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Relocating factories

Tawfiq Ali's report on this important matter, published by you on 8 November, is the current headache for Metropolitan Dhaka City. The report related to the growing environment pollution of the city. The report also clearly points out the illegal activities of a number of public bodies and utilities in permitting the location of the factories in Dhaka city, in the first place! The vice president of Gulshan Society has stated that at least one hundred factories are located in the Gulshan residential area for which we the residents here have to suffer the most. It deprives us of water and power facilities which are usurped by these illegal factories!

To reiterate his point, he also states; which I quote: "An unauthorised industrial unit has been set up in connivance with DCC, Rajuk, DESA, WASA and Titas Gas officials". However, I feel that he has missed out the Department of Industries, and the Directorate of Labour; whose clearances are also needed. I know this, as our builder had to get all these, (excluding the Industries and Labour Depts.) plus the Department of Civil Aviation's clearance for constructing an eight-storied building in Gulshan located more than three miles away from ZIA runways!

Why then are we now saying, as stated in the report, that the industrialist should pay for shifting from the illegal location when they have obtained all necessary clearances? First the real criminals, who gave the permission, should pay for the shifting costs. Only then may be we can sue the industrialists, as accessories to the illegal deed.

S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka



ally lasts till March. During these 4-5 months, the privileged class (net worth 10 crore +) indulges in their annual orgy of throwing lavish parties in 3*, 4*, 5* hotels, clubs, resorts and convention centres. The occasion could be anything, though birthdays, engagements, weddings are still the most common by far. Receipt of a foreign award (purchased or wangled?), arrival of a 'foreign dignitary' (junior minister from Moldova, for instance), academic degrees obtained by children in some foreign university, etc. are also some of the fit excuses for the parties.

The guest list exposes the real purpose of the tycoon, which is spread of networking, making new contacts and strengthening the 'old boy' network. Wheeling and dealing are resorted to, deals discussed, alliances forged and slices of the forthcoming economic pie agreed upon. This has given rise to a new breed of 'event managers' who outdo themselves in arranging novel decorations, games, prizes etc. a la Indian serial soap opera rituals. "Expenses - Sir?" "Don't bother about it, but it must be more garish and obscenely obnoxious than so-and-so's party last week!!!"

The menu ranges from the traditional katchi, roast, zarda to the most novel sub-continental and foreign dishes imaginable. However, one thing is common. The repeat on offer is by no means anything suitable for the betterment of the health of the VIPs who are mostly elderly, pot-bellied, suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney ailments and the like. Their cardiologists and physicians would probably shudder in horror seeing them tucking into the dishes in gay abandon! I have only spoken here of the public parties and not those held in private where liquor and drugs also flow endlessly. There is immense waste of food, time, energy and money for the sole purpose of further inflating the egos of some of our privileged class. Net result bigger gridlocks of luxury cars, greater inconvenience and expense for the 'common' invitees and joyful income for the centres and the muggers who can pick and choose their victims at night.

So, my questions are what happened to the Guest Control Order, Limit of Expenses allowed under Entertainment and other measures to curb corruption and tax evasion? Where are the DCC, Income Tax and VAT inspectors? Have they got cold feet and lost the rigidity of their back-bone?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1
Dhaka

Overburdened city

Our Economic & Administrative activities and infrastructural developments are centralized in Dhaka as the Capital City. Nowadays, Dhaka is worst affected by acute traffic congestion that leads to loss of working hours as well as costly fuel imported with foreign exchange. Our economy is not in a position to allow this type of luxury. However, the only positive aspect of the acute traffic congestion is it makes people read newspapers!!

In the era of globalisation, we can't keep ourselves isolated. If we compare Dhaka with other capital cities, we will be surprised to see that the average speed of the Dhaka city is only around 7.5 km/hour. Apart from lack of infrastructural facilities, traffic congestion is also one of the major obstacles on the way to foreign investment.

The issue must be addressed in right earnest.

Alamgir Sujat
Regional Sales Manager
Mutual Food Products Ltd.
Segunbagicha
Dhaka

Role of teachers

The New Age in its front-page article of November 8th, 2009 quoted a Dhaka University professor saying that he does not support public university academics working as consultants because it "warrants no creativity" and that "teachers should be engaged only in teaching". I strongly disagree with both these statements.

