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Save power



I live in a four-room apartment. For last few years I have been using lights in my apartment very sparingly. I only put on lights in rooms which are essential and that too only one lamp and a fan when necessary. My living room lights are usually off unless I have some guests. I was wondering if we all could use electricity very prudently and when and where it is necessary. I think we could all contribute in saving power and bring down the number of power outage in a day. I get surprised when I see many apartments having scores of lights on after dusk which can be avoided.

We all should use common sense when we very well know that our country is passing through a serious power crisis and as true citizens we all should come forward to ease the crisis. Our private television channels should also frequently advertise between their programmes requesting people to use minimum lights possible. If we do not participate in helping the nation at the time of crisis, how can we expect any party in power to solve national problems?

Ziauddin Ahmed
One-mail

Street children

The image of children scouring for metals and scraps in a garbage dump speak volumes about the woefully miserable and pitiable state of the have-nots, especially children. We, as citizens of Bangladesh, should hang our heads in shame. That children of seven and eight are forced to sift through hazardous waste on a daily basis to contribute to the income of their families is shocking. It is indeed saddening to know that when they are supposed to be in school, the unfortunate children are wading through used bandages, syringes and old batteries to salvage some metal pieces and plastic containers. The government should take serious note of the inconvenient truth. Child rag pickers are deprived of love and education and are at high risk of being exploited by others, especially bandits and those running junkyards. Children resort to street life due to their instinct to survive in hard life conditions.

The need of the hour is mission-oriented approach to tackle the problems of street children, including rag pickers. The initiative should involve the government, industry associations, schools and special schools, and NGOs. The corporate houses can provide the necessary resources. It appears that a sizeable amount from various poverty reduction schemes is siphoned off by middlemen and the benefits do not reach the needy. The need of the hour is strong political will and a dedicated bureaucracy that can ensure universal education for children.

Gopal Sengupta
McGill University
Canada

Observer crisis

It is heartening to learn that on the basis of the assurance given by the Information Minister and the Law Minister, the journalists, press workers and the general employees of THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER newspaper have deferred their scheduled fast unto death programme to press home implementation of the agreement till 19 April. It is sincerely hoped that the agreement signed between the owners and the journalists, press workers and general employees of The Bangladesh Observer will soon be implemented allowing Observer employees to take a fresh breath in comfort after several years of suffering!

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

Medical errors

This is one of the areas of medical profession, which keeps them under tremendous pressure, especially the specialists. Many countries have this problem, there are many cases where a cancer drug was provided instead of the drug for some other ailment, instruments were left

in the body, operation was performed on wrong limb/eye because of lack of coordination among the medical staff. In Saudi Arabia we have people from different countries working together in a single place. Hence it is important that the communication should be clear. The employees should undergo regular refresher courses on understanding various factors leading to medical errors. A good labelling system should be in place. A proper integrated approach will definitely help in reducing the number of medical errors.

Mohammed Sadullah Khan
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Safe drinking water

Re: "Water pipeline a blessing for Sathkira villagers" by Reaz Ahmad, Daily Star Monday April 5, 2010

The pipeline network scheme under the Bangladesh Water Supply Programme Project (BWSPP), funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) is a most welcome endeavour that will supply safe drinking water to hundreds of thousands of people in remote areas. What is also innovative is that this initiative is a public-private partnership. This approach of supplying safe water from a safe aquifer or arsenic free regions by a network of pipelines will assure safe drinking water to millions.

One point of caution is that the water supply from deeper tube wells may very well be free of arsenic but should still be tested for other toxic metals which may be present in deeper aquifers.

An additional solution could be rainwater harvesting which has shown promise and should be continued. It is also important to point out that domestic water treatment in various forms may give short-term relief but the handling and disposal of arsenic sludge in the long term remains an issue.

Previously, the cost of an extensive network of pipelines to supply safe water had been considered prohibitive. However, when one considers the amount of money spent for the arsenic mitigation efforts since 1993 perhaps the network could have been achieved by now. I was amazed to see the extensive network of pipelines traversing through all manner of terrain and major rivers, spreading throughout the country and bringing natural gas from Chittagong. I often wondered why such a system of safe water delivery from pre-designated sources and distribution centres could not be implemented to save lives of so many people.

