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Observing May Day!



A.M. AHAD / DRIVENews

Each year, all over the world, the historic May Day is observed through arranging different programmes. In Bangladesh, the workers feel gratified as it is a national holiday. Nothing additional is achieved or felt by its stakeholders. Is it all about that day of sacrifice?

Where the workers do not get their proper wages, female workers lose their job for getting expectant, breathe their last in the locked up factory premises, don't get salary (not bonus!) before the Eid day, observing May Day, in a festive mood, is quite offending! We all understand that the white collar people are enjoying the output of the disadvantaged workers but they are not eager to fulfill their basic rights.

After 39 years of achieving high paid, much desired, independence we have not been able to develop an acceptable and standard wages policy. Owners of

the organisations, in most cases, pay too little as wage/salary. It is quite impossible for the workers to live in urban areas. Moreover, they have to work 18 hours per day without having proper foods, safety, and a comfortable environment. As a result, gradually they are becoming physically frail and pale. Finally, the authorities kick them out without bothering about their pension, gratuity, or any other allowance.

So, on this May Day, the prime demand should be: formulating an up to date, reality based, labour and wages policy. If that is possible both parties will be benefited because the satisfied workers will become an asset for an organisation.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
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sisters' marriage. Sometimes they are to take loan, sell their land, furniture, ornaments and even their house to collect the money. They are to lose many things and face many problems due to this dowry system.

It must be abolished at any cost.

Md. Tanjil
Dept. of Geography and
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Mindset

Dr. SN Mamoon's letter "BNP's Tears" on 26 April caught my attention because it not only illustrates Dr Mamoon's mindset but that of a large majority of supporters of both the parties in particular, and all our political parties in general.

We need to get out of this frame of mind, the earlier the better. It has been proved time and again that mudslinging by political leaders at the top position or at lower levels has given this country absolutely nothing. Their blame game is good reading material or even nice to hear if you support a particular political party but this has no effect on the ground level where we are suffering from shortage of electricity, water, gas, traffic jam, price hike, corruption, law and order, you name it.

Can we not shun this blame game and concentrate on suggesting solutions to these problems, which are acute and causing unbearable miseries to all of us. To the general public it matters little which party in Bangladesh is in power, simply because one party is only a shade better or worse than the other. Therefore, it is of no consequence to us what the previous govt failed to do. We are interested in what the government in power, be it BNP or AL, is doing for us. We want our lot to improve, and improve at the earliest without excuses.

Dr Mamoon has every right to express his views in the light of the party he supports but we, the general public, have no time or energy for blame games. We need action now, irrespective of which party is in power.

Mahmoodul Haque
Gulshan
Dhaka

Stock market

Some endemic problems have been bedeviling the investors especially those who are new and small. These relate to Mutual Funds that were embroiled in a court case for over a year in 2008-09 resulting in non-payment of dividends since 2007. Even after the High Court has given a clear-cut ruling about the issuance of Stock Dividends and Right Shares, some of the lucrative companies are facing problems in payment of declared stock dividends for 2008 and 2009. In fact the oldest of these AIMS 1st Mutual Fund has virtually disappeared from the trading board for well over a month after the SEC vetoed their dividend and right declaration. What is going on here is also not known as both AIMS & SEC are silent? Meanwhile thousands of Mutual Fund investors are suffering.

Non-resident Bangladeshis are facing serious problems in getting refunds. Most applicants prefer to send their applications to the head offices of the companies by post/courier because going to Motijheel to submit it and get a receipt is akin to going to a

foreign country. The postal/couriered applicants never get the receipt after encashment of their foreign draft as the rules of SEC specify on reverse of the application forms. Yet the refund carrying couriers are made to demand this and refuse to hand over the refund warrants. Then the applicant has to make a long and tedious journey to the head office (usually in Motijheel area) to get the refund. This writer had personal experience recently from no less than 7 companies who were holding on to the refund warrants. Why can't the amounts be refunded to the banks mentioned in the application forms as is now being done increasingly for other applications.

