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Rich poor gap



PHOTO BY: FROZGAZI / DORIKNEWS

It is highly rewarding to go through the thought-provoking articles of MM Akash and Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled entitled 'Rising inequality takes shine off growth' and 'rural financing -- the innovative way' respectively appearing in economy and climate change supplements of DS dated 02/24.

According to Professor Akash, the unsung heroes of much heralded growth of Bangladesh are our peasants, garment and migrant workers and micro and small entrepreneurs.

He wrote, "How great the potential of our people is and how foolishly our ruling class keeps them outside the main stream growth process and favours the rich non-performers".

Professor Akash in course offered a contour of ideas to achieve equitable growth and narrow the divide between rich and poor.

According to him, as I understand, collective ownership of all means of production, universal literacy, democratic land reform and reversal of traditional patron-client political structure are fitting tools to apply for achieving the desired objective.

Eminent banker, Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled in his analytical write-up drew a geographical map of poverty situation in Bangladesh. In his opinion poverty zone comprised mainly rural and pros-

perity zone urban areas of the country. He further viewed that the gap between rich and poor is very wide and pointed to a strange contradiction that phenomenal growth and increase of national income simultaneously triggered further increase of number of poor multitude.

Ibrahim Khaled rolled out a plan for all pervasive rural development by massive pumping of capital and capability to rural economy to confront this ominous sign.

His development plan includes social safety net, agriculture, roads, bridges, health, education, markets, cottage, small, medium industries and the like, bringing the vast rural segment under banking network, making access to credit easy and universal. He thinks money wasted there is actually money earned.

As an elderly discerning person, I am highly excited to go through the police-format revealed by two very widely respected social scientists of our country to address the sordid situation; but at the same time become equally interested to know how they plan realization of their vision on the turf of patron-client political set-up and virulent model of market-economy stoked by limitless greed of corporate giants.

SA Samad, Janata Bank, Dhaka

Cell phone hijacking

Nowadays cell phone has become a part and parcel of our everyday life. Passing a single day without cell phone is unthinkable for many of us. Today the usage of cell phone is not just limited in distant talking, rather it is being used in multiple ways. We all are dreaming of a digital Bangladesh. And it goes without saying that mobile phone can play a very significant role to make our dream come true.

In our country, using cell phone, especially costly cell phone is a very risky job. Whenever we go out, we can't avoid worrying about its safety because it could be hijacked anytime. Having a personal cell phone lost or stolen may be one of these situations in which we feel rather helpless or without knowing exactly what to do or where to go for help. In cases like these the following tips may be of some use at least to minimize the potential problems you may run into.

1. When you do pull out your mobile handset in public, make sure you are in an environment you feel comfortable in. Mobile users who walk and talk are particularly vulnerable because thieves know that they are at their most distracted. Of course hiding a mobile phone cannot mask its presence from undesirables if it decides to ring. To avoid attracting unwanted attention it is therefore wise to set the device to vibrate whenever possible.

2. One simple but effective solution of helping to protect your mobile phone from theft is to attach it to a safety strap that is either worn around the neck or attached to a belt or a bag, and then kept out of sight. Of course this method would be ineffective in a mugging situation but might be enough to guard against your phone being snatched from you whilst you are unaware.

3. You should take care of your cell phone as if it were your personal wallet. Check the user guide that comes with your phone set and start using the lock or password feature to potentially prevent a theft from making unauthorized phone calls. There are ways to get around passwords, but you will probably be buying yourself some time until you realize the loss of your cell phone and call your service phone provider.

4. It is important to remember that if your mobile phone is stolen the first thought should not be how I can retrieve it but how I can stop anyone else using it. Make a note of the model, phone number and PIN number details, it is also suggested to record your phone's unique reference number, or IMEI, as this will enable most network operators to permanently disable the handset if it is stolen. This code is usually printed underneath the mobile phone battery but alternatively it can be retrieved by dialling '#06#'. The network will disable your phone within 48 hours if you report the incident to them and provide the IMEI.

5. File a police report. It may not be of much help in getting your cell phone back, but it should provide an official record of the missing/stolen cell phone. Keep the police report number available while reporting the loss to the phone carrier.

