

# Latest on global warming

The heat is on

THE verdict is in. We humans are causing global warming very substantially, and the temperature is set to rise another 0.3 – 4.8 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) unveiled these dismal facts in the 1st volume of its exhaustive work in Stockholm on September 27. Should things remain “business as usual”, then we are looking at a rise in sea levels of anywhere between 26-82centimeters by 2100.

With a 95 per cent probability of such events taking place, it is high time global policymakers woke up to the new realities by which their actions are concerned. The last report of the group published in 2007 should have been a wake up call for the global community. It wasn't. This time round, IPCC's indicators clearly point to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as the main culprit for global warming. To put all this in perspective, were the planet's temperature to actually rise by 4.8 degrees Celsius, it would play havoc with our ecosystem. Heat waves would occur for longer periods bringing about droughts, and the increased risk of flooding could not be ruled out.

Little wonder that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon went on record citing the report as “essential” for governments around the world to start working out seriously on a global agreement to cut GHG by 2015.

Without sounding alarmist though, experts stressed on the need for evolving cheaper green energy options. If those are provided, people would switch over to such alternatives from the conventional energy sources. And that could help a good deal in mitigating the damaging prospects that loom.

# Confusion over Malaysian intake

Result of unconfirmed figures

THE news of Malaysia hiring 10,000 Bangladeshi workers by next year and not as part of 1.4 million envisioned earlier is somewhat puzzling. Many Bangladeshi workers applying for jobs in Malaysia had their hopes up for the last month, but now their plans appear to have undergone a reality check.

The confusion was created when some Malaysian dailies last month reported that the country would start hiring 1.4 million Bangladeshis in phases from 2014, misinterpreting a visiting Bangladeshi minister who said 1.4 million Bangladeshis had applied for the jobs. We wonder, however, if this is a sheer case of miscommunication or if there were other factors that went into this number game.

Of course, the people who are suffering in this confusion are not the Malaysian government or the Bangladesh government, or the newspapers, but the workers who had applied for the positions and felt positive about their move to Malaysia.

We urge newspapers and governments everywhere not to spell out such things without absolute confirmation, especially when it deals with people's lives. When words are said by people in authority, or are printed, they are usually believed, so all concerned need to be careful while spewing out figures of manpower intake by any country. No confusing signal should be given when it involves a country hosting our workers.

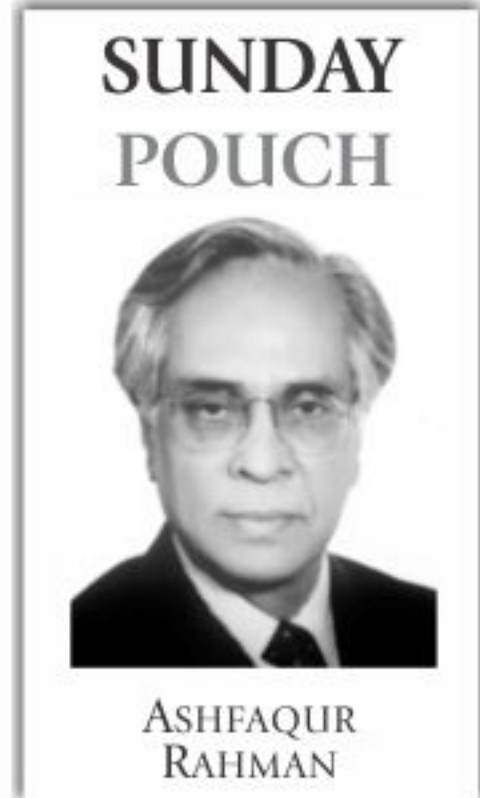
# Ban on the Brotherhood: Counterproductive

EDITORIAL

IT is doubtful that a court ruling can destroy a party that has survived 84 years of bans and repression. On Monday, an Egyptian court effectively banned the Muslim Brotherhood, ordered all its assets seized and asked the government to manage them. Even though the court ruling came in the form of a judgement on a petition by a lawyer, it is impossible not to detect the hand of the Egyptian army behind the judicial farce. The judge banned the organisation's activities but made no specific reference to the Freedom and Justice Party, the Brotherhood's political wing. It is unclear whether the extensive social welfare network linked to the Brotherhood will be affected.

