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Let us help poor survive winter



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN/ DRINKNEWS

Recently a weeklong cold wave has swept the country especially in the northern part of Bangladesh. It has predominantly jeopardised the lives of the poor. We learn from the newspapers that many poor people died of various diseases caused by extreme cold. Weather office is predicting another two or three cold waves to set off in upcoming January. It is in fact a bad news for the poor. There are many well-off people in our country. They can pass the winter happily with warm clothes. But the poor don't have the ability to do so. So, let us come forward to help those distressed people with warm clothes according to our abilities so that they can fight against the winter.

Md. Fuad Hasan
 B.L. Govt. High School
 Sirajganj

'Education shines but...'

To mark present government's three years in office, The Daily Star has started publishing evaluation-based reports on each day focusing on the performance of specific ministries under the title "Three years of the government". On December 27, 2011, it highlighted the performance of education ministry. Under the title "Education shines with success", the reporter appropriately threw lights on different praiseworthy efforts of the ministry. But I am sorry to say that the minister is not giving his due attention to the National University (NU), the largest University (affiliated) of Bangladesh. Among many problems, the session jam ranks number one problem for which the students are to waste their valuable 3/4 year. We believe it is not an impossible task if the education minister handles the issue properly.

Rashid Harun
 Mohammadpur
 Dhaka

Women's status in Islam

The powerful media, dominated by the western world, bitterly criticize the Muslims for discrimination against women, which is absolutely baseless and unfounded, as Islam does not promote any such discrimination. On other hand, It granted freedom to women, which was hitherto unknown before the advent of Islam. December 25th is the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ.

Christians through out the world celebrated Christmas with great religious fervour. A local television station here in Houston, was showing a documentary on places of importance in the Christian world. I was surprised to learn that there exists a holy place in the Christian world in Mount Athos, Greece, where women are forbidden to enter in order to maintain its sanctity and the tradition is being followed for centuries. This is some thing weird and is unheard of in the Islamic world.

None of the places of religious importance in the world of Islam is forbidden unto any Muslim women. Definitely in this respect Islam triumphs over Christianity, as it does not discriminate on the basis of sex, both men and women are treated as equals.

Saleh M Ayub
 Houston, Texas
 USA

Power tariff hike

Electricity price has again been raised at the consumer level by 21.2% in two phases. The energy regulatory commission has increased the price to Tk 5.02 from Tk 4.16 per unit. The retail price in the first phase is being raised by Tk 0.55 per unit with retrospective effect from December 1. Another hike of Tk 0.31 will take place on February 1 next year. When people are smarting from sky-rocketing price of essentials and petroleum products, this fresh hike of power tariff is really very painful. The chairman of the energy regulatory commission said the increase in electricity would help the government save about Tk 10 billion in annual subsidies. It is true that Bangladesh is facing severe pressure on the economic front. The government has increased its bank borrowing heavily. The government is tired of providing subsidies to different service sectors. So, to reduce subsidies, the government has no way but to raise power price. But the government should also consider the plight of the common people.

The government has decided to establish costly rental power plants to solve power crisis. The government is also giving excess subsidies to buy electricity from rental power stations at exorbitant price. This is also contributing to price hike. It is feared that price will go up further thereby worsening the suffering of the common people.

Md. Iqbal Hossain
 Shankar, Dhaka



Announcing the launch of the Grow campaign as 925 million people go hungry every day, UK Charity Oxfam Chief Executive Barbara Stocking has observed that the food system is pretty well bust in the world. According to the recent Oxfam report, the food prices could double in the next 20 years. The reason behind increasing trend of hunger around the globe include food price inflation and oil price hikes, scrambles for land and water, and creeping climate change. The Oxfam has rightly suggested in its report - "Now the major powers, the old and the new, must cooperate, not compete, to share resources, build resilience, and tackle climate change".

In fact, the poor developing countries are the worst sufferers of Climate Change which is a result of the activities of the industrialized developed nations. Hence the developed world has a moral obligation to help both financially and technically the developing countries. Their economies are mainly based on agriculture where many of the battles over land, water, and food are being fought and where people are struggling to develop sustainable agriculture and attain food security.

While sincerely appreciating Oxfam's Grow campaign, I would call upon the international community to work together to produce enough food so that not a single person around the globe die of hunger.

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

Oxfam's alarm bell on food security



TANVIR AHMED/ DRINKNEWS

Another secret side of Newton

I have learnt from the "Science & Life" page of the Daily Star of December 27, 2011 that a recently discovered paper of Sir Isaac Newton revealed his secret interest in alchemy (of turning base metal into gold). It was an illegal research work under the then act, though.

I remember Stephen Hawking's assessment of Newton from his book "A Brief History of Time" that Newton was not a pleasant man. Newton clashed with the Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed, who had earlier provided Newton with much-needed data for his book "Principia Mathematica", surely the most influential book ever written in Physics. Another serious dispute arose with German Philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz. Both Leibniz and Newton had independently developed a branch of mathematics called Calculus, which underlies most of modern physics. Although we now know that Newton discovered calculus years before Leibniz, he published his work much later.

However, these incidents reminds us that Newton was a human being. But I wish if he had no such limitations in his life, it would be undoubtedly very nice like a few great scientists of the history.

Mobarak Ali
 RK Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka

A rare example of democratic election

It is very appreciable that the election of BCS (Agriculture) cadre was held in a democratic and peaceful atmosphere throughout Bangladesh. The election campaign appeared credible, as both the candidates and the supporters were peaceful in nature and festive in mood. One group affirmed their election pledges while the other group did the same at the same venue and in front of the same gathering. Democratic norms and values were observed at every phase of the election process such as during submission and withdrawal of the candidature, at the of electioneering campaign. The post-election occasion of congratulating the winner by the defeated candidates was also no exception. We, the people of Bangladesh, can follow this as a model in our national election where candidates, voters and supporters will really act as friends of each other. Will it remain a mere dream or would ever become a reality? We are optimistic and look forward to seeing the positive changes in this regard.

Md Refatul Hossain
 Dept. of Agricultural Extension
 Khamarbari, Dhaka

Storage of winter clothes

How kind are the people who donate warm clothes and blankets to the poor for the winter season! But where do the poor keep them during the hot and wet season so that they are available for next winter and do not need the generosity to be repeated? Are the ultra poor likely to have waterproof and insect-proof storage facilities? They also need the security that ensures the contents are not stolen or damaged - and get an airing once or twice. This needs not only people with space and time but the kindness that does not shrink from direct contact with the ultra poor. In about 6 weeks' time, are there people who would approach particular poor people that they know and offer to care for blankets and clothing until the following winter - and be trusted to do so? I wish I found this easier to imagine... However, may be inspired people could develop a system and a team of sympathisers...and, surely, mosques, temples and churches with extra space could help...?

Angela Robinson

To be careful has its rewards

Many accidents could be prevented if we are more careful. Carelessness contributes to a large number of accidents. The news that some people got killed while crossing the railway tracks, or when talking on their mobile phones is very saddening. They had to pay dearly for this carelessness. We should always remain alert and avoid unnecessary haste when working with sharp objects, or crossing roads. When we walk, we should pay attention, or we may stumble.

Sitting or leaning over the railings of roofs or balconies of buildings is not safe, because one could lose balance with catastrophic consequence.

Therefore, if we remain careful and advise our children to be so, the outcome will be rewarding.

Nur Jahan
 Chittagong



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN



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Abdur Razzak passes away (December 24, 2011)

Poet of politics, Politician with ethics, Organiser of Liberation War, Dignified, honest, polite and simple, In politics he was a bright example, You name it, he was, Our beloved Abdur Razzak.

Mir Mahfuz ul Anwar

May Allah rest his soul in peace! He was a great freedom fighter.

Eddo Brandis

Bangladesh will miss a great leader like him.

Mohammed Habib Ullah

Abdur Razzak deserved better treatment from the present government, but unfortunately he did not get it.

Shireen Farhana

We are sorry! We are very worried about the future of our politics... we can hardly afford this great loss.

Md. Akhteruzzaman

We are deeply shocked at the news of his demise. We are equally angered with the way he was treated by the leadership of his own party. He will be remembered not only as an Awami League leader, but also as a patriot. He was the symbol of value-based politics.

Shah Mostain Billah

My sincere condolence goes to the family members of Abdur Razzak. He deserves full national mourning for his service as a committed politician who fought for our freedom. We might have points

of disagreement with his views, or about the way would like the politics to run., but that is how a patriotic leader is expected to and keep maximum flexibility to embrace popular wish and to follow the path of democracy.

Faqrul

It is a sad day for Bangladesh. We have lost a great leader, freedom fighter and a patriot. We pray for him. May Allah bless him!

Eva

Abdur Razzak was our close relative. I have returned from London with a grieving heart that the end was so near. We had the opportunity to be close to him. We knew him very intimately. He loved to share stories about his intimate association with Bangabandhu and Begum Mujib.

Whatever controversy surrounds him regarding 1/11, there is little doubt that Razzak was one of the greatest patriots that Bangladesh has ever seen. We remember his outstanding role in our liberation war with apt reverence.

Niloufar Sarker

Late Abdur Razzak was one of our four dedicated student leaders who nurtured the hope and mobilized young Bangladeshes to fight against Pakistani domination. Being a student during his time of leadership, I had the opportunity to attend almost all of his public meetings in Dhaka University.

He was an honest politician who fought against dogmatic political colleagues before, during and after our liberation. May his good soul rest in peace!

Naabaj

Veteran politician Abdur Razzak was a gentleman who never hurt anyone's feelings intentionally.

Faridul Alam

His contribution during 71 is the most notable achievement of his life.

Rch

A leader like Abdur Razzak is always important in Bangladesh. This loss is irrecoverable.

Fida Likhon

Many senior politicians said that his death was the "fall of a star" from Bangladesh's political firmament. Really we

PHOTO: STAR