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Parliamentary democracy

We dream of a country free from poverty, hunger, pollution and climatic hazards. After our independence we could not achieve much success due to military dictatorship. After we have regained the parliamentary democracy in 1991, the people of Bangladesh thought that the country would now follow the path of democracy. But this dream was not fulfilled due to lack of good leadership.

Twenty years have passed since then, but there is no significant change in the trends of our politics. Today the people of Bangladesh are divided into many 'isms' and for that our politicians cannot take the right decision. If the government takes

any step for the welfare of the country, the opposition party criticises it. We have to understand the real meaning of parliamentary democracy.

Mutual understanding and trust have to be engendered between the govt and the main opposition party. For making a real digital Bangladesh, the govt. and the opposition party should work together. The govt. has to be accountable and transparent in all its activities. Every citizen of the country has to be conscious of his or her civil rights. That is how the dream of a prosperous Bangladesh would come true.

Eng. Md. Meheub Haque
BUET



Ominous signs

I am a superstitious person and this even grew stronger while living in Houston. How could I possibly refuse to be influenced when I found the scientifically advanced Houstonians believe in such things?

This morning while crossing the bridge connecting the two parts of Dhanmondi, I came across a frightening sight; a driver of a car was dragged out and severely beaten by another person for hitting his car while crossing the bridge. In a few seconds the number of people beating him mercilessly increased.

When I crossed over to the other side of the bridge, I witnessed a similar incident, this time right in front of the cop on duty. Seeing the helplessness of the cop, I lowered the window of my car and yelled at him, "This is how the country is going to get destroyed if things continue to deteriorate like this".

Let us take a look back. A few days ago a train ramed into some buses causing deaths and injuries, critics may say that was an accident. Well, apparently it was an accident, but these are all ominous signs of a greater danger that would strike the nation. People have become aggressively desperate. It is an ominous sign likely to cause a

serious blow to the nation if corrective measures are not taken timely.

To save the nation, please decentralise the administration at the earliest. People definitely will move out of the capital if means of livelihood are made available at their respective district towns. This is the miracle cure to save the nation, which the founding father could foresee many years ago. I only regret that he had to die before he could implement his plan. The country would have been absolutely different today.

Saleh Ayub
On e-mail

Ayodhya verdict

In 1949 an idol was placed inside the Babri Mosque and later in 1992 the Hindu fanatics, blinded by wild faith that Ram was born at that site though it is not a historical fact, demolished it. Now the Indian court in its rule doles out two-thirds of the site to the Hindus, as if a reward for desecrating and demolishing a historic mosque. However, I'm not surprised, given that Indian politics is highly charged with antagonism towards the minority communities and the Indian Muslims powerless from division into different denominations.

Abdus Subhan
Lalpur
Natore

Who will amend the constitution?

President Zillur Rahman's appeal to senior officials to discharge their duties according to the constitution and rise above partisan politics is significant. But for this to happen, the appointment of senior officials should undergo a change.

The people hardly get a glimpse of the "mission of righteousness" the president is attributing to the office. It is for the political parties to respond to his call and help to restore the dignity of the office.

President's wise counsel deserves praise. But to act non-partisan, civil servants need job security.

When a party comes to power, it replaces civil servants for obvious reasons. As long as this practice exists, it will be difficult for civil servants to rise above party politics. Instead of reminding the civil servants of the sanctity of their office, the President could have emphasised the need to advice the ministries concerned to select civil servants from among those who have no party affiliation. Though he has come from a political background, he is the right person to moot such a proposal. Unless the practice of partisan appointment is dispensed with, such confer-

ences will serve only as rituals.

However, experience shows that the constitutional provisions are insufficient to deliver the desired results. With civil servants reluctant to change their style of functioning, the alternative is to amend the constitution to withdraw the unlimited discretion and absolute immunity granted to them, and to enforce accountability for their actions and inaction. But today's legislators are tomorrow's presidents or prime ministers. Who will amend the constitution?

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Helping the Bhola slum dwellers

Ariquzzaman's feature and the photographs with it, published in The Daily Star on 1st October, is a human tragedy. It is for us, the better off in our society, to come forward to help these desperately needy people. I wonder if some interested persons from Bhola will take the lead to organise help, and lobby the government to arrange a place to build their new homes.

You, as a leading daily of Bangladesh can take the lead like you have done on other occasions, including financing needy students to get a admission to college/technical schools, where Rotary Clubs are also participating. After all, "drops of water and drops of sand, make the mighty ocean, and the pleasant land!"

