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World Tourism Day

This year the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) will celebrate the World Tourism Day on 27th September under the theme 'Tourism and Biodiversity' and China is the host country. The United Nations also declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a celebration of the value of biodiversity in our lives. The UN has called on all its member countries to take action in 2010 to safeguard the variety of life on earth. As the UN's specialised agency for tourism, UNWTO has long been working to maximize tourism's contribution to biodiversity conservation. UNWTO is also committed to the UN approach to provide a coherent response to the current challenges, including environmental sustainability, as one of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

This year's World Tourism Day theme will raise awareness among people about tourism development,

biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. Through this year's campaign, UNWTO draws everyone's attention to the most pressing global challenges of our time the sustainable use of environmental resources and reduction of extreme poverty. Biodiversity based tourism represents an important source of income for the world's poorer population, 70% of whom live in rural areas and depend directly on biodiversity for their survival and well-being.

As biodiversity is the tourism's natural capital, Bangladesh may emphasize the promotion of eco-tourism in the country. Here concerted efforts from both the govt and NGO bodies are required to protect the natural attractions from depletion. The tourism planners should always focus on how tourism can contribute positively to biodiversity conservation.

Ziaul Haque Howlader, DM, BPC



KOLU SHANTU/DRIKNEWS

Saga of 185 suitcases!

The front-page report published on 3rd September in a local English daily, quoting AL's acting general secretary, revives the saga of the epic South Arabian journey of Khaleida Zia, four years back in 2006. It has remained an intriguing mystery since then, which may be only time will reveal!

Not that Khaleida Zia will ever say what was packed in the 185 suitcases. However, possibly the weight of the 185 suitcases may be known which may give some idea of what may have been carried! May be it was best Bangladesh tea and our famous handloom produced head scarves and other Rajshahi silk goodies in special gift boxes, for the extended Saudi royal family, whose numbers can easily exceed 50 heads!

However, part of the suitcases had normal travel gear (dresses and personal toiletries etc.) which may need at most two suitcases per member of the Zia family in the entourage.

Whatever it was, the mystery will linger over the lifetime of Khaleida Zia.

Till then it will remain, a well guarded secret! Later it may be known through the people who had packed the suitcases. Surely all 185 suitcases were not packed by Khaleida Zia personally!

Acourious citizen
Dhaka

Priest of violence

A priest of Florida, USA, announced his plan to burn copies of the Holy Qur'an in protest of the 9/11 massacre, after long nine years of the unfortunate incident. It may ignite a new wave of hatred

among the believers. If some of the Muslims are responsible for attacking the World Trade Centre, all the Muslims cannot be made liable for that. When Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq or attacks on Afghanistan, no Muslim ever burnt any copy of the Holy Bible.

Ahmed Munir
Purana Paltan
Dhaka

Intellectual bankruptcy?

This refers to the government's move of engaging experts from multilateral institutions in the consultative groups of government and NGO development efforts. It is unfortunate that even after 40 years of independence we look to foreigners for guidance. I echo the question, "Are we intellectually bankrupt?"

In perfecting the parliamentary system, an Indian statesperson, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said: "A democratic executive must satisfy two conditions: (1) it must be a stable executive and (2) it must be a responsible executive. Unfortunately, it has not been possible so far to devise a system which can ensure both in equal degree. The American and the Swiss systems give more stability but less responsibility. But the British system on the other hand gives you more responsibility but less stability. In England, where the parliamentary system prevails, the assessment of responsibility of the executive is both daily and periodic. The daily assessment is done by members of parliament through questions, resolutions, no-confidence motions, adjournment motions, and debates on addresses. Periodic assessment is done by the electorate at the time of the election which may take

place every five years or earlier."

What we see in our motherland. The ruling government is not living up to its commitment of 'reforms with a human face with the slogan of Vision 2021 - Charter of Change.' It doesn't look like it will go the way of 'Bangladesh Shining.' It is gratifying to note that non-governmental organisations and civil societies, media and think tanks have raised their voice against the appointment of people from multilateral agencies on the development agencies' panels. But where was their faith in the Bangladeshi intellect when all these years some of them were flaunting the different world commission on human rights and overall development report a document produced by foreigners as the bible on development efforts management in Bangladesh?

