

Water concerns all too known

Inaction puts health and development to peril

WE are not water-starved; but policy-wise we are evidently bankrupt. We have had a natural abundance of the precious, life-nurturing and growth-yielding resource, especially in the monsoons.

Bangladesh, being the world's largest delta, has 1,210 billion cubic metres of surface water, but in contrast has only 21 billion cubic metres of ground water reserve. And how are we utilizing the resource? Firstly, we have allowed some 300 rivers to be contaminated by untreated industrial effluents and human wastes making a cruel mockery of what are called 'natural sources of fresh water.'

The second and seminal anomaly in water utilization lies in overdependence on ground water to supply 80 percent of drinking water to the cities. The remainder 20 percent is supplied by the surface water treatment plants. The imbalance is striking here when you take into account the fact that ground water reserve is 57 times less than surface water. The argument that because the river water is polluted we had to turn to sub-soil water is as disingenuous as it is ridiculously expedient. To add to the misery, the short-sighted approach risks serious land subsidence.

So we flag the paramount issue of not just balanced but extremely prudent utilization of waters from both sources, let alone harvesting the substantial amounts of rain water. We need to address the question fairly and squarely so as to deliver and implement a well-thought-out water use policy considered so vital for sustenance of life and rapid economic development.

Protestors of stalking are victimised

Anti-stalking directives have to be enforced

A twelve-year-old girl who was regularly stalked by a local youth in a village in Habiganj had the courage to file a complaint against him at the Union Parishad. For this the stalker and his friends stormed into the girl's house and severely injured her mother and elder sister. The police have said they could not trace the culprit or his cohorts. In another village in Rangpur a 50 year-old grandmother was attacked with acid by a stalker when she tried to prevent him from abducting her teenaged granddaughter.

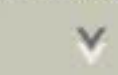
In both cases local youths were the stalkers and in both incidents the protestors of the crime were victimised. This indicates that despite fairly stringent anti-stalking legal recourses, these culprits are being able to sexually harass young girls and get away with the crime. Anyone trying to lodge an official complaint against them or physically trying to stop them becomes a target of vicious attacks.

Stalking has led to victims committing suicide, families being threatened or attacked and young girls being deprived of their right to live without fear. The High Court has expressly declared stalking to be illegal and has asked the government to consider it as sexual harassment and replacing the term 'eve teasing' with it. It has given directives to the government to set up cells at every police station across the country to monitor and deal with stalking cases. Under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000, the maximum sentence for sexual harassment is ten years imprisonment, the minimum three years. Stalking must be incorporated into the Act as per the High Court directive.

COMMENTS

"Wife seeks PM's intervention"

(March 20, 2015)



Barkat

Mrs. Salahuddin, please don't waste your time; you'll get more disappointed. Ilias Ali's wife did it and we all know she got nothing but disappointment.

"No more death in arson, violence"

(March 18, 2015)

Jamil

The government should tighten law and order, reform policing and give them training and patrolling transport.

Zman7

Yes, we want no more death and destruction in the name of democracy.

Rezaul Karim

But people's perception is, this violent culture was created by the Awami Leaguers and their activists.

"At least assure he's safe"

(March 18, 2015)

Rezaul Karim

Politics has become a very dangerous game of life and death in

FORTY FIFTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

A journey through light and shadow

MACRO MIRROR



FAHMIDA KHATUN

BANGLADESH'S War of Independence in 1971 was the culmination of a prolonged movement for emancipation from economic, political and cultural subjugation by West Pakistan.

The nine month long Liberation War was influenced by the ethos to establish a country where progress, equity and justice would be the underlying philosophy of development policies. Forty four years later, the journey looks thorny and turbulent. Though the aspirations of the people of the country were articulated so eloquently in the constitution, much of the ambitions have faded out over the years.

During its journey in the post-independence period the country has experienced turmoil in the form of assassinations, coups, counter-coups and military rule. These were coupled with massive corruption and mal-governance. After a long period of instability and misuse the country moved towards a democratic transition through parliamentary elections in 1991. This transition, however, could not continue its uninterrupted journey as politics could not take a matured institutional shape as yet and is characterised as highly confrontational. One does not need more narratives on Bangladeshi politics—neither of the past, nor the present. Bangladeshis are indeed politically very conscious, as much as they are about their rights.

But do they have rights? What rights? Independence was about achieving their democratic rights, their economic rights, their social rights, their cultural rights. Forty four years is not a long time for a nation to be built fully and entirely if

one looks at the nation building process of today's advanced countries. But it is also not so short that we still have to struggle only to determine as to what would be the form and nature of the government, how the national elections would be held and what would be the guiding principles of parliamentary democracy.

