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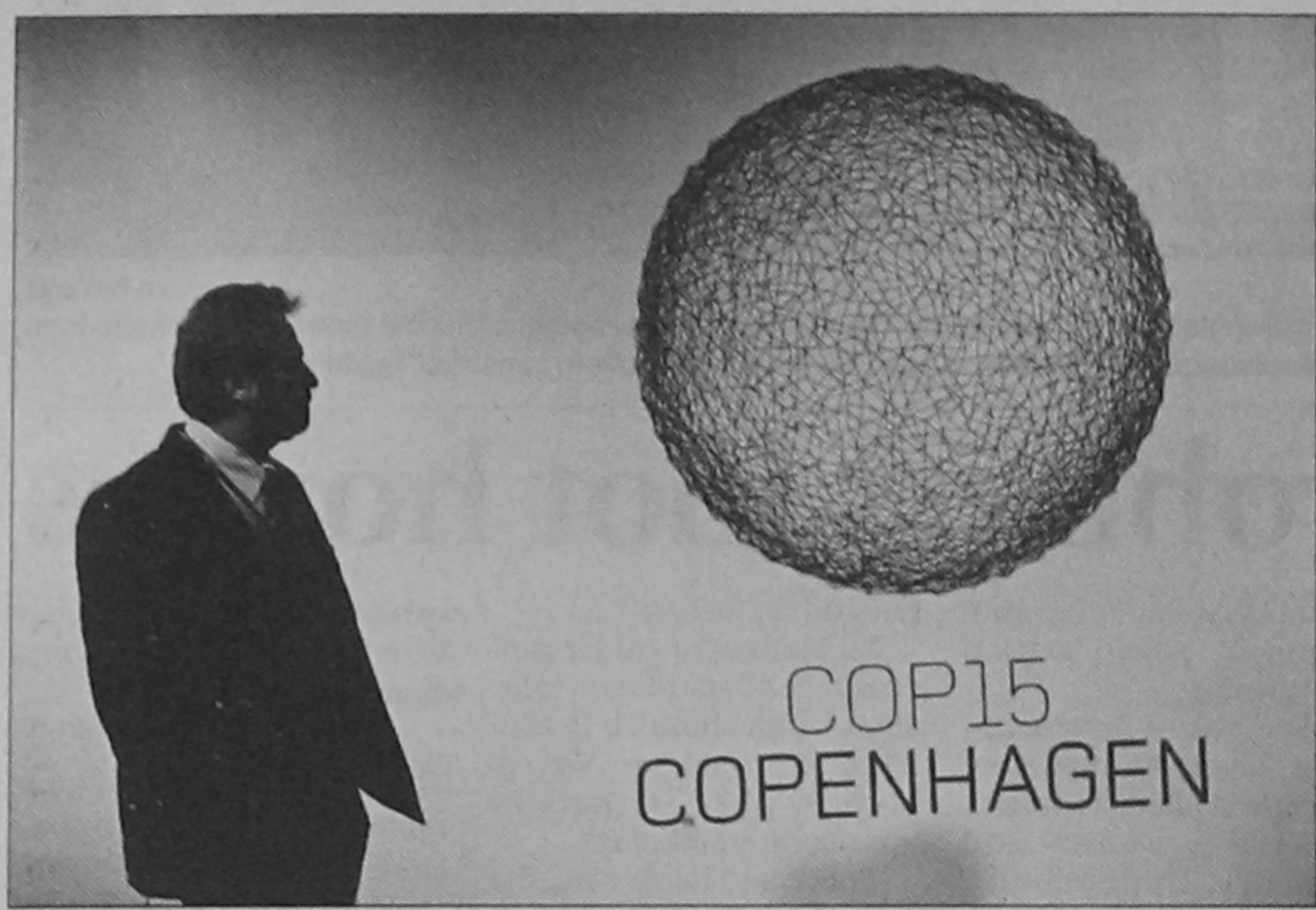
Scourge of climate change

International climate summit is going on in Copenhagen. Bangladesh as well as other developing and poor countries look forward to good initiatives from the summit. But may be we are going to be disappointed. The developed countries never agree with the objection that they are increasing greenhouse gases more than the poor countries. Their inattention brings various negative impacts of climate change particularly on poor countries. Climate change is increasing food insecurity, poverty and develop-

ment. A recent report from FAO proves the above statement.

Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. Every year we have to pay a lot to face disasters. Climate change not only affects the poor countries but also the developed countries. Because this year most powerful and developed countries like the UK and USA faced natural disasters.

The matter deserves quick attention.
Sabina Parvin
Dhaka



Amateurish governance

The 10-month old popular regime is too much in a hurry to become more popular; but it cannot change gear beyond the first or second stage. Basic policy changes are being introduced in a hurry, without providing enough time for public debates. The parliament is one-eyed, with no opposition; and many of the ministers are new, buffeted by a lot of extra advisors.

There are two glaring examples of lack of wisdom: the hurried introduction of the DST (Daylight Saving Time) in a tropical region; compounded by change to timings of offices and educational institutions; while violence in daily life continues unabated; compounded with entrenched corrupt practices. The other is the basic changes in the educational policy since the Raj era; without enough time for public feedback.

The role of the opposition is most undemocratic; it cannot spotlight the public problems non-politically. There are too many political platforms (in a poor LDC) to confuse the masses. Today politics has taken the centre or front stage; whereas good politics works rather quietly in the background (like the way we breathe); without disturbing the daily lives of the citizens. The mass media are full of political news all the time -- it is simply boring; diverting concentration of the individuals and institutions.

The collapse of ethics and good culture in the education sector is simply amazing -- what remains of the effect of good education on the future generation? Why back-door culture is being patronized by the regime?

In this digital age, Bangladesh cannot remain isolated regionally and globally; but the relations amongst the neighbours in South Asia is rather depressing; while in the background there are strong global pressures on the region for outsourcing reasons. India and China are the emerging countries at the global level; and the declining West is eyeing South Asia as a destination target. The Pakistan concept has failed -- we have witnessed the disintegration of the former East Pakistan (religion is a secondary issue in cultural and social affairs); and today the existence of Pakistan is at stake (due to other added reasons).

In Dhaka today, routine leadership just won't work; to bring about the expected changes in the mindset of the people. The global warming is another shadow effect. Without internal national unity, there is no hope for Bangladesh.

Alif Zabr
Dhaka

Help the disabled

Bangladesh observed in a befitting manner the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2009. There was a programme on the International Day at United Nations Headquarters, New

York. "Creating the MDGs Inclusive: Empowerment of people with disabilities and their communities around the world" is the theme of this year's International Day for Persons with Disabilities, as well as for the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Self-respect and fairness for all people are well-known widespread doctrines. Since its commencement, the United Nations has acknowledged that the intrinsic self-respect and the equivalent plus absolute rights of every member of the human family are the basics of freedom, righteousness and tranquillity in the planet. These doctrines, together with parity and non-discrimination, have guided the effort of the United Nations for the precedent 61 years and are enshrined in a range of instruments, for instance the UN contract and the worldwide announcement of Human Rights. Approximately 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with disabilities. In fact, the conference promotes and preserves the human rights of people with disabilities in social, literary, financial, political, and social life. Nevertheless, all over the globe, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to their partaking in society and are frequently enforced to exist on the margins of the general public. They are usually deprived of basic rights such as equivalent acknowledgment ahead of the law and legal capacity, freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to participate in political and public life, such as voting.

There is a sturdy connection between disability and paucity. Such as, the statistics on employment for people with disabilities are shocking. In developing countries, 80 per cent to 90 per cent of people with disabilities of working age are jobless and in industrialized countries it is anticipated to be between 50 per cent and 70 per cent. The right to learning and well-being are also normally denied. Ninety per cent of kids with disabilities in developing nations do not attend school, says UNESCO.

The United Nations and the universal community ought to make certain that all its employment is all-encompassing of people with disabilities. The Millennium Development Goals will not be accomplished if persons with disabilities are not integrated.

Therefore, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an occasion to compose a renewed promise to the authorization and full accomplishment of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol which we must not forget.

