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Biodiversity

The article 'Biodiversity in Peril' (DS 10 Oct 2009) by Mr. Md. Asadullah Khan is a reminder of atrocities the humans are doing on the fellow living things with which we share the planet. The precarious state of biodiversity is recognized globally and Bangladesh is no different. The writing could have been more educational to our Bangladeshi bureaucrats and businessmen had examples from Bangladesh been used in the discussion.

World environment ministers in the Hague Ministerial Declaration of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Netherlands 2002 signed an agreement to reduce the threats to the global biodiversity by 2010. Political commitments were made but we are far from reaching there. Commitments are made by the politicians not to be kept -- this is another great example. Biodiversity remains in an even more perilous state than before while our bureaucrats and politicians are busy getting the figures right on how much to claim for the impacts of climate change!!

The government is still assessing the state of biodiversity in Bangladesh whereas the documents produced earlier particularly the "National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Bangladesh" (MOEF 2004) have clearly prioritised the actions that need to be taken to conserve and protect our natural heritages. One can only lament about the politicians, political situation, instability, etc., to stop you from arguing - where there is no future for the humans in Bangladesh so what chance is there for biodiversity.

But before saying this, just look around everything that we use, eat, wear - the root is biodiversity.

S. M. A. Rashid, PhD
Chief Executive

Centre for Advanced Research in Natural Resources & Management (CARINAM)
Dhaka



Magic box

The box has both merits and demerits. It depends on the needs of the users. Actual users get maximum benefit out of it, but those who do not have utility and money should be treated as "nonsensical".

The ratio between the actual user of the box and the nonsensical is very big in our country. It might stand like 1:50 and this uneven ratio results in very bad impact both on society and economy as well.

Ours is a poor country with no other option to spend money on unproductive purposes.

I am not pleading for stopping the use of the box but feel obligated to tell the authorities concerned to ponder on following points before the box goes to the users:

1) There should be a

criterion for eligibility to get the box.

2) Free-hand use should be stopped.

3) Young generation who are under 18/20 years (both male and female) should not be allowed to use the box (because they have no earning).

4) Working classes like labourers, rickshaw-pullers, days labourers, farmers

(who can not afford to maintain the box) should be barred from using it.

With the advent of the box, society is being benefited but that benefit must not be at the cost of insurmountable negative influence of the box on society.

My six years old son asked me to give him a box. I said, "What is it?"

He replied passionately - "mobile phone".

Md. Mosharraf Hossain
Chittagong

Obama wins Nobel

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama is arguably one of the most absurd awards that the Nobel committee has ever made. Highly patronizing it will be received with incredulity around the world. In fact there's rarely been an award that has been so obviously partisan and political in its intention.

The award is apparently an encouragement to America's first black president and a way of saying we hope that there is going to be a new direction in Washington's policy. However, all of this undermines the point of a Nobel Peace prize.

Obama has only been in office since the beginning of the year and while his foreign peace aims are noble, his achievements are rather few. He's done nothing in the Middle East and nothing to improve relations with the Russians.

In his own homeland he has actually undermined peace by becoming the most pro-abortion President ever to be elected. Former Nobel winner Mother Teresa once said, "The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion."

To award a prize simply on hope suggests a naivety and a blindness that I think will only damage the value of the prize and diminish its value to all its previous winners.

Tom Richardson
London, England

Palestine and Israel

During World War-I, the UK invaded and occupied the Turkish Muslim Empire in the Middle East and cut the Arab world into pieces.

After World War II the UK and the USA initiated the creation of two independent states within the state of Palestine for the Arab Muslims and Israel for the Jews of Europe and the USA.

The 'two state and 'divide & rule' policy of the UK and the USA encouraged the Jews' unilateral declaration of independence of Israel in 1948.

The UK and the USA promptly accorded recognition to the newly created state of Israel and gave a bluff to the original state Palestine.

Ever since 1948 Israel is an independent state on the one hand and it is getting stronger day by day with mammoth US economic and military aid. And on the other hand, Palestine is deprived of independence, it is languishing and the sufferings of millions of Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis know no bound.

