

Books, power and flyovers

Education along with co-curricular activities can nurture in the young self-respect and independence, compassion for and a will to help others, knowledge of and respect for adherents of all beliefs and cultures, and the most important, potency to change for the better.

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

THERE is no country in the world that gives away more than 33 crore books on New Year's Day, and that too for free, not even in the richest of the rich countries. The difficulty

is not only in printing so many different books on different subjects of levels one to ten, but also in the perhaps more demanding and humongous task of distributing them to almost 4.5 crore students across the country. Bangladesh, thanks to the innovative initiative of a thinking head-straight education minister Nurul Islam Nahid and his supportive ministry, aided by a dedicated team of writers, editors, printers, teachers and principals, have been doing just that for now for a number of years. The joy on the face of the children and the patriotism instilled in their soul is worth the while and the entire project by all means a wise investment.

Education along with co-curricular activities can nurture in the young self-respect and independence, compassion for and a will to help others, knowledge of and respect for adherents of all beliefs and cultures, and the most important, potency to change for the better. There is little doubt that education indeed is power.

The power sector too has made progress in leaps and bounds. The initial criticism for allotting contracts for quick rental power supply has subsided in the face of development meanwhile of the larger permanent stations that has taken Bangladesh's total power from 3300 megawatt in 2008 to plus-12000mw in 2015, a steep journey in just seven years. This hitherto considered improbable progress has again been possible by a catalytic government policy taken forward by an agile power (state) minister Nasrul Hamid Bipu and his sincere ministry officials, buoyed by the zealous dedication and hard work of those concerned in both the public and the private sectors.

Rarely in Bangladesh has the private-public-partnership worked with such fruition, and the amalgamation of the joint efforts remains today a model for the rest of the developing world.

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) and its subsidiaries for power generation, the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. (PGCB) for 'wheeling of energy from BPDB power stations and generation companies to distribution entities', Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC) and DESCO for distribution in Dhaka and Narayanganj, and Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (REB) through rural electric cooperatives called Palli Bidyut Samity, as well as private sector operators such as giants Summit power - they all deserve kudos.

If truth be told, the success of power generation has not fully reached the households because of limitations of the distribution companies, but the obstacles they face are not merely anthills. The appreciation of a grateful nation and continued support to generation, transmission and distribution will be the right gear to accelerate the enviable programme to enable Bangladesh fly over all hurdles.

One major hurdle in our bid to fly remains the traffic jam, in not only the capital city but in many key points all over the country. The time consumed in not travelling is adding to our costs at

personal, corporate and state levels. In the 1990s, flyovers were peddled as hopes for a citizenry bogged down by congestion. The experience on Mayor Hanif and Kuril flyovers are pleasant, albeit subjective, but the common citizens' hopes for traffic-reduced roads were substantially reduced since Moakhali and Banani flyovers faltered badly; the jam was only elevated to upper deck. Several upcoming flyovers are occupying major roads in Dhaka for months now, and movement along those roads is terrible to say the least.

Despite adding to the percentage of city roads, according to traffic engineers and planners, flyovers do not and cannot solve mobility problems because there are other major factors responsible for the way traffic moves in a city and around the country. The number of vehicles and tailbacks will continue to increase, adding to the woes of people on the street. Dedicated lanes for bus movement, planned flyovers (implying the ones constructed are not), judicious employment of the 3 R's, rail-road-river way, installation of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) could evolve more fruitful means of achieving the end. (*Flyovers to become burden for Dhaka:*

Experts', Online Desk Prothom Alo, 17 Oct, 2015)

That brings us to the point of proper education. Whatever facilities are provided, a system will fail if the controller and user are not sincere to the purpose. A case in point, say, is the 'bus lane'. If bus drivers do not abide by it and drivers of other vehicles encroach on it, both of which are very much likely given the current practice, and police in desperation or otherwise look the other way, mayhem will be the order. Hence, true all-round education that can inculcate self-discipline, sincerity, and steadfastness is required. There lies the importance of the books. Consequently, the results are there for all to see in the mammoth undertaking of the power sector.

We can be powered by education, but we cannot fly off to reach higher measures of success unless that education is meaningful and effective.

In the New Year, let that be our resolve. May you all come to pass 2016 with greater fruition on which to build a better Bangladesh! Happy New Year!

The writer is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

Who leads the world in 2016?