The judgement stands in sharp contrast to the position during Hosni Mubarak's regime, which permitted the Brotherhood to continue political activity and even indirectly take part in elections while remaining outlawed officially. As rightly claimed by the FJP, Monday's decision reverts Egypt to the status of a police state, nullifying the gains of the January 2011 revolution that overthrew the Mubarak regime.

By any standards, army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi has sabotaged democracy by toppling an elected government and arresting Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president. There is no doubt Mr. Morsi made many mistakes, and the speed with which he moved to amend the constitution and assume special powers for himself alarmed the liberal sections of Egyptian society, but a military coup should not have been the solution. Sooner or later, the Morsi government's failure to address Egypt's enormous problems would have cost it the people's sympathy. As examples elsewhere in the Middle East show, parties banned by the military re-emerge with greater strength through the electoral process. The Brotherhood will not only survive the ban; it will gain in strength. The only choice before the generals is to install a neutral regime and hold free and fair polls.



current prime minister as the interim head. Ostensibly, the responsibilities of both these types of government will revolve round taking routine decisions and ensuring the holding of a free, fair election under a spruced up National Election Commission.

The people have very few days left to decide on either of these two forms of government. But the point is clearly not that. The ruling AL is supporting the interim government system and the prime minister has already indicated who are likely to have a place in this cabinet. The leader of the opposition, Khaleda Zia, remains insistent on setting up of a caretaker government. However, she has not indicated who will run this form of government. But we do know that those who may sit in this cabinet would be non-political, non-partisan persons who are held in high esteem in our society. These 11 members will do the same duties as the interim government and will hand over power after 90 days to a duly elected government.

The sticking point remains the nature and character of these 11 persons who will be running the government. Khaleda Zia is not particularly choosy about the 10 persons who will be in the cabinet. But she would on no account accept a political person, especially the present prime minister, to lead this caretaker government. To her, this would mean that the neutrality of this government would be compromised.

Both forms of government have their supporters and detractors. There has been misuse and abuse of either or both of the systems. There is immense trust deficit between these two leaders and their close associates. It is not so between the rank and file of these two big parties. The caretaker government in the immediate past had done things that were not in its writ. When it failed to do the task it was meant to, its tenure was arbitrarily extended for more than the admissible time. After two and half years it was finally persuaded to hold a free, fair election, which brought in the present government.

Now that the Parliament is in its penultimate session, all the political parties have a small window of opportu-

HAFIZ G.A. SIDDIQI

MERITOCRACY is a social system in which people get recognition or reward because of their ability, talent and effort, rather than wealth, class privilege or family background. In this system, individuals succeed because of demonstrated competency and achievements, rather than for their inherited status or patronage ties. Merit refers to a particular quality, of intelligence-plus-effort. The idea of meritocracy is not new—it is often associated with the Confucian mode of state management.

Today, because it can promote an equal-opportunity society that allows the best minds to thrive, the application of meritocratic system is more or less assumed as a best practice in all arenas. Meritocracy has a special place in managing universities. Among other things, departure from meritocracy is said to be a prime reason for campus unrest in public universities. In this article, I briefly discuss its applicability in private universities of Bangladesh.

As institutions of higher learning, two of the most important missions of universities are to produce knowledge for social progress, and to produce highly skilled graduates and professional leaders able to contribute to national development. To this end, a good university must not only hire the best professors, it must also admit the most promising and competitive students.

In a meritocratic system the university needs to institutionalise a system of recruiting the best quality professors and students. It should also hire professional managers and competent administrative staff to help the faculty discharge their duties, and provide students with necessary logistic support. Now the big question is: what is the best way of such recruitment? I believe private universities will do better if they adhere to the principles of meritocracy while recruiting vice-chancellors, scholars, teachers, students and staff.

