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Anthrax red alert!



PHOTO: STAR

The government has issued red alert to control spread of Anthrax. Reported first in Sirajganj, anthrax is now spreading to other parts of Bangladesh. Caused by bacterium *Bacillus Anthracis*, anthrax is an acute infectious disease which attacks both animals and humans. Domestic animals like cattle, goats, sheep, dogs, horses, etc. are often attacked by the deadliest anthrax disease. Anthrax usually spread by the spores of bacterium *Bacillus Anthracis* (Spores are the asexual production units of bacteria) which lives in soil in dormant condition. They survive well in alkaline soil and multiply when the soil conditions are favourable in terms of moisture, temperature, nutrition, etc. Meanwhile the average soil in Bangladesh is acidic in nature (pH between 5.5 and 6.5), so survival of anthrax spores is rather

difficult. The anthrax spores enter into animal through ingestion while grazing on grassland.

The infected animal dies within a week of being infected by anthrax. Humans are subjected to anthrax infection through handling of anthrax infected animals and products. The spores are released from the carcasses of dead animals if not properly destroyed or buried. The best way to prevent anthrax is to keep the infected animals isolated under constant observation and treatment. The dead animals should be disposed of properly. Vaccination should be done on healthy ones.

In humans, anthrax usually infects through skin and often by inhalation and ingestion. The symptom becomes visible with 3 to 4 days which includes skin sore, flu-type fever, nausea and vomiting, in

severe cases, respiratory problem, abdominal pain, shock, coma, etc. But anthrax can easily be cured if timely and correctly diagnosed. Antibiotics like ciprofloxacin, doxycycline, penicillin, works quite well against anthrax. Human vaccine is available but it is less effective and causes side effects.

To sum up, monitoring and proper medication can easily help control spreading of anthrax. The Directorate of Livestock services, the Department of Agriculture Extension, and other related government agencies and NGOs plus electronic media need to intensify the campaign against anthrax.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
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Bangladesh-Israel relation!

Plenty of material surfaced to come to conclusion that those Arab pilots were not even ready for solo flights in a Cessna, those flying objects that hit the twin towers were not commercial aircrafts, 3 big towers collapsing under controlled demolition, the celebration by 5 MOSAD agents right after the attack took place...all pointing towards a Zionist element behind the whole conspiracy. The real victims are the Muslims and this is exactly what the conspirator's objectivity was. Ground zero mosque is not going to make much difference in the name of building inter-faith relations, it's all politics. Are Muslims learning?

Our FM is talking about building diplomatic relations with Israel. This is a major issue and the govt cannot possibly proceed without a wide range of support.
Sheikh Monirul Islam
One-mail

Opposite views

Success can be considered from two different points of view. Progress in making money and being able to lead a luxurious life is the point of our consideration these days. But when there is no shortage of money and something takes place only because someone has plenty of wealth, we say, if he had less such a mishap might not have happened. On the other hand, when we think about the rewards and punishments of the life hereafter, then we say, there is little necessity of money here.

We cannot think of anything else.
Mahmudun Nabi Miron
One-mail

Match fixing

There has been uproar in the cricket world that Pakistan team in recent England tour has done match fixing in the match against Australia. In that scam one Pakistani gambler has been arrested in

the hotel suit of Pakistan team with a huge amount of money. It is presumed that entire deal of match fixing was supposed to be done through that gambler. Pakistan Premier Yousuf Raja Zilani vowed to bring to book the culprits of match fixing who tarnished the image of Pakistan. Match fixing is not new in the cricket world. Previous Indian Cricket Captain Mohammed Azharuddin had been implicated into the scam of match fixing. There had been voice of denunciation and condemnation from around the cricket world against this heinous act. People in India spitted at the portraits of the cricket captain in public places where those were available. Azharuddin had been banned from cricket for life by a ruling of Indian Cricket Board once this scam had been proved. The Daily Star in its 30th August issue in the sports page quoted some foreign journalists as saying "Pakistani cricket players are after money,

women and food" whenever they visit England. The Pakistan cricket captain in his immediate reaction told one cannot be implicated or prosecuted into a case without proof. It has been estimated at least 7 Pakistani cricketers will be implicated into the case of match fixing. So, arch rivals of two superpowers in this subcontinent are not free from malpractices.