Shohag Mostafiz
MBA (Strategic & International Management)
University of Dhaka

Zee's 'Choti Bahu'

Does caste identity really matter? The Zee TV serial 'Choti Bahu' currently on

show reflects a grim image of a caste sensitive grandmother. The main theme of the serial goes like this Dev deeply loves Radhika and so is Radhika in true love with Dev. Although Radhika was brought up in priest Shastriji's family, yet in reality she wasn't their own daughter. Radhika was actually found by Shastriji in abandoned condition at the gate of the temple and adopted her. Everyone in the family had accepted Radhika as their own blood relation except the grandma who could never accept her as their own. She used to hate Radhika as her caste identity was unknown. The grandma considered Radhika as if she was from a lower caste. She would never take food or water from Radhika's hand as Radhika was untouchable. If sometimes she comes in touch with Radhika she would take a bath immediately to get purified.

Well, Dev is from the reputed 'Puruhi' family'. In face of their pure and unselfish love, Dev's grandma, mother, and other family members finally accepted Radhika a their Choti Bahu through materializing Dev and Radhika's wedding. The grandma actually wanted her real grand daughter Bishakha to be married with Dev. In order to realize her goal, the grandma played several dirty tricks. On the wedding day she locked Radhika into a room and set it on fire by spreading kerosene oil. As ill luck would have it, instead of Radhika, her real grand daughter Bishakha caught trapped into the fire! But Radhika came in her sister's rescue and got herself seriously burnt. I was rather horrified to witness how caste differences had undermined the human values.

Television drama serials are considered a replica of society. After watching the above mentioned serial, a question naturally arises in the mind--does caste identity matter so much?

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Automobile revolution!

The green car has arrived! It heralds the end of the era of the gas guzzlers merrily polluting our environment for the past decades, as reported in your pages on December 4. It logically follows Wahid Khan's write up on "muscle cars" in the "Rising Star" on 3 December! The linkage between automobile's past and future, published by you on successive days is coincidentally remarkable, to say the least!

We in Bangladesh, importing every drop of automobile fuel or the crude oil to refine it should and must keep close track of the new green automobile models, now undergoing a sea change in our economic interests, to contain our rising demand of imported liquid fuels!

The hybrid car has two

prime mover-- electric and petrol engine both. It not only needs petrol, but also servicing and maintenance of two separate drives; the petrol engine as well as the electric battery and motors. In contrast an electric car only needs servicing and maintenance of its battery and electric motor. It needs no petrol! Personally, I would go for the electric car. The Nissan's electric car "Leaf" with a lithium-ion battery can run over 100 miles between battery charge! This should meet most urban driving needs.

Readers may question; that with shortage of electric power in Bangladesh; how can we charge the batteries of all these cars? This can easily be done at night between midnight and 6:00am; when our electric power demand is the lowest; and the car battery can be easily charged in two hours! All we should have is to have the charging cable incorporate a timer switch set to operate starting from midnight up to say 3:00am. If we have, say 60,000 such vehicles; then we can preset the timers starting from say 11:00pm, 1:30am and 4:00am respectively. Alternatively, we can have battery charging stations in petrol pumps, where spare batteries can be charged and kept ready, using the station's in-house generating sets or inverters, and just changing the car's battery for a fully charged one. This will require the car owner to have two batteries!

The electric car like the electric 3-wheeled scooters now being run in Bangladesh will be the right step forward-- both to reduce the import of petrol and diesel fuel used in automobiles as well as contain environment pollution. Proverbially, killing two birds with one stone!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Maldives and Nepal show the way

Two members of Saarc have set world record by arranging their respective country's ministerial summit under deep sea and at the top of Mount Everest respectively. They have done it as an awareness campaign on global warming. To arrange this unique and unparalleled programme under the sea and at the top of Mount Everest they took long preparation to brave nature's wrath during the summit attended by their ministers who are obviously aged persons.

My hats off to them who attended their respective summit under deep sea and top of Everest risking their lives. By organising this unique and unparalleled summit both the Maldives and Nepal could become the hub of international attention on the issue of global warming. They have arranged the summits at the right time and at the right places.

Other world bodies who arrange summit on climate changes in cozy hotel conference rooms at different times in different countries may learn from the recent ministerial summits organised by the Maldives and Nepal.