Meritocracy requires assessment of intelligence, education, accumulated training enrichment, professionalism, leadership quality and demonstrated achievements. Although some element of subjectivity may be unavoidable, the measure or assessment of merit should be as objective as possible.

Currently, the rules for recruitment are in some ways inconsistent with the system of meritocracy. For instance, since the vice-chancellor holds the highest rank with greatest responsibility, the search committee should demand the highest academic degree, Ph.D. However, the Private University Act 2010 does not require the vice-chancellors to hold Ph.D. This logically contradicts the principles of meritocracy.

The 2010 Act stipulates that to become vice-chancellor, one needs 10 years teaching and 10 years administrative experience in similar positions. If several candidates have identical qualifications, then the search committee needs to look for additional achievements, for example, demonstrated leadership quality, fundraising capabilities, etc. No personal favour, family wealth or political connections are to be considered.

Occasionally, in universities, meritocracy is ignored for non-meritocratic reasons. For example, the vice-chancellor is selected through popularity test. In public universities, a panel of three potential vice-chancellors is elected by the Senate members' votes. The chancellor appoints one of them vice-chancellor based more or less on the number of votes the individual candidate receives.

# Caretaker or interim government?

So it took five years for our politicians to come up with a choice for our people. Either you support the concept of a caretaker government, which is controversial and, in our own country, has been discredited in the past. Or you accept a so-called interim government to run the country's affairs for 90 day after the dissolution of the parliament. In the case of an interim government, it would be run by an 11-member cabinet with the

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# Meritocracy and academic excellence at private universities

This way, meritocracy does not play any major role.

Meritocracy does not compromise with the requirement of education, achievements, job-experience, and competency. They, however, vary from position to position. While selecting teachers from professors down to lecturers emphasis should be given on academic qualifications; demonstrated ability; achievements like quality papers published in quality journals; patents; scientific inventions; prestigious awards; recognised research, etc. If teacher with lower academic achievements is hired rejecting one with much better qualifications, i.e., if meritocracy is ignored, then academic excellence is bound to go down. Unfortunately, such things happen in low grade private universities.

Some private universities however require Ph.D. if a candidate seeks the post of assistant professor or higher. This is in line with meritocracy because it demands higher education and additional achievements for higher position. In case of promotion from lower to higher rank the quality and quantity of publications, patents and additional achievements like proactive leadership are desirable.

In appointing deans, departmental chairs and programme directors, most universities use a system of rotation that is incompatible with meritocracy. Rotation depends on the seniority of service in the department. One can be senior-most in the department only by teaching and doing nothing else. As per departmental rules, s/he can be chairperson without any administrative experience. This is not compatible with meritocracy. Because of this, the department tends to run at low operational efficiency.

Meritocracy is most challenged while enrolling students. For most private universities, revenue trumps student quality. Ultimately, universities admit disproportionately more poor quality students, leading to more poor quality graduates. Thus, refusal or inability to institutionalise meritocracy pushes down the quality and reputation of the university.

It should be noted that adherence to absolute meritocracy creates unintended negative impact; the system tends to admit a small number of good students but denies access to thousands of equally 'brilliant' admission seekers. Results of the post secondary public examinations demonstrate that thousands of Golden GPA 5 students who are equally talented and meritorious do not get admission. The latter can be divided into two groups: (i) those with the ability to pay for all expenses but whose admission is denied because of lack of additional capacity of the university; and (ii) those who are meritorious but cannot afford tuition and other fees. It is difficult to ascertain whether the admitted students are better.

