

What's in a mayor's name?

MAHFUZUR RAHMAN

WE now have two mayors. Not long ago the city of Dhaka was split in two, each requiring a mayor. My allegiance, however, lies unshakably with Dhaka South: the Dacca of Bakshi Bazar of my youth, the Dacca of Dacca University, Ramna, Shahid Minar, and teeming streets, the Dacca in short with a history, very unlike Dhaka North, which has none.

A mayor is not a mere cleaner of streets or provider of water and light; the government of the country could appoint someone to do the job. Indeed we had government-appointed administrators for the two Dhakas, though their performance admittedly left huge room for improvement. Do we really need a mayor to do a better job? No. But a mayor represents things loftier than his indispensable function as someone who sees to it that the city streets are clean. Most important of all, he is a leader of a large citizenry.

A mayor is a city father. That term signifies leadership, care, responsibility and wisdom. And note that the Dhaka South mayor has been directly chosen by a far larger electorate than individual Members of Parliament, including the Prime Minister, have been. Remember cities are the birth place of democracy itself...

Being chosen a mayor of Dhaka South is thus a weighty affair. It is curious therefore to see how he makes light of himself by continuing to use his childhood name, Khokon. That name is of

course a pet name, a term I prefer to the more familiar 'nickname', because of its more endearing ring.

We Bangalis are fond of showy and long names. These are official or legal names. In Bangla this is *bhalo naam*. In addition, many of us have pet names, the Bangla *daak naam*. My generation, people born in the early thirties, has seen plenty of pet names in our time too, mainly

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given by dotting parents, but sometimes originating from special circumstances surrounding the early life of the individual in question. But pet names rarely embedded themselves into the official names. The pet name was used mostly within the family circle. Sometimes it even faded from memory of those on the fringes of the family. Pet names were none of the business of the unac-

quainted or the faintly acquainted. Where the pet name survived, it co-existed with the official name but quite independently of each other, with the latter clearly dominating. When putting it on paper, one wrote only her or his *bhalo naam*. The *daak naam* was too immaterial to come into the picture. But now the pet name is an organic caudal end to the official name. The two often go together even in the loftiest of positions in society. That position can be one of a high official, not excluding a cabinet minister. The caudal pet name can sometimes wag the official name.

Over the last few decades there has been an infectious proliferation of the use of pet names, most remarkably of the caudal type. The variety too is astonishing. Some of the names we hear today in the media were unknown when we were young. These are as remarkable in variety as in number. There are the plainly meaningless (Falu or Dudu), the demeaning (Potol or Tepa), and the ridiculous (Stalin, Samrat). This still leaves us with a huge miscellany of Alal, Bulu, Inu, Maya, Mintu or Tuku. And there are terms of endearment like Babu, Khuki, Khoka or Khokon. But it is important to go beyond mere enumeration of names.

Note, first of all, that even where parents' dotting is involved, pet names are sometimes bestowed without a thought of the child ever growing up. Imagine: why would the father or the mother name their child Baby, Babu, Bachchu, or Khoka, if they believed the child will one day be prime minister of the country? In all probability, they did

not think of such possibility, or did not think of the future at all. Despite all that dotting, the name was a triviality. Even if the parents had thought of the future, they must have assumed that the name would fade away while the *bhalo naam* alone would prevail. This does not seem to happen anymore; the pet name acquires a life of its own; and its bearer in adult life continues to flaunt it, quite oblivious of its frivolity.

In public life, a pet name conjures up a closed circle of chums and sycophants, a coterie, a clique, with the pet-named politicians at the centre. The scene may be somewhat exaggerated, and the politician in question may remain impervious to ingratiating. But the reality of it being played out around the country, especially among low and middle level politicians, is beyond question. It is true that other politicians, those with mature names, can also be surrounded by a coterie, but the circle of politicians with appended pet names seems to belong to quite a different world, one that is fast expanding.

Most importantly, pet names trivialise politics in public eye. Perhaps many will agree that politics today is not what it was. Faith in politics and politicians is crumbling. Politics has been de-idealised. It has been criminalised. Fewer pet names will not of course restore respect to politics. But it might go some way towards that end.

Won't Your Honour, Mayor of Dhaka South, lead the way?

The writer is a former United Nations economist and author of a miscellany of books.

From 'good-enough' jobs to 'decent' jobs

SELIM RAIHAN

THOUGH there are many views on 'inclusive growth', the key consensus is that inclusive growth is a growth process which reduces poverty, inequality and social exclusion and promotes 'decent' jobs and economic and social cohesion. A 'decent' job is referred to as a productive job for women and men in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. It also involves opportunities for work that deliver a fair income, provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families (ILO, 2011, *Working with the ILO - Decent Work and System Wide Coherence*, Geneva).

