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Food security



SHAFIQUL ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

Ensuring adequate nutrition for all is as important as ensuring the country's defence. The state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition, and the improvement of public health, as among its primary duties. Food security depends mainly on domestic production of grain. We do not lack natural resources. Our potential is at least twice as much as we are currently producing. What we lack is political will. None of our politicians has ever set the target of achieving the full potential of our agriculture. Their thinking is still feudal. Agriculture and agriculturists are not their main concern. Management of the food economy should have two objectives; first, to increase grain production; and, second, to ensure its proper distribution. We have seen how our system has failed - both in the long run and the short term - to achieve higher produc-

tivity and production of grain. To sum up, the management of our food economy is in a mess. It is likely to worsen after the removal of quantitative restrictions on the import of farm products. To improve the situation, the government should take prompt and radical reform measures.

These, in turn, adversely affect the efforts of raising production and productivity. Therefore, all restrictions on movement, stocking, trading, credit by financial institutions, monopoly buying, processing and exports have to be removed to enable the farmers to take advantage of free market. It is not only illogical, but also immoral on the part of the government to plead, on the one hand, for globalisation of trade and, on the other, fail to create one unified national market for farm products within the country.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Environmental hazards

Today it is very common among the young generation to throw bottles or other rubbish on the road, but the habit is very dangerous. Coconut sellers throw their waste products in the nearby corner. Still most people are unaware that disease spread from dirt. Malaria, typhoid and many other disease can be easily prevented by keeping the roads and houses clean.

Md Mahabubur Rahman
Dhaka

Neurosurgery unit

DMCH is the premier health care provider for the poor people of this country and the neurosurgery department of DMCH is the busiest place of DMCH but this department is in a shambles. The patient care is very poor.

Senior professor and junior doctors of the department have no respect for office timing, junior doctors are busy making money by extortion from poor patients. Here everything is out of bounds. Will the Honourable Prime Minister and Health Minister look into this affair and bail us out of this situation? I would also invite the media to come forward with a bold step to break this evil nexus.

Ms Chowdhury
Babar Road
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Uniform

There is a rule in almost all the educational institutions that students have to come to their own campus wearing certain uniform/apron.

We think that teachers should also have a certain uniform so that one can easily identify them as teachers. We hope the authorities concerned would take this into consideration.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

Ground Zero

With reference to the debate about building a mosque near Ground Zero, Irfan Husain, a columnist for Karachi daily Dawn, touched the crux of the problem of religious intolerance in Pakistan when he recently wrote: "The sad reality is that non-Muslims in Pakistan live on sufferance, and it would be unthinkable for them to even dream of expanding their places of worship, let alone constructing new ones. A few years ago, I recall writing about the trials and tribulations of Christians trying to build a church in Islamabad despite having received official permission. They were bullied by a local

mullah, and found no support from the city administration. Since then, things have got worse for the minorities."

In Pakistan, not only churches and other places of worship of non-Muslims are under attack, mosques are also being destroyed by the Taliban and their acolytes. The Taliban have been bombing schools, hotels, hospitals and even mosques -- all in the name of their interpretation of Islam. Last December, they bombed a mosque in Rawalpindi, killing scores of Pakistanis.

In all fairness, the \$100 million to be spent on the project to build a mosque in Manhattan should have been sent to Pakistan to rebuild the Parade Lane mosque destroyed by the Taliban. Spending money to build a mosque in New York should be secondary to rebuilding the destroyed mosque in Pakistan. As Raheel Raza and Tarek Fatah, two Canadian Muslims of Pakistani origin, so correctly argued in an op-ed in The Ottawa Citizen that proceeding with the project to build a mosque near Ground Zero is tantamount to mischief-making, an act prohibited in Islam.

All charity must begin at home and the money should be diverted to Pakistan to rebuild the destroyed mosque in Rawalpindi and to help construction of the church in Islamabad. Only after that Muslims can ask for building a mosque in New York.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Day of joy

Eid, the greatest religious festival of the Muslim community, is imminent. It is such a rare occasion of the year that the have's and have-not's remain in the same row on this day. Eid means endless joy and happiness. It's for all ages particularly for the kids who long for this dream-like event since Ramadan. It comes to us with the relish of unlimited entertainment. But what about the majority of the people who live hand to mouth? Most of them cannot get sufficient food let alone new clothes and other desirable things of Eid. The Eid day is all the same for them. Moreover, most of the rich distribute 'Zakat clothing' (some low quality costumes which to me serves nothing) to the poor community by killing them (!) which is rather ludicrous and against the spirit of the holy Eid. We need to realize that Islam doesn't allow such foolish activity as some think rather it is very simple and generous. In addition, most of the rich and intellectuals of our country do not know or do

not want to know (!) (I am confused) that by proper distribution of Zakat system poverty can be reduced in a thousand times more effective way than any other means. We must keep in mind that zakat, fitra which are provided on the occasion of Eid are the right of the poor over the rich. That's why the rich are not permitted to grasp the due right of the poor or to distribute it flamboyantly or unsystematically which will serve nothing to the poor. However, Eid is for all irrespective of rich and poor. The prime aim and spirit of Eid is to share everything with others. For this reason, it is the religious and holy duty of every Muslim to pay zakat, fitra in an Islamic way to please Allah.

Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque
English department
International Islamic
University Ctg

Khaleda's vow

We remember some of her popular phrases she frequently used during her premiership of Bangladesh like; "Shadinota nosshatter cheshta cholchhey" meaning conspiracy is going on to destroy the independence of the country, "Ekti-mahal desh bikri kortey chai" meaning one group wants to sell out the country, "Unnoyoner joar dekhe vitu hoye ekti-mahal deshey orajajokata christri korchey" meaning seeing the wave of development of her government a certain group has become scared and trying to create anarchy in the country. She used the above phrases so many times that the people of Bangladesh have learnt them by heart and will not forget in the foreseeable future.

She is now out of power, so those phrases are out of place to use. Her latest phrases to keep her supporters active and energetic are; "This government has failed in every sector, so she will compel the government to resign." "This government is filing court cases against the opposition leaders to divert the public mind." "This government is serving the foreign powers who have installed it to power" etc. Her present threat is country-wide agitation to topple the government to save the country.

Today, the 29th August, the DS has published a popularity survey of the present government. The survey report speaks quite differently from Begum Zia's conviction.

So, Begum Zia's vow of agitation after the holy month of Ramadan will not get much public support.

She should carefully examine the situation. Instead of agitation, she should join parliament.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Col. Taher

Col. Abu Taher was a valiant freedom fighter. He along with Gen. Manzur and Col. Ziauddin defected from the Pakistan Army in the then West Pakistan, they crossed the border and joined the war of liberation. He was rewarded for his valour and leadership qualities. Col. Taher lost one leg in the war and an artificial limb was attached. Later on, he left the Army and was working as the chief of the Dredger Corporation in Narayanganj. He also resigned from that job.

It is an irony and extremely unfortunate that the same patriotic soldier named Col. Taher conspired against the government, people and the state in 1975.

1. He was one of the main architects of organizing 'Gono bahini' which attracted thousands of politically motivated good students resulting in destruction of their careers and also lives. Thousands of parents were rendered 'sonless'.

2. He was instrumental in inciting the well-disciplined regular Bangladesh armed forces to revolt, ridicule the officer corps, breaking and destroying the chain of command in November 1975.

3. Many officers including a lady doctor were killed on 6-7 November 1975. Valiant officers like Col Hyder and Gen. Khaled Musarraf and others were maimed at the instruction of Col Taher - directly or indirectly.

4. Col Taher planned to destroy the officer corps and transform Bangladesh Army into a classless society and army which constituted high treason and sedition.

5. Col Taher was responsible for the deaths of all the officers - directly or indirectly, destroying the very fabric and structure of armed forces, causing social chaos and confusion, and a reign of terror prevailed.

Hence, it does not really matter whether he was tried and sentenced to death in a 'kangaroo court' or 'monkey court' or a summary military court (I am no supporter of Ziaur Rahman).

Please recall that Marshal Petain was a highly decorated General of French Army in the 1st world war, and the same General collaborated with German Army in the 2nd world war and became a much hated soldier!

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

Bashabo roads

Bashabo is a large residential area under Sabujbag police station at south-east of Dhaka metropolis. It is a planned residential area built by the then Railway Diversion Division to rehabilitate the people affected by shifting of Dhaka railway station from Fulbaria to Kamalapur in the 1960's. At the beginning of the 70's all the roads were car-

peted by the then Dhaka Municipality on demand of the local people. Thereafter, on peaceable basis repair works were done in different times on different roads. But at present the condition of most of the roads are not suitable for traffic movement and not suitable for even pedestrians. Re-carpeting of all the roads is very much necessary.

I would like to urge the Dhaka City Corporation to arrange re-carpeting of the roads at Central Bashabo, North Bashabo, South Bashabo and West Bashabo. **Mohammad Ashraf Hosain**
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

OSD

I was indeed saddened to read "Other side of OSD" in DS (30 Aug). My sympathies are entirely with Shahidur Rahman's family members at this dark hour.

