

## New national pay scale

### Performance must match pay hike

**P**UBLIC servants are about to see their salaries doubled across the board. We are all for an increase in the pay of public servants given the increase in cost of living we have witnessed over the past few years. Yet, we cannot but stress that there has to be a concomitant increase in the efficiency level of the government machinery. The citizens would like to see better service delivery and greater professionalism from the civil servants now that they are being taken care of properly in terms of financial emoluments.

The revised pay for the bureaucracy is going to cost the national exchequer an additional Tk 15,904 crore this year. From the next fiscal it will add a further Tk 23,828 crore as the new bonus will come into effect. While the new scale amply covers financial security of government officials, it would be heartening to see greater accountability to the general public as well as proper evaluation of their performance.

Some economists believe that the pay hike is justified given the inflationary pressure on the economy, but it is important to keep tabs on the customary rise in house rent and other commodity prices whenever a new pay scale comes into effect. Unless this unnatural phenomenon is checked, the new pay scale will have little value to the recipients. We look forward to an increase in productivity among public officials in the foreseeable future which has not been forthcoming as the public service cadre has seen quality compromised due to nepotism and politicisation at the cost of professionalism.

## Another Arms Haul in CHT

### Security breach must be addressed

**T**HE detention of a miscreant with a huge cache of weapons and ammunition from a remote jungle in Khagrachhari by the army has left us with a sense of foreboding. It is the second time in two months that weapons and ammunition have been recovered in the region. In this particular operation, the haul included machine guns, sub-machine guns, SLRs, a grenade, 350 rounds of bullets and seven sets of military uniforms. This is indeed a serious breach of security, one that we must make all out efforts to address. The influx of these illegal weapons and ammunition has the prospect of causing severe infringement of peace and security in the area.

We condemn these terrorist activities which must be dealt with immediately. However, we must also point out to the grievances of the Hill Tracts people as a result of part of the 1996 Peace Accord remaining unimplemented. Initiated by the then Awami League government, it was considered a milestone achievement for which the present Prime Minister, who also headed the government at the time, received justifiable praise.

We had hoped that with the historic Accord, peace would be restored to the CHT permanently. Unfortunately, this has not happened, allowing a vested quarter to take advantage of the situation, thus attempting to destabilise the region.

Just as we must take the severest measures against terrorists, so also the conditions of the Peace Accord need to be fulfilled and its spirit not compromised.

## A Quiet Repose

SYED S. ANDALEEB

**A**YLAN Kurdi, another sweet and innocent child, laid in eternal slumber on a Turkish beach, claimed by the horrendous cruelty, imbecilic greed, and unfathomable excesses of a world gone astray, a world nurtured by those who control it for profit and frolic. Indeed Aylan unmasks once again the world's moronic rulers, hungering for power and control, scarring our sensitivities, grating our fond memories, and generating the flotsam and debris of the unswilled washing up on the beaches and elsewhere.

Surely, the masses of the strife-ridden world making a dash across unfriendly waters to unknown (and often hostile) lands do not seek the outcome that Aylan's family had to bear. All they seek is the security of a safe harbour. The question is what circumstances force people to make such perilous choices? The horrific memories of 1971 and the ravages we suffered keep rushing in; the images of uprooted men, women, and children making a desperate bid across the borders, many dying on the way, while the world's rulers strategised and dithered and connived to find answers. Not much has changed since then.

How many more children will be lost in this new migratory wave to imagined safety? How many more will die an untimely death in Palestine, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Mexico, and now in Hungary? How many will die in the larger canvas of the African, Asian and South American continents? Rant and rave as we may, the rulers of the world have managed to stifle outrage. Nothing seems to change the trajectory of despair and suffering while a small coterie shamelessly grasp for everything they can lay their hands on.

Aylan's story will deeply stir the emotions of a multitude; some will even silently wipe away a tear-drop. But in very short order, the sonorous waves of global glitz, and the attendant greed and lust and unfettered delusions, will have erased his memories. Life will again be "as is" - glittery and mirage-like- for those who shape the destinies of others, until another blip appears on the sands of time...and another and another. Blips they are not; they abound all around us - out of sight, out of mind.

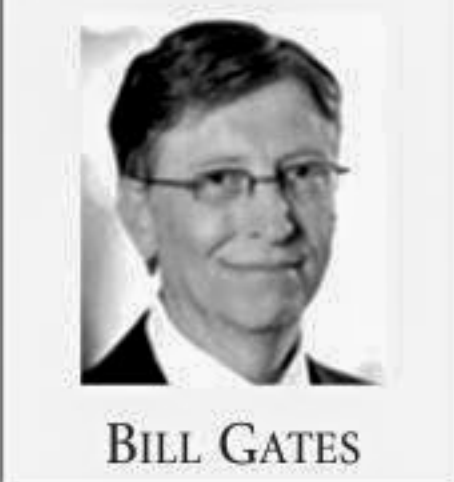
This innocent little boy and others like him who have been lost to time, stand tall as symbols of grace in their slumber. They bear no malice. And they leave behind a simple message to the warlords of the world: "All you could give me was fear and uncertainty and distrust. I have had enough. I am now at peace - far from your ugliness, your contempt for life, your inhumanity." That message, delivered time and again, seems to ring hollow to the world's rulers.

The writer is Vice Chancellor, BRAC University, Bangladesh.

# Who will suffer most from climate change?

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT



BILL GATES

**A** few years ago, Melinda and I visited with a group of rice farmers in Bihar, India, one of the most flood-prone regions of the country. All of them were extremely poor and depended

on the rice they grew to feed and support their families. When the monsoon rains arrived each year, the rivers would swell, threatening to flood their farms and ruin their crops. Still, they were willing to bet everything on the chance that their farm would be spared. It was a gamble they often lost. Their crops ruined, they would flee to the cities in search of odd jobs to feed their families. By the next year, however, they would return - often poorer than when they left - ready to plant again.

Our visit was a powerful reminder that for the world's poorest farmers, life is a high-wire act - without safety nets. They don't have access to improved seeds, fertilizer, irrigation systems, and other beneficial technologies, as farmers in rich countries do - and no crop insurance, either, to protect themselves against losses. Just one stroke of bad fortune - a drought, a flood, or an illness - is enough for them to tumble deeper into poverty and hunger.

Now climate change is set to add a fresh layer of risk to their lives. Rising temperatures in the decades ahead will lead to major disruptions in agriculture, particularly in tropical zones. Crops won't grow because of too little rain or too much rain. Pests will thrive in the warmer climate and destroy crops.

Farmers in wealthier countries will experience changes, too. But they have the tools and support to manage these risks. The world's poorest farmers show up for work each day for the most part empty-handed. That's why, of all the

people who will suffer from climate change, they are likely to suffer the most.

Poor farmers will feel the sting of these changes at the same time the world needs their help to feed a growing population. By 2050, global food demand is expected to increase by 60 percent. Declining harvests would strain the global food system, increasing hunger and eroding the tremendous progress the world has made against poverty over the last half-century.

I'm optimistic that we can avoid the worst impacts of climate change and

poorest adapt.

Many of the tools they'll need are quite basic - things that they need anyway to grow more food and earn more income: access to financing, better seeds, fertilizer, training, and markets where they can sell what they grow.

Other tools are new and tailored to the demands of a changing climate. The Gates Foundation and its partners have worked together to develop new varieties of seeds that grow even during times of drought or flooding. The rice farmers I met in Bihar, for instance, are now grow-

world take for granted. This new prosperity allows them to improve their diets, invest in their farms, and send their children to school. It also pulls their lives back from the razor's edge, giving them a sense of security even if they have a bad harvest.

There will also be threats from climate change that we can't foresee. To be prepared, the world needs to accelerate research into seeds and supports for smallholder farmers. One of the most exciting innovations to help farmers is satellite technology. In Africa, researchers are using satellite images to create detailed soil maps, which can inform farmers about what varieties will thrive on their land.

