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Water pollution

Pollution affects plants and organisms living in water. Although water has been identified on several planets, none has as much water as Earth, of which 70 percent is covered with water. Approximately 97.4 percent of the water on Earth is found in oceans and is too salty for human consumption. An additional 2.6 percent is freshwater found in underground bodies of water called aquifers or frozen in glaciers or polar ice caps. Less than 0.02 percent of Earth's water is present in lakes, rivers, or the atmosphere. The water itself provides the environment for fish, plants and animals. There are several sources of water pollution which work together to reduce overall river water quality. Industries and agriculture discharge liquid waste products. Rain as it falls through the air, or drains from urban areas and farmland, absorb contaminants.

Many dangerous metals including iron, aluminium, tin, lead, mercury and cadmium come out of old mine workings. Phosphorus from sewage is another powerful pollutant. Careless

people can also pollute rivers and harm wildlife by pouring things like used car oil and paint into drains. Rubbish dumps create a strong chemical cocktail called leachate. This can be deadly to fish, small aquatic creatures and plants. In modern waste sites great care is taken to ensure that none escapes, but leachate from older rubbish dumps seeps into rivers and can pollute our drinking water. If we want to mitigate water pollution then we need to be aware of using various technologies. In the industrial sector, there should be use of water purification technology such as waste water treatment plant. This way we can maintain a sound industrial environment. Steps should be taken by the government at the policy making level. The awareness among the general people of the country and the NGOs should help to reduce water pollution.

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ANAN DRINKNEWS

Implementing DAP

The government hurriedly enacted the Detailed Area Plan for greater Dhaka City; when already considerable damage had been inflicted on the environmental conditions. Billions of taka had already been invested by the land and building developers over the decades. Thus the market condition has been changed; and there would be a migratory tendency from the affected areas; and the pricing conditions would mark sharp rise and fall.

Then there is the question of firm implementation of the rules enacted. There are powerful vested groups who pull the strings through the back doors (the prevailing political culture).

Add another drawback: the ministries are not technically oriented (pen-pushers from the colonial days). Then the MPs misuse their power and position. The coordination culture is poor amongst the public agencies involved in the projects; and lethargic implementation takes its toll. The civil service has been politicized; and there is no national consensus between the ruling regime and the opposition; with the result that the continuity of implementation of ongoing projects is abruptly halted with the change of regime.

Now another hurdle is being created by encouraging the setting up of satellite towns around Dhaka capital city. Dhaka city is located within wet and marshy lands, thus discouraging horizontal expansion.

An easier solution lies in decentralisation of Dhaka; and encouraging the development of the divisional and district headquarters, so that people do not have to come to Dhaka metropolis so frequently to complete their assignments. There is no crowding effect in New Delhi and Islamabad. The Southern and Northern districts are being neglected officially, with the result that people of all income groups have to migrate to Dhaka, for one reason or the other.

The transport problem in overcrowded Dhaka defied solution. It is not technically easy to maintain transport services with the satellite towns; as the railways and the IWT sectors were neglected, paying undue importance to the development of roads, bridges and culverts (in the

delta region). There is an unhealthy tendency to go for mega projects in non-essential areas.

This tendency to cling to power in Dhaka is not in public interest (considering the highest density of population in the world in Bangladesh: over 1,000 persons per sq km; in an area of mere 147,570 sq km). Disperse the political leaders in the divisions and districts, for non-distant operation and management in local areas.