Bibudhendra Sarkar
Professor Emeritus
Hospital for Sick Children
University of Toronto, Canada

Bangla movies

We have been observing a new trend in our movies for the last couple of years. Some brilliant drama directors have turned into film directors which is the main reason behind that improvement. Movies like "Monpura", "Jago", "Third Person Singular Number" and so on are really attracting our young generation toward Bangladeshi movies.

Popular director Salauddin Lavlu's latest project is a film entitled Warish. We all hope this is going to be another popular movie. We are eagerly waiting for this.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Department of Business
Administration
SUST, Sylhet

Nuclear weapons

With intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq the United States of America has been able to create a serious threat of instability in the Middle East and Southeast Asia region with chaotic conditions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan while India and Bangladesh are already suffering from its fallout. To some extent, the Afghan intervention is understandable but the seizure of Iraq defies all logical interpretations. It is almost unpardonable that a power like the USA with extremely sophisticated electronic spying devices and superbly trained manpower for espionage and counter espionage activities would commit the mistake of wrongly assessing the military capability of Baghdad as gravely as it did. But, might is right, who would question the mightiest on the earth?

If restraint does not come with might it is devastating, therefore uninhibited demonstration of power may bring the downfall of the mighty as it did innumerable times in history. The Romans fell, the Muslims at the height of their might were destroyed by half civilized barbarians, recently the British Empire disinte-

grated.

Nuclear Iran is a threat, so is a Nuclear Pakistan, a Nuclear India and for that matter any Nuclear power is a threat to civilization. Has the USA used nuclear weapon judiciously when it unleashed that immense diabolic power on Hiroshima and Nagasaki or will the atomic states be able to use that power without causing unforeseen devastation? It is argued that that power is more a deterrent than an offensive weapon. If that is such a powerful deterrent as to be able to stop wars then every state has a right to possess that power. Since, possession of nuclear power by all the states is a sure passage to destruction of the humankind, it is an absurd proposition and therefore, the alternative is to disarm those that possess that power.

The irony is that the United States is not suffering the direct consequences of its mistakes.

Mir Mahboob Ali
Freelance consultant

Teasers

It is unthinkable in this era of enlightenment that a young man can go so far as to kill a girl for refusing to marry him. Our government is up and doing in bringing the crimes committed in 1971 to justice but very much blind to crimes perpetrated by their own men. We know how the youths let loose their libido on the girls of Dhaka University, Ananda Mohon college and Jahangirnagar University recently. We do not know how many girls are in the pipeline to be teased, humiliated and ultimately killed. My sister-in-law will never visit my college because she will definitely find those golden boys throwing remarks at her. A few days ago the hecklers killed a government college teacher in Sylhet for the latter's opposition to a love affair. Actually, those hecklers in most cases are the ruling party cadres who are disturbing teachers, students and snatching tender documents all over the country.

Tinku
Lalpur, Natore

Deployment of police

After the suicide of another schoolgirl in her Madhya Nandipara residence on April 3 last, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has deployed plainclothes in front of the city's female educational institutions to stop eve teasing and harassment of girls by delinquents. The home ministry, however, instructed all the law enforcers to take strict measures after the suicide of Ummeh Kulsum Elora, a 14-year-old schoolgirl, who, repeatedly harassed by some delinquents led by 20-year-old Rezaul Karim, committed suicide by swallowing pesticide.

Deployment of plainclothes in front of the female educational institutions is a good move indeed. We would also like the authorities concerned to initiate a move to deploy enough lawmen in front of all educational institutions on a regular basis.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Madrassa
Chittagong

Ridiculous indeed!

