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Dredging of Buriganga



WAHID ADMANI/DRINKNEWS

The Daily Star has brought to our knowledge that ignoring a proposal of free dredging from some individuals, the BIWTA authorities are going to contract it out to a private party which will cost the exchequer nearly Tk. 7 crore (DS: 3.9.10).

From the news we learnt that the total contract will be a sheer misuse of people's money. But still the authorities are determined to do the job through surreptitious means. The

hidden reasons of this sort of deals are not unperceivable to us. A few months ago we experienced Buriganga river cleaning which ended up misusing the total money.

For the sake of proper spending of the poor people's money, the government should take more transparent steps for the bid.

Ahmed Munir
Purana Paltan
Dhaka

Newspaper for the blind!

Your staff correspondent's interesting report on the matter, published in your pages on 2nd. September, is indeed a very noble step undertaken by 'Prothom Alo', a popular Bangla daily. It enables the blind to listen to the newspaper being read out, which has been established through access to a new website link!

It was the outcome of a corroborative work between the Center for Research on Bangla Language Processing of Brac University and Prothom Alo. For the blind it is the first light (prothom alo in Bangla) to be aware of the news and views from round the world!

The Bangla daily has shined the first rays of light for the blind, who cannot see and therefore read the daily newspaper. It brings them in closer contact with local and global activities of which they are not normally aware because of their physical handicap. This pertinent and unique development, by improving the quality of life for the blind, who generally tend to have a lonely life, will play a very great and important role in our society. For this the institutions involved (Prothom Alo and Brac University) deserve public appreciation and recognition. I am sure all readers will join me in congratulating Prothom Alo and BRAC University for this wonderful service to our blind fellow citizens!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Demand of Biman employees

The Biman, Bangladesh Airlines, authorities have bowed to the demands of the Biman employees. We are not sure if all the demands were logically acceptable. But how far was it worth to accept the way the employees have compelled the authorities to take such a defensive posture? They beat up some of the officers to realise their demands and finally have succeeded.

If fulfilling of demands this way is encouraged, we would ask the top brass of other offices to wait to see its domino effect in their offices too. And that will take place very soon, I apprehend.

Monzur Rahman
Muhammadpur
Dhaka

No Eid bonus and salary!

Due to negligence of the AG office, the employees of Dhaka Zoo didn't get Eid bonus and the monthly salary for August, 2010.

How could this happen? Is there anybody who can explain it?

Wahida Sultana
One-mail

MPs and taxes

Thanks to the Daily Star for its editorial entitled "A matter of rights with obligations. Let our lawmakers pay taxes" (September 5, 2010). Let our MPs correct the situation and convince the people of Bangladesh that lawmakers are not and cannot be above the law. Let them begin paying their dues to the republic. The nation's members of parliament are already some of the best-paid legislators in the world, a fact that has drawn fire from their constituents who believe they should be paid less. It is ridiculous that our MPs go home with huge perks per month while professionals like doctors earn less per month though they work more than 12 hours a day seven days a week! Our MPs? A few hours a week with more perks just for showing up! Take the money, but spare us the hypocrisy. Integrity of MPs should be measured by the same ruler they use for the same country. They really don't care about the welfare of ordinary citizens.

There are other more pressing matters we should be attending like improving infrastructure, instead of increasing salaries. Bangladesh's economy is still recovering from the aftermath of a post-election crisis and an ensuing world economic downturn. Yet another drastic pay hike for MPs is the most outrageous, insensitive, immoral and intolerant abuse and impunity by Bangladesh's officialdom the country has ever witnessed. They really don't care about the welfare of ordinary citizens.

Gopal Sengupta, Canada

TV ads

Thank you for your piece on TV advertising (Star Business Wednesday, September 1, 2010).

I wish there were some mention how effective ads are in selling products, given the exorbitant rates charged by broadcasters. You mention there is no reliable data. But why aren't advertisers themselves conducting polls? The question needs to be asked.

Polls or no polls, however, most viewers are turned off or repelled by repetitive showing of the same ad every few minutes for the duration of a single episode or programme. Do sellers-advertisers think audiences are brainwashed into buying more of their stuff?