SUNDAY POUCH



ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

AS we step into 2016, the big question that spooks thinkers, political scientists and the common man is this: who leads the world? For decades past it was the United States. But with the gradual emergence of China and Russia from middle powers to giants, 2016 poses this

question to the world: who is your leader?

First it was the mighty Great Britain which ruled the world. Then came the United States which, with a few allies like Great Britain and the USSR (read Russia), led the world in the two cataclysmic World Wars. Then the US and the USSR tugged at each other to assume world leadership. This continued for a few decades before the USSR spun out of the world leadership challenge and crashed into the earth and splintered into Russia and 15 other republics. Then the splinters started to rotate around the single, biggest power colossus, the US.

Ever since 1991 the world has seen a single world power, the US, take on the role of the world leader. Be it in the matters of geo-strategy, armed conflicts, industrial growth, science and innovation, the US has led the way. The change in power among the leaders of the US was the subject of discussion among political leaders of the world. The swearing in of the President of the US every four years would result in geo-strategic realignments by individual countries. Although when Bangladesh was born in 1971 it had the blessing of the USSR and India. Other big powers realigned with Bangladesh as time passed. Bangladesh quickly reset the alignments and its foreign policy veered to a world led by the US.

Yet as China, Russia and India reemerge as regional powers vying for world leadership, the context of world leadership is changing. The US still retains the title of the world leader in military strength. It has the wherewithal to be the most powerful country in the world. But there is a palpable challenge in three areas. First, political leadership inside the US is not always in sync with the long-term commitments needed to solve divisive world issues. The political consensus that the US President always enjoyed to take leadership in times of crisis in the world is fast fading. This is no more a check on his powers.

The world in 2016 also has to contend with two other powers, China and Russia. Though the decisions that the US takes is not clearly in sync with that of these two

powers they are both closely consulted. Whenever the US feels it needs to take leadership in areas where it is not willing to do so, political leaders in the US must often gain support of other big powers before it plunges to action. But this is not the case

sea of dissent. World public opinion is increasingly coalescing through large ducts engineered by connectivity spilling through different communication systems which even great powers like the US cannot ignore anymore. Increasingly, the US has to join the

likely to change the power contours. Not much is likely to change in a year but the corrosion seems to have begun.

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with China and Russia. Their leadership need not always consult with their political constituents to arrive at decisions in global matters. Like an emerging colossus they are self-propelled to rise and contend for world leadership.

The other reason why the US slowly seems to be receding from the role of world leadership is due to the growing interconnectivity between and among people in the world. Public opinion worldwide is not anymore a set of islands emerging from a

flow or recede to a ranting bully unable to tackle real issues in the ground. The internet, space satellites and fast air and road communications are connecting people and nations and the world is no longer willing to follow one leader who acts on its will. Just see how the US joined other nations of the world and world public opinion in signing the consensus in combating climate change. The world is now metamorphosing and this is

QUOTABLE Quote

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

It is the same with man as with the tree. The more he seeks to rise into the height and light, the more vigorously do his roots struggle earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep - into evil.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Shopper's aid
- Like draft beer
- Business bigwigs
- Theater feature
- Court-related
- Goof up
- Christie's "Death on--"
- Turns
- Composer Rorem
- Common dice roll
- Finishes
- Disencher
- Caustic stuff
- Workout count
- Docking spots
- Boxing great
- Takes care of
- Hand signal
- Napkin spot
- Take, as advice
- As -- (generally)
- Em
- Kitchen gadget

DOWN

- Pathetic person
- Lead-ins
- Gun at a race
- Luggage ID
- Tennis star Monica
- Yoked animals
- It helps newbies
- Climbed
- Stroked
- Winter gliders
- Chick's mother
- Rara --
- Stared at
- Straight
- Sitar tunes
- Votes in
- For each
- Less fresh
- Fixed, as a piano
- Verdi work
- Writer Morrison
- Carnival city

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

E	A	R	S	L	A	B	E	L
A	L	E	U	A	S	I	D	E
T	A	M	O	M	A	R	I	S
U	M	A	P	O	P	P	E	T
P	O	P	L	I	N	T	I	O
M	O	S	T	R	O	A	N	
C	A	N	S	U	M	O		
A	Y	E	S	P	O	P	L	A
P	O	P	U	L	A	R	O	N
E	R	A	S	E	V	I	T	A
R	A	G	E	S	D	A	R	E
S	L	E	D	S	T	E	S	S

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