The economy of the country had been growing at a rate of above five percent over the last two decades. There are arguments that such growth in Bangladesh has been largely 'inclusive' in nature and that Bangladesh has been successful in generating 'good' jobs by improving farm-non-farm, rural-urban inter-industry inter-sectoral labour mobility at a relatively low skill level that had poverty reducing and social cohesion enhancing effects (Mahabub Hossain, Binayak Sen and Yasuyuki Sawada, 2012, *Jobs, Growth and Development: Making of the "Other" Bangladesh*, WDR 2013 Background Paper). Such claims demand careful examination as it is not clear what the definition of 'good' job is in the context of Bangladesh's economy. It is equally important to understand what needs to be done in the transition toward a regime of 'decent' jobs.

'Decent' jobs should be regarded as a dynamic and progressive phenomenon. There could be three stages for moving toward attaining a 'decent' job. The first stage is the 'good-enough' job which shows the transition from no job to job or from unpaid family job to paid-job. The second stage is the 'good' job which shows the transition from 'good-enough' job to job with better return, formal job security and enhanced workers' rights. The third stage is the 'decent' job, which is the transition from 'good' job to a state of productive employment in compliance with agreed international standards of working environment and workers' rights.

Apart from the RMG, employment in all other sectors has largely been for men, and mostly informal in nature. Rise in employment in agriculture, both in the crop and non-crop sectors, has been associated with agricultural growth and rise in agricultural real wage, with virtually no progress towards 'good' jobs. Rise in employment in the rural non-farm and urban informal sectors has also happened without much progress towards the creation of 'good' jobs in these sectors. For men, such expansion has helped them to move out from unemployment or unpaid family labour to 'good-enough' jobs. For women, employment in the RMG sector, in most cases, is a manifestation of the transition from no labour force participation or unpaid family jobs to paid-jobs. Such paid-jobs in most of the RMG factories are largely 'good-enough' in nature, which however have also contributed to the reduction in poverty and generating growth in Bangladesh.

It is equally important to understand the quality of structural transformation that has happened in the process of economic growth in Bangladesh. Though the share of industrial sector in GDP has increased from around 20 percent in the early 1990s to around 30 percent by late 2000s, with a simultaneous reduction in the share of agricultural sector, there is still a long way to go for the creation of large scale 'good' jobs in the urban sectors. This will require both quantitative and qualitative changes in the current pattern of structural transformation of the economy. The economy is yet to have a strong and diversified manufacturing base, which requires supporting macroeconomic, trade and industrial policies and removal of policy-induced and supply-side constraints.

In the near future, for the promotion of inclusive growth, the challenge of Bangladesh's economy is how to transition from the current state of 'good-enough' jobs to large scale 'good' jobs. In the medium to long term, the prospect of inclusive growth in Bangladesh would depend on how the growth momentum would be able to generate successful transition toward a state of 'decent' job.

The writer is Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). Email: selim.raihan@econu.ac.bd

Thunder Clouds in the Horizon?

The Global Climate Change Agreement 2015

M. ASADUZZAMAN

THE global climate change is expected to have possible devastating effects on lives, livelihood and economy in most countries. A Global Climate Change Agreement (GCCA) is to be signed in Paris in December 2015 and implemented from 2021 onwards. This will be an international agreement with the force of law. And here lies the problem for Bangladesh which needs to be clearly understood by policy makers.

In Geneva in February 2015, the members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met and produced an official text for the consideration as GCCA. As the GCCA is going to be a legally binding international treaty the issue of legal cover must be sorted out by December 2015. The first meeting to discuss the Geneva text will be in next June in Bonn.

The Geneva text has two alternatives on legal cover. It refers to the Vienna Convention of 1969 on International Treaty and also provides an option for a stand alone agreement. Either may possibly foreclose at least for some time the door of the treaty to Bangladesh.

Provided the reference to the Vienna Convention stays, this will create some difficult problems. Non-signatories to the Vienna Convention include Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Norway and ironically France, the President of the upcoming Paris meeting. The USA has signed but not ratified it. As Bangladesh is not a signatory, with the Vienna Convention as the legal cover, a question obviously arises if Bangladesh can sign and ratify the GCCA. If it cannot, the country will be deprived of the global support under the GCCA for mitigation and adaptation and the associated finance and ancillary activities. The financial flow is expected to be at least US\$100 bn per year globally from 2021 onwards.

The non-signing and non-ratification of the Vienna Convention by the above-listed countries may have national and global ramifications. The national implication has already been hinted at as the country may be deprived of various international financial and other support for it to avert the adverse impacts of climate change.