All the times we hear about meetings, conferences, meditations, negotiations, assurances and promises under the leadership of the USA for comprehensive peace in the Middle East and independence of Palestine but all in vain. The arrogance, bellicos-

ity and Israeli democracy turned dictatorship have made the 'two state' policy of the USA and the UK for peace in the Middle East totally obsolete.

More than six decades have passed and the Jews immigrants, now Israelis, have been controlling the whole of Palestine. The Israelis are enjoying freedom but the Palestinians are not enjoying freedom and human rights.

The synopsis of the history of Palestine is that 1) Palestine is the holy land of the Jews, 2) of the Christians because it was the scene of Jesus Christ and 3) of the Muslims because Jerusalem is the traditional site of our Prophet's (Pbuh) ascent to heaven.

If the people of various faiths including black and white people can live together peacefully and happily in the USA, South Africa, Mozambique and many other countries, why could not the Israelis and the Palestinians live in a single state of Palestine?

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Expensive foreign tours

Everyone knows that Bangladesh is a poor country. The government has to beg and borrow from other countries every year to meet the "deficit" of our budget. Day by day the expenses are going up and the govt. has failed to keep control on the expenses.

Recently, our respected PM went to attend an international conference at Geneva with a large contingent of officials/politicians costing a huge amount to our exchequer. There was lot of criticism by people about it.

Further, it was reported in the TV news that on the Eid day our PM went to the US with 53 officials/staff by Biman for attending a UN Meeting. As citizens we do not object to this as it is a state obligation. But we would humbly request our PM to carefully scrutinize the list of officials/staff who accompany her abroad. After all, they are spending money of a very poor country.

I hope our Honourable Prime Minister will kindly look into this and take appropriate action.

Acitizen
One-mail

Poor postal service

It is very sad that in Bangladesh the "Postal Service" is extremely poor. We have a very large population who are deprived of the postal services. The service available is very inefficient and inadequate. There is ample opportunity to improve the services but no one ever really tried to look into this matter. Therefore it is suggested that

the govt take the following measures.

1. Appoint a high level committee with experienced people to look into this matter and recommend steps to be taken for improvement within a reasonable time.

2. This committee should study the "postal needs" of our people and recommend actions to be taken.

3. This committee should study the postal systems of our neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan and make the best recommendations suited to us keeping the cost at the lowest.

4. The "International Postal Union" or United Nations Organization can help us in this matter.

5. People of our country want a fast postal service at a reasonable cost so that they do not have to depend on "courier service" which is very expensive.

6. The number of post offices in Dhaka and Chittagong should be increased substantially keeping in mind the large population of these two cities.

7. The "Postal Savings Scheme" or "Postal Banking" should be enlarged/improved substantially so that more and more people deposit their small savings at various post offices. This scheme has become very popular in India as the service is fast and customer friendly.

Time has come to reorganize the entire postal system of our country. And this should be done keeping in mind the needs of people and as fast as possible. We have wasted a lot of time already.

Concerned
One-mail

Obama and Suu Kyi

It is great news that US President Barack Obama has been awarded Nobel Prize. Though it is very early, there is no denying the fact that he really deserved this prize. This achievement would definitely encourage him to take more fruitful steps in establishing peace all over the world. The shining eyes of Obama who is also a follower of Mahatma Gandhi raise hope in the hearts of millions.

While Obama is enjoying the facilitations from his well wishers, a woman named Aung San Suu Kyi is leading an imprisoned life. As a fan of Obama, I strongly believe that I have the right to express my expectations from him. It would be great if he takes some bold steps to rescue Aung San Suu Kyi, an icon for all democracy lovers of the world. It is really sad to see an innocent lady suffering imprisonment.

At present the two most talked about persons of the world are Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi. If the former becomes conscious about the latter, then no jail would exist

Child labour



ADNAN & AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRIKNEWS

Child labour nowadays is not accepted in any civilised society. But child domestic service is a widespread practice in Bangladesh. The majority of child domestics tend to be 12 to 17 years old. But children as young as 5 or 6 years old can also be found working. A survey of child domestic workers found that 38 percent were 11 to 13 years old and nearly 24 percent were 5 to 10 years old. Child domestics work long hours, getting up well before their employers and going to bed long after them. On an average 50 percent domestic workers work 12-14 hours a day.