The courier services being chosen by issuing organizations are mostly third-rate. Most of them are congregated in a dingy room in the seedy part of Fakirapool. They sit on the refund warrants for weeks then return it to the companies with false notes such as "Not Found", "Receipt Not Available", "Premises Locked" etc. I can testify to this personally. Apart from a few, I have had to go to the offices to get my Refund Warrants. Why not use the services of the banks and dispense with the services of the couriers altogether?

Will the SEC not consider a quota for Senior Citizens in future IPOs say 5% of the shares for those 65 and above? This way we can augment our income honestly and also keep active mentally and physically.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Recipe for change

Bangladesh is country of immense potentiality. Despite being so, we couldn't achieve major goals even after 38 years of independence, whereas other countries achieved the goals within a relatively a short period of time. What is the obstacle that keeps us backward with every passing year? The most obvious cause is that we, as a nation, fail to appreciate anything good. We never applaud any positive approach, nor do we nourish good ideas. We always think about the negative impacts. To be precise, we hardly apprehend anything good. This negative attitude of ours towards everything is the prime cause of our falling behind other modern nations.

Laziness, negation towards positive thinking, giving up responsibilities, playing the blame game, finding out faults with others but not ourselves and neglecting solutions are not going to bring any change to our lives. If we look at the bright side of life, things can improve dramatically.

We just need to take the initiative to accept our responsibilities as global citizens. It is high time for changing our mentality as the winds of change are blowing across the world.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Punish the stalkers

It has been observed since a long time that the girls in the streets, villages and even in colleges and universities become the worst victims of the stalkers. It is astounding and alarming news that even in the University of Dhaka girl students are frequently teased and if anyone comes forward

RMG sector's future

Has anybody gone through the OPEX workers demand list? They are asking for revision of minimum pay scale from Tk.1663 to 5000, attendance bonus increase to Tk.500, & yearly leave encashment, + 6 months' maternity leave (for all those who are not familiar, none are included in our existing factory acts!) So, basically all these demands are over the law requirements. These issues can at best be requests but definitely not demands.

Media should condemn this illogical demonstration by workers, especially when it's affecting not just the factory owners / buyers but the mass people. It's really an irony, that when the whole world economy is at its worst, and most countries' unemployment is hovering at

around 10-15 %, our workers, politicians, & NGOs are making fuss over these extra benefits!! What a timing!

One thing for certain, garments workers in Bangladesh are not forced labourers, so if one doesn't like what he /she gets they can always leave & opt for working in other trades, but to go to streets & block roads for these demands is illogical. No offence, I blame our politicians & media role for the present state in RMG. They are over-sympathizing with workers every time on issues which are not even logical.

If this trend continues, garments owners will be compelled to close their factories for good. Then what will happen to these workers?

Mehroz Jalil
Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Water crisis

A detailed front-page report on the subject was published on 25th April in a local English daily. Unfortunately, it was more confusing than clarifying! There were major errors in it, both language wise and technical. I would like to point out a few glaring anomalies.

To begin with, one wonders what was found 'defective' in the proposal sent by Wasa by the concerned ministry? That has not been stated and the public would naturally like to know about it.

Later in the report, it was stated that Wasa sent a proposal to procure 200 "high voltage" (?) generators! I wonder if Wasa pumps are run by electric motors rated at 3.3kV, 11kV or higher voltage? I expect that most pump motors run on normal 3 phase AC power supply at the standard 415 volts, which voltage most normal generators are also rated to provide, be it gas or diesel engine driven. The "high voltage" needs clarification for understanding!

Though it was an important article for public interest, these errors made comprehension of the actual facts difficult! In bureaucratic terminology, the facts were not transparent!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Sheraton Hotel

The Dhaka Sheraton Hotel is the oldest five star hotel of our country. Previously, it was called Hotel Intercontinental. It is situated in one of the best locations of Dhaka City beside the picturesque Ramna Park. The hotel is a govt. property and run by a board selected by the govt.. But they have no experience of operating five star hotels.

About two years ago the Board of the Hotel invited public tenders for a "New Agreement". There was good response from international hotel operators. However, two years have passed and no decision has been taken by the Board as yet after completing negotiations for awarding the tender. This has caused much resentment amongst the parties who have submitted tenders.

