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Optimum use of land in BD



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

Our per capita land is seriously scarce. Therefore, we must always be extra cautious, smart and innovative in planning and taking up projects that involve huge land mass. Case in point is the proposed Bangabandhu City and Airport. The project is needed and is really grand in its scale. But do we have so much of land mass to go ahead? I am not against having an airport with future needs. But I strongly feel we are simply rushing to 'launch' such programme. Local people are apprehensive about its impact on their life and economy. They do not see any good in mass displacement and local culture is likely to be disturbed. Worst of all, most of the land lost to the mega project will be arable land. Farmers will lose their livelihood and a lot

of crops will be lost as a result. We can not forget how important is our food security, when every hour there are new mouths to be fed!

Possible alternatives to the project:
---Delay the project to be reconsidered after more surveys.
---Choose new area of less farming importance and minimum displacement.
---Upgrade/expand the current airport to serve another twelve / fifteen years.
---Let the aviation sector evolve gradually to generate professionalism and take new/greater responsibility.

I request the authorities to consider the local situations and implications, vis a vis alternatives.

Syed Imtiaz Ali, On e-mail

Setting up permanent power plants



PHOTO: STAR

This vital matter was very rightly taken up in a front page news report published in a local English daily on December 29th. It is a cause for worry, that no prompt positive action is being taken to expedite the important matter of issuing letter of intent and sign the agreement for setting up four already government approved power plants. As stated in the report, Summit Group and GE Energy & Associates have been selected by the cabinet committee for purchase, to set up three power plants for generating 1350MW of power, while a Malaysian Group is to set up one rated at 150 to 225 MW in Bhola.

The signing of the agreements and issue of work order is stalled over the last six months! The files on this subject is lying somewhere in the bottomless government bureaucracy! Meanwhile people suffer daily with short supply of much needed electric power, effecting both urban and rural areas. What happened to the government's pre-election commitment that rapid action on power capacity expansion will be taken?

Surely the suffering public deserves an answer from the elected government for this delay in signing the contract. Is it not possible to have the contract signed within January 2011? Will the authorities kindly clarify this important public matter?
S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka

Need for strong Islamic media

This refers to the report, "OIC chief affirms need for strong Islamic media." Unfortunately, especially after Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Muslims are stereotyped as extremists, fundamentalists, fascists, terrorists and suicide bombers. A school of thought in the West play double standards, and some of their remarks and comments naturally fuel Muslim anger. Muslim anger is also fueled by the deaths of over a million Iraqis following the US invasion and Washington's support for Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, and the ongoing US occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries.

Islam is a religion of peace and justice. It is compatible with a modern secular society. It is a way of life based on equality, truth, compassion and justice. The verses concerning jihad are frequently misquoted, mistranslated or taken out of context by those who deliberately or erroneously seek to slander Islam and spread hatred toward its followers.

Islam is a misunderstood religion. We can only challenge the deceptions, misinformation and negative discourse about us through our own media. We must create a network of positive reporting by using the latest technologies. We must present our own version of events, stories, realities and experiences, and not just rely on foreign wire services.

Muhammed Jamil Ather
Karachi, Pakistan

Bureaucratic efficiency

The style of governance has changed for the worse (compared to the British era). Elected political regimes in Dhaka go after new and mega projects, for publicity, and not for scheduled completion of the projects. The efficiency of the daily routine jobs is neglected.

The efficiency level of the bureaucracy is not being probed seriously, for better and quicker public service. The culture of OSD is being patronised; and regular transfer system is comatose. Political interference in the public offices is the norm of the times.

The works at the route levels (operation and maintenance) is not being monitored seriously. There is too much pen-pushing around, especially at the Secretariat level, (this clerical mentality is out of date in today's digitalized environment). The counter services are poor and outdated, (in Malaysia for example, I found officers manning the public

counters, assisted by the clerical staff in the background.

The elected politicians feel that they were above the law; and dictate terms at all levels, leading to corrupt practices and sycophancy. That is why we have taxis that do not use the installed fare meters; dilapidated buses and trucks are driven by fake drivers; and black marketing thrive at all levels. The parliaments are just show pieces in the newly emerging countries.

The human factor in the public services has to be motivated, so that it exudes dedication. And a mind shift is required to enhance the quality of the public services.

A Mahasen, Dhaka

Voice against oppression

Like many others I also love the heart-touching and soothing ghazals of Mehdi Hasan. One of my favourite numbers from among his numerous songs is:

"Raqs zanjeer pehen kar vi kiya jaata hai..."

(One can also make to dance in shackles...)

The other day when I was listening to the above song of Mehdi Hasan, a legend associated to this particular number flashed across my mind. Some may know about this while others may not...so I would like to share. The legend goes something like this During the dictatorial regime of General Ayub Khan in late sixties, Iran's Shah Pehalvi came on a visit to Pakistan. Ayub Khan asked the then most popular film actress Neelo to come and perform for Shah Pehalvi. But Neelo refused to come and perform. Neelo's refusal made Ayub Khan and Co. much angry. Police was sent to bring Neelo. On this, Neelo was terribly disturbed and tried to commit suicide.