Unfortunately, it's true that you may never get back what you have already lost but your awareness could help everyone to prevent further hijacking.

Md. Shahadat Hossain
MBA student
University of Dhaka

Observe "Genocide Day"

May 5, 1971 was a red letter day at the famous North Bengal Sugar Mills at Gopalpur in Natore district. About one hundred innocent people including my beloved eldest brother, the then General Manager Lieutenant Anwarul Azim, LLB, officers, labourers and staff of this mill were brutally killed on the staircases of a pond in the mill premises in 1971.

Their holy dead bodies were then floating on the said pond for several days and their bodies were not found. Only three labourers luckily escaped with critical injuries.

This holy pond is now called "Shaheed Sagar" by the locals.

A museum should be established in the mill premises which could preserve photos, dresses, handwritings, sketches, newspaper clips and other relics of these martyrs.

I, on behalf of the families of these martyrs, earnestly request our democratic government to observe this genocide day in all sugar mills of our country on 5 May every year.

Would our president, the prime minister and higher authorities concerned kindly look into the matter?

Mohammad Anwarul Quadir
Advocate and Journalist
Masterpara, Chakdev
Naogaon

Sin of mediocrity?

Through your paper I would like to draw the attention of the higher authorities in the ministry of education to a stigma which the students and parents of some schools are facing. It is seen that when the students are in class VIII, those who fail to secure their desired marks (say 60% in exams, are forced to leave the school. This is done in utter disregard to a child's fundamental right to education. They forget that all the fingers are not equal. Allah, the Almighty, has not made all human beings equal, in physique, mental capabilities and character. This is applicable to children also. This sort of pruning by the authorities of such schools put the future and even life of a student in jeopardy. The cast away students go through mental agony for being reprimanded by parents, feeling guilty and shame for not securing the 'desired marks' and ridiculed by fellow students and it affects their psyche. How are the people in these school sure that a child who secured less than the desired marks set by the school will not be able to pass the public exam? Why do they like to have only A grade students? Perhaps to boast about their 100% A grade result. This is not a credit of the school. The real credit of the school lies in making mediocre students better. If A grade is the only acceptable grade for them, then why B, C and D in public exams? Why do they demoralize such low grade students by showing the door?

This sort of DISCOURAGEMENT leads to frustration in a child which might lead to suicide in extreme cases.

Sultana Zaman
East Nasirabad
Chittagong

Natural mosquito repellent

A friend of mine wrote to me from Australia that if you cut a lemon into half and stick a few cloves into them and place them around the house you will be free of mosquitoes and this is a lot safer than the usual mosquito repellents, I have tried this formula on a slice of lemon with few cloves on it and placed it near my work desk. Surprisingly, it worked and mosquitoes did not bother me. A slice of lemon with cloves will last for almost two weeks. So it is inexpensive too. I hope your esteemed readers will try this formula to keep mosquitoes away. A natural mosquito repellent indeed!

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

City crime rate

Every time we have an elected government, the law & order situation deteriorates. I would request DS to do an statistical analysis as to what's the city crime rate during an elected government as opposed to a caretaker govt. Because it's apparent to citizens like us, that with every elected government package (sorry to say both parties) we see a direct link to higher crime rates. It is evident to everyone, that some quarters (mostly belonging to ruling parties) take advantage of their elected godfathers & our elite police force work, simply as an audience (knowing even if they do catch these criminals ... there would be someone calling from high ups to release them instantly).. Simply analyse, how many of ruling party thugs have been arrested during their tenure. In AL time you will see only BNP activists getting caught & vice versa!!

For how long will we see our police (& even court rooms, for that matter) acting as puppets of the party in power.. At least for citizens' basic safety need (which is all we ask from our govt), we are earnestly requesting our PM & Home Minister-- please ensure that these departments act fully autonomously & have full control of the situation by taking stern action on the criminals (irrespective of which party support they have). Only then we will have some peace in our streets (mugging/hijacking is no longer confined to our nationality only, even our foreign guests are not being spared!)