Universities are one of the highest places of learning. At the undergraduate level most students not only gather basic academic knowledge but also learn the process of learning itself. At the graduate level, courses are designed to provoke questions about methodologies, styles and deeper understanding of their chosen subjects culminating in many cases in novel research work. Learning is a perpetual part of life and that is exactly why a university degree, changes most people's outlook on life as they go through the process. As such, universities are vital institutions of modern societies. They must address the needs of the societies they are part of. Whereas they should be allowed to pursue academic goals autonomously, they must also bear their responsibilities of not only imparting knowledge back to the society at large but also address the latter's contemporary and future needs.

Consultancy by definition is a short-term paid employment to perform a specific task. Whereas one is expected to deliver just as s/he were a full-time employee, the employer hires a consultant simply because they cannot guarantee full time employ-

ment and benefits. Therefore, these short-term contracts have to be highly paid to compensate the expert for their time. It is ridiculous to say that consultancy warrants no creativity when for example such a short-term contractor has to find solutions to his client's problems based on all the facets of his/her personal knowledge and networking abilities.

University teachers should not be engaged in teaching only. They should be engaged in exploring ways to propagate knowledge and seek new knowledge through continuous research with a keen eye on how to best benefit the society they consider themselves to be part of. Teaching is only a part of their task; keeping up to speed with new findings in their field and polish their personal academic expertise is equally important. Failure to keep up with the knowledge of rest of the world on part of the academic leads to failure of his/her immediate society. I hope by now your readers will start to see reasons why so much of Bangladesh is lagging behind the rest of the world. In the more advanced societies of the world, there is a close circle of collaboration between academia, industry and the administration. In Bangladesh, public universities have a reputation for being nothing more than an extension of petty partisan and often violent politics; they are a far cry from countries where academics are respected in their own right. Why any self-respecting academic worth their salt want to be part of such ill reputed institutions baffles me.

My impression of a secure government job being a magnet for all those who want all the authority without any responsibility is supported for example by the ailing and stagnant (and of course politicised to the brim!) civil service of the country. Many public university academics are no different; they want a guaranteed salary and benefit package from the tax payer and they want to do politics by going on talk shows and at the same time they want an even higher standard of living by moonlighting in private universities. How many of them sit down and think about how to improve their society using their vocational role firstly and foremost as an academic? I bet the numbers are shrinking since the academic culture of the country simply does not value these vital traits.

Let's keep politics at bay. Let's have a minimum sense of discipline and ethics in the highest academic institutions of the country be they private or public.

Shabbir A. Bashar, PhD

Vancouver, USA

Predicament of Aila victims

Reports are being published in The Daily Star on the predicament of the Aila hit people of Satkhira and Khulna districts. The stories published in the paper emanated from the sympathy of the reporters, though these are inadequate and most of the sufferings of people are not properly described. Actually, it cannot be described unless anybody lives on the spot for a few days, at least.

The main callings of the local people are seriously hampered; most of the shrimp farms are inundated, most of the arable land are still under saline water, ponds are inundated, homesteads are under influence of the saline flush water, where vegetation is not possible. Right after the devastation few young girls were harassed and violated by the local political goons while they had to take shelter on the embankment, makeshift shelters were looted by the dacoits and the left-behind houses were emptied by the thieves. There were no fish, no milk, no pure water to drink and for other essential purposes, no road communications, nothing!! It is hard to believe that after several months people are yet living on the embankments of the rivers.

All these mess failed to attract the proper attention of the rest of the people of the country as the media was not ready to cover all these, may be they had limited resources to cover such a humanitarian tragedy!

Questions may arise what the political leadership has done to overcome the aftermath of the devastation. As the Aila hit areas are in the coastal belt and far away from the capital city, most of the sufferings of people went unheeded.

The leaders mostly live in the capital city, or they were reluctant to go there just after the incident in apprehension that with little resources how they could overcome the devastation, or they had been waiting to see what the government would do. They might have some other reasoning which people could not understand.