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Traffic jams

Travelling in Dhaka city has virtually become a nightmare. All the roads are clogged. The cars are stuck bumper to bumper, the engines release a tremendous amount of heat, drivers honk their horns incessantly, some of the old vehicles let go black smoke, vehicles break lanes and try and enter the ones that are moving faster. At rush hour, a distance of three to four kilometres can take about an hour to reach. Destinations like Gulistan, Motijheel, Old Dhaka, Maghbazar, Malibagh, Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmondi are nightmares for commuters from any point in the city. Especially frustrating are the points like Hotel Sonargaon crossing, the road in front of the Prime Minister's

office, Maghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh, Khilghaon, Rampura, Elephant Road, Science Laboratory, Green Road, Jatrabari, Sayedabad, Mohakhali and old parts of the city mainly at Dholaikhal, Postagola, Bangshal, Chowkbazar and Imamganj.

People miss important appointments, people are late for work, children and old people fall sick, not to mention the painful site that most of us choose to ignore a blaring ambulance stuck in the middle of a traffic jam trying desperately to find a way. The heat released from the engines, especially the private cars that use air conditioners, increase the overall temperature of the city. Continued exposure to pollution from the streets during traffic jams, will have grave consequences in the future health of these people. The economy, meanwhile, is losing out in millions because of traffic jams. Government officials estimate a loss of around Tk 15,000 crore annually because of traffic jams. The government has introduced a detailed area plan for Dhaka. Bangladesh has proclaimed an order to redesign the capital city to prevent flooding and ease the traffic congestion in the city, requiring reclamation of 3,000 acres of land occupied by influential real estate companies, earlier dubbed as "land pirates" by senior government leaders. Everyone should agree with this new proposal and it must be implemented as soon as possible, because the traffic issue is becoming excruciating!

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Only a dream?

We, the people of our country, are in a dream to live in a digital Bangladesh in future. But the present condition of our country really disappoints us. What do we mean by digital Bangladesh? We mean a country which is free from traffic jams, theft, robbery, hijacking, load shedding, free from pollution and so on. The government has taken necessary steps to solve these problems. But alas! Still crimes are being committed on a regular basis. And there is also unbearable traffic jam in the city roads and load shedding occurs frequently, even on holidays.

But, still I believe that the prime minister and the ministers will look into these problems with a view to solving them.

M. Tapon Arif Picasso
ST. Joseph Higher Secondary School
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Sinister plan

Pastor Terry Jones, of the Dove World Outreach centre (a non denominational church in Florida), announced his plan to mourn the death of September 11 victims through the burning of the Holy Koran. He claimed that he intends to send a message to the perpetrators of the September 11 incident by doing this and also express his grievances against Islam and Shariah law. His act however holds all Muslims (for whom The Koran is sacred) around the world liable for the heinous act of September 11. However, his rejection of Islam as a religion has already been made clear while he wrote his controversial book "Islam is of the devil" and made it available on the internet for sale at some of his websites. Other merchandise with the title of the book is also available. It seems to be the ordinary that he has already achieved what he has desired: publicity and profit-

ability of his enterprise. However, what Pastor Terry Jones has failed to realize is that by his deeds he not only expressed his rejection and hatred towards the religion but has also alienated himself from Muslim population. In an interview with ABC news, President Mr. Barack Obama has clearly expressed his distaste towards such an act. However, mere distaste towards this clear outrage is not enough to absorb the shockwaves which such an insane act will send through out the globe. In these times when social harmony is being restored.

Finally to Mr. Terry Jones: 'Be reasonable'.
Zulfiker Hyder
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Abuse of power

There are some educational institutions in the country where some people have been given the power of running them. Regrettably, most of the members of the managing committees seem to be just showing their monetary power, instead of looking after the institutions properly. Recently, an ugly incident occurring in an institute disappointed me. One of the committee members behaved very rudely with a female staff presently serving an orphanage.

We draw the attention of the authorities concerned to look into the matter sincerely and take the necessary steps in this regard without any delay.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Mirsara, Chittagong

No dearth!

The other day, the electronic media reported that there is no dearth of any goods and services in the capital, rather there is a surplus of everything i.e. gas, water, electricity etc.