Tanvir
Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka

SBA's article

The writing of Mr. Badrul Ahsan attracts serious readers who want to keep abreast of the matters happening around them every day (Daily Star: 5 March 2010). But this time, I surmise, he has wilfully evaded or failed to single out the main players for the failure of the spirit of 1/11 in our country. It is very much unlikely that Mr. Ahsan does not know them all. If he was honest enough for the purpose he wrote about, he also should have at least hinted at those who foiled the whole game wilfully.

Perhaps Mr. Ahsan can still remember those days when almost every day somebody was arrested, taken into custody (not necessarily the court in all the instances). People's support was so splendid and unanimous that everybody thought the long expected change in our politics, our business, our bureaucracy was about to reach our doorsteps.

But yet it did not work properly at least up to their expectation. Perhaps Mr. Ahsan would admit that a few people only fell victim to the wrath of the then administration. There were a lot of businessmen who were not arrested but had to sacrifice hugely otherwise, there were lot of political people who could trek out the country with so called dignity, there were lot of civil servants who were not even questioned about their fortunes ever.

Methinks Mr. Ahsan can find the reasons of failure in those facts if he wants to. It is unfortunate that those people who indulged in corruption and resorted to corruption themselves will never be taken to task, let alone the politicians.

Corruption has many ugly faces. It cannot be eliminated partially. So, he may also consider writing about other aspects of the subject. Should we expect any in near future, Mr. Ahsan?

Kashshaf Munir
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Chinese world order

With the United States facing a financial meltdown and record budget and trade deficits, the world is witnessing an emerging world order where the United States is no longer the dominant force. Unlike earlier dominant powers -- Rome and Britain-- that faced catastrophic military crisis before collapsing economically, the United States is dwarfed economically by China's industrial might. Rome collapsed when it faced the attacks by the vandals and British empire collapsed in the wake of two world wars. But the United States is facing an economic meltdown although it faces no real military threat. It is becoming dependent on rising China as an economic juggernaut. By the middle of 2007, China achieved several historical milestones: it displaced Canada as the biggest exporter of goods to America; it displaced America as Japan's biggest trading partner; it displaced Japan as Australia's biggest trading partner and it displaced America as the European Union's biggest trading partner. All this happened at a time when the United States has been facing a financial meltdown and massive budget and trade deficits.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

In fact, America must borrow from China in order to buy manufactured goods from China.

Another casualty of financial meltdown in the wake of sub-prime mortgage crisis is the collapse of American consumer confidence. With most Americans facing a mountain of debts after indulging in unaffordable mortgage, they can no longer act as an engine of growth and collapse of consumer confidence has become the biggest obstacle to any economic recovery. As opposed to anaemic growth of the American economy, the Chinese economy has resumed its stellar growth after a brief slowdown. In fact, the Chinese economy has replaced America as the engine of growth for the world. The quick jaunt from deep recession by Germany and France can be attributed, in good part, to fairly strong demand in China. French exports to China rose by 14.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2009. By all accounts, China is providing a shot in the arm for the struggling world economy. The driving force behind the rapid recovery has been the Chinese government's stimulus package worth 4 trillion Yuan (about \$600 billion).

With heavily dependent on the Chinese largesse, the United States is now reduced to the role of the only military power capable of projecting power. Undoubtedly, the military remains the United States' strongest card; in fact, it is the only card. Today, the United States wields the most formidable military apparatus. But how long a military power, suffering from seemingly insurmountable economic problems, can hold to its unique status as the world's only superpower? As Prof. Martin Jacques, of London School of Economics, writes in his recent path breaking study 'When China Rules the World: "The fundamental problem of China for the US is not its military strength but its economic prowess. This is what is slowly and irresistibly eroding America's global pre-eminence. If the US comes to see China as primarily a military issue then it will be engaging in an act of self-deception which will divert its attention from addressing the real problems it faces and in effect hasten the process of its own decline." China's rising economic clout and America's faltering economy will mean that the United States will be obliged to depend on China to finance its vast military machine and at some point the United States will be obliged to cut back military expenditure. By that time, the United States might become an economic weakling, unable to maintain its status as a superpower. Only by disengaging in military conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States can bring its deficits under control. But will the American leaders listen?