The Daily Star, some concerned persons and the MP from that constituency, can all get together, and set the ball rolling, and convince the government to provide them some 'khas' land at low rent, in greater Dhaka city area, as elsewhere they will not be able to earn a living.

A move in this direction for these suffering fellow beings will surely be a boon for them. I hope some of your readers will volunteer and come forward to help this humanitarian cause. Should something be organised, I will help in whatever way possible.

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

BCL

Awami League leaders are not taking any punitive action against the BCL cadres. At present the BCL can do anything they want. They are now above the law of the land. The AL leaders should think seriously about this issue.

Raju Kumar Das
Dept. of Business Administration
SUST, Sylhet

Autism

When I think of the lives of the mentally and physically challenged, I feel lucky that I am leading a normal life. Previously we were not aware of mental disorders and we used to think that people who act abnormally are mad and should be put into mental asylums. Autism is a brain disorder that often results in impaired thinking, feeling and social functioning for a lifetime. Experts have estimated that 3 to 6 children out of every 1000 have autism. Males are 4 times more likely to have it than females. Girls with autism have severe symptoms and greater cognitive impairment. Three major distinctive behaviours in them are as follows:

- (i) They have difficulties with social interaction.
- (ii) Show problems with verbal and non verbal communication.
- (iii) Exhibit repetitive behaviour or narrow, obsessive interests.

Unfortunately, scientists have failed to identify the cause of this deadly brain disorder. There is no cure for autism, but regular therapies and behavioural intervention are designed to remedy specific symptoms and thereby bring improvements. In many fortunate children, symptoms improve with treatment and age, and some grow up to lead normal or near normal lives. During the period of adolescence, some children with autism become depressed and may experience behavioural problems. Parents of such victims must be supportive and provide them treatment accordingly.

My only motive of writing about autism is to raise awareness and request the society to help the victims and the victims' families, and try to include them in our societal activities and not make them social outcasts.

Nahreen Rahman
Baridhara, Dhaka

Ridiculous reception!

The Prime Minister of the country has been awarded by the UN for achieving one of the Millennium Development Goals, that is reducing child mortality. The target was fixed in 2000, and the then incumbent government got only one year to run the country. In 2001, BNP came to power and ruled the country for five years. Then the caretaker government ruled the country for almost two years. The present government has been at the helm only for nineteen months. So, the credit should go to all the governments that ruled the country since 2000.

Another point is, from the time of PM's arrival the sufferings that the people of the city, including the students, went through was intolerable and totally unacceptable.

My question is - was the reception so important which eventually made the people suffer? The award giving ceremony was telecast in the media, was it not enough? Besides, it was not her personal achievement; rather it was our national achievement.

The money the ruling party spent for arranging the gathering could be spent for the rehabilitation of a good number of destitute children who sleep on the streets with their stomach empty. Did anybody think of it? If they did, Bangladesh could have obtained awards for achieving some of the goals within the timeframe fixed by the UN.

Anis Rahman
Zahurul Haque Hall
Dhaka University

Indecent attack

The Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim went into retirement recently. A farewell ceremony was arranged for him where some other justices, the attorney general, president of the bar and other dignitaries were present. But the pathetic part of the farewell was that he was told off harshly by none other than the attorney general himself, which crossed all acceptable boundaries of nicety and courtesy (DS: 30.09.10).

I would like to thank the departing Chief Justice for his not being equally indecent in replying to the harsh words. He kept silent. And that was, probably, the wise answer to the indecent attack.

Ahmed Munir
Purana Palton
Dhaka

Lack of motivation

Bangladesh cricket team has been playing ODI matches for more than a decade, but still they lack consistency. I believe the reason behind this is lack of motivation. We should watch how the world champions play. The difference is - in adverse times, the world champions don't get upset and thus overcome the situation, but even when the situation is in our favour, we often fail to perform well because of our complacency.

Arif Faisal
St' Joseph Higher Secondary School
Dhaka

Corporal punishment

A letter entitled 'Physical punishment in schools' published in The Daily Star on October 4, 2010, drew my attention and I would like to write something in this regard.