The proportion of boy and girl child workers, in the age group of 5-17 years, is 73.5 per cent and 26.5 per cent, respectively. The total number of working children aged 5-17 years in rural areas is estimated at 6.4 million as against 1.5 million in urban areas. As many as 93.3 per cent of all working children in the age group of 5-17 years operate in the informal sector.

Among factors contributing to child labour are rapid population growth, adult unemployment, bad working conditions, lack of minimum wages, exploitation of workers, low standard of living, low quality of education, lack of legal provisions and enforcement, low capacity of institutions, gender discrimination, etc. One or more of the above contribute to the large numbers of children working under exploitative or hazardous conditions. More boys than girls are engaged in this form of child

labour across all age groups.

A boy of seven or eight has to work as a servant. Sometimes the boy works in ships and hotels. They have to grind bricks and stones. They work as street hawkers. Sometimes they become pick-pockets. A boy whose feet hardly reach the pedal has to work as a rickshaw-puller. They work as bus conductor. They work in small factories. They polish boots. They sell nuts and chinchies. They sell vegetables. They work as porters.

The servants and maidservants have to work fourteen hours a day without any recess. They are always dealt with rebuke and reproof. Very often they are punished for trifling offences. The masters and housewives are very harsh to them. They are generally given poor food. In the shops, hotel and factories they get similar treatment. The children who work from an early age cannot have proper growth. They sometimes suffer from various diseases of the stomach. They have a short life.

Mass education programmes protect children from work at an early stage. The educated people of society, the young educated graduates, should come forward to help this programme. If our government, NGOs, students as well as all conscious people come forward, the country can easily get rid of child labour to a great extent.

Md. Nur-e-Alam Siddique
Hajee Danesh Science & Technology University
Dinajpur

for her. None but Obama can do this. I am sure the liberation of Suu Kyi would give a new dimension to his popularity. It must be noted that both Barack Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi are Nobel Prize winners.

If they work together to establish peace in the world, then human civilization will watch a "newsun".

Pradip Das
A novelist
Dhaka

Our future

About two months ago, the prime minister of Bangladesh issued an order to advance every clock in the country by

one hour, in order to make more use of daylight. But where is all the saved electricity? They are definitely not in the houses of the average citizen, for load shedding is still going on unabated!

This is just one of the many failures of the government on which I would like to comment, but due to the word limit of a letter I cannot deal with all the problems.

The point is, no matter which party gets elected, the AL or the BNP, the end result is always the same. Our politicians are busy serving themselves instead of the country. They have no concern for the image of Bangladesh around the globe and the state of the nation, they only care about making money, grabbing more land and so on.

Unfortunately, the nation at large is also responsible. During the last election, I was disappointed to find out that hardly anyone used the "No vote" option, despite overwhelming evidence that neither party deserved to be in power. The end result is that both the politicians and the nation have let down the millions of people. Like it or not, deep down inside, everyone is miserable, hopeless and lost.

A frustrated citizen
Chittagong

Tobacco

How many people in Bangladesh smoke, or have raw tobacco with beetle leaves, as their everyday item to satisfy themselves, is unknown to me, but lately I have learned from a television advertisement that each year, at least 57,000 Bangladeshis are dying every year due to smoking. Still there is no information about the death of raw tobacco users.

The advertisement was proclaiming that hundreds of thousands of people were also suffering from different type of diseases due to smoking.

They also announced in that advertisement that more tax should be imposed upon bidi (the local product sans filter). But, they didn't state that bidi is even more dan-

gerous and should be banned.

The authorities who produced the advertisement and brought that to be aired, should be cautious about airing any advertisement like this. Because, indeed, they are not discouraging people to smoke.

They perhaps have a good intention since they are trying to collect more tax from people, but should also care that no product should cause any harm to human beings.

If they added in that advertisement that bidi is more dangerous and should be avoided, then, as a matter of fact, the whole sense would have been positive.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS Correspondent
Gopalganj

DU lagging behind

The immense sufferings of the admission seekers of Dhaka University provoked me to write this piece. The undisciplined and haphazard queue under the sun for long hours really reminded us that Dhaka University is backward in information technology. A couple of days earlier we had witnessed that a public university demonstrated submission of admission form by the students through SMS.