Realising this odd incident, Habib Jalib a reputed Urdu poet wrote a poem titled "Neelo". Neelo's husband, a prominent writer, producer and film director Riaz Shahid adopted the poem as a song for his box office hit film "Zarqa". He recorded the song in Mehdi Hasan's voice.

Then many days had passed, so many general came and gone in Pakistan, but the legend remained vivid. And the song "Raqs zanjeer pehen..." is still played and heard by the people in the sub-continent and outside. It is a popular song symbolising voice against oppression!

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Pakistan scene

After a female suicide bomber killed 43 in Pakistan recently, The Lahore based Daily Times ran an editorial on Dec 26 on the incident.

Women were victims of the Taliban during their reign of terror in Afghanistan, and yet a Pakistani woman suicide bomber slaughtered 43 innocent Pakistani civilians. This shows the virus of fanaticism is also spreading among the females. It seems that the Taliban have been able to brainwash women into believing that by slaughtering fellow Pakistanis in the name of religion, they are doing a great service to Islam.

Like Alice in Wonderland, where everyone is mad and you are likely to be mocked if you behave like a normal human being, Pakistan has become an ultimate madhouse where all sane persons are threatened.

Mahatma Gandhi once remarked: "Those who hate others, end up hating themselves." Evidently, Pakistanis, in their blind hatred for India and America, have turned against each other. They need someone like Gandhi to teach them the lessons of love and tolerance.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Why they talk too much?

After a landslide victory in December 2009 election, the present government has spent two years in office. One of the main reasons behind this victory was the immense corruption of the BNP-led 4 party alliance, of which the countrymen were informed by the media and some other watchdog organizations like TIB. When the AL-led grand alliance spoke against corruption before the election, we thought they would really do something to eradicate corruption. But of late, comments of some ministers of the government regarding TIB's annual report have raised a question in my mind whether they really want to do anything to curb corruption. Why are they (some ministers who seemingly want to be jack of all trades) so eager to talk to media about each and every issue?

If the government finds any travesty of truth in TIB's report, they should face it legally, not by absurd comments which only annoy the common people. I think when any government declines to hear anything against their regime, it obviously proves their failure.

Galib Ashraf, DU

New traffic rule

I don't think restricting cars to ply the Dhaka streets is practical without creating first class and safe public transportation in the city. The present state of public transportation is highly unsafe, unhygienic and very unappealing.

I myself was mugged inside a bus. The drivers are poorly trained and the conditions of the vehicles are beyond description. The government can make parking very expensive, collect tolls from busy roads, etc., which will automatically discourage motorists from bringing their cars on the roads.

Aminur Rahim
Dhaka

Price of rice

To arrest the rising trend of rice price the government has started OMS of rice. Under the open market economy this sort of intervention is appreciable. OMS is a method to arrest the price hike, especially when the situation is not entirely dependent on normal supply and demand.

But instead of continuing OMS at this peak harvesting time, the government should think about the reasons why rice is not cheap at the market at this time? Are there any vested interest groups who are working against the free flow of market? Is any group or syndicate working to manipulate the whole situation?

Under the above context I would like to suggest the authorities to take the following steps for the greater interest of the country:

1. To ensure border security so that no food grains can be smuggled out of the country.
2. Banning the export of food grains.
3. Supervising the activities of our rice millers and traders.

Md. Habib Mansur
Mymensingh

Rice is our main food. But the present government has failed to control its price. Majority of our population is living below the poverty line. I wonder how they will survive when the price of 1kg rice is Tk. 40/-! When will the government take some steps to reduce the price of rice?

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
BBA
SUST, Sylhet

Unrealistic ideas to resolve traffic jam



AMDADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

The article published in The Daily Star on December 29, 2010 entitled 'Finance minister on traffic congestion' has rightfully identified the true nature of our country. If we wonder why things do not work in our country, it is because we perhaps, do not really want them to work.

Surely, I believe the government has NO right to deny the RIGHT of the citizens. Every citizen has the right to move freely. If the government fails to control the unruly bus drivers, transport company owners, rickshaw pullers, irresponsible car drivers, and of course the corrupt traffic police officers; it simply cannot transfer the liability onto public.

The government can, however, impose restrictions in the form of charges for using certain roads at certain times to reduce the number

of vehicles on roads. But before that it must succeed in managing its own force, the traffic controllers. Then it must enforce traffic laws vigorously. Fines for traffic violations must be high enough to deter people from disobeying the traffic rules. There is the option of making HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes on major roads like the Airport road. This lane will only be reserved for cars which carry a minimum of four passengers. If any vehicle is found with fewer passengers, it must be fined heavily. If this seems unsuitable for Dhaka, it does not need to be done. But under no circumstance should the government impose any rules that deny the public of their right.

Rahat, Malibag, Dhaka