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New year 1417

Though Bangladesh is a small country in size, it retains multicultural heritage from the primordial era. The people of this region are caring enough to celebrate festivals. With the help of modern technology (e.g. cell phone, satellite channels) this trend is increasing rapidly. This tendency has been amplified in the last few years tremendously in case of celebrating the Bengali New Year.

Our youngsters have become the active stakeholders in these arrangements which is really a positive sign. It is very often said that they are shifting

to the global cultures and becoming indifferent to our own roots. But Pohela Baishakh celebrations give a different picture.

However, feeling for our culture, language, or nation should not be an occasional affair. Only celebrating some days and wearing new clothes are not enough to be real patriots. We should be guided by the spirit of those days.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shah Jalal University



AMANDUL HUIO / DRINKNEWS

Arsenic removal

A report on the subject was published in a local English daily on 4 April. It was based on a first hand write-up from the site, where an arsenic filter was recently installed and is being used in a village in Kushtia.

The provision of funds and resources by British American Tobacco

(BAT) for providing, installing and putting into operation six such plants in Manikganj, Jhenedah and Meherpur is an excellent example of corporate social responsibility demonstrated by this multinational. This should serve as an example for our local large group of companies to follow for the benefit of the poor and needy rural people, unaware of the dangers of arsenic in drinking water!

Setting up and commissioning and training for operation of such plants, comes to around Tk.4 lakh as reported. The villagers in turn, collect Tk.30 per month from each household in the village, to pay for the regular upkeep and maintenance of the arsenic removal plants to ensure regular supply of arsenic free drinking water!

This matter should be well publicised in our audio-visual media, so that it encourages other philanthropic people and organisations to come forward and set up similar plants for the removal of arsenic contamination from potable water for the rural people in Bangladesh. I am sure all readers will join me in thanking BAT for this much needed help, which will save the money for the country for treating many poor arsenic infected people!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Teasers at work

Nowadays people are talking about women empowerment everywhere throughout Bangladesh. The government is creating many opportunities for bringing women under the development activities. But these opportunities do not help women. Girls are facing serious problems while going to school. They take away their lives after becoming victims of eve teasing. Thanks to the Star Magazine for raising the topic.

Every newspaper should write about eve teasing.
Md. Mahi Uddin
Department of Business Administration
SUST, Sylhet

Hapless children

Chittagong University is one of the prominent universities in our country. But, unfortunately, many children are working in CU cafeteria and restaurants. They are deprived of education, though they are eager to become educated.

Please look into the matter.
Md. Mahbubur Rahman
Management studies
University of Chittagong

Shakespeare

The month April is significant because great dramatist Shakespeare was born in this month. Shakespeare is a unique figure in the world of literature. The more I read, the more I get from his dramas.

Though I strongly claim myself to be one of the millions of admirers of Shakespeare, yet I do not hesitate to express disagreement with him. Especially, his treatment of Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice" was too harsh. There is no doubt that the predicament of Shylock was portrayed vividly but at the end of the play, he was almost forcefully converted to another religion. Apparently, Antonio, another character of the drama, seems to be the "hero" that I can never accept. I do not find any heroic quality in this man. The way he treated Shylock, he really deserves punishment. None but only an ugly-headed villain can behave in this way. After reading the book, one question is born in my mind which I could not ask anyone before. Is Shakespeare an orthodox person? Our Sharat Chandra too wrote a short story named "Mahesh" which was a plea for religious tolerance. Here the protagonist is Gafur. Though innocent Gafur also suffered a lot yet we can find a strong sympathy of the writer for this man. But Shakespeare could not express his fullest sympathy for Shylock.

Moreover, there is another ground for my discontent towards him. Many characters of Shakespeare commit suicide. I only understand that suicide is a great sin.

Whatever it may be, Shakespeare is great.
Pradip Das
Lecturer
BHPI, CRP

Climate change and we

Without an iota of doubt it can be said that the world is getting warmer and subsequently the world climate is getting changed. But the people of this planet are not well prepared to face these natural ups and downs. A good number of countries are the worst sufferers of this cataclysmic hazard such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, especially the whole South Asian region. People were not much acquainted with the term 'Climate Change' in the past. Lately, it has become a buzzword. Of course, natural "dis-equilibrium" creates many changes in the whole process of climate. Generally, we know that any change in climatic process occurs after a long time pause. In recent years, the changes have been happening very rapidly. It is obvious that men made activities are massively responsible for climate change.

Geographically,

ness amidst the mass people can reduce the losses.

Since climate change is a global problem, it needs a global solution. Nonetheless, Bangladesh can play a leading role amongst the fellow vulnerable countries on the issue of climate change.

Tusar Talukder
Department of English
University of Dhaka

An appeal to the govt.

We, on behalf of the retired Armed Forces employees, are humbly drawing the attention of the Honourable Prime Minister to an important issue. Our Honourable Finance Minister recently declared that the government officers and employees, who took retirement up to July 2008, would be included in the new pay scale, which came into force in July 2009. In accordance with the declaration of the finance minister, the government civilian officers and employees have been included in the new scale. But it is a matter of great regret that the retired Armed Forces employees were not included in the pay scale. Even we, who have gone into retirement in January 2010, have not been made the beneficiaries of these facilities.