The correct term is "off-peak." (and not "off-pick") as you refer to the time when there are less TV viewers. It is the same term used to justify lower rates for hotels and airline tickets.

Readers, young and old, will adopt such language inaccuracies as the standard if left unchecked.

N. Chaudhury
New Eskaton
Dhaka

Separate pay scale for BB

Not an engineer, not a doctor, not those brightest students working as teacher in the public universities (BUET, DU), not those brightest boys and girls who joined in the civil service (not foreign or customs cadres) that will receive higher salary- it is those who joined the central bank (popularly known as Bangladesh Bank in our country) who will receive much higher salaries than those sections stated above. I came to know this from the newspapers some days before and was waiting for the reaction on this issue from respective corners.

Thanks to respected Mr. M. Abdul Latif Mondol, a former secretary to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, for his column published in your daily on August 31, 2010 on this issue. In addition, I would like to recall two other reports on this issue- one in The Daily Star of 26 August 2010 and the other one in the Daily Amader Shomoy on the same date (probably other newspapers have also written on the issue). I found some differences about the salary amount quoted in these three sources. The Daily Star says that the basic salary for an Assistant Director (AD) of BB is Tk 20,000 (instead of Tk 11000) and Mr. Secretary also cited the same scale. On the other hand, the Daily Amader Shomoy says the gross salary of an AD of BB will be taka 42,300 per month. Whereas, a BCS cadre officer will get Tk 17,750 per month only, the difference in this case is Tk 24,350 per month (if we add other benefits received by the central banker, for example, daily lunch bill of taka 150, and benefits accumulated from house rent, then this difference could be 40 to 50 thousand per month). Does it sound convincing?

Finally, I think the government should carefully evaluate the matter considering the probable reaction of the same ranked government officials.

Bappy Jowarder
Saitama, Japan

Jute price

Once Jute was our main exportable commodity and it was called "The Golden Fibre of Bangladesh". During the last three decades, farmers became reluctant to grow jute. Because farmers did not get their cost of production. Gradually most of the jute mills were shutdown.

We are losing a golden opportunity since jute can still have a very good market abroad.

Zaglul Haider
One-mail

SEC interventions

The security exchange commission has taken the following decisions in the recent past.

1. On 11 July, the margin loan ratio was reduced to 1:1 from 1:1.5. On the next day the general index fell by 128 points.

2. On 14 July, SEC wanted on an emergency basis the list of 50 top investors from Brokerage Houses and Merchant Banks. The General index fell by 76 points on the next day.

3. On 22nd July, SEC directed the merchant banks to give up to Tk 10 crore and brokerage houses up to Tk 5 crore as loan to a BO account holder.

Lately, SEC is endeavouring to enforce another complicated devilish margin rule loan regulation which all the stakeholders strongly objected to and resented.

Prior to the above decisions, the margin loan criterion had been altered from PE75 to PE50 and then again from PE50 to PE40.

The central bank has started poking its nose once again into the share market. The reasons given behind all the above apparently innocuous decisions by the SEC are that the market is overheated, many shares are over priced, investors are ignorant etc. An investor can rightfully ask the SEC what is the harm if the general index goes up. The market and the general index are not supposed to remain frozen at year 2000 level! The country will develop, so will the activities, investments and index of the share market. What is the rationale behind 'crying wolf', 'false alarm', 'impending dooms day' every now and then, resulting in panic sale, unsettling the budding market?

All the above mentioned decisions were taken in the names of small investors to protect their interest. Ironically, the decisions actually harmed and killed many small share investors! It appears that Muhammad bin Tuglak has not died! The 'reign of Tuglak' is prevailing in SEC. If SEC intervenes three times in a month and harms the investors, should they not be taken to task, reprimanded, asked to refrain from such 'knee jerk reactions', improve their qualities, and on failure be punished for their inefficiency and apathy for the common people who constitute the majority of the population of Bangladesh? Nobody is above law.

