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Save Madhupur forests

Pursuance of wrong policies by successive governments coupled with corruption at different levels including the forest department contributed to the gradual disappearance of the legendary Madhupur jungle in Bangladesh. The present size of the forest is almost one sixth of the original jungle; less than 8,000 acres as against 45,000 acres a few decades ago. A large variety of wildlife, including tigers, black bears and peafowls, has already disappeared from the jungle because of human encroachments. The traditional sal and medicinal plant forest has vanished. Thousands of acres of the government protected (!) Madhupur National Park are now at the mercy of timber thieves who pay forest officials to fell trees. The forest is fading away very fast and what stands there now is a mere shadow of the original.

Advocates of people and environmentalists opine that introduction of different varieties of plantations in



the name of social forestry may not be suitable for the soil and may affect the ecological balance in the long run.

As a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Bangladesh should take

immediate steps to conserve its natural resources including the Madhupur jungle. We can no longer afford to lose more biodiversity systems in our country.

Nuruddin Azam
Australia

Clogged drains in Banani

I don't know whether my mail will cause any sort of difference or not, but I think I should be writing this. I am a resident of Banani living here for the past 10 years. I have always been in love with Banani as I feel it is one of the best places to live in the whole of Dhaka city. But for the past few years, me including my family members have been facing the problem of new high-rise homes in the area, thus leading to a distressful state of sewerage lines. For the past one year or so, the drain of Road # 7, Block # F has been clogged up and water has been stagnant. It is very difficult for the people surrounding this area to move. Pungent smells are always there.

I would just like to know why it is not being fixed. Doesn't anyone in the ward even care for the residents' sufferings?

Who will help us to clear up this mess? If the welfare of the citizens does matter to the Dhaka City Corporation, I would kindly request someone to look into it.

Sunny Quazi Saad Billah
Banani, Dhaka

Politicians and bank management

An article on the matter was published in a local daily on 9 December, giving the pragmatic opinions of the Hon. Finance Minister as well as an Adviser of the last caretaker government. The opinion expressed by them against introducing politicians in bank management was very appropriate and realistic. They rightly pointed out that with politicians in the bank's board of directors; financial discipline and prudence will be sacrificed for expediency.

Also, such a step if taken, will be against the fundamental ethics of public sector banking; without their holding any shares or financial stake and not proposed by the members of the bank's board. In a private bank, the board may do so. However in a public sector bank, this will amount to the board member, exercising authority without any financial responsibility or risk involved for him!

This will lead towards a potential route to disaster, where prudence will be overruled to satisfy the politician's sphere of influence subjectively! The politician will exercise his political authority and power in giving loans to parties with little or no sound financial base or justification. This will jeopardise the normal prudence and financial judgment, that is essential for professional banking portfolio management!

With politicians calling the shots, all these barriers and precautions will be selective in financing loans. This important discipline will gradually be eroded, and subjectivity will be the order of the day! We hope good sense prevails; and the government in overall national banking; does not allow political expediency to overrule the norms of banking by inducting politicians to hold responsible decision making positions in public sector banks.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Collapse of civilization

The civilization of cities is rootless. The people there have no tradition, because it is a mass of people from different sections and groups without any unifying culture or ideas. Money is the God of the modern people.

The barter system has been replaced by the currency system. We evaluate everything in terms of money. People highlight the culture, moral decay of cities, on account of the commercialisation of life where everything is for sale. Even in the matter of love there is a question of profit and loss. In ancient times, the source of inspiration and achievement was faith. People really believed in religious values. Elderly people were respected. Character and saintliness were regarded as an important asset. In older times, people believed in intimate human relationship.

There were certain loyalties to the community and loyalty to the nation. To day the values have changed. Older people have no place in society. Obviously, there is the fashion of nuclear family in everywhere. Such loyalties no longer exist. People have become self-centred and egoistic. There is no sentiment of sympathy and compassion for the members of distant families and the community. Each one thinks only of his own interest and how he can gain at the expense of others. So, the rebirth of civilisation is possible again through religious faith.

Mohammad Hanif
Dept. of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Chittagong

Scientific 'fatwa'

As reported in your daily, my attention caught glued to the news item that the Minister for Agriculture was asking the agricultural scientists not to adhere to conservative school of thought but to have some imaginative ideas of feeding three million people, the number being added annually to the total populace of our country, while she was attending ceremonies to observe Saarc Charter Day at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC).

The message itself is very thought provoking in the sense that all parameter of enhanced agricultural production is declining at a faster pace and we are to depend largely on average yield per unit of cultivable land. The Minister further assured that the govt would be careful about any negative impact of introducing Hybrid seed, but again, this scientific adoption if taken once would have a long lasting effect. That is why it is wiser to think again & again before such adoptions & the ball must be rolled to the players' field.

I would therefore, request the Hon'ble Minister not to guide science to any unnatural direction, rather recouse the nature in a way that is good for all citizens as well as national interest.

The scientists definitely know better than anybody in their respective fields.

A citizen
One-mail

Population growth

I am happy to know that the draft population policy advocates introducing "single-child families" at national level by 2015 to avoid a serious socio-economic debacle due to the country's ever-increasing population.

I wrote my comments in response to an article entitled "Population boom setting development efforts at naught" by Mr. Md. Asadullah Khan who is a former teacher of Physics and Controller of Examinations, BUET on July 25, 2009. An unchecked demographic boom has already created imbalance in the country's social system and eventually also affects economic growth. The population growth is set to exert pressure on our educational, health and social systems, on our society and job market. We urge policymakers to take immediate steps to address the demographic boom with adequate social policies about the country's future.

Avik Sengupta
Biochemistry
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Was it necessary?

The successful holding of BNP's fifth council after a long gap of 16 years is an indication that the second largest political party of Bangladesh has been able to stand straight after its crushing defeat in the last general election. There was some doubt about a trouble free council as the party was almost divided during the rule of the last caretaker government centring the minus two formula and the much talked about call of reforms by the Fakhruddin government. But the happy and successful ending of the council will work as a big relief for BNP workers, supporters as well as for overall political climate of the country.

Holding of council is a democratic exercise for electing the office bearers of a party. But what is seen and understood from this council of BNP? Although it is not known clearly what process was followed to form the districts and Upazila level committees, but nothing really democratic happened in this council where the councillors effectively surren-

dered their right and empowered the party chairperson by giving her full authority to select the different office bearers, members of the National Executive and Standing committees. Her power was further consolidated by deleting the provision for removal of the BNP chairman, once elected.

The last nail in the coffin of intra-party democracy was put by selecting (electing!) Khaled Zia's son Tarique Zia as a powerful senior vice chairman. It is believed that this was the act of some mid-level enthusiastic party activists in their desperate move to get favour from him. It is an irony of fate of this nation that the very controversial man of the Hawa Babban is now in a position of future prime minister. If it were for his leadership quality then no body would say anything. Probably he & his supporters would claim that he is a natural leader but his party and the nation will have to pay dearly for this.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur R/A
Khulna

Increasing population

As it is the capital of Bangladesh, population has been increasing very rapidly in this city and they are polluting its environment. Air pollution in Dhaka has gone higher than Mexico City and traffic jam is crossing the levels of tolerance. Between 1980 and 2009, the population of Dhaka has swelled from 3 million to more than 10 million. Moreover, the urban population has been growing very rapidly since liberation in 1971 and continues to do so at over 3.5 percent annually. The country will have an urban population approaching 50 million by 2015. This rapid growth has been due primarily to migration by the rural poor, particularly to large metropolitan areas. Dhaka is now bursting with people of all categories looking for jobs.

In order to survive, the urban people are coming to the Dhaka city to find out a shelter and a job. Some of them are involved in different kinds of criminal activities. Moreover, most of the government offices, NGO offices,

garments, indentures etc have been staying here and the service holders have to come to this city for doing jobs and they are facing various troubles. The citizens of Dhaka are tired and weary. They are tired of passing through a city in which there is filthy garbage dumped on the roadside, along the footpaths.

In my view, it will be better for the government to transfer some offices from here to other places and ensure facilities in every district to give the people some relief.

Therefore, increasing population is becoming a great alarm for this city and it is high time for the government to take steps to check the process.

Mohammed Jamal Uddin
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Ctg.

Copenhagen Summit

Heads of administration from more than 70 countries, together with all the key stakeholders, have now signalled that they'll make the Copenhagen conference the foremost "Real Summit" on global warming where countries are projected to make promises, commitments and good signs to action. This is an incredibly optimistic measure as facing this challenge will need the focus of the major decision-makers in each nation, and their continued support for more than 40 years.

The hope is that there will be a 6-8 page political accord which outlines the wide contours of the international concord, and then a series of "Annexes" to the political accord which state more details. The mixture of these two sets of documents is then expected to be incorporated next year into a legal agreement which can be ratified by countries in the following years. They have to deal with the following issues:

a. The anticipation is that all developed nations will ensure further emission reductions and then next year these commitments will be translated into officially obligatory commitments.

b. Developing countries will go for emission reductions, actions/commitments (called "Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Commitments") - All key developing countries are projected to outline the kinds of emission reduction actions that they'll commit themselves to.

More optimistically, if the nations are able to leave behind their differences, disparities and see the greater good (our prospect), they'll come across a way to concur to set the world on a corridor that is much nearer to solving global warming. They'll sketch a fresh set of measures to deal with global warming and an obvious conduit to making them rigid and profound subsequently.

As a whole, we the inhabitants of the world want the Summit to be able to meet up its expectations by taking adequate measures and timely executions of them in order to implement the dream of the people who want to provide a green platform for the next generation.

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

Launch disasters

On almost every Eid horrible launch accidents bring about untold devastation to the people going home to meet their kith and kin. In fact deaths in launch mishaps have been on the rise. To get rid of these accidents strict rules and regulations should be enforced by the government. Launches failing to go by the rules and regulations should not be allowed to operate. Last, but not the least, passengers should be aware of the dangers and take precautionary steps.

I hope the government will take the initiative to save valuable lives.

Khalid Eashun Fahim
Ashkona
Uttara, Dhaka

Zia

I have just learnt today (15 December) that the government is going to change the name of Zia International Airport. It is very shocking news for me. I am a staunch supporter of the Awami League.

That is why I am feeling so shocked. I simply cannot believe that the Awami League could be so mean! In fact, it is irrelevant whether the airport is named after Zia or whoever it is. As the name has been given long ago, after Zia's death, I strongly feel that that

the name should be there as it is. If the Awami League changes the name, its party people will be ridiculed by many at home and abroad, and it would be damn shame for us, especially for those who love the Awami League as an open organisation, but not politically.

We always expect that the Awami League would be modest and kind-hearted, thus we will feel proud of it. The Awami League should remember that it is the harbinger of our liberation war, therefore, as long as Bangladesh lives, the Awami League will live in the hearts of the Bengali Nation. So, they should not bother about the petty things of other parties.

Shazzad Khan
Manusher Jonno Foundation

Nation lagging behind

The other day I happened to watch the talk show on Baishakhi Television. Colonel (ret'd) Oli Ahmed and Bangabeer Kader Siddiky participated in the talk show.

Bangabeer Kader Siddiky lamented in his concluding words that back in 1971, at the time of independence, the then East Pakistan now Bangladesh was ahead of Malaysia and Singapore. Does this imply that independence at such a great cost had an adverse impact on the coun-

try? In the words of Bangabeer Kader Siddiky it did.

The 150 million people of Bangladesh do know that both Singapore and Malaysia are far ahead of Bangladesh. What they do not know is both Singapore and Malaysia were behind the then East Pakistan.

The sacrifice of three million lives will go in vain if we people are deprived of the fruits of independence.

Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Our airports

At present our country has three international airports. International airports must be up to the standard of international level, but I am ashamed to say that our airports do not have that standard. The major and the biggest airport is Zia International Airport and it is in so bad shape that some airlines have warned to stop flights from that airport. Our other two airports in Chittagong and Sylhet are also in poor condition.

In today's world air communications is one of the major ways of transportation. So our airports must reach the standard. The government must improve the conditions of the airport and the civil aviation authorities must do the job.

Ahnaaf Ahmad
The Aga Khan School
Uttara, Dhaka

Extra judicial killing

In the last 11 months a total of 141 people were killed by law enforcing agencies in the country. The news was published in your first page on 11 December.

Odhikar, a human rights organisation informed it at a roundtable meeting entitled "Extra judicial killings and rule of law", on the World Human Rights Day. The discussants have urged the law enforcers to stop extra judicial killing immediately and also urged all political parties, media and civil society to raise voice against it. I appreciate

such efforts of those elite of society.

I personally think that they should continue their activities and spread it to countryside to organise strong protest against extra judicial killing. They just should not stop protesting after one roundtable meeting but should inspire all citizens to join their effort.

We somehow have the propensity to avoid our duties. We should take a stand against extra judicial killing.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex BSS correspondent
Gopalganj



Criticism and reality

Every year a large number of students are entering into several private varieties. Nowadays it is seen that not only less meritorious and sons and daughters of rich families are studying in private varieties, but also students from middle class and even lower middle class background are studying here.

So, we can say that private varieties have paved the way of educating the whole nation.

Md. Raihanul Azim
Dept. of English
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Fly more!

Since Bangladesh airspace does not have many airplanes flying, this is one mode of transportation that still does not face traffic jams. Building new airports in other cities in Bangladesh will encourage commuters to use air transport instead of road transport thus reducing traffic. Opening new airports will create new jobs, city development, decentralization and improve communication between the cities in Bangladesh. Therefore, when factories and industries are set up in these cities, it will

also be easier for executives to commute to these cities in order to visit and manage their industries.

Opening new airports will also encourage new domestic airlines to start operating within Bangladesh and this will also create many new jobs for skilled personnel. Yes, I think this is a wonderful idea to move forward. I hope everybody will see the light in this.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS
Mohakhali
Dhaka

Climate change



Bangladesh is tapped between the Himalayas in the north & the encroaching Bay of Bengal to the south. Bangladesh is most vulnerable to natural disaster due to the frequent extreme climate events & its high population density. In Bangladesh, climate change will affect many sectors, including water resources, agriculture & food security, ecosystem & biodiversity. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) Bangladesh country representative Dr Aunur Nishat told that a three to four degrees Celsius rise in temperature will cut rice production by at least 30 percent. If there is an increase in temperature of 6 Celsius the greater flow of water through Bangladesh's three great rivers will lead to between 20 & 40% more flooding. In my view, the government should take following steps to face the impact of climate change.

Strengthening capacities at different levels to interpret and communicate relevant climate information, and advise local communities how to prepare for risks and capitalize on opportunities; enhancing institutional and technical capacities of government institutions, civil society organisations and communities for localized risk and vulnerability assessments, and the formulation of climate sensitive development plans and policies; promoting development of practical adaptation options and demonstration of location-specific investments to foster development in the face of present climate variability and future climate change risks.

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