We are hopeful that the prime minister and the finance minister will consider this humanitarian issue and take necessary steps to ensure justice to us.

Sergeant (retd) Abul Hossain
Sergeant (retd) Md Toaz Uddin
Dhaka

Government's policies

This refers to the prime minister's concern regarding the civil servants that her government is still trying to bring back confidence among the public servants that was lost during the army-backed caretaker regime. She alleged that a sluggish situation is still prevailing, the regime is facing trouble in doing government's works for the people. She also alleged that the army-backed caretaker government was engaged in absurd works in the name of eradicating corruption. She also accused the BNP-led 4-party alliance government of destroying the morality of the public servants. There were stalemate, fear and panic. She added that her government could not overcome these adverse factors yet. But she said that in the near future these obstacles created by the caretaker government would be removed.

It was an arbitrary style during the era of previous governments and it was indeed too fierce. However, another extreme has been emerging over the recent few months, causing the delay of important programmes. With too many obstructions, both internal and external opposition, the government lacks confidence. The government does not implement any other

policy adjustment plan after the liberalisation for service sub-sectors. Foreign investors are waiting for the government to reform the tax structure, cut subsidies and reduce deficit, so that the national economy can be more robust. But the government has repeatedly delayed programmes and plans, affecting the confidence of foreign investors. The government has to delay a number of important plans because of the strong opposition from the opposition party, civil society, related industries and non-government organisations (NGOs). It has no choice but to delay the implementation as it is afraid of losing votes. For example, the business sector will never get prepared for the removal of subsidies and protection if the government keeps delaying the implementation of new policies. Those who are interest-oriented will ask for more after they have succeeded once. How many times could the government entertain their opposition?

Reform is always painful. The government cannot expect business owners and entrepreneurs to support reform. The government may sometimes need to adhere to the right and appropriate policies.

Civil servants are our own countrymen, the government must find ways to talk to them.
Gopal Sengupta
McGill University
Canada

Customers

Customer Perceived Value (CPV) is a very important concept for any business organisation. Many businesses are not facilitated to shape their "Point of Differences (PoDs)" for their product. Though they are not able to modify the product, they can increase the total customer benefits. Personnel benefit is a key to the way of achieving this goal.

Good behaviour with the customers must be considered a very important point to increase the customer perceived value towards the business.

Abul Albab Mabruur Ahmed
Department of Business Administration
Leading University, Sylhet

Challenged people

If you keep your eyes open we can see that about 5% people are physically or mentally disabled. The rights of autistic people are strictly followed in the developed countries or they provide better facilities to them but the developing countries like Bangladesh could not afford minimum facilities to them.

They have no proper medical facilities and accommodation facilities. In our country, they face a lot of obstacles to lead or move freely. Most schools do not give them admission. They are not treated in a friendly manner.

We all know that our present govt. has announced that



A.M.AHAD / DRINKNEWS

Groundwater depletion

About 65% of the surface of Metro Dhaka was water bodies (Ponds, small lakes, steams etc.) about 20 years ago. The soil profile of Dhaka and its surrounding areas is clay with silt with some silt-loam composition. Water percolates very slowly through these soils from the water bodies to recharge the ground water table. During the rainy season the water bodies around Dhaka were filled up and a significant quantity of surface water would also runoff into the streams and rivers. Water from the filled up water bodies used to slowly percolate over time and recharge the groundwater, thus elevating the water table to a constant level every year until lately with introduction of massive land filling projects to build houses for an ever growing Dhaka population. A significant portion of those water bodies was filled and so most of the rainwater escapes Dhaka through surface runoff, creating artificial flooding in many areas. Because of land filling surface water does not percolate and recharge the

groundwater table. It is estimated that we are losing 1-2 inches of water table every year. With more and more land filling and concretisation of Metro Dhaka, this rate of groundwater depletion would be worse.

Our surface water has already been poisoned and would not be fit for human consumption. We don't have the sophisticated water purification system to get rid of some of the nasty chemicals in our surface water. We have to devise a way of recharging our groundwater from natural precipitation during the rainy season. If we don't plan now, we will face a major disaster down the years.

One possible suggestion to accelerate groundwater recharging would be to dig thousands of 20x20 feet deep pits all around metro Dhaka and fill them with sands. During the rainy season water would percolate faster through these sand pits and recharge our precious groundwater.

Dr. M. Rafique Uddin
Banani, Dhaka

the autistic children will be admitted in all public or private institutions. It is a praiseworthy decision. The PM also announced special quotas in the PSC and all other job sectors for them. She announced tax exemption for those private institutions who would give jobs to them.

The government should now implement the policies announced by the prime minister.
Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Unliveable city

I am sure that you are familiar with the nature of crisis in Bangladesh, so why are we not taking action? The trash in Dhaka is out of control. Everywhere we go we see paper, plastic, food wastes and construction site wastes in the streets.