The job is really appreciable. Anybody can download the form and fill it out properly and submit it to the university. The required fees can be paid through pay order or bank draft. Is the job of uploading the admission form on the Website of Dhaka University and invite the students to read the rules and regulations and download the form for submission for admission with necessary pay order/bank draft very hard?

Most organisations in the bank, business and financial sectors are applying this system for IPO purposes. If it is done in time then the sufferings of the students can be minimized and immoral business by the unscrupulous people would not be possible.

What is the role of Dhaka University in digitalisation of Bangladesh so far?

Matin bin Zahir
Trishal, Mymensingh

Rawalpindi attack - what next?

Defeat, Disgrace and Dictatorship are inevitable companions of the Pakistan Army despite its possession of a few nuclear crackers. The 24 hour-long, not unexpected, Mumbai-style hostage taking suicidal attack by the Islamist militants inside Pakistan's political and Military Headquarters (GHQ) at Rawalpindi once again exposed the myth of the Pakistan Army, the capability of Pakistani Taliban and grave concerns over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Shock, fear and panic gripped the whole country. No one, no place in Pakistan is safe from the militants now. In fact in the last 2/3 years, on several occasions the militants attacked the GHQ, all big cantonments, Air force and Navy Headquarters (HQ) and bases, commando, paramilitary and police HQs and barracks and killed/injured a number of generals and ministers including Benazir Bhutto. The Pakistan Army is the architect as well as the victim of the Islamist militancy.

About three decades ago, Pakistan, USA and oil-rich Wahabi Arab states had taken the Afghanistan 'jihad project' as a cost-effective way to fight against the Communist Russian invaders. The jihadis ('mujahidins') were recruited from all Afghan ethnic groups and youths from Muslim countries including Bangladesh. After the Soviet pull-out and US disappearance, strategic and ideological planners of the Pakistan Army created a number of



militant organizations for different purposes: Taliban was originally created from Afghan Pashtuns (Pathans) refugee students in Pakistan madrasas for the strategic purpose of controlling Afghanistan and central Asia; several Kashmiri militant groups were created mainly for the territorial-strategic purpose against India; violent militant gangs in Pakistan's Punjab (and Baluchistan) province were raised mainly to terrorize other sects (non-Sunni), non-Muslims and Shiite Iran. Some gangs in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces were created to tackle the nationalist and democratic forces. Taliban were portrayed as Islamic

Robin Hood (heroic defenders of Islam and the only hope for the poor). As Plato said, "What is honoured in a country is cultivated there" a recent survey showed that about 60% Pakistani still see Afghan Taliban as heroes. All these plan and propaganda worked nicely until the 9/11 (2001) when the Pakistan Army 'reluctantly' sided with US against the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Introduction of modern education to Pashtun tribes by the British brought relative stability in that region and produced Pashtuns like Gaffar Khan, actor Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) and cricketer Imran Khan. Indoctrination

of Wahabi ideology in the same Sufi-mystic Pashtun society in the last three decades by the Pakistani military planners increased intra-tribal bloodshed, brought international warfare and produced extremists like Mullah Omar and Baitullah Mehsud. Common Pashtuns both in Pakistan and Afghanistan side - are terrorised and are suffering (over 3 millions became refugees during the recent Pakistan military operation in Swat area).

During 'mullah-military' friendship years, the Pakistan Army, civil society and the militant groups had transformed completely. Islamabad is probably the only capital in the world without a cinema hall for the last 7/8 years (a major demand of the militants). Also, the Army falls into its own propaganda trap an alarming percentage of officer cadres came under radical influences.

Despite about 6000-7000 troop deaths in last few years, there are strong evidences that elements inside the Pakistan Army are helping certain militant groups.

While there is strong debate whether 2009 Nobel Peace Prize winner US President Barack Obama can resolve the Arab-Israel conflict, he and other world powers should immediately bring the Pakistan's nuclear stockpiles and infrastructures under safe UN control and save the world before they are handed over to the militants.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK