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Government's electoral pledges

Even if the ruling party tries to blame the results of the municipal elections on other factors such as rebel candidates, it is quite apparent from the result that the popularity of the party does really seem to be on the decline. The party which came to power with a landslide victory in the 2008 general elections is losing focus within 2 years of its tenure. There is a tendency within the members of the ruling party to simply ignore the "reading on the wall" and to be in a state of denial and come up with explanations that are sometimes irrational.

The government has not been able to implement its electoral pledges to the extent people expected. There have been achievements in certain areas like education, war crimes trial etc. However, its failures have also piled up. The government failed to change the same culture of politicisation of administration; failed to curb the violent activities of the front organisations; has not managed to bring substantial improvements in the power sector a key infrastructural requirement if our country is to receive more investment and subsequent higher economic growth; unfairly being biased towards the ruling party members; failing to monitor the share market plunge and also price hike of essentials and more.

Hence, actions have to speak louder in the remaining 3 years than just trying to utilise the past glory and indulging in rhetoric.
Wasif Wahed

Please, do something



A.M.AHAD / DRINKNEWS

Recently, an extremely shocking news item in one of the daily newspapers traumatised me. According to the news, on 23 January, some hoodlums in Iswardi, Pabna killed an SSC examinee named Sorna Khatun (15) after gang raping her. A gang of 12 kidnapped the girl from her home at gun point in presence of her family members and forcibly raped her. Afterwards they broke her legs, gauged her eyes and hanged her body from a tree.

I really don't understand why we cannot ensure social security for our women at all levels and why there is no effective initiative to vigorously counteract such incidents. Unless we ensure exemplary punishments for the beasts that commit such brutal crimes, we will never be able to build a safer society for our women. If I was the Prime Minister or the Home Minister of the country, I would personally

go to the field, ensure quick arrest of each of those culprits and personally arrange a swift public trial to ensure that they are publicly executed after meticulous tortures.

I think our law enforcers, public representatives, judiciary and our policy makers are responsible for the creation of a social context where such unspeakable violence against women can go unpunished. Such incidents have almost become an inevitable part of our social life and we seldom get to know if the criminals are eventually brought to justice. My sole message to the people who can do something is: "Please Do Something".

Kh. Asef Safa Kabir
Zakir Hossain Road
Muhammadpur
Dhaka

What an unfortunate nation we are!

From the news item published in The Daily Star on November 10, 2010, we had learned about the uncertainty gripping Ghorashal Power Project as communications minister was meddling with the tender process, every time PDB sought the cabinet purchase committee's approval, communications minister who is a member of the committee opposed it. The reason behind had been the minister's wish to give contract to a company of his choice which could not become the lowest bidder; Sacho was representing the Chinese company which failed to meet the required criteria.

We learned from the report published in The Daily Star on February 8, 2011 that PDB floated a fresh tender for the project, this time also Sacho represented a Chinese consortium- CNTIC and CMC and again it failed to become the lowest bidder but mysteriously Shanghai Electric, who was the lowest bidder became the second lowest as PDB manipulated it by some foul play and is seeking power ministry's clearance to award it to the consortium.

We are deeply outraged by this move and we can easily assume that communications minister has played a major role behind this as he was interfering from the very beginning.

What an unfortunate nation we are, when scarcity of

electricity has become acute, some quarter is taking advantage of it!

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Slavery in Bangladesh!

This matter of shackling and cruel confinement of poor helpless villagers by a brickfield owner was published in most dailies on 27th January and some even published the picture of the shackled victims. This is a shameful and shockingly unbelievable event far beyond the norms of a civilised society! It is a slap in the face of our struggle to take Bangladesh out of the grim stigma of poverty; which should be a matter of urgency and a national priority for us!

The owners of this enterprise, who should not be allowed to carry out these heinous activities, must be given the harshest possible punishment for this inhuman crime beyond imagination! We should "throw the book of punishment" at them, as the saying goes.

These are the people who bring shame to the nation, and in that context they are enemies of the nation. They should be publicly identified, and their background and details be published in all dailies and presented in the audio-visual media; so that we all can identify them, and ostracize them from any social contacts. Please follow up on the matter, and provide more details about such criminals.
S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka

Re-designing the rickshaw

Today, I am nursing a bloody knee from a fall from a rickshaw but I suppose that two such falls in 11 1/2 years is not too bad. It reminded me of one of the saddest Bangladeshi stories - of a dedicated engineer and designer who came here and re-designed the rickshaw, made a prototype according to the science of ergonomics - but no one followed it up. How do you help people who do not want to be helped?

Could not some department of state give some training in metal work to some unemployed young men, (including graduate engineers who have been educated at the expense of the state?) and send them off to train those who make rickshaws, to re-make them according to a better plan? The 'carrot and stick' method will doubtless be needed - maybe a financial reward to the owner (that covers the cost of the alteration - plus a bit extra) and the threat that all rickshaws not according to the agreed design will be scrapped in 3 years' time in Dhaka and 5 years' time throughout the country.... Maybe some mechanics could be trained to convert rickshaws into bicycles that could be given free to schoolchildren living far from their schools.

This vehicle that is part blessing, part curse, can surely become one that is a great deal kinder to both puller and client - and reduce deaths from road accidents at the same time.