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Banani Road 11

Since the opening of the Banani-Gulshan Bridge, Banani Road No 11 has been promoted from being just crowded, to one that is simply un-passable from morning till late at night. Up-market eateries, bakeries, boutiques, fashion arcades, trendy garments stores, doctors, clinics, banks, offices, apartments etc are all

Tiny tormentors!

Mosquito menace has become the talk of the town in the Chittagong city. The problem is deteriorating by leaps and bounds. It becomes so intolerable and annoying that there is hardly any place to stay for a while. People of all walks of life, particularly the students (SSC and HSC candidates in particular) being the worst sufferers cannot concentrate on their studies. The irritable song of mosquito is not be stopped by the coil or mosquito prevention spray.

People are becoming vulnerable to different mosquito-borne diseases like malaria, dengue etc. Load shedding creates a more unbearable situation. In the circumstances, I would like to draw the attention of the authorities and the mayor of Ctg. City to solve the problem as early as possible. Otherwise, the general people and particularly the upcoming HSC examinees would face a great havoc.

Md. Ziaul haque
North Halishahar, Ctg.



ving to be there to cater to a horde of customers with access to easy money.

A few weeks ago some 'conscientious' member(s) of the conservancy department took it upon themselves to clean up the ditches on both sides of the road in readiness for the rains. Very commendable, indeed!! Workers are still being observed hard at work digging up the accumulated muck of years and dumping it on the roadside/footpath. But with typical bureaucratic 'efficiency', the bright boys forget to make arrangements to remove the filth!

By now (9 March) hundreds of small hillocks of slime occupy an area containing tons of dirt that is even more than that taken up by the parked Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs). As the sludge dries out in the hot sun, the wheels of the GGMs grind up the scum into a fine powdery mass that swirls up in the air every time a GGM passes over it. The smell emanating from this compacted sewage could be patented as "Evening in Banani". How much of this mire gets into the eyes, lungs, stomach, skin etc of the passers-by and what harm it does there, is anyone's guess.

As for the poor pedestrians, they have nowhere to go. The fate of Banani-bashi, like that of Dhakabashi is, either get run over by the GGMs or jump when a raucous horn blows behind you and take a mud-bath. The real fun and frolic will really start once we have a couple of heavy nor'westers. Before concluding, I would like to pose a question if this is the condition of one of the most posh areas of Dhaka, what must be happening where the poor plebeians and peasants reside?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Steel export

Mr. JU Khan's report on the matter published in your 'Star Business' on March 7 is a heartening matter. Not being basically an iron and steel manufacturer, it is really good to hear that we are exporting steel flat products (GP&CI sheets) to Africa, competing with steel giants like Japan,

South Korea and India-- all Asian countries! Our steel producers deserve congratulations for their breakthrough in a non-conventional sector in international export. It would have been good to know the percentage of total tonnage of these (GP&CI flats) products that we export compared to countries from Asia and Europe.

One reason behind this achievement could be the low price for our natural gas, which in effect is an indirect financial support provided to them.

Nevertheless, our government should give them all possible encouragement to encourage their effort. If necessary the concerned steel mills should be excluded from the gas-rationing plan now in place. With scarcity of gas, and its price being increased, I am afraid our steel makers will now find it difficult to maintain this trend of export! It will be interesting to know of the total export figures for the calendar year 2010, and also next year's figures in your issues of 'Star Business'. It would be worthwhile if you can follow this innovative export trend in public interest in support of our steel makers and exporters.

I wish our steel makers good luck and God-speed in this epoch-making effort. Given my interesting and challenging years in the public steel sector in early 1970s in Chittagong, I keenly look forward to innovations in better heat recovery and utilisation by our pioneer steel makers.