Why are we ignoring this big crisis? Dhaka is becoming uninhabitable in some places. Have you seen how are the poor living in the garbage? We need to convince the government to help us. However, the government can't do all the work; we need your support as well. We have to show the world that we care and show that we need to start taking care of our environment!

We have to take action to change everything. At present we are destroying this beautiful country.

Etienne Dogra
American International School
Dhaka

Girls and stalkers

Reading the daily newspapers we are shattered with shame and sorrow when we see how the girls are being dealt with. Due to the presence of some misguided young people, the innocent girls are leading themselves towards death. While going to school, the girls are irritated by stalkers with rubbish words and vulgar proposals and for getting rid of these they commit suicide. In some cases, even the parents have been killed and humiliated. They can't file any case as they are threatened by the criminals.

Being an independent nation we can't manage a conducive living for our womenfolk. How long will they be regarding as a commodity?

Budu Das
Student
Department of English
Govt. City College
Chittagong

Netanyahu's arrogance

After reading this article, I found myself extremely sympathetic with the Palestinian cause. The gesture of the Israeli Prime Minister was childish at best and I can't believe a man with such a high international position would stoop to such low levels.

I agree with the writer, Mahmood Hasan, one-hundred percent. The severity of this action goes much further than just feelings of anger, because the area is so explosive. This conflict goes back thousands of years and even though a couple of peace talks are not going to create a solution this type of behaviour helps no one.

As an American college student I have been privy to both sides of this horrible conflict. Most information given or taught has shown the Israelis as the victim, but I am not naïve, nor do I accept everything I am told, I know there is always two sides to a story. The further your research history, the rights/ownership to the area switches back and forth and is extremely difficult to assign territories to one group. Unfortunately, I had always perceived the Palestinians as the instigators of military/physical conflict, but after reading this article I can clearly see the distinct non-compliance from the Israelis.

The implications of Prime Minister Netanyahu's actions are extreme, severe, and may change the future of this conflict. By insulting the one country who has backed you for decades is a huge slap in the face for the United States, adding to their non-compliance by the annexation of east Jerusalem. Taking action against Israel would obviously hurt the Israelis and I would hope strengthen the positive attitude towards the USA from the Palestinians. This is what I am truly hoping, for our nations have very rich and interesting histories that can prosper with a strong alliance.

Personally, I hope Obama severely punishes Netanyahu. Without talks there will only be violence, which only pushes forward progress further away. There has been enough suffering and death over this matter and I hope for the sake of Israelis and Palestinians alike there can be a mutually beneficial conclusion to the problem. Having said this Netanyahu must be disciplined for such malcontent, displaying these actions

will not be tolerated and will be penalized.

Nate Garza
One-mail

Appoint smart people

It seems that the recently formed investigation agency is directionless and not up to the task. This is because the persons appointed are not media savvy. They seem to be shy of the media whereas the success of the entire process depends on people's support through the media. I suggest that smarter and more intelligent people be appointed.

Farah Khan
Gulshan, Dhaka

Holy Hadith

The ongoing wastage of water, power and gas in some places, when the country is reeling under the combined effect of severe shortages of them, reminds me of a fact mentioned in the Holy Hadith. Once some followers of our dearest Nabi Hazrat Muhammad (Pbuh) asked him, "Ya Rasulallah! Can we use as much water as we want during ablation when we remain on the sea?" Our dearest Rasul (Pbuh) replied, "No, rather you are allowed to use as much water as you require for ablation, even when you are on the sea."

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Madrasa
Chittagong

Pohela Boishakh

It has been a common trend for our so-called intellectuals to criticize young generation for wearing western dresses. On Pohela Baishakh, irrespective of age, people wear traditional panjabis and sarees. Young people refuse western dresses & fast foods on that day. They enjoy the day having our age-old makeup. But there are a lot of intellectuals who keep on blaming our young generation. On all other days, youths prefer western dress and makeup. Why do they wear traditional dresses only on Pohela Baishakh? This is the question asked by the guardians.

'Bengalism' is in our heart. Even if we become too much modern, still at the end of the day we have to eat rice. So, I think our young generation should not be blamed for their smartness.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Tushar
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University Of Science & Technology, Sylhet

Solar power scheme

I am highly optimistic after reading the article "Power Crisis" (The Daily Star: 12-04-2010). Grameen Shakti's power generation by using solar power is undoubtedly praiseworthy in the sense that it can compensate for the future & further shortage of electricity in the capital! The matter is in our government's hand. Looking at the further/ ongoing construction of high-rise buildings, GoB can make it obligatory for REHAB members to

install such Solar Power System in their buildings. Prices of all electronic commodities are falling day by day; which are benefiting this wealthy population! Why can't they spend on this scheme? Let us proliferate the Solar Home System Providers! As the raw material i.e. solar power is more than abundant, is it impossible to implement the project?

Dr. Lailun Nahar
One-mail

