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Power shortage

We appreciate the statement of the Honourable Finance Minister about the power shortage in the pre-budget meeting with the Honourable Chairmen of the Parliamentary committees recently. This indicates that the Honourable Finance Minister is sincere in his thoughts and honest in his action.

However, sincerity and honesty at the ministerial level are not enough. Something has to be done to address the power outage becoming gruesome day by day, especially in the capital city where a large number of foreigners live. A year ago, in this column, the present I proposed buying electricity from

Nepal and Bhutan.

Both the countries then expressed their willingness to sell their surplus power to Bangladesh as reported by local newspapers. Unfortunately, that idea has long been buried in the oblivion.

Today to save the capital and the govt. from acute suffering and hapless disgrace there is only one way left at hand. That is to equip the farmers to manage their irrigation needs. They may be supplied with diesel generators and power-pumps (tax-free) to be independent from the national electricity grid to run the pumps in their rice fields. The govt. may have to spend as much as Tk 1000 crore in grant or in subsidy which if spread in four years (life span of a generating machine) amounts to Tk 250 crore only per year. This may take two to three months if taken in right earnest. After this short time, the power thus saved will not only ease the crisis in Dhaka but also free the industries now suffering from power shortage. Fertilizer factories also may not be shut down to avoid an imminent fertilizer crisis. It's needless to say that this extra expenditure on the part of the present govt. is the punitive legacy of the immediate past govt. for their inaction in power sector or reaction in cancelling the work order of the 450 MW Serajganj power station.

Engr. Dr. M. H. Rashid
Former Professor & Head of
Civil Engineering
RUET, Rajshahi



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Climate change and livestock

Natural disasters caused by climate change have a tremendous impact on the livestock population of Bangladesh. Livestock suffers large-scale death in cyclonic storms. Prolonged floods can also cause such deaths. During droughts, livestock in Bangladesh do not suffer death, but lack of water increases their vulnerability to diseases.

In Bangladesh, millions of coastal belt people are relying in livestock for their income. The welfare and survival of the livestock is essential to supporting livelihoods of these people. The vast char areas are the best places for rearing goats, fattening cows and growing different types of animals. So, the inhabitants of these areas keep and raise animals over the years. But it was seen in last cyclones SIDR and Aila that thousands of cattle were killed and people of those areas became vulnerable due to such loss.

Creation of shelters, relocation during natural disasters, proper treatment, financial support for livestock etc. are some important solutions to climate change impact on livestock.

Md. Humayun Kabir
MS in Environmental Science
Institute of Forestry and
Environmental Sciences
University of Chittagong

Blame game

Blaming each other is the cultural heritage of the ill political practice witnessed by the people of Bangladesh over the years. The ongoing shortage of electricity and gas has created a looming crisis in the scorching heat of summer across the country.

In the real sense of the term, we don't love our country. The

past records reflect that the role played by the BNP or Awami League was nothing but a clash for grabbing power and looting money with political influence. But the fate of the people remains unchanged and always in the dark. This situation can't go on; we need change in every sphere of life. The present govt. has to make its strategies and policies correctly to change the fate of the people.

Eng. Md. Meheboob Haque
BUET

Talkshow

I was watching the prestigious talk show "Tritiyo Matra" on 01 April, 2010, I found there were two guests-- Ferdous Akhter Wahida (ex-MP) and Aupu Ukil (MP), both of them blamed each other for their party's past and present activities like poor performance, corruption and the war crimes issue.

But they didn't come to the point how to overcome the past and present crises.

Tanvirul Wahhab
Crescent Road
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Water cries

I congratulate Abdul Hannan for his illuminating piece. "Tighten your water taps to fight the water crisis" published in your daily on Monday last (April 5). It graphically juxtaposes the fact that while the richest nation, America so jealously guards any wastage of water, we in Bangladesh, a rank poor nation do it with no qualms of conscience. What a bewildering irony! It is high time that the government enacts a water policy forthwith and puts it through urgently to prevent further wastage of this precious commodity--water. Perceptively, the brewing summer of discontent has

much of its roots in water.