Whatever the reasons may be, they were absent at that time and most of the people had to suffer a lot. Most of the people subsequently left that area having no food, no shelter, no water and no employment.

I sincerely thank The Daily Star for covering the issue in detail.

Monzur Rahman
Khulna

Rickshaws- should we continue this way?

Well, I didn't think I would have to write so soon again on this topic. But my friend Mr. Sikander (thanks to him for considering me a friend) has once more compelled me to write back. Before I continue, I would like to request Mr. Sikander to look at the front page picture of the Daily Ittefaq dated November 6, 09 with the caption "City's busiest road Dainik Bangla crossing is almost obstructed due to rickshaws" which perhaps will bring him to reality and the nuisance rickshaws are creating in our city.

In his letter dated November 4, 2009 in The Daily Star he mentioned that rickshaws are "invisible" on Airport, Mirpur, Mohakhaki, Gulshan and other roads that have been rickshaw-free for years". Now let us be honest. Can any one of us say that ANY road is rickshaw-free in the 'real' sense in Dhaka? One of the main reasons for sudden unexplainable traffic jams are due to one or more rickshaw pullers' dangerous stunt in the middle of the road and most of the time in the wrong direction charging towards oncoming traffic in flying speeds with NO regard for traffic law or the safety of others around. So, let us not fool ourselves. No road in Dhaka is purely rickshaw-free at the moment.

Yes, once again I would like

to point out that I was utterly shocked to see the article by Prof. Rabbani who suggested taking cars off the roads and replacing them with rickshaws. Let me ask with due respect, does every citizen of this country not have the right to go where he pleases in the safest form of transport available to him? If we say yes, then given the reality of the public transport system of our city, how can we justifiably force people off the street who are riding on anything but rickshaws? I am sure ALL of us (or most of us) if given a car for free and advised not to use rickshaws, anyone would gladly accept. And no one will then be bragging about the non-polluting (air only) nature of rickshaws.

Rickshaws have systematically made the people of our nation more inclined to disobey laws as we got so used to riding rickshaws who obey NO ONE. See, the point here is simple. We must recognize that rickshaw is an outdated vehicle and it is extremely dangerous. Moreover, it is inhumane to keep these poor people in misery for our own comfort. This is not a profession for a human being. We must take steps immediately to bring an end to the rickshaw-era. I am personally confident and certain that despite some people's argument in favour of rickshaws, it will very soon be a thing of the past. All I am vowing for is how soon we can start the process.

And surely we are to move forward which involves removal of rickshaws and I am sure Mr. Sikander also agrees that it is the only option.

As for the government plans for building a transport network to include metro, elevated highways etc., it is to be applauded. Surely, there has to be a beginning if we want to have a finishing. In the long run that is the forward way.

I agree that Dhaka city does not have the capacity to hold such huge number of vehicles. And precisely, Mr. Sikander has himself mentioned that a 50 kg cement bag cannot hold 100 kgs of cement. For that very reason our roads cannot carry the burden of irresponsible, reckless, and countless number of rickshaws in its limited road space.

To Mr. Sikander and anyone who agrees with him, I would like to politely request once more, let us be sensible and think of our future generations. We have the responsibility to build a better world for them. If we all do our bit, it will all add up. We really have no option but to do without rickshaws.

Rahat
Malibag, Dhaka

Zoonotic diseases

Zoonotic diseases are those transmitted from animal to human and vice-versa. We know that zoonotic infection spreads rapidly under rural conditions, especially in the

developing countries. No systemic data is presently available to evaluate the socio-economic impact of diseases in general and zoonoses in particular. Although livestock is the main source of meat and milk for human consumption, human health hazards associated with these foods of animal origin have great importance from the public health point of view. Diseases like avian influenza, rabies, TB, brucellosis, tetanus, amoebiasis, cysticercosis, fascioliasis etc are found to be common as zoonotic disease in Bangladesh. Approximately 2,000 people who come into contact with rabid animals die of hydrophobia annually in Bangladesh. TB of cattle can be transmitted to man through contact with diseased animals or their products like milk or meat. Milkman and other people drinking raw milk are infected with brucellosis each year in Bangladesh. Amoebiasis is a common disease among the rural people of our country.