From the Star Sports on 7th April, 2010 we came to know the turmoil prevailing in the marital functionality of the two stars namely Shoaib Malik of Pakistan and Sania Mirza of India in detail. Sania has always been a controversial

figure owing to her sartorial minimization. It's actually a matter of personal belief and practice of any individual but yet both the stars have very murky lifestyles indeed. Shoaib was earlier married to an Indian Muslim girl named Ayesha which he tried to deny at first, while Sania was betrothed to her boyhood friend, a young man of the same township, which she ignored latter.

However, as long as these are absolutely their personal matters, we should have nothing to say. But what astounded me most is that a lawyer of India urged the government to take back all accolades and awards Sania achieved as she is going to marry a Pakistani!

Monzur Rahman
Dhaka

A war without end

Re "A war without end," by Harun ur Rashid (April 7).

Harun ur Rashid has rightly pointed out that suicide bombings by so-called black widows in Moscow shows that the war against terrorists in Chechnya is far from over. Women are being used increasingly by the extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan and this is an extension of the same war Pakistan is fighting.

As in Pakistan, the targets of the extremists are always civilians. Extremists in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia are attacking civilian targets in their regions and Russia in a bid to establish a theocratic Islamic state similar to Afghanistan under the Taliban. But the war will not be over even if they are successful in imposing their Islamic regimes in these areas. When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, they engaged in the brutal suppression, including mass executions, of those who didn't agree with their version of Islam, banned women's education and provided sanctuaries for al Qaeda to plan and carry out attacks on America. Similarly, Islamic states in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia will become new breeding grounds of terrorism.

Russia has joined America in this war against extremism. As such, this war will continue. As for economic development, no economic development can take place in a country facing war and destruction. All economic developments come to a standstill when war erupts, disrupting normal economic activities.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Save Bangladesh

Over the last one year, climate change scientists have been sending alarming news that a significant part of Bangladesh will be submerged in the next twenty or so years due to the effects of climate change and resulting sea level rise. The Bangladesh government is naturally concerned and has been highlighting this perilous problem in national and global forums in an effort to look for solutions. But will this be enough? There is an urgent need to inform the young generation about the implications of the impending crisis since they will be most affected if the gloomy prediction comes true. They will need to play an active role in finding ways to mitigate the adverse impact on our people and society.

Md. Tanjil
Dept. of Geography and
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University of Chittagong

Occupied footpaths

It is very difficult to find any footpath especially of Dhaka city which is not occupied by unauthorized people. We always say poor businessmen such as "Hawkers" occupy footpath and make them dirty. I agree that they are responsi-



ble for making footpath dirty but only partially. But at the same time it is almost impossible to find any footpath in Dhaka city which is not occupied by developers and/or where vehicles are not parked. Developers not only occupy footpath but also destroy them. I have never seen any developer repair the footpath after their work is finished. Moreover, the whole area remains dirty and dusty till the developers finish their work. After the finish of work of one developer another developer starts working nearby. Hence, the footpath remains dirty and occupied. The government should strictly enforce the rules so that people can walk through footpaths.

Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacy
Northern University Bangladesh
Dhaka

Nascent democracies

In the nascent democracies military coups are a constant danger. It derails the development of the political institutions which helps to consolidate democracy. It also stalls continuation of the democratically elected governments and erodes international confidence in the nation. The military coup of 1975 was an unexpected development in Bangladesh but the political situation gave a few military personnel to embark on this misadventure.

The present administration must make sincere efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, arrest corruption and ensure transparency. This must be accepted that misrule and alienation from the masses is always a boon to the disruptive forces. Democracy is the fairest form of government and all the political parties must understand that there is no other alternative or a better way to run the affairs of a nation.

Akbar Hussain
Toronto, Canada

Night without end

The whole country is reeling under acute power shortage. The high-ups of the government have even shutdown five fertilizer factories to supply 246 mmcf additional gas to power plants to generate 500 MW extra power. This was done from April 3-10 but with no visible improvement in power supply situation. Duration of routine load shedding is increasing. The prime minister's call to keep A/Cs off during peak load period has fallen into deaf ear, the government order to close the shops and markets after 8:00pm is being widely ignored. Ultimate result is the people's suffering as well as impotency in country's forward march.