Still, a better seed or a new technology can't transform the lives of farming families until it's in their hands. A number of organisations, including a non-profit group called One Acre Fund, are finding ways to ensure that farmers take advantage of these solutions. One Acre Fund works closely with more than 200,000 African farmers, providing access to financing, tools, and training. By 2020, they aim to reach one million farmers.

In this year's Annual Letter, Melinda and I made a bet that Africa will be able to feed itself in the next 15 years. Even with the risks of climate change, that's a bet I stand by.

Yes, poor farmers have it tough. Their lives are puzzles with so many pieces to get right - from planting the right seeds and using the correct fertilizer to getting training and having a place to sell their harvest. If just one piece falls out of place, their lives can fall apart.

I know the world has what it takes to help put those pieces in place for both the challenges they face today and the ones they'll face tomorrow. Most importantly, I know the farmers do, too.

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PHOTO: AFP

feed the world if we act now. There's an urgent need for governments to invest in new clean-energy innovations that will dramatically reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and halt rising temperatures. At the same time, we need to recognise that it's already too late to stop all of the impacts of hotter temperatures. Even if the world discovered a cheap, clean energy source next week, it would take time for it to kick its fossil fuel-powered habits and shift to a carbon-free future. That's why it's critical for the world to invest in efforts to help the

ing a new variety of flood-tolerant rice - nicknamed "scuba" rice - that can survive two weeks underwater. They are already prepared if shifts in the weather pattern bring more flooding to their region. Other rice varieties are being developed that can withstand drought, heat, cold, and soil problems like high salt contamination.

All of these efforts have the power to transform lives. It's quite common to see these farmers double or triple their harvests and their incomes when they have access to the advances farmers in the rich

# LIVING WITH HALF-TRUTHS

KNOT SO TRUE



RUBANA HUQ

**I**T'S easy not to lie and speak half-truths instead. In one form or another, all of us benefit from all the half-empty glasses sitting on our table. With time, many of us get more comfortable living with half-statements and quasi desires.

As a result, we have been labeled as the second most unliveable city in the world, without any of us forcefully arguing that while Melbourne, the most liveable city, has almost 3,900 square miles and four million people, Dhaka has over more than 14 million spread over in only one-tenth of that of Melbourne. As a result, we have negative, bashful media attention on apparent non-compliance and not so much on positive stories in the readymade garment sector.

So, we waddle through water, watch garbage pile up in front of our homes and have no relief from traffic jams. Meantime, the mayors enlighten us on how clogged the outlets are and how there is a complete lack in coordination with the 54 or so agencies that none of the mayors of Dhaka can immediately solve. When the intolerable jam was questioned in the media, both mayors said that traffic was beyond their jurisdiction. When we watch waste piling up in our neighbourhoods, the Dhaka North City Corporation mayor says that there is no place to dump the waste and that lands for transfer stations are in the process of being acquired. Quite interestingly, both the mayors' manifestos pledged to "coordinate" and solve all the above problems. At this point, perhaps it is relevant to quote Mario Cuomo, the 52nd Governor of New York for three terms, from 1983 to 1994 who, in one of his famous speeches, uttered: "You campaign in poetry. You govern in prose." Perhaps that bit of Cuomo is right and fair and perhaps we ought to give more time to our mayors to realistically do what they need to do in order to fill their half empty glass challenge.

But what is clear is that a lot still remains on their platter as no matter what these two do, the lands, parks, lakes and canals which have been grabbed will perhaps never be completely reclaimed as there are bigger forces working behind them all. The question of empowering the mayors more may also not happen,

ever. We may have to live with half empty glasses all our lives. What happens then? The fact still remains that irrespective of whether the government decides to empower them or not, irrespective of whether they are able to reclaim the grabbed lands, lakes and parks, they will be continuously graded in their daily report cards... just because the people of the city have not elected officials of the 54 agencies but we have elected our mayors. Given that there are many challenges within these organisations, the task for them is perhaps much more difficult than what we assume. But no matter what, the remediation must begin.