Md. Lutfar Rahman
Faculty of Business
IUBAT- International
University of Business
Agriculture and Technology
Dhaka

Armed forces

I commend The Daily Star: Internet Edition for the front page coverage about the 38th Bangladesh Armed Forces Day observed on November 21, 2009.

Born during the final months of the 1971 War of Independence, the Armed Forces have reached many milestones and contributed to national fames as well as national shames. Gone are the days when some army officers killed two popular presidents including the brutal massacre of the entire family of one, widely regarded as the Founder of the nation.

Apart from the few months' joint battle-field experience gained with the Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army, the all-volunteer Bangladesh armed forces have hardly any other combat experience. Moreover, those military personnel who gained the valuable experiences are mostly retired or dead now.

Ashraf Z Khan, Ph.D.
USA

Why this price increase?

The other day I went to a pharmacy to buy a 114 ml bottle of Milk of Magnesia. The price printed on the bottle is Tk.13.14, and I had purchased it for that price just a week ago. Now the pharmacy demanded Tk.30.00 for it! However, I went to a couple of pharmacies to double-check and all of them said the pharmaceutical company had increased the price without changing the label. What type of trading is this?

Dr MA Obaydullah
Banani C/A
Dhaka

Drivers

The DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque recently revealed to journalists that "Over 70 per cent drivers of the public vehicles carry fake licences in the capital and they are the most irresponsible and inefficient." Twenty-eight road accidents on an average occur in the capital every day. Fake licence holders mainly run most of the human haulers and minibuses on different routes in the capital. For the ongoing drive the following may be considered.

1) Introduce 20 teams each headed by a deputy commissioner to take driving-tests of the present licence-holders, starting with the human-haulers and minibuses.

2) Joint commissioners should monitor the activities of the personnel conducting the driving-tests of licence-holders, specifically the theory (all types of traffic signs, dos' and don'ts, etc). Stern disciplinary action should be taken against malpractice by officers including jail-terms and dismissal from service.

3) Traffic-rule violators must be fined heavily. As a beginning, Tk 1,000 for violating the lane-system and Tk 5,000 for traffic-light violators. The amount should be doubled from July 2010. This is to discourage offenders who "slip" Tk 200 and get away. If the fine is heavy and the "slipping-fee" gets raised proportionately it would deter offenders and achieve the desired results.

4) Conduct patrols in specific checkpoints every other day to look for fake licence, impaired and underage motorists. Drivers should have their driving licence and registration ready.

5) The habit of minibuses blocking other buses to take in passengers creates tailbacks and jams. All buses should have serial numbers so that they cannot overtake. Waiting passengers will find the next serial number at bus-stands after every half a minute. The serial number should be taken the day before, every day, displayed and monitored strictly. The authorities should take in as many suggestions from thinking citizens as possible.

Md. Mahmoodul Haque
Gulshan, Dhaka

While mosquitoes bite....

We are facing the mosquito menace for the last couple of weeks. The number of cases of dengue fever and its deadlier form has increased considerably in the city. If you take statistics from the diagnostic labs, you can easily see the worsening situation in Dhaka. The DCC administration seems to be asleep. People have got apathy. The media is busy with BNP's internal clashes on the eve of its conference. Who will care for us? It seems that the mayor is not getting the BNP nomination for the upcoming mayoral election, so he just remains insensitive to mosquitoes.

The AL being in power has got something to do to mitigate the sufferings of the city dwellers. But it's not the case. Probably they are trying to capitalize on Mr. Khoka's failure to deliver goods to the Dhakaites. But it is beyond explanation why the media remains blind. Is it a problem of prioritization of news? Preoccupied with some stereotyped news? Or do they think that readers will not rate high any news that directly affect themselves? We expect from your daily an in-depth, probing report regarding mosquito containing programmes of DCC and what they are actually doing and who are responsible for not taking measures to contain mosquitoes and where does the money earmarked for mosquito control go? Is our incumbent mayor waiting for children to start dying from dengue?