On the global implication first note that the US, the largest emitter till recently of greenhouse gases may wiggle itself out of the Paris agreement obligations behind the fig leaf of non-ratification. On the other hand both India and South Africa are major emitters among developing countries whose emissions are expected to rise even faster in the future. Also, India has already reportedly declared that it would not sign any legally binding treaty. The absence of USA, India and South Africa will thus be a mockery of the high global



PHOTO: MUNIR UZZAMAN/APP/GETTY IMAGE

ambition for the climate treaty when the average global concentration of greenhouse gases has already crossed the 400 parts per million mark.

The Geneva text proposes an alternative legal framework. Some of its options however fly in the face of the letter and spirit of the UNFCCC. Let me just quote one of the options for membership. This is from para 215.5 Option 3 and reads as follows:

"A Party to the Convention to have a legally binding mitigation commitment in order to become a Party to this agreement."

If this option stays, countries which have no legally binding commitment under the Convention (such as LDCs including Bangladesh) cannot be members of the GCCA. Bangladesh first must commit a mandatory GHG reduction pledge to be a member of the GCCA and benefit from its operation including the flow of finance. This is a clear political commitment that Bangladesh has to decide whether or not to make. Such a commitment must not be made lightly or through executive order. The people must be consulted before making such a commitment.

So far the idea in climate change talks has been that while countries such as Bangladesh may commit for mitigation it has to be conditional upon receiving financial and technical support from the Convention or related bodies. A chicken and egg problem may arise here and must be resolved before which the GCCA may not be signed by Bangladesh.

There may be perfect solutions to the problem at hand. But we do not know what and the people have a

right to know how things will be managed in such a case. If the non-signing of the Vienna Convention becomes a real hindrance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Law owe the nation an explanation about how they will keep Bangladesh's concerns alive in global climate change talks and allow it to attract resources for its climate change management in the years to come. If Vienna Convention is not an impediment, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has a lot of explaining to do regarding governance of the GCCA and membership issues. To begin with the delegation to the Bonn climate change talks in June must clearly oppose in the opening plenary any move to restrict membership of the GCCA. Further it should raise questions and make arguments for one or the other of the confusing governance options in the Geneva text.

For that matter there is the persistent reference to a Governing Body which has not even been formally proposed to be established in the text. Would the Governing Body be the present COP itself or would there be a separate body apart from COP? What would the relationship between them in the latter case be? Would it help or hinder the GCCA operations? Or, for that matter, would the UNFCCC be ultimately redundant and wither away? There are thus many legal matters to settle which may have domestic political implications as well as for international relations. The official delegation must have its brief ready accordingly.

The writer is Professorial Fellow, BIDS.

QUOTABLE Quote



LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die life is a broken-winged bird, that cannot fly.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Belt holders | 1 Jar part |
| 6 Does some housework | 2 Music's Yoko |
| 11 Acquired relative | 3 Conservative folks |
| 12 Bring about | 4 Book feature |
| 13 Avoid | 5 Give the oath of office to |
| 14 Opposition | 6 Nerdy guy |
| 15 Fall fallers | 7 Fancy planters |
| 17 Boxing great | 8 Spot |
| 19 Umbrella part | 9 Wool cap |
| 20 Paddle's kin | 10 Sun setting |
| 23 Throat mass | 16 Heavy |
| 25 Cuzco native | 17 Make amends |
| 26 Cruise carriers | 18 In the area |
| 28 DEA agent | 20 Some jokes |
| 29 Short sock | 21 Farm units |
| 30 Overhead trains | 22 Dreadlocks wearer |
| 31 Make fun of | 24 Bodily pouch |
| 32 "Patience - Virtue" | 25 Pen fill |
| 33 Not harmful | 27 Hoosier's home |
| 35 Admit | 31 Home of the Masai |
| 38 Alaska native | 33 Swallow, e.g. |
| 41 Creamy color | 34 Surfeit |
| 42 Clinic worker | 35 Designer Claireborne |
| 43 "The Prisoner of-" | 36 Time to prepare |
| 44 Puzzled | 37 Great weight |
| | 39 Purpose |
| | 40 Hot brew |

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44

Yesterday's answer

S H E B A D R E W
L A V I N B R A V O
A V E R T R A D I O
L A R D M U T A T E
O N E T A N R A D
M A S T E R E D
S T I R T U F T
M I S T E R E D
S A D G E E E R R
C L I M A X M E M O
A L T E R B A S I N
R O K E R A C U T E
S W A T T Y P E S

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

YOU MUST HAVE HAD A VERY ROUGH DAY

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

YOUR TEETH ARE STILL GRINDING

GREG+MORT WALKER

HENRY by Don Trachte

FOR HOMEWORK I WANT YOU TO WRITE A PARAGRAPH BEGINNING WITH THIS SENTENCE: 'I LIKE SCHOOL BECAUSE...'

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