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

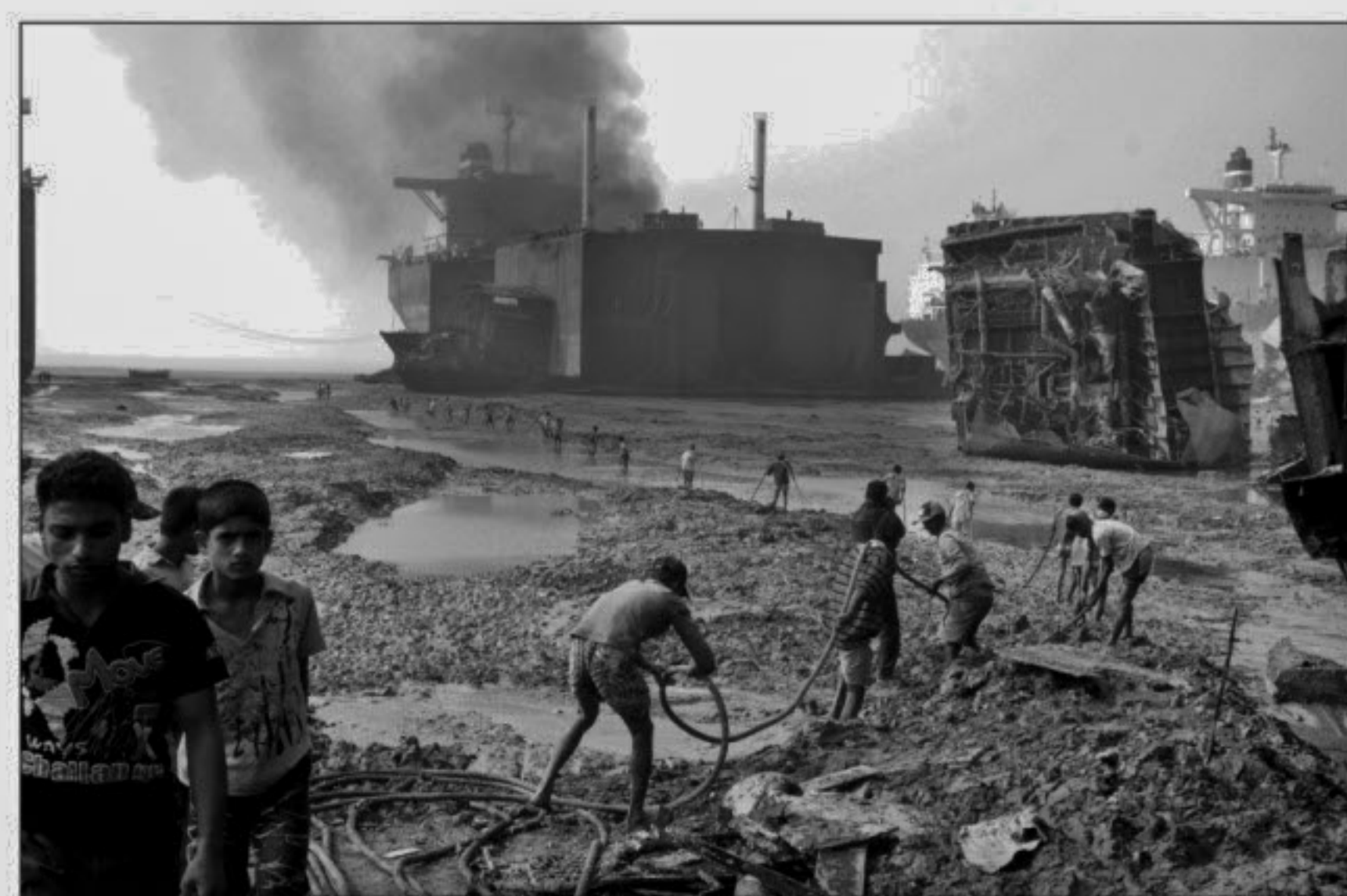
Women's rights

We are considering women's rights. But considering only such rights often creates many problems in our society. The declaration of reserving 9/6 seats in big/small buses for only women is creating so many problems, especially during office time.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter as elderly men are often left without seats in a bus.

A student
One-mail

Ship breaking industry



It is detrimental for us in many ways. It is responsible for the pollution of air, water and land. It is very harmful for workers in ship breaking yards. Even it causes death to the workers. For example, 400 workers have died in the last 20 years.

The issue cannot be neglected any longer.

Abdullah Al Mamun
A third year student
Forestry Department
Institute of Forestry and
Environmental Sciences
Chittagong University