A Husnain, Dhaka

Lacklustre cabinet

The prime minister as head of the government seems to retain the exclusive right or absolute power to choose her cabinet colleagues and the state ministers to run the state, of course in a better, if not best, way and so did our PM Sheikh Hasina. She inducted new faces, and there was not an iota of doubt about her sincerity that her first and foremost concern was how the well being of the people through good governance could be ensured. But it was and is still generally believed that the novices who had never walked down near the corridor of ministerial realm and were even unaware of the A B Cs of ministerial stints could hardly be able to steer the nation, bursting with sea of problems, to fulfil Sheikh Hasina's 'great expectation'. The old guards of her party have been left out in the cold for, people guess, Sheikh Hasina while behind the bar, smelt a rat in the activities of the party stalwarts that were purported to be the machinations to minus her. It is true they had caved in to the invisible threats, but they are still obsequiously loyal to her and depriving them of cabinet berth was not a good omen as observed by the countrymen. Political acumen and experience with sagacity and maturity and above all wit and diplomacy with eloquence are the prerequisites for one to hold the reins of the statecraft. The persons chosen to head our Home and Foreign Affairs direly lack the above and their performance as of today in no way goes to give them any kudos. Law and order remains as worse as ever.

One thing needs be consumed, if the ranks and files who get the dictates find their top brasses unsavoury, expected achievement would remain a far cry. And that the

present bunch of ministers barring a few could not deliver is in fact the talk of the country. The old guards are still the precious assets of the AL, and to save the party as well as the government from future brinkmanship, they need to be reckoned with.

Ahmed Niaz Shekheretk
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Friends

When we're kids we make a lot of friends whether they are friends at parties or school friends, but we all make friends. This is a lot easier when we are young. As we get older this is harder. But we still make friends!

Tasnia Zaman
One-mail

Big brother

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was defending the Obama administration's record and his comments on the so-called professional left. On a range of issues including accountability for torture, detention of terrorism suspects, and use of lethal force against civilians, there is a very real danger that the Obama administration will enshrine permanently within the law policies and practices that were widely considered extreme and unlawful during the Bush administration. And, in fact, in some cases, you see this administration going even further than the last administration did. Some of what was going on under the last administration was going on in spite of federal law that prohibited it. That was true, for example, with the warrant-less wiretapping programme. And then Congress authorized the warrant-less wiretapping that President Bush had authorized in violation of statute. So now you have a statute that authorizes precisely what President Bush was doing illegally between 2001 and 2006. But what we had hoped was that the constitutionality of that statute would be tested in the courts.

Big Brother wants to keep an eye on you. He believes in being his "brother's keeper," but it's not for any sort of benign purpose--or at least it won't be in the end. It'll end up being for the purpose of control, and he'll use as many methods as possible--hidden cameras, microphones, chips, sensors or whatever!

Ted Rudow III, MA
One-mail

End of paradise

There was a Paradise where Adam and Eve were living in peace and harmony. There was abundance and plenty of everything, there was no scarcity, water was as good as pure honey, air was pristine, no poisonous chemicals in food, people could sleep at night with their doors open, children had vast open fields to play games after school and so on.

But then the devil was pledge bound to dislodge the tranquil peace and harmony and replace it with evil. People began fighting one another for silly reasons, peace and harmony got lost and the Paradise turned into a hell. The fighting still continues, honey like water became poisonous, air became polluted, open fields and ponds got occupied by sky-scrapers and children got confined to their video games, lap tops and cell phones, people cannot sleep well at night even in fortified cages with 24 hour security guards, eves are getting killed almost every other day, properties are vandalized and set ablaze, people have become hypocrites, everything has become scarce in terms of money though there is a plenty in the markets, there is a wide-spread frustration among the peace loving people, some are making big money real big, the population is spreading fast like anything to explode any time and the devil is all smiles.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Gas reserves

One of the major indicators of development or industrialization of any nation is the level of her per capita commercial energy use. The three most important commercial energy used in present world are natural gas, oil and coal. Natural gas is Bangladesh's only significant source of commercial energy, with 2002 production of 384.9 billion cubic feet (bcf). Bangladeshi natural gas production began in 1960 from the Chattak field. There is much uncertainty and debate about the level of natural gas reserves in Bangladesh. Estimates from Petrobangla put net proven reserves at 15.3 tcf as of mid-2004. The US Geological Survey has estimated that Bangladesh contains an additional 32.1 tcf in additional "undiscovered reserves."

