative path to disturb her journey. A research cell is perhaps very proactive to give new release of gimmicks every day, including distasteful and substandard digital product

to defame the effort of digital Bangladesh. Yes, Sheikh Hasina is right, just keep the people behind the government, and stop irrelevant empty talks and acts by the ministers--the ministries are, the ministry of commerce, the ministry of law and the home ministry in order of demerit. Ask them to cool down and inform us only after taking action. Some silly action has been taken by the ministry of cultural affairs regarding "Ekushey Padak".

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Mr. Choudhury.
Faqrul Quadir
California, USA

Taxpayers in trouble

Out of 15 crore people in this country only 7 lakh people are taxpayers. This is the story going on through different newspapers, talk shows, and income tax bosses. This is evident from their attitude, talks, behaviour in every forum that they want to extend the tax net to every sphere of life in order to increase revenue income of the government. Conscious people who were so long ignorant about the importance of income tax payment are becoming interested to pay income tax from their salary income, business

income or whatever may be the source after observing different advertisements in print and electronic media that payment of tax in time would save them from harassments and legal complications in future and at the same time the poor country would be largely benefited.

Now the picture is quite different in the government agencies where income tax return is collected. From their attitude and behaviour it seems they are not at all convinced of the urgency of tax payment by people. At different tax zones and circles their attitude has not changed. The government in their advertisements announced easy modalities to calculate and compute tax returns by individuals, but in real life it seems tax payment has become more complicated these days. There is a gulf of difference between what government says in respect to tax payment and the ordeal experienced by the taxpayers at different circle offices.

The government's responsibility is not confined to convincing people to come under the tax net through advertisement. They must make the procedures simple and easy so that people can pay taxes.
Md. Lutfar Rahman
Uttara, Dhaka