What is the mystery? Policy makers, please wake up from your slumber before it is too late. All efforts shall go in vain, if this issue is not addressed properly. No matter how much taxpayers' money you spend to alleviate the sufferings of the city dwellers, it shall come to no avail unless the trend is reversed i.e. 2000 people going back to their respective homes a day, spend the money in providing them with what they come for to the capital, it is the only solution.

It is also high time for the nation to realize the bleak future awaiting the nation. Given its size, Bangladesh has already a surplus population of about 100 million. In order to survive a catastrophic disaster, the country has to adopt a one child policy right away. Only this can ensure a better future for the nation.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Reckless driving in Dhanmondi

Reckless driving or dangerous driving is a major traffic rule violation and this can be seen often in Dhanmondi area where the youths are always in competition with each other putting the pedestrians' life at stake.

It has become very difficult to go for a walk in front of your own house these days as you will encounter at least 3 or 4 speeding motorbikes or cars whizzing past you with powerful beaming headlights which sometimes temporarily blind you. These people are so uncouth that they don't even bother while driving their vehicles. Our children can't go out for a walk as it becomes too risky for them to be on foot these days. I live in the road where our Honourable Prime



FIROZ GAZI / DRIKNEWS

The anthrax challenge

The anthrax situation is worsening day by day. In the last few days, the disease has spread in Narayanganj, Dhamrai and the outskirts of the city. The number of the infected has since crossed four digit, as new cases have been reported from Chittagong, Meherpur and Chaudanga districts in a single day.

Therefore, anthrax is now a public health concern of worrisome magnitude, particularly because it is reportedly spreading through infected cattle. The steps so far taken by the government appear highly superficial and lack intelligent approach to the problem. For example, checkpoints have reportedly been set up on the highways to stop movement of the infected cattle and civil surgeons have been asked to remain ready to treat anthrax-infected people. The government has also taken emergency measures like cancelling the Eid holidays of the livestock department officials and employees. However, it has been reported in the media that a driver of a truck carrying cattle to the city said that he was not stopped at any checkpoint while coming to Dhaka, although the authorities claimed these have been set up. So, there are major loopholes in the arrangements so far taken.

What appears even funnier is that a few days ago an hon'ble minister publicly urged the people (through the electronic media) to cook beef in the pressure cooker or better not to take beef at all! Did the minister ever thought as to how many people in rural Bangladesh can afford to buy pressure cookers? And again if the people just stop taking beef all of a sudden, over a million people would lose their avocation, as their livelihoods are directly related with this industry, right from rearing of cattle to preparing meats for the consumers across the country and again preserving hides and skin which ultimately fetch valuable foreign exchange.

Hon'ble minister's solution reminds

us of the old adage that if you have a headache, just cut you head and there will be no headache at all!

Anthrax may be made into chemical compound, which may be used for spreading the disease. During the US-Iraq war, the Iraqis used anthrax against the American soldiers. The US, however, immediately developed vaccine against anthrax. Anthrax in chemical form can be used in cow to spread the disease.

It is absolutely necessary for the Bangladesh government to find out the real causes of this calamity. I would urge the top brass of the government to immediately probe the matter with top most urgency and an enquiry committee be formed with technical experts, state intelligence personnel and learned Members of Parliament. The committee may find out, inter alia, why anthrax has spread into Bangladesh only and not in our neighbouring countries like India and Burma? And whether there has been any sabotage hatched by any vested quarter to destabilise the present government or to compel the government not to try the collaborators who were against our liberation and who committed crime against humanity. Whether the disease has the roots in the animal feeds containing anthrax and imported by any unscrupulous importer of our country must also be found. Finally it has to be revealed if there is any foreign hand in it.

Meanwhile, I would urge the government to take immediate steps to vaccinate all the cattle population of the country and import quality vaccine from the United States (as this country has the vast experience of dealing with such catastrophe). The government should also make the present stock of vaccine available to the affected through all the public and private hospitals and clinics across the country.

Hafeejul Alam
A former civil servant

Minister's party office is situated but those culprits hardly care about that. This should have been the most secure place in Dhanmondi but we are facing danger every now and then instead.

