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Micro finance and other issues

That micro finance should have the total responsibility to alleviate poverty is the notion of some people. If they ever talk about poverty; they like to confer all the responsibility of poverty alleviation on micro finance. This is not rational.

In fact, indicators that affect the poor may be such as unplanned family, having no wealth left by one's ancestors, life style, notion about poverty, education etc. There are some external factors like river erosion, flood and draught, that diminish people's assets and make people poor. These factors are uncontrollable; man can only take some measures to reduce the loss.

Our country is agriculture based and 80 percent people are dependent on agriculture. So, the majority share of income of a farmer family comes from agriculture and as arable land is being divided every year because of breaking up of the joint family; land share is also getting smaller. As a result, agro-income of every farmer family is diminishing gradually.

For eradicating poverty a nation needs a corruption free hard working society that will work in a planned way.

Md. Humayun Kabir
Extension Pallabi
Mirpur, Dhaka



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRIKNEWS

Gitanjali

It has touched 100 years of its publication. The Nobel Prize winning book was published in 1910.

This is the book that brought fame and glory to Bangla literature.

Rahad Ahsan
One-mail

Fuel shortage

Having no liquid fuel, Bangladesh has to import it of necessity. Finite natural gas (methane) reserves are getting reduced day by day. Meanwhile, proven and possible resources of methane, remain unexplored even today! Coal is there, but we do not extract it, except from one mine-- for so many reasons (or excuses)! In the case of extraction of coal, we ideally define the saying: "Poverty in the land of plenty"! We are shying away from it, be it by shaft or surface mining, while the debate on the subject has continued on and on!

Coming to renewable sources, we have explored solar and wind power in a very limited scale, possibly due to the very high investment cost per MW of power produced. Nevertheless; these two sources of power need to have further investment, preferably in the private sector. This may be encouraged by government measures to provide capital at favourable borrowing terms, and reduced duty

and taxes to encourage investment. The per unit investment cost for power here is naturally high. However, except for minor maintenance charges, and manpower costs, the operating cost throughout the life of the project is zero, as no fuel, the largest slice of operating cost, is necessary!

This option, is an attractive long-term alternative for power; when compared to the high costs of rental power plants. It would be prudent to provide local capital for investment than subsidising the high operational costs of these uneconomic power plants for a number of years. Would it not be more attractive if the government in partnership with private investors, takes up say 35 to 40 percent of the investment capital cost, and suitable government lands for setting up solar and wind power plants? This matter needs to be seriously considered by our government as the best way to generate pollution free power!

Another very potential source of methane has never been considered for exploitation and development! The vast potential of recovering methane from 'human waste' has remained totally unutilised! Unfortunately, this writer has vested time and effort to present this idea, but no one seems to listen!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Power generation

Your staff correspondent's front-page report of May 11th, stated about the "whitening of white money" by Khaleda Zia! However the statement from an NBR official was otherwise! He stated, and I quote:

"There is no such procedure called 'whitening' black or white money!"

The NBR procedure only provides scope for as quoted "legalising undisclosed income by paying taxes!"

However, the amount of tax and penalty paid on the undisclosed income was Tk.33.87 lakh! This is a fact as this was not denied by Khaleda Zia, or any of her "spokespersons". It is of interest to note the NBR official's statement, and I quote: "Many have made legal their illegitimate income under SRO on several occasions. And NBR could not do anything about it." Possibly because NBR does not function as an office for identifying and investigating the sources of income declared. Its function is to ensure that the income is properly taxed!

Why the tax was not paid earlier; has been given a good "lame" excuse; and again I quote: "She was not completely aware of income tax laws"! As good an excuse as any, despite her army of advisers of the "ex-Head of State"!

Then ours is not to question why or what the former prime minister did, or did not do! This back payment of taxes,

along with her son's "international scandal" with Siemens; which she claimed 'she did not know anything about' has indeed helped to downgrade the country, taking its image down the drain!

Former BNP supporter
Dhaka

Shashi shines brilliantly

Our heartiest congratulations to Farzana Saki Shashi from Bhairab, Kishoreganj, for becoming the second runner-up jointly with Drokrisnendu in Mirakkel-5, a show arranged by Zee Bangla. Its last episode was on May 8, 2010.

But we think Shashi deserved more than that as her performance was brilliant and her jokes were very entertaining.