Why is this uncertainty and debate? The answers are that, problem in selecting reserves estimation method, lack of sincerity and lack of honesty. There are four methods for gas reserves estimation. These are- Material Balance Method, Volumetric Method, Decline Curve Analysis, Reservoir

Simulation. But in Bangladesh only material balance method and volumetric methods are used and accurate assessment is not possible. So

I think to get the real picture about gas reserves, the other two methods i.e. decline curve analysis and reservoir simulation should also be used if economically feasible.

Mohammad Mamun-ur-Rashid
Student, Department of PGE
SUST, Sylhet

Climate change

The disadvantage of being one of the LDCs is that no one cares if you exist or not. During COP (Conference of Parties) 15 that took place in Copenhagen last year, the following was supposed to happen: 1) Developed countries would take responsibility for their actions and compensate accordingly. 2) The Most Vulnerable Countries (MVCs) would get enough financial and technical support to enhance and develop their adaptation processes. 3) A legally binding accord would be created which would limit the carbon emission amount for the developed countries and the G77+China group. 4) The accord would also ensure that the MVCs would get continuous support in the future to battle the climate change impacts. Unfortunately, we all know what really happened, very disappointing indeed but that is the current reality. Bangladesh, for example, is ground zero for a Global Warming induced calamity. Funding is necessary for Bangladesh to tackle the adverse climate change effects; necessary embankment building, infrastructure development, and a lot of researches need to be done. It is forecast that a 1m sea level rise will inundate one third of the land in Bangladesh! The entire Sundarbans will be underwater! If developed countries do not provide these funds, Bangladesh will face frightening consequences. Among the most startling are agricultural devastation, deterioration of health and increasing number of deadly diseases, millions of climate refugees, economic downfall, and even national security issues. Imagine a situation where millions of people lose everything they own and are forced to move towards the cities for a better life. These people are farmers or fishermen; skills which are useless in urban settings. Would these people become beggars or muggers? If even 1% of those millions of helpless people decide to commit crimes, imagine the effects!

"With great powers come great responsibilities" - which



JASHIM SALAM / DRINKNEWS

Month of deliverance

Blessed are those who have once again been granted the advantage of observing the holy month of Ramadan.

Hazrat Salman Farsi (Ra) said that the Prophet (SM) while delivering his "Khutba" at the end of the month of Shaban said, "O mankind, arrival before you of a solemn and virtuous month is imminent." i.e. the month of Ramadan.

Allah the Merciful has said in Quranul Karim "O Believers it has been made incumbent upon you fast during the month of Ramadan as it was made incumbent upon your forefathers in order that you may follow the path of piety." Actually, Ramadan is month of patience, love, piety and forgiveness.

For any sane and healthy person of appropriate age it is obligatory to fast in the month of Ramadan. To desist from fasting is a sin and not to believe in it is downright infidelity. Therefore one must fast and encourage others to do likewise. Encouragement for pious deed is also a pious act.

The month of Ramadan encom-

passes within its limits the noblest ideals of self-restraint, dedication and service.

Ramadan, one of the pillars of Islam, is not something extraneous but is fulfilled only through scrupulous performance of the duties enjoined upon the faithful. One of the duties is to offer salat or prayer, salat cannot be neglected and during Ramadan salat along with "Tarabith" has an added importance.

During Ramadan one must take good care of the poor and the distressed. If someone keeps in mind Allah's benevolence and offers Iftar to a fasting person, then that act wipes out his sins and saves him from the torments of hell. Similarly, during Ramadan if one shows affection and kindness to parents, neighbours and others, for them Allah has infinite mercy and benevolence.

K. Habibur Rahman
Writer, translator and
Ex-journalist
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

is very true, and the industrialized nations should realize it themselves instead of simply making movies about it. The developed countries must adhere to a legally binding agreement to reduce carbon emissions immediately.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Private or public transport?

I totally agree with Humayun Hyder that if we use the public transport, it will be better in all respects. But I will also like to remind my brother of the condition of public transport. The condition is so bad that one cannot travel by public transport. Of course, people are economically weak and they need to travel by local bus, yet this does not mean that they will travel like non-humans. Perhaps this is the

reason why poor people are affected by air borne diseases and the problem is not just with public transport, the public hospitals are in deteriorating condition as well. But still the solution lies in improving public transport maintaining the security of the passengers and their assets.