Syed Badrul Haque
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Understanding Big Bang!

According to Reuters report, published on March 31 in a local daily, scientists now have smashed sub-atomic (really small, or mathematically: smallX10 to the power minus infinity) particles of matter to re-enact the Big Bang, hopefully in a very small way!

God forbid, if due to some experimental (or any other error) the recreation produces a really Big Bang or even a small Big Bang, or sub-atomic Bang; then we are 'Gone with the Wind': in this case the utter void in space! At least here we have science superseding literature!

However, as reported, the particles speeded up and collided successfully; releasing 7,000,000,000,000 electron volts! I have no idea how strong the electron volt is compared to our volt in real life, or to the 230 volt of single phase house wiring; which gives quite a kick! Sometimes, with water around, it may even kill you!

The "Collider" where atoms, sub-atoms and sub-sub-atoms, smash into each other (ignoring all traffic rules it seems!); the experts who manage the collision say that they are on to discover the 'known' unknown!

Hopefully, it is well known; otherwise we can all wander in space 'from here to eternity' jettisoned into the infinity of time and space! Will "Qiyamat" (Judgment Day) come this way? I simply wonder, while scientists expect to unveil the mysteries of the 'cosmos', as reported! It seems that they are keen to explore the mysteries of 'mass', the mother of 'matter', if my Physics basics are right!

Hopefully, we will not be reconverted from 'matter' to 'mass'; and left in space; as 'ignorant fools', who as Shakespeare said, "struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more"! Hopefully all this is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"! As the wise Bard said, centuries back! I wish the Bard was there with "The wise men of Geneva" on their journey to the unknown!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Attestation

To apply for a job and so on, one needs academic certificates as well as photographs to be attested. Regrettably, one has to face harassment after going to a first class gazetted officer. Because most of the officers normally do not agree to attest our documents without a pre-familiarity. If one can manage a peon with tips for the purpose, then he gets the documents attested easily. It is an open secret that now almost all are using fake seals and signatures in respect of attestation. Earlier, much was written about it. But no initiative has yet been taken.

The present democratic government should look into the matter urgently.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Madrasa
Chittagong

Gulf Air

Its first flight was in 1950. Till then it has been serving passengers from all over the world. Bangladeshi workers who go abroad & bring remittance to our economy are also well-acquainted with the Gulf Air. Congratulations, Gulf Air. S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology
Sylhet

Unbearable load shedding

In our area Kalabagan, we are experiencing digital load shedding i.e. 2 hours X 5 = 10 hours a day out of 24 hours. Every day we are burning 20 litres of diesel to run the generator to supplement the power supply. It is understood that this diesel is not home grown, it is imported from abroad with foreign currency. Like us hundreds of city dwellers are doing the same thing. Had the government been serious, with these hard earned foreign currencies, it could have very well built the necessary infrastructure for power generation.

Very recently at the initiative of the Bangladesh Bank Governor, solar system has been installed on the roof top of the Bank premises to produce the much needed electricity. It is widely rumoured that changing name of the international airport has cost the national exchequer Tk 1200 crore. I think the government could have very well installed solar system on all the roof tops of the government buildings and establishment in Dhaka with that money, thereby greatly mitigating the sufferings of the people.

Instead, the government is wasting crores of taka on unproductive purposes and criticizing the past government for their alleged failure in doing the needful to mitigate the sufferings of the people. If the government really cares for the people, then it should give up these

extravagant unproductive expenditures and concentrate more on pressing needs like power generation, gas generation, supply of adequate safe drinking water etc.

Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Health and progress

The concept of health-led progress is not a new-fangled one it surfaced at Alma-Ata and is also set up in the 1993 World Development Report. Health, seen as a form of human asset and not just an output from the growth process, deserves to join education as a key policy instrument for promoting the success of developing countries.