Terrible and fatal accidents are what you get or cause when you do not follow the traffic rules. Human and material losses are the price we pay because of careless and reckless driving.

I think we need more speed breakers in the residential areas than any other places as you can't stop those offenders from showing off. I am requesting our MP and to the road construction department for immediate construction of another speed-breaker in front of the Prime Minister's party office as well as other residential areas to prevent rash driving.

Hasib
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Syria and Hezbollah

This week Saad al-Hariri, the Lebanese PM, retracted his former claim that Syria was behind the assassination of his father, Rafik al-Hariri, the Prime Minister of Lebanon in 2005. The assassination in 2005 led to massive protests in Lebanon and the eventual withdrawal of Syrians troops after almost 30 years in Lebanon.

Many people would ask why Syrian troops were present in Lebanon anyway? This goes back to the Lebanese civil war of the 70's and early 80's when the Christian minorities were overwhelmed by the burgeoning Muslim community and felt an erosion of their political and economic power.

Syria made its presence felt and had remained in Lebanon ever since. Despite the enormous protests for the withdrawal of Syria in 2005 with the inevitable backing of America, there were an equal number of Lebanese who wanted Syria to stay, recognizing its presence as a stabilizing force within Lebanon.

Syria pleaded its innocence throughout but its voice was quelled. There was no hard evidence to prove Syria's involvement in the assassination even though there was an initial UN report in 2005 which implicated Syrian security forces in the attack (which was subsequently quashed). The accusation of the UN together with American and international pressure forced Bashar al Assad, the Syrian president, to peacefully withdraw troops from Lebanon.

Now 5 years later the present Lebanese PM and the son of the slain former PM, has retracted his former accusation against Syria and said it had nothing to do with the assassination. He further

went on to say that the accusation was purely politically motivated.

There is certainly no hard evidence to support Saad's previous claim. Now with the new Obama administration, which has a less isolationist policy toward Syria, together with tacit approval of Syria escalating importance, it has emerged as a much stronger regional player. Recognizing this, Hariri has made no less than 4 official visits to Syria since he took office.

Syria has always covertly backed Hezbollah. We cannot forget that it was Hezbollah that saved the day in 2006 when Israeli troops made their illegal incursions into southern Lebanon. The then fragile official Western backed government, led by Emile Lahoud's ineffective government troops, were powerless to defend its citizens and state against the Israeli onslaught.

The people of Lebanon, be they Christian, Muslim or Druze, common folk or ministers cannot forget what Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah did for them. In the aftermath of the fight, in which Israel won no decisive victory or land grab, his organization was responsible for the reconstructing of people homes, and lives giving out food, money and organizing jobs at the cost of millions of dollars.

Nasrallah, has this week stated that, as the PM has retracted his former accusation, it is inevitable that Hezbollah will now be blamed for the assassination. Let's see what the special tribunal which has finally been set up in the Hague (March 2009) to investigate the matter comes up. To date it has not been able to implicate Syria in the killing.
Deeba Sajjad
One-mail

Blair lied, millions died

In case of telling lies, Tony Blair, the ex-British prime minister, is undoubtedly the champion; none is equal to him. He started telling lies on multifarious subjects right after getting the power of PM, albeit he is an ex now, still he is continuing it. Thus some people call him 'Mr. Lair' cutting 'B' from 'Blair'.

Once, his forefathers had the ability to capture the maximum area of this earth. They fetched and gathered properties in England looting from other countries. As the USA is now the super power, the British generally follow them to earn and gain something. In the matter of attacking Iraq and Afghanistan Blair gave his full support towards Buss. The B&B Co.

(Bush & Blair) attacked Iraq and killed thousands of innocent people on the false pretext that Saddam had nuclear weapons. Bush was dull-headed, Blair spoke for him. So, people called him 'foreign minister' of Bush.

Recently he was awarded with shoes, eggs etc by some protestors in Dublin, capital of Ireland. Bush was awarded with shoes in Iraq but in case of Blair, the matter happened in a Christian country.

Blair with his wife visited Bangladesh some days back. Our two lady prime ministers (present and ex) were happy to meet and talk with him. We welcomed him with flowers instead of brick-bats!!
Rashid Harun, Dhaka



AFP