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Migrant workers deserve humane treatment



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

Imagine being hauled off to a foreign land in search of better economic prospects in harsh working conditions and poorly paid jobs. Imagine being subject to humiliation and harassment by your own countrymen. Yes, this is a situation our migrant workers have to face on a daily basis. My heart fills with sadness, and mostly anger, every time I witness how we, as a nation, treat migrant workers with such contempt in our airports. Our workers are made to wait for hours in long immigration queues and repeatedly harassed by airport authorities. We laugh and sneer at them when they ask for help. We look down on the very people we share the same flight with. How many of us are aware of the fact that these are the very same people who are one of the biggest contributors to our national economy?

They now face abuse and mistreatment even on their own soil. Our workers' lack of English language skill and hence, confidence, have led them to being open to exploitation. These people have probably never been on international flights before, and we ought to try and guide them along the way. It is our duty to correct their shortcomings.

The government must start a massive skill development programme which would enable our unskilled youths to pick up professional skills. Such programmes would see our migrant workers earn three times more and also greatly enhance our foreign exchange. We must stop exporting unskilled workers who are exploited, abused and left to lead a life in misery.

Sajid Choudhury
 Dargamahalla, Sylhet

Of ACC, NHRC, and Padma Bridge

The World Bank's decision to withdraw funding for the Padma Bridge is not as much an indictment of the Awami League government as it is of a system of fool's gold. The same would have happened in a BNP administration. We may have fine sounding organisations like the ACC and the NHRC, but the fact remains that those are little more, in practice, than toothless advisory panels made of tired ex-bureaucrats too scared to say a peep about government ministers and ruling party functionaries of the day. Until the day that an ACC prosecutes a cabinet member of the incumbent political administration or the NHRC hauls into court human rights violators belonging to the affiliated bodies of a ruling party, the only people who will believe these to be credible organisations will be the professional attendees of the numerous seminars in the various posh hotels in Dhaka who have been talking for forty years and will do so for forty more.

Esam Sohail
 Wichita, Kansas
 USA

Poultry sector in crisis

Our poultry sector is now struggling hard for survival. There are various reasons behind this crisis. Lack of proper and effective management, inadequate knowledge, ineffective vaccinations, banning import from India, oil price hikes etc are some of the reasons. We should give attention to our poultry sector as it is directly related to the nation's nutrition. The government should introduce vaccines and other facilities such as poultry insurance, bank loans with lower interest rates, and tax exemption for poultry feed for ensuring smooth operation of the industry.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid Tushar
 Department of Business Administration
 Shahjalal University of Science & Technology

Planting trees imperative

World temperature is rising gradually. Bangladesh is considered one of the most vulnerable countries in the face of climate change. To keep the environmental balance, a country should have 25% forest of its total land. 100 years ago, we had 30% forest but due to cutting trees indiscriminately, we have only around 10% forest now!

Trees are important tools in the fight to stave off global warming because they absorb greenhouse gases. Sustainably managed forests can play an indispensable role in sustainable development. They help to regulate local and regional rainfall. Forests are also key sources of food, medicine etc.

In recent past, a number of cyclones swept across the coastal regions of our country. It is essential to create greenbelt across the coastal areas to protect the region from natural calamities.

Only trees can make a liveable world by preventing climate change. Under the present circumstances of climate change impacts and climate change-fuelled disasters, there is no other way but planting trees to protect the earth.

Nishat Sharmin Seouf
 Rajshahi Medical College
 Rajshahi



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Communications minister admits mistake

With reference to the editorial entitled "No 'surprise' from Quadeer, please" published in The Daily Star on July 03, 2012, the Honourable Communications Minister admits his mistake for using the word 'surprise.' His explanation goes as below.

Ever since I took the responsibility, I have been keeping consistency in my comments regarding the construction of Padma Bridge. I never volunteered to hold any formal press conference on the financing and construction of the Padma Bridge. After visiting the bridge site and rehabilitation areas, during discussions with representatives of different countries including that of Malaysia and on various occasions, I have been informing the journalists about the possible timeline of the bridge construction.

By coming February, the construction work for the basic infrastructure of the bridge could be undertaken - I have said this to the media and I still believe it. While responding to the journalists regarding this matter, I never exaggerated; rather, I remained careful with my words. Through my statements on various occasions, I have tried to clarify the position of the government and the bridge division, for that matter, to the public.

Last Sunday, after the World Bank's cancellation of the Padma Bridge loan, journalists wanted to know my reaction. I said if we use alternative financing then it may lessen the financial liability on the common people while the economic pressure would remain under control.

Many said that it might increase the expenses. In reply, I said there is a surprise for them. I erroneously used the word 'surprise' which I could have avoided. Without any reservations, I am admitting my mistakes.

On behalf of the Honourable Communications Minister
Md. Abu Naser
 Senior Information Officer

Pleasure trip to the Moon!

A private British space company has announced that it would fly three people to the moon a year. The tourists would orbit the moon and return safely to earth in a round trip of about 500,000 miles. This company has planned for one trip a year from 2015 to 2025. A person will have to buy a ticket at £100 million to be a tourist of the moon.

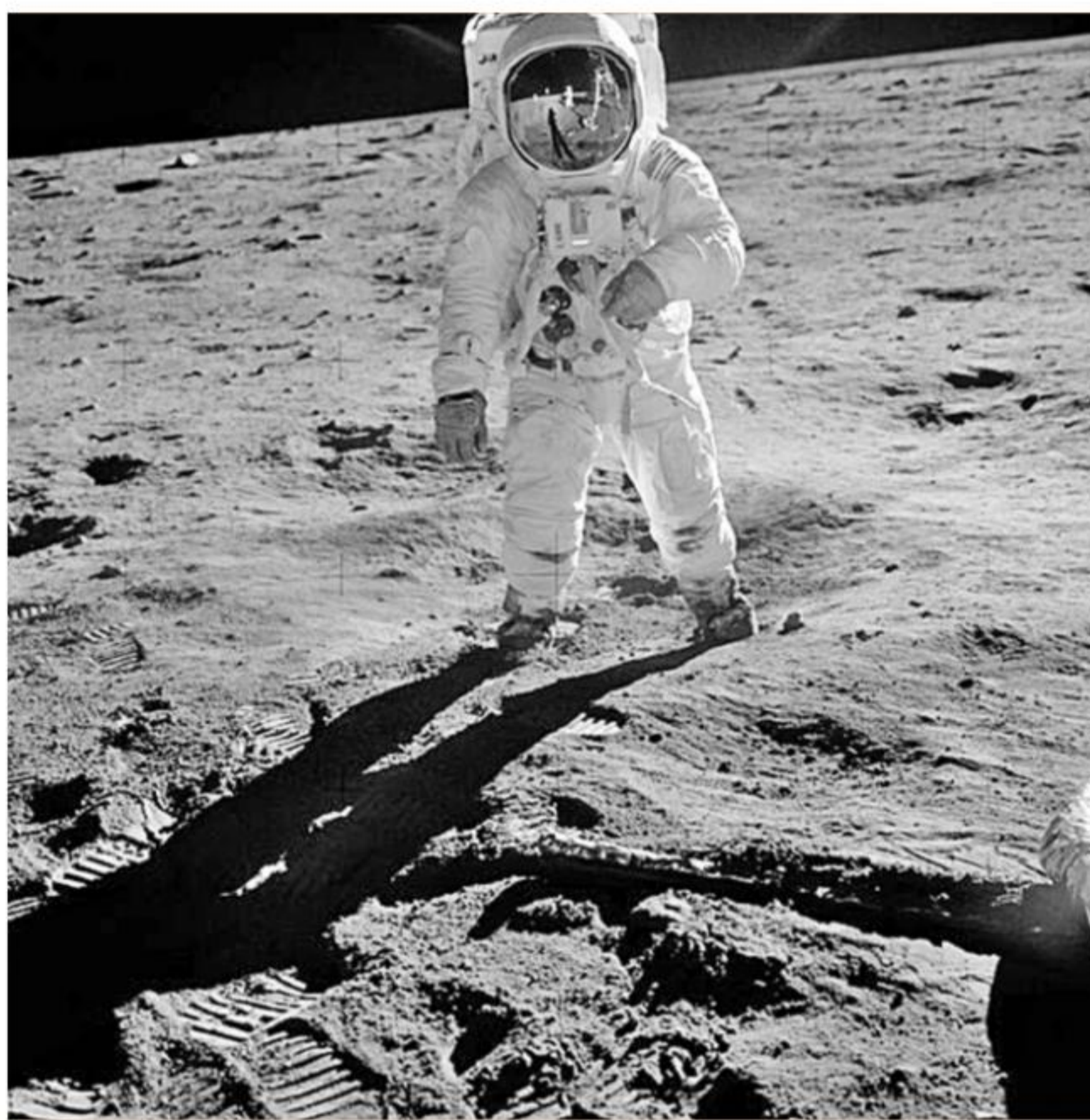
Of course, this would be an exciting outing for the rich adventurers.

We know there is a debate going on whether spending huge money in space researches and trips would bring any benefit for mankind? A prevailing notion is that space research would benefit the people of future generation more than those of the present generation.

However, now it would add another point to this debate: Is it morally right to spend huge money for a pleasure trip of this type? Although spending for luxury is part of modern civilisation. The ethics and morality in this regard differ from person to person, place to place and time to time.

Anyway, we hope the authorities of the space firm would declare a fund raising program from their business profit for helping the destitute people of the world.

Mobarak Ali
 RK Mission Road
 Gopibagh
 Dhaka



Irreparable damage done to the country

On June 30, 2012 the breaking news in the electronic media that "World Bank cancelling its loan for Padma bridge" came as a shock to us and we felt deeply ashamed. The government is fully responsible for losing the 1.2 billion credit for the Padma bridge project because it did not pay heed to the World Bank's repeated warning that they had proof about corruption in the bidding process, in which high level government officials were involved. The name of the former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain came to the forefront. The government then removed him from his post and gave him another portfolio. The government should have done a thorough investigation about Syed Abul Hossain and others who were involved in the scam and taken proper action against them. But it did not hesitate to degrade the country to save a few people.

Now, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Finance Minister AMA Muhit are saying many things about this but people will not accept those. Irreparable damage has been done to the country which will leave a permanent scar.

Nur Jahan
 Chittagong

Within 48 hours.....

Presently some people in power and some service oriented organisations developed a norm of announcing (without appreciating the real situation) that they would accomplish some goal or fix certain disorder within 48 hours! But in almost all the cases no fruitful results could be seen even after passing of so many 48-hours.

At the moment I am talking about the dead telephones under Sher-e-Bangla Nagar BTCL exchange which went out of order due to a fire at the exchange. Unfortunately, both my office and residence phones fell prey to the cruel fire. On TV screen I read quite a number of times that all the dead phones will be put back into order within 48 hours. I am anxiously keeping my eyes on the clock to witness every 48-hours pass with no ring!

Professor M Zahidul Haque
 Dean
 Faculty of Agriculture
 Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
 Dhaka

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Sohel Taj tenders resignation in person"

Bulbul

Congratulations, Sohel Taj! Like father like son. We are proud of you. I think you have made a good decision.

Anonymous

The nation congratulates you on your resignation. You are a real hero. As you are the son of our great leader Tajuddin Ahmad, we hope you will never leave us. We will always wait for your leadership.

Mohammad Nurul Hoque

Resignation is not the solution. By resigning from your MP post, you have shown that you are unfit for politics.

Shamim

Other lawmakers should take lesson from him on integrity.

Mohsin

We can feel the agony of Sohel Taj. A man who was elected by the people of Kapashia and now living far away from them must be broken-hearted. However, we should respect his decision. In fact, he echoed the agony of us.

Zakir, Narsingdi

If we get more of such type of leaders, then Bangladesh can curb corruption. Young generation, please follow him. Present government should consider this matter seriously.

Anonymous

Congratulations on doing a good job. A person with dignity, self-respect and conscience can not work with this government. I am sure the country will be deprived of his bold leadership, but his conscience will be clear. Good luck and wishing you all the best.

Amin

Now Kapashia by-election will be a lesson for the followers of present opportunist politics.

M.S. Farazi

We are proud of him; he has a bold character like his father. His father was one of the main founders of Bangladesh and remains in the heart of people. He should prove his ability even after resignation.

Major Arif Ahamed (rtd)

I believe Sohel Taj is following in his father's footsteps, but it is not clear to me why he is not disclosing the fact to the people. We have the right to know what problems he had faced. Mr. Sohel Taj, if you remain loyal to the party by not disclosing the truth, then you are cheating with the people who have elected you as an MP.

Mohammad Jashim Uddin

It is really a shame for us that at last we have received Shoel Taj's resignation. But why this drama? He is a man of personality. I wish to see more leaders like Sohel Taj in the future.

Mohammad Rahman

Power cuts make them loan defaulter

On 26th June 2012 most of the dailies carried two important news with big headlines. The headlines were: "More than 1.22 lac loan defaulters in the country" and "Government's proposal to hike electricity prices very soon." Let me give an example of one unintentional loan defaulter whose name might have already been included in the 1.22 lac list. A friend of mine, an experienced businessman, established a textile manufacturing unit about a year back with bank loan. He imported sophisticated textile machinery by opening L/C from abroad. The time between L/C opening date and trial production was more than one year because of delay in getting electricity connection, setting up of machinery etc. By the time he completed setting up the machines at the factory, he failed to pay more than six instalments and became a defaulter according to BB rules. His company became disqualified for getting any further support.

The only way that is open for him is to run his factory at any cost, using full production capacity. But alas, how will he use full capacity? Out of 24 hours a day, he hardly gets electricity supply for 10/12 hours, which means his production has reduced to 50 per cent. Instead of making profit he is losing his capital every month. I believe he has no escape. Hon'ble finance minister, do you have any suggestion for him? He has no other means or land to sell to pay the present dues.

Shafiqul Islam
 On e-mail