If powerful people have grabbed lands, parks and lakes, and if nothing can be reclaimed, then these elected representatives must find a way to make these "powerful people" make positive changes in the land-

*The journey of a nation must be a holistic one. We must all collectively remember that promises need to be balanced with pragmatic route maps; plans need to be properly conveyed; regrets need to be coupled with hope.*

scape of the city. Maybe they can atone for their sins by themselves carving out parks, lakes, and public toilets in the places that they themselves have illegally acquired. How about making them compensate this city for all their sins? And how about laying out your complete plan for five years so that the Dhaka city dwellers have an impression of a fuller Dhaka in the next couple of months?

The RMG story is also a tale of half-truths. Very recently, an international news channel shared a story on Shams Styling Wears that supplies to The Children's Place, a renowned brand sourcing quite a bit from Bangladesh. The story covered how a pair of shorts travels 13,000 miles from Dhaka to Alabama and is sold at \$19.95 a pair. The factory, the story claims, is paid something around \$4.00 for the same pair. The

channel carefully crafts the story of exploitation at both ends and says how the factory, which belongs to the very well reputed Standard Group, gives no days off to the workers (incorrect data) and how the brands are also paying less to their vendors. While the case of the brands paying much less to factories is made in the story, it's also true that Bangladesh remains most competitive because of inexpensive labour. On the other hand, the ground reality reflects that remediation is on track in this country. In times like this, continuous rehashing of Rana Plaza in media does nothing more than attempt to draw a consumer's attention to the product's ethical construction and dampens the moral fabric of the manufacturers of Bangladesh as there are many stories in this sector that could be incentivised and shared with the world.

While in the story, the owner, Mr. Hossain is referred to as claiming to be a grandfatherly figure, in reality he truly is. This report on him pretending to weep and shed tears and wiping them with a "pink tissue", while sitting next to the honourable Prime Minister when his factory was burnt down, does nothing to Mr. Hossain's reputation; rather it reflects poorly on an extremely well-reputed electronic media platform that is known for its political correctness. So while the story of exploitation pops up every now and then, what is needed is an international campaign appealing to all brands, media and platforms to consider that in about three years time, most of the RMG units in Bangladesh will be far more compliant and that by supporting our journey, they would only be supporting the causes of the workers in this county.

The journey of a nation must be a holistic one. We must all collectively remember that promises need to be balanced with pragmatic route maps; plans need to be properly conveyed; regrets need to be coupled with hope. After all, perceiving the whole truth in an instant may not be possible, but the journey must begin. Most of us need to be suddenly exposed to the light where the glare blocks our vision. And ultimately, many of us will definitely be looking at real things and reflections in due course. And then, finally, many of us must also see the real sun, the moon and the stars that complete the picture. This is where Plato's Republic comes alive and this is where allegory underpins real life.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

## COMMENTS

**"A friend of Bangladesh passes away"**  
(September 6, 2015)

Habiba

This man was a great friend of Bangladesh.

Abu Mahmud

We will never forget his role for our country during 1971.

**"8 burnt, fight for lives"**  
(September 6, 2015)

Abul Fathah

Ship breaking is a very risky and hazardous job but the ship yard owners are negligent about their workers' safety.

**"Arab countries doing nothing"**  
(September 6, 2015)

Abul Khan

These Arab countries have little time to look at the plight of their fellow brothers/sisters. With unlimited petro-dollars in their possession, they only care about their personal luxuries.

Shakil Ahmed

Shame on the leaders of these Arab countries.

Noyon Sam

They are mostly dictators and don't have any shame.

Salahuddin Jamal

Saudi Arabia with its vast area can easily accommodate these refugees.

**"Standards to be set for talk shows"**  
(September 7, 2015)

Shahedul Islam

Good decision, but who will set the standards? Commission set up by the government? In this case, there is a chance that it will hamper freedom of speech of the guests of talk shows because no commission can work freely and neutrally in Bangladesh.

Fif Ahmed

Simple meaning of this is: you can't criticise the government.

Salahuddin Jamal

This is a skillful way of putting barriers for talk shows to discourage the free flow of information!