Md. Lutfar Rahman
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IUBAT
Dhaka

Biman

Biman has a captive set of customers in providing the hajj service (numbers going up and up) and transporting labour to the Middle East. Its services to other destinations are viewed as of non-core nature demanding little attention or motive for profit. This can be felt by international passengers as there are frequent breakdowns, cancellations of flights, change of schedules, delays and lost luggage.

Perhaps Biman should specialise its operations with dedicated planes and staff for its core and non-core businesses if it hopes to be a successful international airline and attract bona fide travellers and tourists.
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Inside Biman

Capt. Monawar Hossain's frank assessment of corruption at the highest levels was published in a local daily on 31 August. This supports an reiterates my own experience in the public sector industries in mid 1970s. Small wonder that today Biman is known by its acronym "Bay-Iman", which means untrustworthy! One very salient fact in his article was as follows; and I quote: "We again participated by giving B747-300 with 517 seating capacity at a cost of \$10,200 per hour in July 2009, but was not entertained. This year Biman has taken aircraft with 475 seating capacity at a cost of \$10,400." Can the government offer a rational reason for this to the taxpayers; for, after all, it is their money that is being spent?

As, usual, probes are conducted by 'pliable people', and the management is run by 'yes men', with a purpose behind it, which is apparent.
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Jamuna Bridge

The news item published in The Daily Star on 27 August 2010 captioned "Govt seek further opinion of Prof Reza about cracks" caught my attention. South Korean Hyundai Ltd built Jamuna Bridge with an expected lifespan of 100 years. But cracks have developed within 5 years of its construction. The govt is now going to give the task of repairing the bridge to a Chinese firm at a cost of Tk 165 crore. I want to know from our honourable FM why HEC (Hyundai Engineering and Construction) Co Ltd is not being asked for paying compensation as per the agreement? Or should we guess that Tk 165 crore is no amount to the govt?

Above all, we are the general people who have to pay toll to use the bridge.

Shamal Das
Dept of Economics
SUST, Sylhet

English newscasters

Some English newsreaders we have in our electronic media are simply excellent and the quality of their news reading either in the radio or on the TV. is as good as, if not better than that in the international media like the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, All India Radio or Doordarshan to name a few.

However, it is very sad that the majority of the English newsreaders or the newscasters are of extremely poor quality and the listeners or the viewers (me included) find it difficult to understand many of the words in a sentence or even the whole sentence. As a result you will have to pay extra attention to every word the newsreader utters. This, however, will deprive the viewers/listeners of the joy of news watching or listening. This happens, in my opinion, due to lack of training or even no training of the newscasters before they are put on the air. As a result, the newscasters while reading news on the TV and/or Radio chew part of the words with twisted lips or grinding teeth apparently to sound or appear impressive.

English is a language of phonetics' which means that correct pronunciation of each word with the right intonation on the right part of the word is essential to make the word sound right, smooth and pleasant to the listener's ears. Unfortunately, incorrect pronunciation with wrong intonation on the wrong part of the word is painfully galore with most of our newscasters due to lack of training and/or lack of knowledge of the language itself.

News casting on the electronic media or news reading on the radio is an art and not a science.

You may be having a PhD in the English literature or language but that will not necessarily make you a quality newscaster. News casting is more like acting on the stage or acting in a radio drama. It is a matter of training and hard practice which will make a person a quality newscaster or a near perfect newsreader.

My humble suggestion to the Radio and TV stations will be that after they have primarily selected their potential future news persons, they should send them to a mini "Training Camp" or more like an "Orientation Camp" run or supervised by news casting celebrities.

Baharul Hayat
Rangpur

Tobacco farming

We know that a huge number of people suffer from and die of cancer and other diseases due to puffing cigarette, bidi and consuming zorda etc with betel leaves. Due to increasing publicity against smoking, the number of smokers is decreasing in the developed countries, whereas the same is on the increase in poor and developing countries.

In Bangladesh the government has banned the advertisement of cigarettes in print and press media and a warning against smoking is printed on every packet of cigarette. Smokers are to pay fine if they smoke in public places, although the fine is very paltry (TK.50) and the law is not strict.