We should take appropriate steps against these diseases with the help of qualified veterinarians.

Bhasker Chandra Talukder
Medicine Department
Bangladesh Agricultural University

Season of waste!

The yearly ritual of wastefulness has begun and this usu-

Finally, we got justice.
Rasel Monir

We would like to extend our deepest sympathy to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who lost almost all her family members on that dark day. We hope the country will be relieved of its black history.
Ajit Barua

It is drizzling since morning here in Chittagong. It seems to me Bangabandhu came here in the city and he was sobbing for his nation. Hope justice will prevail.
Meah Mostafiz

Twice prime minister, Sheikh Hasina had to wait for long 34 years to get justice.
Surma Sarwarady

Capital punishment is a stigma on any civilized society. There should be a constitutional ban on such punishment.
Suresh Adhikary

I hope all the analyses before the final verdict were right.
Zakir

Those killers are Pakistan lovers. Why did not they live in Pakistan? Bangladesh is not their country!
Baz

Bangabandhu was the tiger of Bangladesh, hero of Bengalees. They don't know what they have done. They killed the real Bengal Tiger ever born. These killers should be hanged without any delay.
Maruf Mahamud

Today is a historic day for Bangladesh. The peace-loving people in Bangladesh will finally get the justice for the killing of Bangabandhu, who led a series of movements against the oppression on Bengalees for a few decades. He suffered a lot but he never gave up his efforts to establish the motherland for 7.5 million Bengalees. Today, we have our own land and we rule our own country. We are proud to have our own identity which also gives the people of Bangladesh exposure to the external world.

We have our own politicians, economists, physicists, noble laureate, professors, defence officers, media personnel and social activists. If there was no Bangabandhu in 1971, there would perhaps not be any country of our own and we would not be able to become secretaries, professors, ministers, army generals in undivided Pakistan. They never allowed us to excel. We must not forget the contribution Bangabandhu made.
Dr. Abdul Moyeen

I request those to realise the position of Hasina and Rehana. You would only realise if your parents and near ones were brutally killed.

The man who struggled throughout his life to give us freedom, gave us a free country to live in and we killed him brutally. Let part of the unpaid debt be paid back today.
Saleque Sufi

After 34 years, the verdict of the SC will bring an end to this horror.
Wamiq Sattar

Your words are blunt but they are truly penetrating. A notorious crime had been committed on a new born nation by the petty thugs who knew in advance that they would not be prosecuted. On the contrary, they got rewarded by our past governments. How do we comprehend this?
DR

ONLINE VOICES

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Justice order of the day (November 19, 2009)

All killers of Bangabandhu must get the capital punishment.
Dr. Md. Abdur Rahman

We worked hard for sending back the killers, Mohiuddin from abroad to the court. The court verdict is a silver lining in the dark clouds.
Gopal Sengupta

I have never seen Bangabandhu, but I am delighted to see at last a long over due justice being done. I also believe from today Bangladesh will be more 'innocent' than yesterday and will be emboldened to establish the rule of law in the country.
Ananta

We sincerely hope that Bangladeshis would get justice. The self confessed killers remained unpunished, several are at large for 34 years. It is our national failure. The entire nation was bleeding profusely.

Obama's achievement

Another big achievement by the US President. The House of Representatives has passed the HCR bill by 220 to 215 votes. The significant issues are that 39 Democrats representatives voted against the bill, and only 1 Republican Congressman has voted in favour. This is already known all over.

Critics are pointing out the missing spirit of bipartisanship, a positive character needed to reflect the national consensus. There were enough hurdles to cross.

Above all these factors, one must admit and admire President Obama for his courageous leadership. The

Health Care Reform process gives a vivid lesson as to how democracy works in the United States. Unfortunately, their image in the external world is quite opposite and viewed as "hawkish", a policy normally pursued by the Republicans. Hopefully, President Obama will change this image in the external world.

A sound foreign policy support from the Secretary of State is needed. The ball has started rolling!

Faqrul
California, USA