I used to watch this show with interest because there were participants from Bangladesh and they were doing very well but one by one they were eliminated, except Shashi. When Shashi was dropped from the final round, I became very disappointed and lost all interest to watch the show. By sending sms people made it possible for her to join the show again and she did not disappoint.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Dowry

Dowry, a social disease, cannot be cured fully by laws only, rather creating mass awareness among rural people is needed.

The single case of Shahnaz may not bring a massive change but it could be a good lesson for those culprits who treat their female partner as an object, rather than human being.

Engr. M. Helal Uddin
Probationary
Engineer (Chemical)
Eastern Refinery Limited
North Potenga, Chittagong

Importing films

This is in reference to our prime minister banning sub-continental films in Bangladesh which seems to have been welcomed by many people. I however beg to differ. This also bans our freedom and our right to choose what we want to watch considering the fact that we live in a free country.

Moreover, bringing the sub-continental films to Bangladesh will also create a sense of competition with Bengali films and performers. At the moment, Bengali films are of poor quality.

Middle and upper class people don't even go to movie theatres because of such third class films. Therefore, I believe that bringing films from other countries to Bangladesh may be a good thing in the sense that it may bring about improvement and quality in our own films. This will also encourage the more educated people to go to theatres and watch better quality Bengali films.

This will also make Bengali artists realize how over-weight and out of shape they are getting.
Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Order of precedence

Even in these days of disrespect and disregard, the society still maintains a special position and admiration for the varsity professors because they impart education at the highest seat of learning, that is, the university. But in order of precedence at the national level, the professors have not been given their just status and accreditation. Often they get into embarrassing situations.

It may not be out of reference to mention here about the position of the Vice Chancellors of Public and Private Universities of the country according to the existing order of precedence! Have they been given the right position?

We are the citizens of an independent country and a democratic government is in power. Every citizen should be given their due position according to their social and professional standings. It is true that the present democratic has taken a bold step to correct/rectify the positions of different officials and professionals in the order of precedence. I would sincerely request our Honourable Prime Minister to please complete the above mentioned move taken by her government and ensure a respectable position for University Vice Chancellors and Professors in the order of precedence.

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

MPO list

The recent decision taken by the cabinet regarding the acceptance of MPO list is really controversial as the education minister has already finalised the draft, after a long analysis and consideration. It again proves that political partisanship is prevailing in the country and that is one of the hindrances to walking on the way to progress. In a least developed country like Bangladesh, education plays the pivotal role for the continuous development of the nation. So, our prime minister has to handle this issues overcoming all political considerations to take the right decision for enlisting the institutions. Education is a basic need and the present govt has to give right priority to the education sector.

The recent decision taken by the education minister regarding inclusion of educational institutions in the MPO list is really praiseworthy. But the decision taken in the cabinet in presence of the prime minister is pathetic, because they have abandoned the plan.

Explaining the matter they have said that there are some institutions which were included during the regime of BNP-led four party alliance. So, they are not pleased with the list prepared by the education minister. But the govt has to take decisions neutrally.

The government should think over it again.
Eng Md Meheub Haque
BUET

Travelling by train

Along with two other friends of mine, I decided to travel to Sylhet for some specific business purpose and considering the hassles in road journey, I bought the Upaban Express first class ticket for 3 May, 2010. The train was scheduled to depart at 9:45pm. When we arrived at the station we saw a first class waiting room without any air-conditioning. There was a ceiling fan at one side of the room. The furniture were dirty, poorly maintained and occupied by the passengers or some other people who were not passengers of the first class. The washroom was equally dirty. For reasons not known, there was none to take care or check the tickets of the passengers or even clean the room. Having the entitlement yet we had to stroll out all the time instead.

We reached the first class compartment to confront more problems.

We saw the doorway and

the floor of the first class were awfully nasty. As there was no ladder fixed at any point of the couch, the sleeping berths were found difficult to climb even by any young men, let alone the people of our age. The seat, pillow covers and quilt covers were so dirty that some people may refuse to use those on the ground of cleanliness. None perhaps knows when those were cleaned.

The toilets were being frequently used by the passengers some of whom perhaps don't even know how to maintain cleanliness.

No toilet paper or water pot was seen there. Water was dripping down from the overhead tanks making the floor soaked with dirty water.

There is no buffet system, no supply of drinking water, no prayer room. These are to name but a few. We found none around to listen to our complaints even.

Actually I don't even know whom to blame for the poor service of the railway. But I can say that if anybody travels with the railway they would never be willing to ride back again. On the other hand the services of the bus companies are found to be luxurious, cheap, comfortable and competitive.

Munir Ahmed

Purana Palta

Dhaka

Working overtime

Recently, the European medical journal published that people working 10 or 11 hours

a day are more likely to have serious heart problems, including heart attacks, than those clocking off after seven hours. The finding, from an 11-year study of 6,000 British civil servants, does not provide definitive proof that long hours cause coronary heart disease but it does show a clear link, which experts said may be due to stress.

In all, there were 369 cases of death due to heart disease, non-fatal heart attacks and angina among the London-based study group -- and the risk of having an adverse event was 60 percent higher for those who worked three to four hours overtime.

Working an extra one to two hours beyond a normal seven-hour day was not associated with increased risk.

"It seems there might a threshold, so it is not so bad if you work another hour or so more than usual," said Dr Marianna Virtanen, an epidemiologist at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and University College, London.

The higher incidence of heart problems among those working overtime was independent of a range of other risk factors including smoking, being overweight or having high cholesterol.

But Virtanen said it was possible the lifestyle of people working long hours deteriorated over time, for example as a result of poor diet or increased alcohol consumption.

Lutfor Rahman
Korea

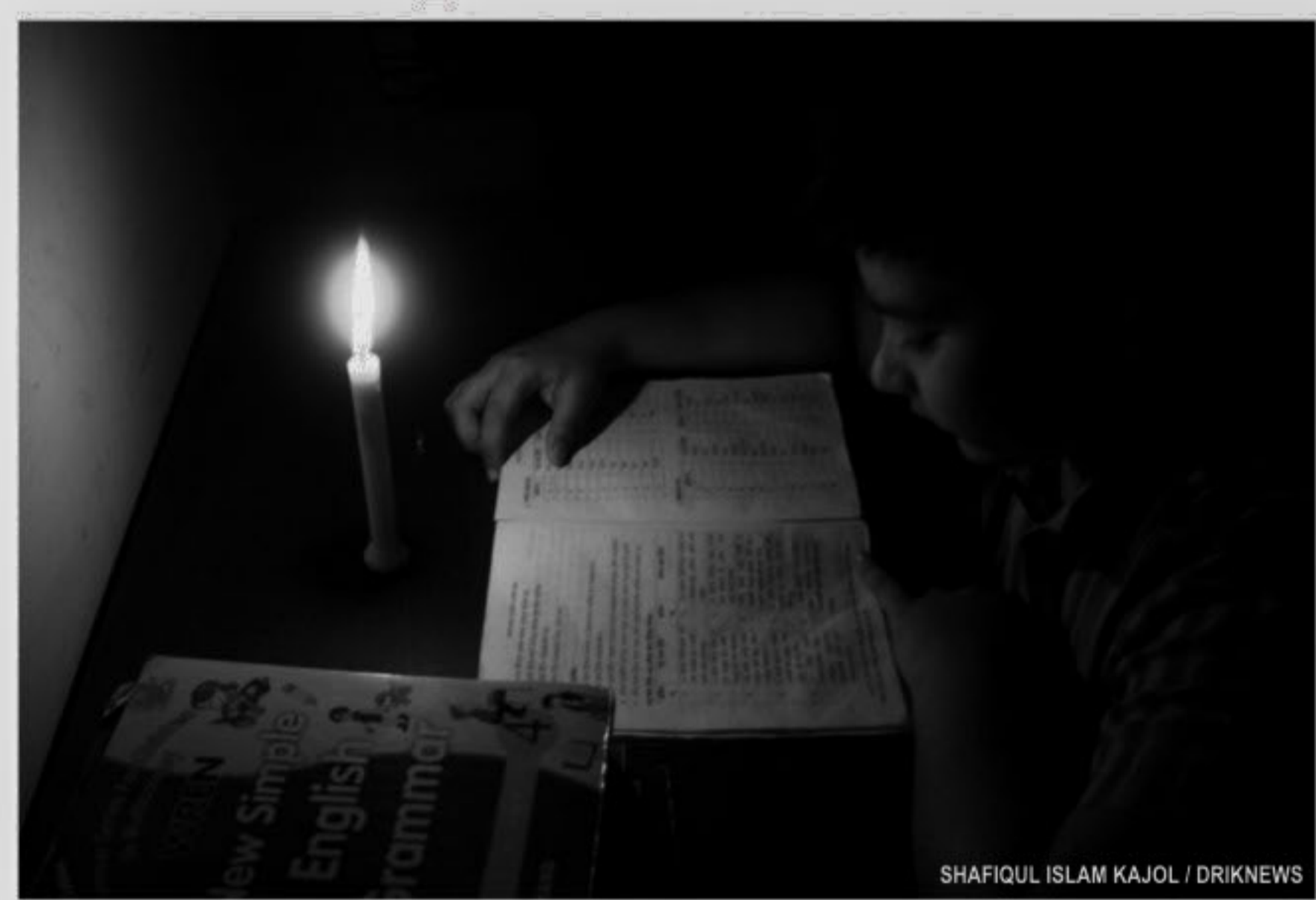
Prioritising civility

After suggesting that the powers of the ACC be curbed, I wonder whether the government is trying to promote a culture of being polite instead of pursuing justice. What other reason could they possibly have to justify such an unbelievably ludicrous protocol of asking for the government's permission before pressing corruption charges against bureaucrats? By attempting to strip away the powers of the country's leading anti-corruption authority against severe public displeasure, our leaders have once again made us realize that we, the people, are simply the means to an end; the pawns they need in support of their demagoguery so that they can get elected to public office. After all, does it really matter that Bangladesh is continually labelled as one of the most corrupt countries in the world today? Why not maintain that title and ask for permission from our leaders before possibly suggesting that they, too, are bound by the same laws as the rest of the people in the country?

Thank you for remembering your priorities, respected government, and for forgetting those of the common people-- the very people who gave you the power that you are so blatantly abusing today.

Ameer Sobhan
Student, Yunnan Normal University
Kunming, China

Rental power



SHAFIQUZ ISLAM KAJOL / DRIKNEWS

Dr. Abdul Matin, a former Chief Engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, wrote an article in The Daily Star on May 5, 2010 on the government's policy of going for rental power for an interim solution of the present power crisis. He has convincingly explained that it is an unwise decision of the government to go for rental power contracts ranging from three to five years as rental power is traditionally used for short periods during an emergency or as a standby power source for big events, like Olympics.