Besides some local companies, a multi-national company is involved in producing and marketing some brand of cigarettes in our country. About 45% tobacco is grown in Rangpur, the rest is grown in Kushtia, Faridpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Barisal, Jessore, Rajshahi and Sylhet districts. Tobacco is grown on about 72,000 acres of land and our total yearly production is about 40,000 metric tonnes. We have to import tobacco from other countries worth about TK. 10 crore every year.

For the deficit of local demand tobacco farming area is expanding. Now it is grown in hilly areas. Recently, some NGOs expressed their concern about this in a gathering in Press Club. Our agricultural land area is shrinking by 1% every year due to construction of houses and other development activities. If tobacco farming expands, we will face more problems in future, no doubt.

The government gets some cash money as excise duty from this sector. It is a direct income. But people have to pay much more money for treating smoking related diseases. So, finally the country incurs a heavy loss. It is high time to ban all tobacco farming like the ban on advertisements. We want a tobacco free Bangladesh.
Rashid Harun
Dhaka

Constitutional amendments

The DS on 01 Sep 2010 contained a lot of fuel to prompt me to write this letter.

1. First the post-editorial article by Syed Badrul Ahsan where he has, in his own inimitable style, laid low the dictatorial authors of the 5th and 7th Amendments to our Constitution with cogent logic and masses of facts. I believe there have been 13 amendments to date so what happened to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 9th to 13th Amendments? What were they and how did they advance the cause of good governance? These should be detailed in simple language so that general people may understand the cause and effect of these amendments.

Over the years I have heard and read many opinions, that the 5th and 7th Amendments did all the mischief, because the 4th which no one mentions now, first kicked open the door in Bangladesh to non-democratic practices. Shouldn't these be explained rationally? Will SBA oblige, please?

2. A reader in Gulshan takes the Mayor and those responsible for road repairs/construction to task asking them to spend time in their public financed (mistakenly called Government) SUVs to see the condition of all thoroughfares in Dhaka. My question is: Why in their SUVs? Why not in a rickshaw which 50% of Dhakabashis use? If they do so, I will pay for their subsequent orthopaedic treatment!

3. Every time there is an uproar about Traffic Jams, the authorities go into reverse gear and ban RICKSHAWs on another road to appease the bigger and lesser gods, who park and ply (often empty) with impunity on the scarce and pot-holed roads, streets and lanes of Dhaka.

The latest to fall prey to this idiotic rule, is a wide road in the heart of Banani.

Rickshaws were banned one morning recently and now the road is being used not for the easy access of the Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs), but for the 'rest and relaxation' of the GGMs all day. Snack shops occupy all the available nooks and crannies to cater to the swarms of drivers, students, attendants etc. Parking is allowed, neither single nor double, not triple or quadruple, but often a Guinness record quintuplet (5 abreast) parking, with Banani Society providing paid attendants to see that rickshaws do not sneak in!! Bush and Blair would be proud of the double standards practiced by traffic controllers in Dhaka. (and all to no purpose).

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Regional cooperation

Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the finance minister of India, came to Bangladesh and watched the one billion dollar loan treaty between Bangladesh and Exim Bank of India. Out of this amount the development of Ashuganj internal port would be done for the transit and transhipment of Tripura with main parts of India. In exchange, the activities of the Bangladesh port would be eased by India so as to facilitate the carrying of commodities between Bangladesh and Nepal through Siliguri of India. It reminded me that thirteen years ago Bangladesh land port was opened. It was a sunny day on 1st September 1997. A helicopter was disembarked at the zero point from where the then Bangladesh Minister for Trade and Commerce Mr Tofael Ahmed, one of the Ministers of Nepal and some reporters of the leading dailies of Dhaka got down. Before that DC Panchagarh, Mr Saiful Islam, the ambassador of Nepal and the customs commissioner were present. Tens of thousands of people

from the adjacent places thronged there.

It was decided that Nepal would use Mongla port for its import export activities through the newly opened Bangladesh Port. Bangladesh would be benefited as Mongla Port would be functioning from where levies, duties would be collected, the transport sector would be invigorated, India would be financially benefited as its route would be used and Nepal would be benefited also. After that we saw some thatched houses were built for customs operation but this port remained inoperative for many years as India did not allow use of its land fearing that terrorists of the seven sisters of the eastern part of India might take the opportunity for carrying arms and ammunition. However, India could now realise the necessity of operating this port for the benefit of the three countries. Regional cooperation is the need of the day. Only that cooperation can lead the subcontinent nations to eradicating poverty and insurgency.