Dr. MM Mortayez Amin
Debi Das Ghat Lane, Dhaka

CNGs & traffic control

My wife and I (total age: 140 years) being a be-car couple usually do our rare visiting/shopping either by walking, rickshaw or CNG. Over the last two weeks, my wife's CNG has twice been accosted by a traffic cop who then grills both the driver and passenger with questions like "Where are you coming from and going, are you going by meter or paying extra?" as if the CNG drivers are the only ones making a little hay in the Bangladeshi sunshine! From long experience, and so as not to get embroiled in a three-sided altercation, my wife gives the driver a clean bill of health and is allowed to proceed. This is Stupidity No 1 will any passenger wish to be deprived of the services of a rare CNG after a long wait on the road?

I have not been so accosted up to now, otherwise I could have given the cop a

lecture on how mindless their own superiors and other traffic controllers are, because their own inane policies and directives are responsible for the chaotic traffic on Dhaka's roads.

Stupidity No 2: Have the authorities fixed just fares for CNGs? NOT AT ALL!!

No 3: Do the CNG owners charge a uniform rate or just exploit the drivers?

No 4: Who compensates them for the long hours they wait for gas?

No 5: Who gives them protection against the muggers, hijackers & murderers?

No 6: Do they not see the cops collect tolls from trucks and buses, so why blame them if passengers are made to pay a little extra? Do they not provide an essential service to destinations where rickshaws are forbidden?

No 7: Why have rickshaws (that carry



50% of Dhaka's passengers) been banned on many roads, to greatly increase the demand for CNGs?

No 8: Why have Dhaka's roads been flooded with Gas Guzzling Monstrosities, which occupy most of the road space, but carry a scant 1-2% passengers?

No 9: Why more new CNGs are not being introduced to meet the demand, while nearly 150 more White Elephant GGMs clog Dhaka's roads every day? At present CNGs are the best substitute for rickshaws, i.e. for 50% of Dhakabashis.

No 10: Is it the cops' duty, only to obstruct rickshaws and CNGs, while toadying up to the illegally parked cars on every road, street and lane and to salute the empty cars causing the massive jams seen every day everywhere?

No 11: Recently CNGs' exits have been encased in steel, but will this save the driver and passengers from a determined armed mugger? Rather in case of an accident/cylinder burst, both are fated to be roasted to death.

Progressive Governments and Ministries elsewhere acknowledge, collect and absorb the development wisdom printed in the letters columns in the media. In our country, however, the authorities are all-knowing and all-powerful and take pleasure in imposing anti-people policies with impunity. Traffic imbroglio is one such problem that can be solved to the satisfaction of all by just implementing existing traffic laws and procedures with some updating, but then who cares?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Save nature

It is an irony that our Honourable Prime Minister is raising her voice against climate change and its adverse affects on people, and at the same time some people (according to newspaper report they are blessed with both the ruling party and the opposition support) are cutting down trees mercilessly in the coastal areas. Now it is not unknown to anyone that due to climate change we are suffering from recurrent flood, crop damage, cyclone etc. Moreover, due to the climate change we cannot produce food for our people. I would, therefore, request our PM to take the right steps to save our environment and save ourselves.

Nasim Uddin
University of Dhaka



Taliban in Pakistan

After the Taliban slaughtered scores of Pakistanis in a Rawalpindi mosque on Friday, Dec. 4, Lahore's Daily Times editorialised on Dec. 6: "Pakistanis have become almost resigned to the daily fate of suicide bombing and other attacks by the barbaric terrorists who pretend to speak in the name of Islam. But even an almost injured populace could be forgiven its shock and horror at the suicide attack on a mosque in Rawalpindi."

This shows that the Taliban will go to any length to justify

their slaughter of Pakistanis in the name of their version of Islam. It may be reminded that when the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, they engaged in brutal suppression, including mass executions, of those who did not agree to their interpretation of Islam, banned all education for women; engaged in the wholesale destruction of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and provided al-Qaeda bases to plan and attack the US. Now after their ouster from Afghanistan, they have moved to Pakistan and are carrying out a two-pronged war against

both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Yet, most people in Pakistan seem to believe in Taliban propaganda that they are fighting against the "infidel" westerners in the name of Islam. Most Pakistanis remain rabidly anti-US and tend to blame the US for their plight. It is time Pakistanis realise that the Taliban are the real enemy who will not hesitate to slaughter ordinary Pakistanis if it suits them. It is time the masses in Pakistan rise up against the brutal Taliban.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada