

Climate change and Bangladesh



The latest World Bank report on climate change has warned Bangladesh of being one of the worst sufferers, saying that by 2100 the sea level will rise by up to 3 feet. The sea level rise will cause water scarcity and falling of crop yields, which will exacerbate hunger and poverty in Bangladesh according to the report. The report has also mentioned that the cities located in Bangladesh (and in some other countries) will become highly vulnerable due to the sea level rise. The Germany-based organizations, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate Analytics, prepared the report for the World Bank.

The World Bank and the German organizations do not know a very vital information that Bangladesh is an active delta. And due to that the lands of Bangladesh is rising 5 (five) millimetres, on average, a year. So by the year 2100, the lands of Bangladesh will rise 20 (twenty) inches or almost two feet. Not only that, every year Bangladesh gets twenty square miles of land, on average, by the process of erosion and accretion from the sea along its coastline. It means the coastline of the country will go forward quite a few miles from the present position pushing the sea back. So from the viewpoint of climate change, the picture of Bangladesh is not as gloomy as said by some international organizations. At present Bangladesh may not be as rich as the western countries (before the colonial rule it was the richest country in the world), it does not mean that the country should always be made an example of any gloomy picture by the international organizations. I have no doubt about the good intention of the World Bank, but their report must be based on reality. It is not Dhaka but cities like New York, London, which are vulnerable due to sea level rise as the lands of those cities are not rising.

Faruque Hasan
Uttara, Dhaka

Significance of Ashura

While the event of Karbala is often referred to as a battle, for ordinary folks like me, it is important to understand the significance of Karbala.

Some may refer to it as a battle but in reality it was not a battle at all but a massacre of innocents. The significance of Karbala goes much beyond the historical battle that was and its human victims. In the spiritual sense, it was a great battle between the evil and the good, the right and the wrong, something that afflicts us every day. For generations to come, the Imam, his family and his companions made the ultimate sacrifice to establish right from wrong. Many people often lament, only if they too could be martyred alongside the Imam, his family and his companions!

The question that comes to mind is whether that spiritual battle was actually won. I believe that the answer lies in our hearts. Are we going to remember them only on Ashura or are we going to remember them every day when we have to decide between right and wrong? Their battle becomes our battle and they win every time we choose right from wrong. That would be the truest way to show them love and respect...that would be the truest way to still participate in that battle.

Syed Mamnun Quader

What's our true identity?

I would like to start with the lines of famous Caribbean poet Derek Walcott:
“The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.”
(A Far Cry from Africa)
Weak animals fall prey to strong ones in the wilderness as big fishes eat up small ones in the pond. Animal world evolves around the subjugation of the weak but this tendency is heartrending if practiced in human world. Recently, some incidents of atrocities have made me disappointed. In our neighbouring country Myanmar, Rakhaines are inflicting grievous violence against Muslim Rohingyas. In Assam, majority Hindus are acting violently against the minority Muslims. Bangladesh is reputed as a secular and progressive country. However, the recent violence against the Buddhist community is a mark of shame on our forehead. These incidents are creating impediment to the process of socio-economic advancement and world peace. When human beings forget their basic identity as humans and confine themselves to particular religious or cultural identities, then their world becomes limited and their senses suffer in a narrow sphere. Present world is witnessing fundamentalism, misinterpretation of religion, which is causing anarchy in the world. But extremism in any form can't ever bring harmony and peace. Irrespective of race, culture and religion, our identity as humans can lead us towards a world of equality and peace.

Shirin Akter Popy
University of Chittagong



An admirable work

As a departure from the reports of violence and misery that fill the pages of local dailies, a report on a library set up by a young villager along with its photograph sent by a correspondent from Jhenidah, was published in a local English daily on 17th. November. It was indeed a breath of fresh air for all readers who came across the news. Tutul, the young man who was behind this noble effort and his mother, deserve support and encouragement from all quarters. He accomplished the feat through a decade of perseverance and support from many local people. Maybe, your esteemed daily could help them with internet facilities and a computer to give them wider nationwide connectivity. I wish Tutul God speed and good luck for such a noble venture!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

TIB report draws wrath of lawmakers

The shameless display of rage at the TIB report by lawmakers in parliament is, sadly, not surprising in the least. For all our vaunted talk of democratic values, we as a people remain fundamentally incapable of stomaching any criticism.

Seasoned political leaders called for punishing TIB for alleged sedition and malfeasance. As children we are taught that anything short of unquestioning obedience to parents and teachers is tantamount to immorality of the highest order, and no measure of the most respectful, well reasoned constructive criticism is welcome. Therefore, whether we like it or not, our culture reinforces from the very beginning the idea that dissent and criticism equals disloyalty and rebellion. Those politicians in parliament are simply reflecting the culture around them. Until such a time that criticism can be handled maturely in our homes, offices, and colleges, I am afraid that our democracy will continue to be a merely procedural one.