Over the years, I have known many dear friends in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, who have progressively suffered from this malaise at the whims of dictators and dictatorial/democratic administrations. You are right in saying that what was once a temporary phase between leave and/or postings has now become an instrument of torture and punishment. There is also no accountability of the huge sums being paid to OSDs for just passing the time of day. In addition to the vocations mentioned by you, many today, also do a little dalali on the side in getting files moving in the Secretariat.

For the younger generation, this little story could just about sum up the status of OSDs true today as it was then. I happened to be in the Secretariat one day, many decades ago, looking up an old friend. I found him in the unofficial OSD "Club" Room (yes, they had these chatting rooms then also). Just then a new entrant walked in and was greeted with a lot of good humoured banter and ribbing before my friend asked him, "Tui ki grade pa-e-se?" In answer, the newcomer smilingly held up 2 fingers. At my perplexed look my friend explained:

There are 4 unofficial grades of OSDs. Grade 4 is the normal "Officer on Special Duty". Grade 3 is "Officer in Some Difficulty". Grade 2 is "Officer in Serious Difficulty". And top of the heap is Grade 1, "Oi Shala-ke Dhor"!!

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Corrupt police

On last Friday I was going to my village home by a CNG run auto rickshaw when it reached in front of Banskhal police station a police van slightly hit it. Saying nothing, the driver of the police van came to beat the auto rickshaw driver with a big cane. He caught the driver and sent him to police station where he had been

Protecting tigers

The Wildlife Conservation Society and the Panthera Foundation announced plans to establish a 5,000 mile-long "genetic corridor" from Bhutan to Burma that would allow the tiger population to roam freely across landscapes. The corridor, first announced at the United Nations, would span eight countries and represent the largest block of tiger habitat left on earth.

Genetic corridors, where tigers can travel with less risk of inbreeding, are crucial for their long-term survival in Asia. The proposed corridor includes extensive areas of Bhutan, northeast India, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia, along with potential connectivity to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The new King of Bhutan, his Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who requested other heads of state to support similar efforts, has already endorsed it.

While Asia's economic tigers are on the rise, wild tigers in Asia are in decline. Much like the call-out for global agreements on banning tiger parts in trade, a similar cross-border initiative for genetic corridors is key to the survival of the tiger. Tigers do not observe political borders nor do they require a visa or passport to travel where habitat and prey remain.

The good news is that given the chance, tigers can replenish their numbers; the bad news is that they are not being given that chance in many parts of their range. Though no truly accurate global numbers exist, conservationists guess that 5,000 tigers remain in the wild. About 150 years ago, 100,000 tigers may have roamed throughout much of Asia according to some guesses.

Tiger scene in Bangladesh chapter is also alarming. According to information available, tigers are being killed here (Sundarbans) and there (zoo), while 2 years ago two Bengal tigers were killed in



AMDADUL HUO / DRINKNEWS

Sundarban smangrove during research by radio-collaring, which was extremely pathetic. These unfortunate situations need a permanent solution prior to the extinction of these majestic animals from our country, which only timely action would prevent. Bangladesh has to also lobby international organizations to be marched with tiger protection movement.

Let us respect their right to live, and save these majestic animals that are beauties from the present untimely cruel deaths, for which enacting tough law, urgent protection and conservation schemes are essential.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
Tourism professional

harassed for an hour. I tried to convince them that that was the fault of their driver but they didn't want to consider their mistake. Finally they permitted us to go taking the address and vehicle no. When we were about to leave the room another police man came he took away Tk 300 putting his hand into the driver's pocket, he had earned on that day. At the moment we were helpless as the time for after was coming near I had to go long way.

This is the real face of police.
Jashim Uddin
Banskhali, Chittagong

Occupational safety

I was very shocked when I received an email that our classmate Aatur Rahman (40) left us forever. His permanent departure at this early age is heart breaking for his family. His two children will have to face hard reality while they grow up. We have lost our beloved Ata, the country has lost a devoted engineer.

Aatur was a manager of Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd. He died in a furnace explosion while he was visiting a steel factory at Shyampur to check the electric transformer and get the reading of electric meter.

I didn't have an opportunity to work in a public organisation or in an industry in Bangladesh. I am not aware of the health and safety practices in these sectors. I have read statistics of such incidents and casualties in print media. It clearly indicates that either there are no health and safety policies or industries do not follow the existing policies.

It is obvious that a company after such an incident would be either forced to close down forever or would be penalised here in Australia. Penalty for loss of a life at workplace due to inadequate safety practice would be millions of dollar to the company. Industries spend big portion of their annual budget on occupational health and safety.

