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Street people

As I travel early in the morning, I can see them lying on the pavements, on the road dividers under the footbridges. It is evident that they have nowhere to go: no shanty or shack made of plastic and thatched bamboo. In other words they have no makeshift shelter, let alone a house. To ward off cold they make fire and burn garbage which gives off an acrid smoke. As the whole country is reeling under a cold wave, the misery of these homeless people is imaginable.

It is evident that the number of the poor people in the big cities is on the

rise. Those who are compelled to sleep on sidewalks are the lowest of the low--the wretched ones. We as a people have become habituated to such scenes of abject poverty. As we go through the day-to-day life we come across poverty in all its ugly forms.

Rulers come and go but the condition of these homeless people remain the same. It seems they are caught in a vicious web from which there is no way out!

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong



Drivers

According to BRTC, the number of the vehicles is about 12 and a half lakh in the whole country. But the number of legal licensed drivers is eight lakh! Illegal drivers drive other four lakh vehicles (bus, trucks, motorcars etc.). A recent inquiry of BRTC has shown that about five lakh licensed drivers did not appear in the exams in time. They got licences according to the list of the labour union.

According to law, a driver has to fulfil certain criterion. At first, he is a learner. After three months, he has to appear in a written exam, viva and field test. But these standards have no place in the way drivers are given licence. So, who should we blame for accidents?

Nuruzzaman
Department of English
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Pollution and purification!

Here we are dumping chemical dyes in the river, and at the same time, cleaning it up! What a contrasting phenomenon that reflects our total unawareness about environmental pollution and poisoning! Mixing dyes on the riverbank should be a punishable criminal offence, not far removed from what Rof Pharmaceuticals did to Paracetamol syrup for babies!

It is a good step by the government to clean up the garbage from our riverbeds as stated in your dramatic front-page reports of January 7.

Unfortunately, nothing was stated in the report about how and where this garbage, which is a non-biodegradable material, will be dumped! Mere shifting it from one location to

another will not be an acceptable solution to the problem.

We will be interested to know about the steps being taken for disposal of this garbage, removed with much cost and effort. If this is not done in a proper manner, it will become another problem! One possible solution is to incinerate it, and use the ash for earth filling. May be something else is possible. One wonders if this important aspect of the cleaning programme has been seriously considered by the authorities. It will be of public interest if you investigate this matter to address this important public concern!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Foreign exchange

Bangladesh is missing millions of foreign exchange just because of a wrong decision.

Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi workers are living in the Middle East and they have to work every day from morning to evening and hence no time to go to bank for sending money to Bangladesh through Bangladeshi banks. So, they are being compelled to send money through "Hundi". In this way the Bangladesh government is losing millions of foreign exchange just for failing to keep the Bangladeshi banks in the Middle East open on a particular day of the week.

I hope the government will take this matter seriously and will keep Bangladeshi banks abroad open on Friday or Sunday depending on the country.

Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
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Dhaka

New Year's resolution

A New Year's resolution is a commitment that a person makes to a venture or reforming of a habit, frequently a lifestyle transformation that is normally interpreted as beneficial. The name comes from the reality that these commitments in general have an impact on New Year's Day and linger until satisfied or discarded.

Now what should be our national resolution, rather than individual one, at this juncture? The irony is that despite passing 38 years after the victory in 1971, we are yet to transform into reality the vision of the martyrs and get our country citizens feel really independent and self-reliant.

Shohag Mostafij
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Environmental disaster

It is generally agreed that the world is facing a serious environmental problem due to global warming. Because of this, extreme events, for instance cyclone, tornado, flood, draught, sea-level rise, vector-borne diseases and other natural calamities are appearing recurrently. Anyhow, at the end of the year 2007, there was a terrifying cyclone 'Sidr' in Bangladesh, which was one of the serious consequences of global climate change. We can still remember the fateful night of November 15; 220 km per hour windstorm accompanied by a 30-foot high tidal-bore that hit Manikkhali under Burirchar union of Borguna upazila and Talatali of Amtali upazila.

Continuous deforestation and extensive fossil fuel

exploitation and natural sources contribute carbon dioxide (Co2) in atmosphere dramatically in higher rate since massive industrialization and it is rising relentlessly.

In fact, developed countries have less control on carbon emission reduction, while the third world countries like Bangladesh are suffering due to the consequences of such pollution.

The 4th assessment report of the 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' (IPCC) demonstrates that the global mean concentration of carbon dioxide in 2005 was 379ppm. The growth rate of Co2 in the atmosphere was 1.9ppm yearly and this is the largest change inferred for any decade in at least the last 200 years. Furthermore, developed countries, with less than 20 percent of the world's population, are responsible for 80% of the atmospheric Co2 accumulation since 1751 and the least developed countries, with 800 million people, have contributed less than 1%, yet they are the most vulnerable to climate change.

Generally speaking, Bangladesh as a developing country by itself may not be able to take significant steps to face the great threat of global warming. Therefore, in this case, as in many other cases, our national policy-makers should think globally and act locally, where we can make our policy concerning management, technologies and strategies based on global framework with the help of global partnership and co-operation and have to implement those at local level.

SM Rumen
Pahartali, West Firoz Shah
Chittagong

BNP and Copenhagen

To draw world attention to the effects of climate change, Maldives govt held an underwater cabinet meeting in the sea and Nepal held their cabinet meeting on top of the Himalayas.

I believe, Bangladesh cabinet should have met on a 'tree-top' to draw the world attention because most of her ocean belt area will slowly go under water due to warming up our planet and will cause serious disastrous human sufferings. The Copenhagen Summit is the first ever meeting among the major polluters and the most affected nations to work out how to minimise future pollution and rescue the most affected ones. Apart from Bangladesh and other low-lying countries, the carbon emission will also affect the emitters themselves in future because global warming up will travel round the earth and not only over certain areas. So, they are also concerned if not equally with us.

Mr. Shamsheer M. Choudhury, BB, Former Foreign Secretary and newly elected vice Chairman of BNP while trying to defend his party's position on Copenhagen Summit, in his letter on 8 Jan '10, blamed the government for not sufficiently projecting the impact of climate change on Bangladesh and claimed that his party position was correct. I know Mr. Choudhury has limitations and naturally he

has tried to convince the people citing other affects like Farraka, Tipaimukh and other bilateral issues including the border killings by the neighbouring border security men which were not raised by the government in the summit. We know the affects of these bilateral issues but Copenhagen Summit was not the right forum to raise those issues. Probably, the attendants would not have listened to those, Mr. Choudhury, being a former senior diploma, should have understood it. I therefore support both the DS editorial and State Minister's comments on BNP on Copenhagen. He spoke like his party Secretary General speaks to his followers for example, "If transit is given, India will bring in their soldiers in the containers and occupy our country" and earn clapping from his supporters.

Mr. Choudhury himself admitted the overall insufficient outcome by citing the comments of President of USA and the Prime Minister of Britain. While the players themselves were unhappy with the outcome, what the Bangladesh delegation could have earned beyond that outcome is anybody's guess.

It suggests that the BNP knew the outcome beforehand. If that was the case, why then they did not forward their known strategies to earn favourable outcomes in the parliamentary committee meetings, if not in parliament which they are boycotting. Doing nothing and only blaming others is purely a "blame game" and not healthy politics.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Government's one year

Since taking oath last year, the AL govt. has crossed one year going through many twists and turns. Taking the notion of 'change', the govt. came to power and we can say that in some sectors the government has performed well. Before the AL came to power, Bangladesh experienced a crisis in the agriculture and power sectors which are now resolved to a large extent.

If they can control the price-hike, it will be a tremendous achievement. I do believe that if the government goes forward with their promise of implementing the people's long-cherished dreams, we will soon be a developed nation.

Bipra Kanungo
Momin Road, Chittagong

Gender discrimination

To treat the boys and girls unequally is called gender discrimination. Naturally, in a male dominated country, the males enjoy more facilities than the females. The females suffer from an inferiority complex and the males feel themselves superior to the females.

The effect of gender discrimination is obvious. No nation or country can attain overall peace and prosperity without an active participation of its women in economic activities. And they cannot contribute to the development of the country, unless they are educated. So, gender discrimination must go.

Abdul Azim
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AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRIKNEWS

Solar power

I appreciate Dr. Shabbir A. Bashar for his article entitled Solar power as a prime energy source in Bangladesh published in The Daily Star of December 26, 2009. It is very timely particularly when our policy makers are busy like anything to promote solar energy in the country without looking in its cost benefit. In this regard, I want to add a few more points here.

Grameen Shakti, an NGO, reportedly has so far installed solar panels in about 400,000 homesteads in the far-flung rural areas of the country which is equivalent to generation of 20 to 25MW of electricity or 0.5% of total demand of electricity in the country. The government has a plan to meet 10% of energy demand through solar source in the next five years. This is equivalent to generation of about 500MW of electricity. In the last two years it has been possible to generate a maximum of 25MW of electricity by installing solar panels in 400,000 homesteads.

Cold wave deaths

At least 60 people have died this winter in the cold wave. News reports from various print and e-media have mentioned that the cold wave is severe. It is so pathetic that so many people died because of cold, probably for the first time in Bangladesh. The southern districts are the worst hit.

The government and people should show a greater sensitivity to the issue.
Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS correspondent
Gopalganj

India issue

We shouldn't forget that blood groups, stature, colour of pupil and other physical and cultural heritage, etiquette, manners and thought process of Bengalee Muslims and Bengalee Hindus are very similar, except religious belief. We also shouldn't forget that for historical reasons Bengalee Hindus of lower castes or oppressed Hindus had been converted to Islam to save themselves from Hindu Zemindars and feudal lords created by East India Company. That is part of history, whether you like it or not.

Relationship with India should be based on pragmatism, and history, rather than religion only. If India wins and prospers, Bangladesh can be prosperous and vice versa, and playing of unnecessary anti-Indian or anti-Hindu cards could take all of us backwards only!
Dr Azizul Karim
GP, Australia

Prospects of sports tourism

Sports and tourism are very interrelated and complementary. Sports and tourism share common goals, which build bridges of understanding among different cultures, lifestyles and traditions, promoting peace and goodwill among nations, motivating and inspiring young people and providing entertainment and enjoyment to relieve the pressures of daily life to large sections of the population.

From time immemorial, sports and games have appeared as sources of inspiration, harmony and peace among the different nations and cultures of the world. Sports tourism may emerge as a powerful tool for development, stimulating investment in infrastructure projects such as airports, roads, stadiums, sporting complexes, hotels and restaurants - projects that

Have the policy makers thought as to how many years it will take to generate 500MW of electricity by solar system? Have they devised any strategy to generate 500MW of electricity in five years through solar system? Moreover, have we thought about disposal of the solar panels after their useful life is over? Where shall we dump them? Are we not going to create another situation similar to the menace of polyethylene bag?

I would request the Ministry of Energy to immediately conduct feasibility study by reputed consultants to assess the techno-economic viability of the solar system in the country to determine an appropriate policy of the government on the issue before too much damage is done to the environment in the name of solar energy.

Engr Abdul Wadud
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can be enjoyed by the local population, as well as visitors who come to use those.

In Bangladesh, various kinds of popular sports and games are organized regularly. During an international cricket match or football match in the country, hundreds of people watch and enjoy those with enthusiasm. The country is now all set to organise the South Asian Games soon. It is heard that about 10,000 international visitors will arrive then. Bangladesh is also one of the important cricket venues to hold the World Cup cricket matches in February 2011. Many international visitors will also come then to Bangladesh to watch the cricket matches.

There is a great potential to promote sports tourism in Bangladesh. We can develop venues and infrastructure in the country. Some cricket venues have already been developed in the country. But, more venues need to be established in various places like Cox's Bazar the world's longest sea beach and the tourist capital of Bangladesh, Kuakata, Comilla, Barisal, Dinajpur, etc. For the development of sports tourism we can seek both local and foreign investment.