Angela Robinson, Gulshan, Dhaka

Population boom

Bangladesh is a densely populated country of 55598 square miles. It has a population of over 120 million. Every year more than 2 million people are being added to our population. The problem is now out of control. The country cannot afford to provide its people with the basic necessities of life. The most important thing is that the area of Bangladesh is too small to support her vast population. As a result, many problems like food shortage, lack of health care facilities, education problem, unemployment, shelter problem etc have gripped the country.

The government of Bangladesh is trying to control its population. To contain this problem each family must not have more than 2 children. If the entire population is educated, there would develop a sense of awareness among them. In addition, we have to stop early marriage.

Population problem can be solved if the government and the people are determined to control birth and grow more food at the same time.
Samia Ahsan, On e-mail

Rosemary



Rosemary is a leafy evergreen shrub native to Mediterranean. It is also grown and available in other parts of the globe. Its scientific name is, "Rosmarinus officinalis" and related to mint family. Rosemary is popular as a spice for its aroma and used in cooking fish and meat. Rosemary has also a great therapeutic power. It has antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties.

Recently, researchers in USA and Japan have detected the presence of carnosic acid which protects brain damage by free radicals, prevents stroke and dementia. It boosts memory. Rosemary is marketed in both green and dried forms. Brownish green colour dried rosemary herb is more potent than the fresh rosemary. The leaves have a tea-like fragrance and are consumed as a medicinal drink. Volatile oil is also extracted from the leaves of rosemary which is used in perfumery and medicine. The rosemary oil cannot be ingested. The dried rosemary herb may be consumed as a natural brain booster.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Restrict supply of CNG to all cars

I would draw your kind attention to our Hon'ble Finance Minister's readings as published in The Daily Star on Dec 22, 2010 and also refer to The Daily Star's report of Jan 23, 2011 regarding briefing on the challenge of urban air quality and mobility management by the Delhi based Center for Science and Environment (CSE) along with Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh where they have mentioned that 70% of our city roads are filled with cars.

The undersigned is one of the oldest active drivers of the country since 1962, a professional International Race Driver in 1970. I agree with our

Hon'ble Finance Minister's idea of restricting cars without heavy toll except with 3-4 passengers as practiced in many cities worldwide at crowded Traffic Zones during Pick Hours. Before this is implemented we are to improve our public transport services for which steps are being taken. But, at least 300-400 cars are entering Dhaka daily and none the less in Chittagong which is required to be discouraged.

I suggest that our government restricts supply of CNG to all cars except 3 Wheelers, Cabs and other public transports.

S D Alam
Motijheel, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Proper implementation of labour laws



R S C ANJAN / DRINKNEWS

The article entitled "Treated Like Slaves" published on January 20th in your newspaper focused on the frequent accidents of workers at the ship breaking yards at Shitakunda due to negligence of labour laws.

It is regrettable that though there is existence of labour code in Bangladesh, still it is not being properly implemented because of the apathetic attitude of the government, industry owners and other concerned parties.

In spite of having labour code to provide the workers their rights, workers are being ruthlessly deprived of their

rights such as accidental compensation.

We have to keep it in mind that the wheels of development of different industrial sectors of our country are being mobilised by their strong hands. If they remain unsatisfied and deprived, will it be possible for us to make our country economically successful? The answer, of course, is NO. That's why the parties concerned (the government, owners and workers) must be made aware of the importance of proper implementation of the labour code.

Shayla Afroze Tonney
Natun Paltan Lane, Azimpur, Dhaka

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's The Daily Star report headlined "Govt on food alert".

Reaz Hassan

Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. But then, arable land is decreasing at an alarming rate and hence with all the inputs of better seed, cheaper fertiliser, and improved crop surveillance, we are likely to be a perennially food grain deficit country.

If we want to be a stable economy, we must go for a crash programme to reduce the population growth rate to 1 per cent or below.

I personally believe that we have tremendous potentiality to graduate into a middle income country within the next decade.

Md. Shafiqul I Bhuiyan

We have to increase food production instead of depending on import. So, instead of having another airport by spoiling 25000 acres of land, we should save land, grow more food and control population growth.

Anonymous

Nobody will come and feed us. Nobody will export grains unless there is surplus production.

Why don't you venture in other countries for farmland? Go to the other countries, utilise manpower and sleeping money for food production.

The subsidy is expected to go up by Tk 7,025 crore from the present outlay of Tk 5,088 crore, said officials in the food and agriculture ministries.

Dr. Karim

1. Quality of food is also important.
2. Last year one of our scientists said that arsenic is present in rice. We think the matter should be scientifically faced in lab.
3. Palm oil importing should be discouraged because of the danger it poses to national health.

Anonymous

Subsidy is not enough to produce foods to meet the growing demand of the country. The ministry of agriculture's performance is not satisfactory. We hear success stories of only a few cases but the overall production is far away from the target.

Babul

The price of rice is increasing day by day but the govt. is doing nothing to control this price hike.

Anonymous

Honourable PM, your dream airport might cost you Tk. 50000 crore which can feed the country for 20 years, right?

"Cholo Bangladesh"

World Cup Cricket 2011 is whispering in our ears. We are waiting for the Tigers' roar as our country will play at the World Cup Cricket 2011. Go ahead, Bangladesh. We are always with you. We are always praying for you.

M. A. Faruki
Dhaka