Like a drowning man, this nation is trying to survive holding a straw. Probably, that is the reason we unseat a political party from power and bring the other one giving that absolute authority to bring some positive changes and address the basic needs of the people. But we are being disappointed and betrayed repeatedly and there is no light

at the end of the tunnel. It is reasonable that people will blame the incumbent government for their failures and will not look for or analyse the causes behind it.

To mitigate the untold sufferings of the people for the crisis of power, gas and water, the government should go into action without just telling what they are going to do. One cabinet minister has shown the way by switching off the air conditioners in her office and the house. This sort of example should have been set by the prime minister and her office to encourage & oblige the others to follow her. Besides, it is high time to evaluate the performance of the government machinery and review the justification of keeping so many ministers, advisers & deputies. Surprisingly, the government has even increased their perks and did not think about what they are doing for the nation in exchange.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur R/A, Khulna

Bio-plastic products

In Germany University of Rostock Bio-Scientists are conducting a field trial of a genetically modified potatoes which would provide the raw material for a biodegradable environmentally safe plastic. The scientists have successfully regenerated potatoes in which a gene from a cyanobacterium (blue-green algae) has been transferred using gene cloning technology. The cloned gene produce the polypeptide cyanophycin in the potatoes providing the raw material for a biodegradable plastic that would help prevent environmental degradation due to excessive use of synthetic plastics. Currently plastic is manufactured from petroleum-based products which is a non-renewable resource and the product is not bio-degradable. Scientists developing the cyanophycin potatoes have already succeeded in increasing the yield from an initial 1% to 6% of the dry mass of the potatoes. These genetically modified potatoes would be utilized primarily for starch production with the stacked trait for cyanophycin production as a

secondary product. The new stacked gene cloning technology would provide two important product from the same plant.

Dr. Rafique Uddin
Banani, Dhaka

Crime situation

The number of crimes taking place almost every day suggests that the crime rate has gone up by leaps and bounds. Different Human Rights organisations are largely to be blamed for this alarming rise in crime. Time and again they have voiced their concern against the actions of elite force Rab. These Human Rights organisations have almost rendered Rab useless and this in turn has encouraged the criminals to commit more crimes.

May I ask the Human Rights organisations what they have done to mitigate the sufferings of the victims or what they have done to protest the sinister activities of these criminals.

From my experience of living in the United States, I can very well say that even a private security force is more powerful than the elite force Rab in Bangladesh. People/criminals get killed by the police every now and then. This news is not covered by CNN or other international broadcasters. As a result, the world at large remains in dark about these incidents taking place in the States.

Deterrent punishment is absolutely necessary in a country where criminals get bail at ease.

Salah Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Power shortage

Bangladesh, our beloved country, has been suffering due to the power crisis, as we see load shedding and low voltage have made people's daily life very difficult.

The Honourable Prime Minister has been trying to comfort general people that soon the situation would be better, people would get rid of load shedding and low voltage. But the situation remains unchanged.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Social worker
Gopalganj

Climate change and economy



Bangladesh's development efforts have, in recent years, been severely frustrated by the devastating impacts of natural disasters which are a result of climate change. Erratic rainfall and deviation in temperature are going to bring critical changes in the country's rice farming pattern seriously affecting crop yields thus causing serious food insecurity, according to experts. A study, conducted by Action Aid Bangladesh, says erratic rainfall in the rainy season is going to affect the food grains production. According to the Meteorological Office, the country experienced 32 percent less rain than normal during the June-July period the last year. Prolonged summer and shorter rainy and winter seasons has only increased the trend of droughts and desertification, inflicting an

adverse impact on the country's agro-based economy.

On an average 1-1.5 percent of potential GDP growth in agriculture is lost every year as a result of environmental damage and a loss of that magnitude in agriculture alone reverberates throughout the entire economy. Which means livelihood of the people will be affected adversely, worsening our poverty situation. Already 55 million people in Bangladesh were below the poverty line before food price rises in the past two years added roughly another 10 million people to that figure. So, the overall magnitude of the impact is immense.

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