Ziaul Haque Howlader
BPC, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Natural variability of climate

It is an irony to see the 'warmists' acknowledge the natural variability of climate in their January 6 press release stating that the coldest northern winter in 40 years "does not disprove global warming" because the bitter winter weather is simply a short term "blip" and a manifestation of "the natural variability of climate". Had it been the warmest winter in 40 years they would surely be singing a different tune.

That tune is the one they sang for the 2003 heat wave in Europe and the 2007 summer melt of sea ice in the Arctic Basin; as well as for Hurricane Katrina, Cyclones Sidr and Aila, recent floods and droughts in China, and droughts in southern Africa, and Australia. In all of these cases, short term weather events and the effects of known regional weather patterns were presented not as "blips" nor as "the natural variability of climate" but as effects of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels.

In the very same press release they slip back to this

old tune and present the deceptive statistic that "2009 will rank among the 10 warmest years since 1880" implying that these data indicate a warming trend even though the cited statistic could be produced by the natural variability of climate without a warming trend. In any case, the issue is not the warming trend itself but whether it represents a natural variation or whether it is caused by fossil fuels.

It appears that the science of global warming depends on the very unscientific notion that data that support the hypothesis are good data and should be retained, while those that do not are blips and outliers which must be discarded. This method of data selection leads to a sense of "overwhelming evidence" to support their cause and the attitude that they already know the answer. That renders research methods into propaganda methods and encourages climate scientists to overlook statistical principle and to use statistics only as a marketing tool.

Cha-am Jamal
Thailand

Behaviour profiling

I am writing with reference to Point Counterpoint: "Profiling and screening Muslims only," by Abdullah Dewan (Jan. 10).

In this context, it can be pointed out that even hardened terrorists are not immune to tensions that go with persons ready to commit murder-suicide by blowing up jetliners with hundreds of passengers. And any abnormal behaviour can be detected by trained security personnel. A potential terrorist is likely to avoid eye contact and show signs of nervousness when asked a few personal questions such as why is he travelling, what is his profession and what is his destination address. A potential terrorist is also less prone to smile. "It is almost impossible to wear a mask of happiness when you're going to blow something up," says former FBI agent Joe Navarro.

Paul Ekman, a psychologist who studied deceit for decades, calls these clues "micro-expressions," an involuntary flicker of a facial feature when a person is trying not to hide his true feelings.

As such, behavioural profiling coupled with normal physical checks can go a long way to counter terrorist threats in our airports.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

St. Martin's Island

St. Martin's, a small continental island in the Bay of Bengal, is located on the southern most tip of Bangladesh separated from the mainland by a channel which is about 9 km wide. St. Martin's island is endowed with vast marine and land resources having great biodiversity significance. The island is a good example of co-occurrence of corals, algae, seaweeds, grasses and mangroves.

A total of 234 species of fish have been found in the coastal water of St. Martin's Island, of which 16 are fresh water species. Among the fish species, 89 are coral associated. The most abundant coral or reef associated fish are Damsel, Parrot, Surgeon, Grouper, Snappers, Emperors and Butterfly fish. The mollusc on the St. Martin's is the largest and most beautiful in Bangladesh. 186 species of mollusc & oyster, 7 species of crab, 9



species of echinoderms, 4 species of sea urchin, 1 species of sea cucumber & some brittle stars have been found here. A number of colourful nudibranch and bryozoans were reported in adjacent area of the island.

There are nearly 8,000 people on this small island of 12 sq. km.

area. In the tourist season (November-February) around 3,000 people visit this island daily, which is beyond the holding capacity of this small marine island.

Besides this, there is regular big ferry services and engine boat, used for transportation of

tourists, to the island. For this reason, a huge amount of crude oil, plastic and other non-biodegradable waste are discharged in the water adjacent to the island. In addition huge amounts of untreated market and domestic wastes, which include sewage matters (only 5% of the local people have sanitary latrine facilities) from the local people and tourists, are discharged into the adjacent coastal water. Thus the quality of coastal water is degrading gradually.

The government should take necessary steps to save this coral island. Beside this, it also necessary to take initiatives for developing eco-friendly tourism in the Island.

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