The road traffic system and the vehicles must be upgraded to standard conditions. However, I would like to ask the writer a question--if he has a car, will he still travel by public transport? The rapid increase in the number of private cars is due to several reasons. Perhaps loss of time and feeling of insecurity have forced the commuters to buy cars if they can afford that.

Md Mahbubur Rahman
Old town resident

BNP's allegations

While the BNP has alleged through their senior leader Mr M.K. Anwar, that 1.75 percent interest rate for the \$1 billion loan and 20 years repayment period which includes grace period of 5 (five Years) from India is very high, but in reality facts and findings about loans taken by different governments including that of the BNP for projects show that this interest rate is not high but in fact lowest so far taken on these grounds from different governments which includes Japan, China, Korea and even the USA and the UK. I am not going to dissect the deals and the agreements signed but trying to pass my concern that the view that Mr Anwar has expressed is just another of BNP's so called bluff & Anti India stunt on which they do stand & do politics.

The loan from India is a commercial or tied loan with a 20-year repayment period having a favourable condition which allows five years grace period but the borrower has to purchase certain things from the lending country. Such conditions are not unique. Even countries like the USA or Japan had given tied loan to Bangladesh in the past but the BNP unfortunately lacked their courage to say against those for the reasons unknown.

Every year, the World Bank and the ADB offer Bangladesh several soft loans. But in such cases, Bangladesh must comply with their conditions and invariably without any say. Both these banks select the projects from an array of proposals from Bangladesh and then monitor all the progress. The availability of such

loans is also restricted. Side by side, the ADB offers countries like Bangladesh commercial loans with interest rates swinging between 3 to 5 percent and sometimes adds service charge too which is less than 1.5 percent.

There is a statement from the newly elected chairman of FBCCI. He termed it one of the most successful negotiations in the history of Bangladesh regarding loan.

Dr Md Shameem Hassan
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Holiday issue

The authorities introduced the system of keeping the factories closed on different days in different areas for electricity load management. We had been maintaining it. But in recent days we have been observing that following this system is not bringing solution to improvement of electric load shedding.

We all know it's a national problem and now we are used to it.

In this context may I request the authorities to withdraw the system and make Friday as weekly holiday for factories in all areas? The reason being as stated above and moreover we have been deprived of meeting and interacting with our relatives/friends due to this system. We need at least one day as holiday to spend along with the family.

So, I would earnestly request the authorities to examine the pros & cons of my proposal.