Dr. SN Mamon
One-mail

Killing by BSF

On Monday I was gravely shocked at the news published in The Daily Star that a Bangladeshi cattle trader was killed by BSF. The report says when the victim was crossing the border, he was caught, beaten up severely by BSF, and not only this, the tendons of his hands and legs were cut off and his body was thrown into the river Padma. How barbaric!!! What are my dear policymakers doing regarding the matter? I think he might have been an ordinary man but his life is as valuable as that of Very Very Important Persons. The authorities concerned are hereby requested to save our poor villagers from BSF's aggression. Effective steps will be taken, I expect. Only flag meeting is not enough to resolve the problem.

Khalid Bin Walid
Bashundhara, Dhaka

Foot over bridge needed

A picture appeared in The Daily Star on Tuesday, Aug 24, which shows some daring women braving the speedy vehicles of the busy road climbing the grilled road divider and crossing the road in a dangerous manner when the foot bridge is just a few yards away. The letter writer (01-09-10) felt very much concerned for such activities and requested others not to cross the road in such a life-threatening manner. But we who are leaving in East Rampura are forced to take such dangerous steps regularly many times in a day as there is no foot over bridge over DIT road at the East Rampura intersection. East Rampura is a thickly populated area where majority are low and middle class people. Kitchen market, other markets, bus stands, mosque etc. are on the other side of the two way DIT road. From dawn till midnight there is continuous flow of vehicles -- bumper to bumper -- on both sides of the DIT road. Every one leaving in East Rampura has to cross the DIT road endangering his/her life to meet the everyday needs of the life. A foot over bridge is very much essential there. In the last year of the past govt. a foundation stone for a foot over bridge was laid there but with the passage of time it has now vanished. Many accidents occurred there in the past causing even death. Minor accidents have become a regular feature. But the authorities concerned have remained silent.

The authorities concerned have to look into the matter.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Child labour



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU/DRINKNEWS

When we see little kids on the street working we don't make eye contact with them, when we do we see their sad tired eyes. We never take a second look at them; we think one look is enough. While they're in the boiling sun working to make our clothes we go to stores to buy them. We never stop to think about how much the little girl who made it gets. Now that's not our fault we're not the ones paying them poor wages. But we can help them.

Tasnia Zaman
Dhaka

Living in islands

You will see people sleeping on islands in Karwan Bazar and many other places.

Sleeping on the islands and sidewalks may be risky. One may be run over by vehicles. This sort of accidents have happened in the neighbouring country, a famous film actor was driving car and at a point of time he lost control and accidentally hurt the people sleeping on the street. Accidents are accidents. Accidents just happen. See, the heavy vehicles like truck, bus often lose control, cross the line and damage the road dividers. This often occurs in airport road. If the dividers can be crossed then crossing the island and sidewalks is not a matter at all. In earlier times, in the days of kings and nawabs there were panthoshala and dhormoshala for the passers-by and travellers. The homeless people could also sleep there at night. Now where will they go? Where will they sleep? So they sleep wherever they can. They need living places.

Cantara Wali Ruhi
One-mail



PHOTO: WRITER

BSF atrocities

I very sincerely thank Saleh Ayub for his letter of September 3rd where he wrote, "Almost every alternate day a poor Bangladeshi is killed by the BSF (Border Security Force) of India." It is not only a matter of shame but also a matter of concern for the nation, whose citizens are getting killed on a regular basis by the neighbouring giant and the people keep on watching their movies, television channels, importing their goods and commodities and so on, as if rewarding them for their act of killing.

He also raised question why human rights organizations do not come forward and protest these killings as extra-judicial killings and take necessary steps to stop such act of killing. I think I have the answer to his question. Neither the human right organizations nor the politicians consider those poor victims as human except during elections. They are poor, helpless and they do not have a voice so they are the victims. In this world, powerless people hardly get justice.

Millions of powerless Iraqi people were killed by the powerful so they are not getting justice. When India claim Bangladesh as a friendly nation I remember love story of Bangla movies where the daughter of an industrialist tell a farmer's son that "I cannot survive without you" and vice versa. BSF is killing innocent Bangladeshis with bullets and the Indian government is destroying Bangladesh environment by Farakka dam and causing loss worth about thousands of crores of dollars every year. India helped Bangladesh during the war of independence but afterwards its behaviour was different.

Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain
BRAC University
Dhaka

Animal Farm scene

The cabinet's decision for the ministers to submit summary tax statements in violation of the AL's electoral manifesto of 2008 reminds me of 'Animal Farm' a fable by George Orwell where Napoleon, the pig, set out some principles to rally the animals against manor farm owner Mr. Jones. But when Napoleon's power was firmly established after exploiting the principle of equality, the principle that 'all animals are equal' were changed into 'all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others' to justify the ruling class's special privilege.

Tinku Lalpur
Natore

Revise the decision

The recent decision of 10% cut from any fixed deposit or sanchay patra with retrospective effect appears to be irrational. These who went for fixed deposit earlier than July entered into a kind of financial contract with the government that they would get certain percent of interest if they deposit such amount of money. But the sudden decision of the government of reducing the interest on money deposited earlier than July 2010 amounts to a breach of contract.

The government has full authority to take decisions and impose it considering the overall financial scenario of the country but that cannot be or should not be given retrospective effect. This decision adversely affects the position of the pension holders and small savers who survive on the interest of their hard earned money. The decision of cut will also badly affect the saving tendency of the people. The country is not under any financial emergency that the cut of interest should be mandatory.

Considering the points raised above I would request the decision makers to revise or modify the decision and show respect to the genuine demands of the people.

Dr. M. Shamsur Rahman
Retired Professor of Public Administration
Rajshahi University

Smoking in public places

Although smoking in public places has been banned by the government for quite some time now, people are still seen smoking anywhere and everywhere. Even during the holy month of Ramadan, smokers are lighting cigarettes and puffing out clouds of smoke onto the faces of other people. If I recall correctly, only a year ago, newspapers were flooded with reports of smokers being penalized publicly. Some wrongdoers also had to endure the humiliation of doing sit-ups in front of the ever curious general masses of Bangladesh. But now it seems everyone has forgotten that smoking publicly was ever a punishable crime.

Smoking is undoubtedly a most hazardous addiction. Cigarettes, biris and other tobacco leaf products are drugs in disguise and inhaling the smoke by burning these products can lead to cancer, tuberculosis, chronic bronchitis and many other diseases that even sound terrible! Smoking is not permitted in Islam and so every Muslim should avoid this practice for his or her whole life. Most of us already know the demerits of smoking yet we are either smoking ourselves or letting others do it.

The anti-smoking law

should be implemented properly and rigorously. The general people should also be aware so that no one can smoke in a public place. The cigarette manufacturers must 'Show The Real Picture' of the hazards of smoking. The government can also consider imposing tax on the sale of cigarettes. ADHUNIK can introduce an 'anti-smoke drive' to raise awareness amongst the general people.

There should be no place for smoking in a civilized country.

Shahriar Kabir
Eskaton Garden Govt. Officers' Quarters
Dhaka

Ershad's trial

With the High Court declaring the 7th amendment to the constitution illegal, H.M. Ershad's regime has turned illegal.

And that is cause for celebration, for democracy loving people can never support a military dictator's rule even if any beneficial activities for the country took place during that period. For instance many say that Ershad contributed a lot towards the development of infrastructure. In other words, he built roads, buildings, dams etc. By preaching his development activities many people try to justify his regime and indulge in indirect praise for the military strongman. It is true that the development activities took place during that period but that cannot justify his illegal grabbing of state power. He was the CMLA and also President at the same time from 1983 to 1986! If that is not illegal then one wonders what is.

A murderer may build schools, hospitals etc. But his basic crime of committing a murder can never be pardoned. A nation with values and morals can never condone the act of murder just because the murderer happens to have built some schools, hospitals etc.

So the people who try to glorify Ershad must take a closer look into the fact that overthrowing an elected president at gunpoint and grabbing state power is gross violation of the constitution that he took oath to uphold. Such dictators deserve a trial.

They need to be brought to book for their misdeeds. Ershad must be tried. If needed law must be made to that end. If he escapes trial this time, it will be a shame for the nation. We will not be establishing rule of law then. But as Mohammad Badrul Ahsan wrote in his article, "The Teflon Man," (DS Sept 3rd, 2010), Ershad can escape from any situation. If he escapes this time, probably we may not be able to punish him during his lifetime!

Wasif Wahed
One-mail