True, in some areas the achievement of the country is spectacular. Consider the macroeconomic indicators. The growth rate of Gross Domestic Production (GDP) increased to 6.1% in 2014 from 3% in 1973. On average, the GDP of Bangladesh has risen from 2.8% in the 1970s to 6% in the 2010s. High growth has pushed per capita income upward by twelve times in 2014 from the level of 1973. The share of

impacted the social life of the population positively on many counts. The share of population below the poverty line has declined from more than 80% in the early 1970s to 24.3% in 2014. Life expectancy has increased by one and half times since 1973. Literacy rate of population of 15 years and above doubled during 1981-2012. Maternal mortality has declined by almost four times and child mortality by more than five times now since the eighties. The list can be stretched further. But it is better to stop here since the devil is in the details. Not only do these numbers portray only a partial scenario but they also do not reflect the mental state caused by failed expectations of the millions who have not received a share of the pie. Thus the lack of fairness in income distribution has been present

we also observe these numbers. Almost 40% of the population do not have access to electricity, about 15% of the population are still without access to safe water sources and 43% do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. In case of the first two indicators, Bangladesh lags behind the South Asian average.

Yet again, numbers are only part of the story. GDP may continue to grow, per capita income may also rise, but they mean nothing in the end. Particularly for those who live on the edge of vulnerability. This is not only because the process of estimating GDP and per capita income is faulty and provides an incomplete picture, but also because, in the absence of major enablers of economic progress such as stable political environment, such growth will continue to suffer from disillusionment.

In their widely acclaimed book *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at Harvard University respectively, argue that institutions determine the fate of nations. Based on their fifteen years of original research the authors show that when political and economic institutions are inclusive and pluralistic success comes as everyone has incentives to invest. In the same vein they also argue that if institutions protect the political and economic interest of a small group of powerful people, nations fail. The findings of this book have relevance for most countries in the world, including Bangladesh. This year, as Bangladesh is set to celebrate its Independence Day, the need for inclusive democratic and development process is once again pronounced, which can pave the way for a meaningful participation of broader section of the people.

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While we rejoice at the achievements during the past decades, we also suffer from frustrations due to the missed opportunities. The promise of an equitable, just and democratic society has been tarnished by bitter political hostility and acrimony between the political parties.

exports in GDP is now almost 20% compared to only 4.1% in 1980. Similarly, import has doubled in 2014 compared to 1980 in terms of its share in GDP. And high imports are possible through impressive remittance flow. Remittances have increased by more than seven times as a share of GDP during 1980-2014.

Dependency on foreign aid to undertake development work has declined by almost half in terms of its share in GDP in 2014 from that of 1973, indicating a more self-reliant growth effort. Also, the feature of a modern economy, that is a graduation from an agriculturally dependent to industry and service sector-based growth, is being observed gradually.

Social indicators are not lagging behind either. Economic progress has

ever since independence. Therefore, any tangible change in the lives of the poorest sections through impressive macro indicators still remains unfulfilled.

So while we rejoice at the achievements during the past decades, we also suffer from frustrations due to the missed opportunities. The promise of an equitable, just and democratic society has been tarnished by bitter political hostility and acrimony between the political parties. As a result, while steady progress has been made, it could not be sustained. Economic growth, though high compared to other least developed countries, has slowed down during the last couple of years. Income inequality persists as resources and wealth are concentrated amongst fewer hands due to a nexus between politics and business. Therefore,

A searchlight for a spotlight

BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

WE shall know soon enough which is the champion nation of contemporary one-day cricket. But we already know who the heroes are: Bangladesh. Each one of us, the odd eccentric apart, supports our countries. All of us, the odd

idiot apart, should feel for Bangladesh. Luck had nothing to do with their unsuspected rise to relevance. It rarely does. They are the team worth admiration because together they are far greater than the sum of their parts.

It is sometimes difficult to recognise cricket as a team sport in the sense that football or hockey or rugby are. In football, two complete teams are fully engaged from kick-off to final whistle. But cricket, a long game played in stages, has one team of 11 in the field versus two batsmen at the wicket. [Those unfamiliar with cricket, or with uncomplicated minds, can switch off now.] Then come subtle variables. One bowler takes on one batsman, while ten of the bowler's mates and the batsman's partner watch, wait, and adjust to a secondary role. Batsmen rotate. Pieces change on the fielding chessboard. Cricket can become, simultaneously, one versus one, one versus two and eleven against one.