SM Rezaul Haque
Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka

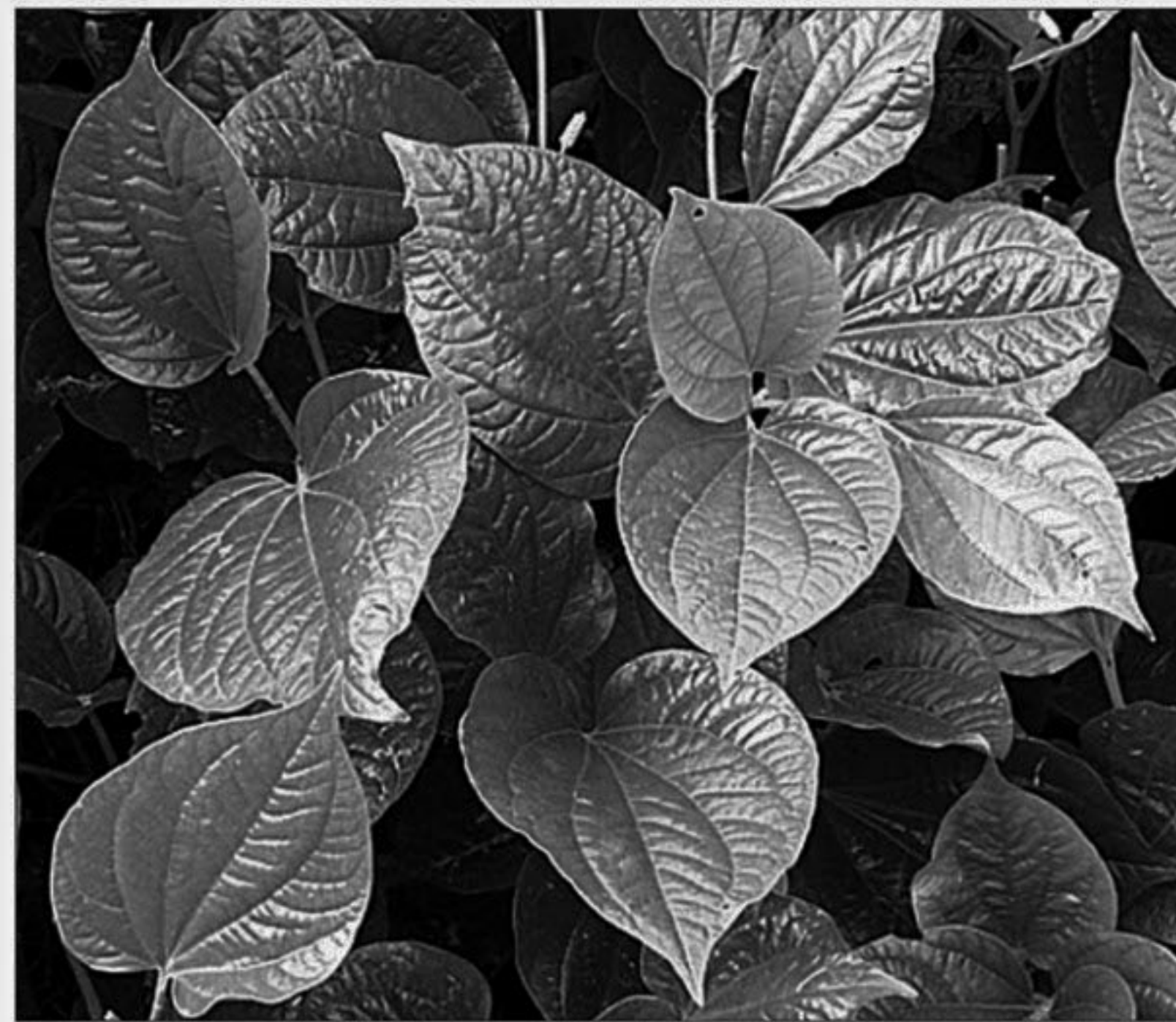
Science education

Recent statistics show that the number of students opting for science studies is declining. Many believe the opportunity for career development is much better for a student studying Business. Whether this assumption is true or not, it is definitely true that more and more meritorious students are moving away from science studies.

Our govt. is fighting a losing battle to stop this Brain Drain. Many also believe that the govt. provides little or no support for science students, especially engineers, for their career development.

I hope the govt. will look into this matter seriously in order to ensure that future progress of our country is not hindered due to lack of pioneers in the field of science.

Shahriar Kabir



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A good prospect!

Bengalees are famous for their hospitality. Hospitality is the indicator of aristocracy and nobility. Betel leaf is part of that hospitality. In some cases, without this attachment the satisfaction of consumption often remains incomplete. Moreover, people also entertain the guests only with 'khili paan' which is known as 'entertaining in brief' in rural areas. Not only in the rural areas but also after the ending of sumptuous session in urban areas the application of betel leaf is worth mentioning. The enthusiasts of betel leaf use not only the tradi-

tional betel nut but also many spicy ingredients in taking betel leaf.

However, in Sylhet there is abundance of Khashia betel leaf. This type of betel leaf has high demand countrywide as well as worldwide. The main drawback of this cultivation is that, in Bangladesh only the 'Khashia' tribe is producing this type of betel leaf. So if proactive measures are taken in this matter, its production can be boosted.

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