Concerned
Dhaka

No place for cars

Karwan Bazar Market is in the heart of Dhaka city which caters for wholesale and retail markets of the central Dhaka area. Previously, there was not much vehicular traffic in this area. But of late with a five star hotel, many large commercial establishments, banks, insurance companies, 2 TV stations, two major national newspaper offices and other establishments, this area has become very

important. Throughout day & night people come here and face a serious car parking problem. Many people are compelled to park their vehicles at any place available which causes a serious traffic jam. In front of the Karwan Bazar there is a "Car Parking" space, but these are all the time occupied by a large "Fleet of Mini Trucks". This is used 24 hours as their "garage." Most of the other places are occupied by vehicles of different companies.

Hence, people are facing a serious problem to get a "parking place" for their daily shopping at the bazaar for fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, rice, dal, sugar, eggs etc. The road in front of the market has been occupied by fruit vendors for many years.

Unfortunately, the police dept. has not taken any step to solve the above problem. It is alleged that our police staff get a large amount from the "illegal occupants" every month and they are not disturbed.

I would request you to assign a reporter for investigating the whole matter and publish a report for the benefit of all.

Salma Ali
Mogh Bazar, Dhaka

Ershad's Suggestion

Former President Ershad, a veteran politician, is bold enough to suggest publicly the formation of provinces in Bangladesh and making Dhaka a federal capital (like Islamabad and New Delhi). But the other political leaders, especially belonging to the two major (dynastic) parties and the MPs won't agree, due to obvious subjective advantages.

Environmental conditions support this new move. Our density of population (around 1,000 persons per sq km) is one of the densest in the world, and the deltaic region hampers transport and communications, as the IWT sector is neglected, and Bangladesh, an LDC, is subject to natural calamities. The economic holding power of the average voters is low (the majority live in the rural areas, facing severe communication gaps).

The immediate concern is the overcrowding of capital Dhaka, making it a dying city (surrounded by water bodies). The districts are not developing as the investment possibilities are not bright. The MPs have a tight control over local politics and leaders, and are apt to misuse their power and position.

Decentralization is a taboo for the political leaders (they like the umbrella effect!). This would open the doors for apprenticeship of young

leaders, who find the tip crowded and unchanging (lack of ventilation). This is due to the culture of dynasty rules, cultivating and patronizing the sycophants.

Today, one has to come to Dhaka for pushing jobs to be done (undemocratic); and hand out bribes to the syndicate controllers. Politics today in Bangladesh has a monopolizing effect, affecting all the non-political sectors. The backdoors are more crowded than the front doors! For the ordinary citizens it is difficult to run daily lives without patronizing the political masters.

Politics should work in the background, and should not be a front stage tamasha all the time.

A Mawaz, Dhaka

Rights of women

It is Islam that has comprehensively given womenfolk the right to education, training and so on. A good mother obviously means the one having proper education as well as skills to keep pace with time.

We are currently living in a competitive materialistic age enriched by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Today one's life has also become harder than before and the struggle for existence is grim. Only the fittest will survive. So, a country can never prosper or reach its peak if the fundamental rights of its women are ignored.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Madrassa
Chittagong

Dowry

The bride's family has to collect a huge amount of money for their daughters or

Desertification



Desertification means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities, leading to reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain fed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands. Bangladesh experiences long spells of dry weather and moderate to severe droughts are spread over a region of 5.46 million ha. During the 7-month dry season in some regions, the evapotranspiration exceeds the amount of rainfall by a factor of 2.0. Between 1960 and 1991, droughts occurred in

Bangladesh 19 times. Very severe droughts hit the country in 1951, 1961, 1975, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984, and 1989. Certain physical observations of desertification are:

(i) Development of continually broken cracks on the dried up topsoil.

(ii) Burnt-out yellowish foliage in the vegetation cover.

(iii) Loosening of soil structure, ending up in the topsoil transforming into a dusty layer etc.

The issue deserves immediate attention.

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