The government organization PDB is to buy power at Tk. 13.32 to 14.4 per Kwh from two rental power companies for supplying 300MW of power to the national grid. PDB will receive a monthly subsidy of Tk. 200 crore to make up the loss as its selling rate of electricity is only Tk.2.37 per Kwh. During the contract period of three years, the government will thus spend Tk. 7200 crore of public money for these two contracts of rental power. It is

learnt that the government is going to arrange about 500--1000MW of rental power for provisional relief from the severe power crisis. So, it is not difficult to calculate the amount of public money to be drained out for such short-lived solution of the power shortage.

But it is also learnt that the power ministry is giving rental power contracts of furnace oil operated plants having higher capacity diesel engines for a period of five years with provision of extending the contracts. This seems to be a wiser decision and for the sake of proper use of the limited resources of this poor country, the government should think of long term solution even if that means a little more suffering of the people as lion's share of the electricity is used for domestic needs. Unless we go for wider use of electricity for industrial and other productive activities to have reasonable return on investment, our socio-economic condition will not improve.

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

Mother's Day



TANVIR AHMED / DRIKNEWS

Like many other countries, we too definitely observe this day. We have huge responsibility towards our mothers. But, many of us still do not understand the significance of motherhood. If we could understand it, then why is a female child still unwanted? Why a mother is tortured to death for the "guilt" of giving birth to a female child? It is also shocking that while killing the wife for dowry, a person forgets that his wife is also the mother of a child. I also do not understand why does a son become eager to send his mother to an old home? Throughout the whole life, a mother runs after her children. Why can't we look after them in their old age? There are many people living abroad who cannot manage time to come back to their motherland to visit their mothers. There are also men who do not hesitate to shift his mother from

bedroom to storeroom or corridor.

Last but not the least, it would be great if we could get a government holiday on this day like many other occasions.

Pradip Das
Lecturer
BHPI, CRP

Of course she is our mother. When we didn't know how to work, she taught us holding our fingers with great affection.

But our mothers are very much neglected in society today. We should show a modicum of gratitude to the mothers.

Kanij Fatema Sorna
One-mail

Will the SA yarn be cheaper than the ones available at the doorsteps?
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Public or private?

We are the students of Jagannath University. About 23,000 students are studying here. The students of Jagannath University bear the identity of public university. Instead of giving the facilities of a public university, such as, students' dormitory, exam halls, required classrooms etc, the authorities of Jagannath University are taking the initiative to make it private. The so called "Black Section" 27(4) demands that a university will run with its own income which is impossible and it is nothing but a lame excuse.

The people concerned are indifferent to the future of thousands of students. I am requesting the government to look into the matter.

Student
Dept. of Finance
Jagannath University