The writer deeply expressed his grief as corporal punishment is still being practiced in the classrooms. He also requested to punish the Head Teachers and teachers who don't abide by the law and send them to jail, if necessary. I would like to advise him to have patience. It is not clear when physical punishment was first introduced in the educational institutions. But it is an age-old tradition. This bad tradition will take a bit time to be fully eliminated. Though it is still being practiced, it is gradually disappearing. Nevertheless, before imposing the law, the govt. should have ensured some institutional facilities. The classrooms of most of the schools are over-populated. It is really difficult for a teacher to control a classroom consisting of 70 or more students. So, the classrooms should not be

Arsenic pollution

Recent surveys show that about 80 million people of the country are living under the risk of arsenic poisoning as the ground-water of a vast region is contaminated with arsenic. Arsenic pollution is not only causing serious health hazards, but also affecting the environment and creating social problems. More than two million tube-wells are presently being used as the source of drinking water in Bangladesh. Out of those, only fifty thousands have so far been brought under inspection by various government and non-government agencies. The actual picture of the severity of arsenic pollution is yet to be revealed, as the entire country could not be surveyed till now.



Arsenic pollution has been creating serious social problems. The affected people have virtually become isolated from the society as nobody wants to keep any social contact with them. Nobody wants to marry any affected person. Some affected housewives were divorced by their husbands. Affected school children are not allowed to attend classes. Due to ignorance, the villagers consider the disease as curse of nature. Arsenic pollution is now considered as a great threat to the future generation. Bangladesh has become the most vulnerable place with regards to arsenic pollution. So, this is the high time to make people aware of the problem and take steps to combat it. Otherwise, nothing can stop this silent killer.

Tanha Kashfia Kate
Uttara Model Town
Dhaka

wait till the last minute to complete any job. The AL leaders should realise that they have zero prospect of coming back to power if they do not fulfil their commitments about the power sector, infrastructure development and administrative reforms. On the other hand, AL should also realise that a pro-BNP group within the administration is working actively to disturb the government's development efforts so that the benefits may be taken in the next election.

A concerned citizen
Dhaka

Legal education and research

Legal education in Bangladesh has been experiencing a downward trend for a long time. We need lawyers with good legal knowledge and skills for our legal and judicial system.

Are our law schools ready to meet the emerging demand at all? We have been producing a large number of law graduates every year. But the majority of them are under-qualified or non-qualified in terms of their legal knowledge and skills in

Electoral pledges

It seems that the AL leaders have forgotten about their electoral pledges. This is our culture. We waste time and

research, analysis, language, and presentation. And thus we are lagging behind in the global competition.

The obsolete curriculum, traditional teaching and examination methods, lack of practical and clinical aspects in the curriculum, huge gap between teachers and students, teachers' engagement in outside activities, lack of interest, motivation, opportunity and skills for research and publications are some of the reasons behind this downward trend.

A handful of law schools at public and private universities offer courses on legal research and writing, and clinical legal education. The standard of the curriculum in these institutions is not beyond questions. The private law colleges, which are producing the majority of law graduates, don't offer similar courses. That is why a great number of lawyers (and future judges) are coming out with no skills in legal research, analysis, and writing.

Dr. Uttam Kumar Das
Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Awareness needed

Traffic jam has made our life miserable. We have been told to use public buses rather than private transports. But, are there any good quality buses? Is there any space left for us in those buses? The government should put good quality buses on the city roads, create effective traffic rules and appoint more traffic police to implement those rules. It is also necessary to take the rickshaws off the main roads. A bus can carry 60 to 70 passengers and it requires less space, whereas only four rickshaws occupy the

same space and are able to carry only 8 to 10 passengers. There should be lanes fixed for buses with bus stops to pick up passengers and not to block the road. The govt. should persuade the public to use the footbridges and zebra crossings. To make people aware of the traffic rules use of advertisements will be highly effective.

Choudhury Tasnim
Aga Khan School
Dhaka



Reading books



I read the excellent article "Boi Para on the Wane" in the Star Magazine which has given a true picture of the bookstores. In this regard I have a few more things to add.

First, we must admit the reality that a large number of people of our country are very poor. How many people have the money to buy books? There is a very famous saying that nobody can be wise with an empty stomach.

Secondly, the massive use of internet has made people more mechanical. Some books can be downloaded through the internet.

Thirdly, people have become very

commercial now. They read only those books which increase their professional skills. Some people think that reading literature is nothing but a sheer waste of time.

The practice of reading books should never be underestimated. It is a way to broaden our mind. We should also keep in mind the famous saying, "book is the true friend of a man."

Pradip Das
Lecturer
BHIPI, CRP