Industries and organisations should maintain equipment and machinery well, train employees on safety in regular basis. The government's responsibility is to ensure that every organisation follows standard health and safety at workplace. Nothing is more valuable than human life.

Faruk Ahmed
Perth, Australia

Taxi service

If I, as a mere foreigner, may add my two-pennyworth to the debate on the traffic chaos, I must point out that most developed nations have found a way of allowing people to have cars but leave them at home for most journeys - by providing a good and safe transport system for commuting to work and getting the children to school. However, in that case, rather a lot of people might be persuaded to have no car at all - if only there were a reliable taxi service.

About 9 months ago, my excellent Bagha (i.e. British) club emailed all its members advising us that we must be careful travelling by rickshaw as there had been some nasty incidents, even in the 'Republic of Gulshan'. The names and telephone numbers were given to us of three reputable taxi companies - Anudip, Navana and Orion.

Last Thursday I got distracted by something and forgot I needed to be at an after party. It was my driver's day off and there was no way I could get there in time by rickshaw. I phoned all 3 numbers and was informed by those answering each that this was not the right number for a taxi service. I arrived by rickshaw - very late...

An American friend, whose visiting parents had to catch an early flight from the airport recently, got a taxi driver to sleep the night at his residence in order to make sure they got there!

Eight years ago, I discovered that a taxi was not available to take me (then car-less) to the airport for my 7.30 am flight back to the UK because (so it was explained to me) they did not start work until 8.00am! A nice man from Emirates sorted that out for me. I could not believe my ears.....

Running an efficient taxi service, so that people can BOOK a taxi ahead of time and be confident it will turn up, is not rocket science. Other countries can do it, even poor ones, so what's the blockage in this dear country? I can understand that some customers can behave badly and be unreliable but, surely, a bright young person on the phone in a taxi office, with a computer and a register of customers, with the names and phone numbers of 'goodies' and 'baddies', should be able to cope with that - after a few months. Maybe there should be a warning message on the answer-phone about this before the operator answers so that 'Don't mess with us' is clearly conveyed....

Please can the amazing Bangladeshi creativeness be applied to this problem to sort it out? Why has the taxi service been allowed to descend into chaos? There is money to be made by being reliable - and not changing telephone numbers! If any of your readers has discovered a reliable taxi service, however small, that your readers can book ahead, would you do us all a great service by informing us?

Or maybe one of your journalists can do some fact-finding research?

Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Sri Lankan woman

Your report on hammering heated nails on the body of a 49 year old Sri Lankan woman by her Saudi employer on August 29, 2010 is heart breaking. I wonder how a person in this age could have done such a thing. Probably the tortures inflicted upon her has surpassed the gruesome cruel stories we hear about the notorious prisons.

The mere act of piercing the skin for the purpose of inoculation is itself painful. If this mere act of inoculation is painful, then imagine how painful it was for her to be pierced with 24 heated nails. I strongly condemn such acts of violence.

The poor woman went to Saudi Arabia in search of a livelihood, had she been well off, she would have never gone there to receive such cruel torture. There is many a poor woman working abroad for a livelihood, who knows what treatment those poor women are receiving. Similar incidences of torture are also reported locally from time to time, strong and deterrent punishment is necessary to ward off such evils from society.

In this case of the reported incident, the Sri Lankan government should take up the issue with the international court of justice and ensure that the culprit is brought to book and pay for the damage done to her and set an exemplary punishment so that no one in future dares to do such a thing.
Saleh Ayub
On e-mail

Power crisis



SHAFIQUL ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

Power crisis has always been a problem in Dhaka city. It has amplified greatly in recent times. Before, I had experienced that load shedding was occurring every four hours. Now the load shedding is taking place hourly. As the population in Dhaka is increasing the demand for electricity is also tremendously increasing day by day. As a student I have experienced what I feel like when there is no power in my house. I cannot study or sleep properly. I sometimes have to use a lamp. Even though we have IPS it cannot give backup forever. Due to power crisis the businessmen are facing problems as they have to close shops very quickly and when the power goes they have to use lamps or even torch lights to run

their business. Industries also cannot generate the proper amount of production needed due to power crisis. CNG pumps cannot supply gas properly. CNG run vehicles have to come the next day to take gas. Due to this reason it causes tremendous traffic jam in the roads. When I get up in the morning and get ready to go to school, I see that on the road there is a huge queue of cars (at least a 100 metre long) waiting just to get gas for their cars. I think if the government can shift some main offices to another district, people will also be reallocated and the population in Dhaka city may also decrease.

Md. Aiman Sharif
The Aga Khan School, Dhaka