Mohammad Rajja
Student
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Dhaka

Child workers

This is in reference to your article on children working at balloon factories without any protection. In my opinion, people living in Bangladesh are very selfish and non-caring.

This issue is way too sensitive and important to ignore and is far more important than changing the name of our international airport!

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Dhaka

War crimes and Jamaat

I draw the attention of my professional colleagues to the statement Mr. Ali Ahsan Mojaheed made a few days ago on live television.

When the Awami League was voted overwhelmingly by the people of East Pakistan and when the Awami League was being denied the right to form the effective government to represent the people of East Pakistan, then the de facto ruling party was Awami League and the de facto Head of Government for us was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Therefore, the words of Mujib were the words and orders of our government. Every head of government around the world has the right and duty to proclaim war and when our leader on 7 March, 1971 called us to arms against the West Pakistanis and proclaimed that we are to embark on the struggle to end our bondage, anyone or any group or organisation who were working against the mandated de facto Awami League leadership's orders must be considered traitors and their crime was simply 'treason'.

I remember that when the British Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair and his Labour party decided to go to war against Saddam Hossain, the Liberal Democrat party was against the war decision, yet when the war started -- they wholeheartedly expressed their support for the British forces.

In England, though the death penalty has been abolished for all crimes, yet the exception remains for 'treason' where the penalty is 'death'.

Therefore, even if Mr. Mojaheed or his colleagues did not order any crimes against us per se, yet the creation of organisations which were active against our liberation and independence struggle is an act of 'treason' by itself. He and others should have known that criminals were to take the shelter of the

Aila hit people



SHAIKH MOHIR UDDIN / DRINKNEWS

On May 25, 2009, Cyclone Aila hit the coastal region of Bangladesh, directly affecting five million people. Cultivated land damaged in the area is around 96,617ha (out of 542,006ha cultivated in the area); the loss in production is of around 482,144 Mt that is worth BDT 6,776 million (FAO mission estimate).

The embankments of these regions have been damaged. As a result, huge areas are now submerged with water and a few million people became homeless. Among them, 40 thousand people

temporarily settled themselves in the coastal bank and 60 thousand went to other places. Till today, the homeless people cannot return home due to continuous submersion and stagnancy of water, lack of fresh water, unsuitability of cultivated land etc.

The government has to address the issue on a top priority basis.

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

Jamaat and Pakistani forces for committing various crimes without the fear of being persecuted as they were zealous active members of the Pakistani regime.

Jamaat leaders, who supported Pakistani regime's brutality, were against our morality and religious beliefs. They should also be tried for hurting our religious belief in Islam. In the name of our beloved religion of Islam, they were misinterpreting the holy scriptures to justify the brutalities of the West Pakistanis.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

Students and politics

There is no doubt that most students of public universities abhor student & teacher politics. The top three public universities named DU, CU & RU are endangered by this dangerous practice. We have lost Abu Bakar, Mohiuddin, Faruque & Harun-ur-Rashid who were non-political students.

Being a student of a public university, I observe the activities of student bodies with much trepidation.

Jahangir Alam
One-mail

Census

It's already been a long time, that the government conducted a census in the country.

Probably, about one and a half decade ago, the government calculated the number of people in the country. Since then there has never been a census to know the exact figure of the population of our country.

Sometimes, our top level government officials also get confused, while they address a meeting, or release information nationally or internationally.

I have heard that the population is now 14 core, 15 crore, 15 and a half crore or even 16 crore, which is a confusing

message.

There is a certain system in every country of the world to conduct census regularly. Our constitution also endorses census and it should be within a decade.

In modern days, census should be conducted within shorter periods to maintain statistics, as it is part of controlling the population growth.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS correspondent
Gopalganj

BNP reinventing Zia

At a meeting held at the Mahanagar Natya Mancha on March 27 some BNP leaders claimed, as reported in the media, that Ziaur Rahman was the first President of Bangladesh and that he had taken charge of the country after proclaiming independence over the radio and also that the country became independent under his leadership!