This fragmented but not dysfunctional process inevitably shifts the spotlight on an individual rather than the team. Statistics build up a batsman's runs, a bowler's wickets, although it does remain a team's victory. But how often have you seen a television camera spread its scope to include all players on the field? Almost never, unless the cameraman has a fetish for panning shots of overgrown ants. It's all close-ups. Players know this. There is no stable face in the game anymore. Players perfect the high arts of

grimace/rage/exhilaration that can win them the next advertising contract.

Bangladesh's progress has been an excellent example of team integration, which lifts average talent to higher capability. This was evident in their most important game, when they defeated England to enter the knockout stage for the first time. The result was described as historic. But although there are more commentators now than players, with acrobats thrown in to fill time gaps, no one noticed a second reason for the accolade. Every successor state of the old British Raj has now humbled the fountainhead of colonisation and the motherland of cricket. Rejoice! We can at last put imperialism behind us. We have taken our revenge. We can move on. It might even be time for some well-deserved pity for English cricket. We South Asians may not be good patrons, but we can be pretty good at patronising.

Sceptics will possibly raise an eyebrow or two at my theory of non-heroes: surely young Rubel Hossain is Bangla's star after a virtuoso performance? He certainly twinkles far more now than he did when he left Dhaka some weeks ago. Even his former actress girlfriend, Naznin Akter Happy, a bit of a star herself, has rediscovered her admiration for Rubel and forgiven a brutal break-up. But Rubel's peaks were on the same range as his team. His killer wickets against England will be the talk of his country for years, particularly since Dhaka's Bengalis have soured a bit on their favourite topic, politics.

But it will be only one of the many stories that stir up some lively cups of tea. The audio recording of umpires taking a final call on close decisions has already done what it was meant to, increase the appetite for excitable gossip. Without ifs and buts, there would be no consolation for anyone whose side lost. But they do not really change the story. The better side wins. You can only run so far in a dream run.

The team of the tournament so far is India. It is calm under pressure, composed in approach and comprehensive in victory. It is a side with many pillars, so that the structure never crumbles. It has not been undermined

by complacency; it fought against Bangladesh with the intensity it would have shown against Australia.

India has taken 70 wickets in seven games. That's bowling. India has not lost a wicket during any batting power play. India has scored 300 runs in a game with intimidating regularity. When Virat Kohli fails Rohit Sharma succeeds. That's batting.

I know the bad news; this can't go on forever, can it? No. But we are not greedy. We just want this to continue for two more games. Virat Kohli and Mahendra Singh Dhoni did not make runs against



Bangladesh; that is surely good news if the balance of probability is your measure, for the odds move in their direction. India, so far, has not really needed the serene turbulence of Dhoni because those above him in the batting order have done more than required, but one of the next two matches will test India's most successful one-day captain.

His last aria for a well-orchestrated team should be in the world's spotlight.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, *India on Sunday*, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Unacceptable umpiring

The match between India and Bangladesh was filled with controversies and broke the hearts of millions of Bangladeshis. I simply cannot understand how the umpires can deliberately do this despite there being video evidence. Why is Bangladesh singled out by umpires? How many matches have we lost due to wrong decisions? Commentators mentioned Bangladesh being "late bloomers" and have very few wins against the top eight sides, but no one talks about the quality of umpiring. From Ashoka Disilva, Steve Bucknor and now Ian Gould and of all umpires, Aleem Dar, an award winning umpire made the wrong call. Why can't wrong decisions be reversed? India could have won without cheating and the game would have looked a lot better if it went to the wire but it seems that umpires have also made their own slogan, "We won't let them give it back".

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Go forth and conquer

Take nothing away from team India whose fielding was superb. However, Tigers, TV viewers around the world would likely agree that had any one of the three very controversial calls gone your way, this would have been a much closer contest: (1) the LBW which would have hit the middle stump (2) Rubel's wicket which was declared a no-ball (3) and Mahmudullah's six which was taken away when the fielder's foot may have touched the boundary and the doubt should go to the batsman. Tigers, you tried your best and have nothing to be ashamed of. If Dhoni is 'captain cool', then Mashrafe is 'captain courageous'. For the tournament the star with the bat was Mahmudullah and the star with the ball was Rubel who had every right to celebrate after the take-down of Kohli whom he also took down in the Asian cup. These two along with Mashrafe deserve a chance in the IPL, and if they do not get it then, Shakib, please stand by your country and boycott the IPL. Tigers, your future is bright. Three future stars were discovered: Soumya, Shabbir, and Taskin. Follow your coaches, since their positive impact is obvious. As it was your goal to reach the QF's in 2015, settle for nothing less than the semi's in 2019. Go forth and conquer!

Scott Elliott
On e-mail