To run the universities on the basis of meritocracy, the university will have to create additional seats matching the number of meritorious admission seekers. In the second case, adequate scholarships must be provided for financially disadvantaged students. Given our experiences, provision of so many scholarships is unlikely to happen. The above implies that universities can take advantage of meritocracy only partially. More importantly, adherence to meritocracy continues to increase the divide between the financially advantaged and disadvantaged persons. For societal balance remedial measures are essential.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Commendable initiative

The Assistant Commissioner of Police Patrol of Uttara recently created a Facebook page with the aim of building a bridge between AC (patrol) and the citizens living in Uttara. The page encourages the residents of Uttara to voice their concerns via the Facebook page or by directly calling the AC on mobile or sms. I recently called the number to ask whether anything can be done about the illegal parking of cars on the Airport Road in front of Scholastica School. It has been a chronic source of traffic congestion at the intersection of Jasimuddin Road. The AC was very courteous and promised me that he would look into the matter personally and find a solution. The very next day, I noticed the absence of illegal parking of cars. I was surprised! This is just one example. I encourage everyone to visit the Facebook page for more information or you can call 01713373159.

Dr. Arif Matin  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Tribute to late AK Azizul Huq

This has reference to Mr. Asif Ali's write-up published in your daily on September 19, 2013. Mr. Ali deserves thanks for giving a brief but moving account of AK Azizul Huq, former C&AG of government, whom, I am sure, many of the old hands in the civil bureaucracy used to know. To come across such an erudite and gentle civil servant in today's civil bureaucracy is beyond comprehension.

In April 1981, I was a junior member of the Bangladesh delegation to the Aid-Consortium meeting in Paris where we were delighted to have Azizul Huq's close company. I still possess some pictures with him and late Abdus Salam, (Secretary, Statistics Division). Every morning before attending the meeting at the World Bank office, Azizul Huq made me sit beside him at the hotel lobby and inquired about issues broached in the government document. On way back to Dhaka, some of us including Azizul Huq stayed in the same hotel in London. I accompanied him to some bookshops in London and felt enlightened seeing the books being chosen and bought by him. One or two books that I myself bought then could be hiding somewhere in my shelf bearing the testimony of guidance proffered by Azizul Huq. May Azizul Huq's soul rest in eternal peace.

Dr. Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed  
Former member  
Bangladesh Planning Commission

## Comments on news report, "Losses pile on RMG factories," published on September 26, 2013

Ash C.

If you have noticed, situation on the law and order front was relatively calm and quiet until the arrival of the ex-bureaucrat turned minister MKA on the scene. And, now the ex-truck driver turned minister has entered the scene! What a pair!

Nds

Your lamentation for daily losses of the garment makers is understandable but while counting their loss with undivided attention, why do you forget to estimate the loss the workers have been suffering since long past due to the owners' insatiable hunger for profit and more profit?

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

MKA is up to a damage control exercise after the devastating accident last time when the whole country was shocked and stunned by his 'Vibration Theory,' a very recent innovation in the field of pure Physics.

Shahin Huq

What a home minister we have!

Alekanda

Hate to see that our garment industry is losing a huge amount of money and they might lose their market if this uprising continues. This unrest will definitely have a negative impact on our economy. But this is the result of decade-long exploitation, oppression and injustice. How long will our garment owners make their fortunes through poor people's blood, sweat and lives? This is a wake-up call for the owners—give these hardworking people basic wages, treat them as decent humans, so you can keep your moneymaking wheel on track and you will be winner in the longer term. After all, these workers are your golden geese!

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## "Mother dies in front of child" (September 25, 2013)

Nds

Those who have practical experience of the traffic movement of this city must know that this is not an accident in the truest sense of the term. The unfortunate mother is just a victim of the bus driver's reckless driving and their least concern for pedestrians. The government's callous attitude towards put a damper on their recklessness smother all hopes for any tangible improvement in the killer mentality of the bus or truck drivers.

Sara

Afraid that this type of accident may increase when trucks are allowed inside Dhaka during the day...

truthprevails53

Will the culprits ever get punished?

Nasirullah Mridha, USA

I know the victim and her husband's family. Both the families are diehard supporters of Awami League. The local AL lawmaker is a relative of both the families. Because of the shipping minister's recent move of giving the drivers a free hand to kill people, the court will not take a homicide case.