By the way, Khaleda Zia was present there when these preposterous claims were being made by her sycophants.

The rest of the country knows that during the liberation war Zia was only a Sector Commander and that Gen. Osmany was in overall charge of the freedom fighters. If Zia was the first president of the country then what was the position of Sheikh Mujib from 1972 to Aug.15, 1975, the day he was gunned down along with others?

Do the BNP people think that the Pakistanis could not recognize their real enemy and had arrested Sheikh Mujib and put him on trial for treason instead of Zia? The problem with telling lies is that one has to tell a host of lies to sustain the first one! We are waiting to see what more ludicrous things they claim for Zia.

Abul Mohsin
Siddheswari Circular Road
Dhaka

A sweet name

Recently Aktel has changed its name into Robi, a very sweet name. The name is very significant. Firstly, it is the synonym of Surya, the sun. Secondly, it is the name of a day i.e. Sunday. Thirdly, the name has a strong affinity with the name of world poet Tagore. Last but not the least, this name is cent percent Bangla. Thus the name is not only sweet but also royal.

Copying the western names has become a very common practice. In this country, many institutions and organisations have English names. In this situation, this change is noteworthy. This will definitely motivate others to do the same.

We all must take it as a lesson and march forward shoulder to shoulder for further promotion of our language along with its heritage.

Pradip Das
Lecturer
BHPi, CRP

US security measures

The major shake-up of air travel security measures announced by the US, will definitely help them in avoiding unnecessary wild goose chase. This will be easing the agony of innocent people from 14 countries, who were targeted by the previous measures. The current system was worked out long before but took time to come into effect.

This will definitely help in focusing the energies of the security personnel on the right target. The security personnel should be trained not to focus on racial/religious profiling.

Mohammed Sadullah Khan
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Jewish reaction

I am appalled that Jewish groups around the world have reacted with shock after Pope Benedict's personal preacher compared attacks on the Church and pope over a sexual abuse scandal to "collective violence" against Jews.

The Holocaust was not exclusively Jewish. Although many of the victims of the Holocaust were indeed Jews, many Poles, Italians and Catholics also died at the Nazi concentration camps. Jews, however, have monopolized it and used it as a weapon of propaganda in order to gain support for Israel and obtain benefits which are often unjustified such the unconditional support for Israel by the U.S. They are also using it today to blindly and unjustly condemn Pope Pius XII, Pope Benedict XVI and the Catholic Church as well as to treat the Palestinians like animals.

So, Israel may very well be the instigators in their war with Islam. They are certainly the precursors of terrorism. In condemning others Jews should take the advice of Jesus "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

Paul Kokoski
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada

Rural development

The state of rural development was not so deplorable in the remote past. It is clear that the villagers did not suffer from food crisis at least. But at present, villagers are failing to meet the bare necessities of life such as food, clothing, education, medicine, housing etc. It is because the population is increasing at a higher rate than production. Besides, villagers are not getting modern technology, which they can use to increase their production. Moreover, only 28% of the rural people are literate and the number of educational institutions is inadequate. For the village people technical and vocational education is very important. Of course, it is a matter of hope for us that the literacy rate is now 65%, according to a government survey. All the mills and factories are situated in towns and as the people of the villages are moving towards towns, rural development is becoming slower.

In spite of that, in the last ten years some basic changes have taken place and these changes have opened the door of development. Side by side with the government, many non-government organisations are also making concerted efforts to develop the rural areas.

The World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO etc. are some of the international organisations which are contributing a lot to rural development. We have to change our attitude regarding rural areas. We should go by the slogan "Go back to the village".

Md. Abu Hasnat Shariar

Keya
Dept. of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Chittagong



SHAFIQ ISLAM / DRINKNEWS