Dilip Kumar Banik
Habiganj

National university

Most of the students study in National University. But session jam is very common in this university. After passing the higher secondary exam. 2003, we got admitted in this university for three years' degree (pass) course 2003-04 and passed the course in 2007. We have got admission in M. A (Part-I) 2007-08 session. Already three years have been lost, though it was a one-year course. There is no coordination between the course and the exams.

What will we do with NU certificate if we do not get it in time?

S.M. Saidul Islam (Shamim)
English Department
Govt. Azizul Haque College
Bogra

Medical treatment

Society is going to the dogs; in almost every sector. The campus is full of political activities --- of the wrong kind. The medical treatment has gone out of the reach of the middle class. The diagnostic centres prescribe expensive non-essential tests, for making profits, thanks to the doctors. Except allopathic, no other form of treatment is officially recognised. The ambulance emergency service is expensive; with lack of publicity.

The doctors are reluctant to be posted in the small towns and rural areas. There is no thrust in the nursing sector; although local female nurses are employed abroad. The diploma and degree courses have to be made more attractive.

Our medicine sector has made tre-



WAHID ADNAN/ DRIKNEWS

mendous stride, but still foreign medicines are preferred, and the rich patients rush abroad for treatment. The private clinics work in an atmosphere of non transparency. Monitoring and inspection are weak. The health sector is not being properly motivated by the regime. There is lack of awareness in health insurance schemes in the public sector. There is lust for mega projects!

A Husain
Dhaka

One billion dollar loan

We would request out Ministry of Finance, our economists and financial experts to kindly enlighten us on the following matters relating to one billion dollar Indian loan to Bangladesh:

1. What would be the approximate/probable amount of financial income/profit/benefit (in US dollar and Bangladesh taka) of Bangladesh and India respectively after receipt and expenditure by Bangladesh one billion dollar loan from India?

2. Would Bangladesh receive one billion dollar loan from Indian Exim Bank at a time or in several instalments? When will the payment of the loan be made in full?

3. What are the terms and conditions of the loan? Why was the loan agreement signed all of a sudden?

4. Why was the loan agreement signed between our government (Economic Relations Division) and Indian Exim Bank? Why not between Indian government (Economic Relations Division) and Bangladesh Exim Bank, Agrani or Janata Bank?

5. What are the obligations and duties of the Indian government for transaction and execution of one billion dollar loan to Bangladesh?

6. Out Finance Minister A.M.A Muhith says Bangladesh government will utilise the loan mainly for rail and road communication projects which will be approved by Bangladesh government whereas the Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee says the two countries will identify the projects. Which statement is correct?

7. Will the one billion dollar Indian loan be placed before our parliament as per Article 84, 86, 87, 90 and 145/A of our constitution?

8. What is the total amount of foreign loans (in US dollar and Bangladesh taka) outstanding against Bangladesh as of 8 August, 2010? After how many years and in which year Bangladesh would be able to pay all the foreign loans?

O.H. Kabir
Hare Street, Wari
Dhaka

Pakistani flood victims

Recently, a massive flood hit Pakistan. I cannot give a vivid detail of the loss, but as far as I know, a significant portion of the country's land is now submerged in deep water. The flood has spared none. Young, old, men, women are now all at the same platform, that is, they are all victims.

Should we not do something too? On a different note, have we forgotten the little boy Amit whom we helped fight a rare disease? We, with limited money at hand, contributed a little sum individually.

Let us make little contributions to the flood victims of Pakistan. A lot is needed, but through our joint efforts, it is nothing.
Rafi Abdullah
Maple Leaf International School
West Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Bus fare

BRTC deserves kudos for introducing a host of new CNG buses in different routes in Dhaka city. Those are very spacious and can carry a good number of passengers. It helps the regular commuters a lot, especially during the office time.

But it charges the same fares as do the other diesel run bus companies. Since CNG is still cheaper than diesel, the bus fares should be made proportionately cheap. The BRTC authorities should consider the matter. If the fares are cheaper, it would be more popular among the middle-income group and reduce their monetary duress substantially. The government and the BRTC authorities should think about the middle and low-income commuters.

Nabila Raisa
Shekerte, Muhammadpur
Dhaka