Esam Sohail
Wichita, Kansas
USA

In a real democratic system, a government usually resigns when such accusations become general, especially when supported by reputed watchdog bodies. The internationally recognised corruption watchdog TIB also threw a challenge by saying that necessary data are available to prove their claim. It was interesting to observe how Tofail Ahmed and Sheikh Selim came down very hard on TIB with their protests, but with no stantive evidence to challenge the TIB claim. On the contrary, they virtually threatened TIB. How can a government still be in power after such report by TIB, which says 97 percent of the 149 sitting MPs surveyed were involved in "negative activities" while 70 percent of them were engaged in "criminal activities? Is not it a shame for our MPs and, particularly, leader of the House and head of the government g to continue in power? I hope she would understand the seriousness of the issue and save the nation from such a shame. Or else, we have to dig a hole in the ground to hide our shame.

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

Tragedies in Dhaka and Chittagong



Holy Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram, is observed in the whole Muslim world including Bangladesh as a day of mourning recalling the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain Ibn Ali (RA), the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SM) at the Battle of Karbala. On the day of Ashura this year, the relatives and family members of the victims of two fatal accidents in our country were trying to identify their near and dear ones among the dead. The Ashulia factory fire in Dhaka and Bahaddarhat's under-construction flyover collapse in Chittagong killed at least 111 and 13 people respectively and injured more than one hundred people.

Now the question is did the garment factory have proper fire safety mea-

sures? And was the flyover being constructed with quality materials? Did the firm have any expertise to build such a flyover? We urge the government to form an unbiased and powerful probe committee in this regard

soon, who will also advise the government how to stop these sorts of accident in future. We certainly hope that the persons responsible for these accidents would be brought to justice in such a way so that nobody would show any laxity in this regard in future.
Mobarak Ali
RK Mission Road
Gopibagh, Dhaka



Quota in school admission

We highly appreciate the decision of the government that there will be no reservation for lawmakers in private school admission process. On the contrary, 5% quotas for children and grandchildren of freedom fighters have been kept in the amended policy. It is also learnt from newspapers that the officials and employees of the education ministry would have the 2% quota benefit in the said arrangement. Perhaps this could not satisfy the guardians of the admission seeking students. This may tarnish the image of the government. As lawmakers are not going to enjoy this advantage, the employees of the ministry should not be provided with such opportunity. All decisions regarding the admission procedure should be pragmatic. So our humble request to the ministry is to please make a healthy competitive environment in the admission process. Hope the authorities would kindly consider the aspiration of the commoners.

Md. Refatul Hossain Mamoon
Nipaban, Shahid Sattar Sharak
Kukrail, Madaripur

Children's Day should not be a ritual

Children's Day is observed across the world to celebrate childhood and create awareness about children's welfare. But it is unfortunate that when the day ends, nobody cares about children's rights. Thousands of children still have to pass sleepless nights on the streets. It is the responsibility of the government to look after these helpless children but the government hardly plays its part. Losing a father or guardian, a number of children have to run their family instead of going to school. Many of them get involved in crimes and anti-social activities. We should extend our helping hands towards them for ensuring a better future for them.

Rafik Alamgir
Department of English

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Grief-struck"

Truth Teller

I have read the news on this tragic incident. It appears that the factory did not have any emergency evacuation procedure in place. The men in authority must be arrested and tried for the murders. All garment factories must have emergency fire escape routes or the government should not give them permission to operate industries and business there.

Braum Harald

A simple fire exit route could have helped the hapless garment workers. The management should be tried for this. I bet they all live in nice mansions and drive posh cars. A union should be formed ASAP, and before that, no more t-shirts should leave Bangladesh!

Rouf

All the people responsible for this should be brought before law.

Niloufar Sarker

In Bangladesh factories are situated mostly in unplanned risky high-rise buildings which are susceptible to this kind of fire incident. It is imperative that our government creates a department dealing specifically with the well-being of labourers.

Suahmed

The repeated fire incident in the garment factories is a national tragedy. There is none to see their horrific deaths; especially our government did not pay heed to so many recommendations of previous investigation reports to ensure safety and security of the poor workers. The factory owners always escape punishment for their failure to ensure security of their workers. It is because of the hard work of the garment workers that Bangladesh is earning a big share of valuable foreign currencies, but it is very unfortunate that their lives are always at stake. We demand the government takes an immediate measure to ensure security of the workers.

Dev Saha

Many homes will be totally empty without these beautiful mothers and sisters, who have been doing such a good work for the country and the world by providing us cheap clothes. Ironically, nobody was really concerned about their safety when they knew the disaster could happen anytime. I bet these outcasts can only cry for a few days and then they have to find similar jobs with similar hazards. Are women's lives too cheap in Bangladesh? Would new safety measures be implemented in the garment factories? If not, wait for the next disaster.

Syed Kibria

The poor workers' scream will not reach the high levels of the society. We will remember the incident for a few days, try to compensate them with a little money, but how can you compensate death with money? How come a factory gets license with only one fire exit? Government will have to answer this. I would like to see the steps that the government would take after this terrible incident.

Zerosopher

Come to the root of the problem. The government is responsible for giving permission to operate the factory in a building with faulty design.

Raihan

This is happening over and over again. This incident also affected the international market. If these incidents continue to happen, Bangladesh is going to face big trouble.

Robin

I will not buy any cloth made in any Bangladeshi garment factory until the owner and the supervisors of Tazreen Fashions Ltd are punished. I will also write to my California Senators and Congressmen to influence the major US buyers from buying Bangladeshi made garments until the government of Bangladesh takes serious steps to ensure workers' safety. That is my