

## Insulted for doing his job?

*Such arrogance must not be tolerated*

A UNO in Faridpur has risked his job by doing his duty as a representative of the government. He refused to allow a father to enter the examination hall where his son was taking the SSC tests. Under normal circumstances, that is exactly what a UNO is supposed to do -- maintain order and fairness of such significant examinations. But the parent was the mayor of the municipality who displayed an attitude that was just the opposite of the UNO's. The mayor's infuriated cohorts, at their boss's bidding no doubt, locked up the UNO and demanded his removal. The officer had to be escorted out of the upazilla under Rab escort.

It is shameful that a public representative of such a high post as a mayor should completely disregard the rules and have the audacity to punish another official who actually stuck to his principles. Such highhanded behaviour does little to enhance the image of the mayor. These actions also make a mockery of those citizens who have voted for their candidate only to see him behave like a local goon.

It is expected that the government will take such flouting of the law very seriously and hold the mayor accountable. If a man who is a representative of the government is insulted by another public official of higher authority for doing his job ethically, where is the rule of law?

## Bloated civil bureaucracy

*Who will pay for the 'extras'?*

We are dumbfounded at government plans for yet another round of promotions at deputy, joint and additional secretary levels. We are surprised because as things stand now, there are already many more people holding those positions than there are positions authorised. For instance, there are 1,301 deputy secretaries against 830 posts; 908 joint secretaries against 350 posts, and 416 additional secretaries against 120 posts. On top of all that, there are 300 officials (officer on special duty or OSD all of whom are drawing salaries and benefits from the national exchequer for actually doing very little, if at all.

We wonder how the relevant audit offices view these promotions, since, to our mind, these promotions are irregular. That said we find no logical explanation for the government to justify these promotions which are likely to create more chaos in the civil service. Needless to say, promotion is not manna to be doled out at random. Certain criteria govern promotions which should be adhered to strictly. And commotion occurs in a service when set standards for promotions are thrown by the way side. Needless to say, promotions will hamper the functioning of ministries.

In the final analysis of things, we would like to know precisely where the money is going to come from to pay for those promoted beyond the authorised establishment manpower. The government is already in the doldrums trying to find the money to implement the new pay scale. This sort of ad-hoc and populist measure will help only in increasing the culture of red-tape and do little to aid efficiency.

## COMMENTS

**"Why so many return dead?"**

(February 1, 2016)

**Golam Ahmed**

Middle Eastern countries want slaves, not workers!

**Jonab Kornell**

The government has miserably failed to ensure the safety of expats.

**"Two kids in a cruel world"**

(January 30, 2016)

**Mumtaz**

Shame on us! We can't even ensure a safe childhood for the kids.

**Hashem Mia**

This world is no longer a safe place for children.

**"Swedish couple get back money"**

(January 30, 2016)

**Anonymous**

The police need to get their act together.

# How to tackle 'entitlement failure' in infrastructure?

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IN the discourse on infrastructure and economic growth the dominant area of discussion is on the quantity and quality of infrastructure and how countries differ in these respects. While most of the countries emphasise a lot on investing in raising the quantity (and quality) of infrastructure, there is a fundamental concern whether rising supply of infrastructure ensures the access to infrastructure. This problem is manifested through the fact that due to a variety of reasons enhanced supply of infrastructure may not solve the problem of 'entitlement failure' in terms of effective access to infrastructure, as the people/sectors in dire need of improved infrastructure may not have the access even with an increased supply.

There appears to be a consensus among researchers and policy makers that infrastructure is a key contributing factor to economic growth. The importance of infrastructure for economic development originates from the fact that it provides both final consumption services to households and key intermediate consumption items in the production process. The deficiency of some of the most basic infrastructure services is an important dimension of poverty; and therefore, increasing level of infrastructure stock has a direct bearing on poverty reduction. Furthermore, while it is generally accepted that economic diversification is a necessary condition for a sustained and long term growth of the economy and job creation, infrastructure development is a prerequisite for economic diversification.

What is the significance of economic diversification as far as 'inclusive growth' is concerned? If inclusive growth is defined as the inclusiveness in economic opportunities, economic diversification can help attain inclusive growth. However, several supply-side constraints related to weak infrastructure can restrict economic diversification. Some of these constraints are broadly 'general' in nature and some are critically 'sector-specific'. Interconnection and complementarities between general and sector-specific infrastructure are key elements for increasing service efficiency, supporting the adoption of innovative technologies, promotion of economic diversification and supporting inclusive growth.

Yet, policymakers in the developing countries are so inclined to improvement in the broad general infrastructure, i.e., enhanced supply of electricity, improvement in roads, improvement in port facilities, etc. that the development of critical sector-specific infrastructure are largely overlooked. Embarking on developing broad general infrastructure are relatively easy, whereas solving sector-specific infrastructure problems involves identifying priorities in the policy making process and addressing a number of political and economic issues. Failure to deal with sector-specific

infrastructure problems leads to a scenario where a large number of potential inclusive-growth enhancing sectors fail to enjoy the benefit from the improvement in broad general infrastructure, and thus end up with 'entitlement failure'.

One such example is the leather industry in Bangladesh which accounts for about one billion USD in exports and which has huge potentials in generating employment and growth by increasing export of higher value added products. However, this sector has not yet reached its full potential primarily due to operating constraints stemming from its production base in Hazaribagh of Dhaka city where there are minimal waste management systems and inadequate industrial layout planning. The Hazaribagh-centric tannery industry is now legally bound to relocate all the factories to a new environmentally compliant tannery estate (under construction) on the outskirts of Dhaka city. However,

that adequately delineate links between general and sector specific infrastructure requirements, inadequate planning, inadequate supporting institutions, and unstable political environment. However, on top of all these, the major critical factor behind the failure to address sector-specific infrastructure problems is the inability of the political system to deliver a political consensus about strategic plans for such sector-specific infrastructure and stable policy frameworks to support their implementation.

How to deal with this entitlement failure? A major part of the sector-specific infrastructure problems needs to be solved through public investment. The priorities in the industrial and related policies need to be realigned to the country's long term economic growth strategy in the changing world economy. There is a need for generating political capital for such realignment. However, the task of developing such infrastructure facilities cannot be left



A steady stream of untreated toxic waste from tanneries in Hazaribagh flows towards the Buriganga River, the lifeline of the capital.

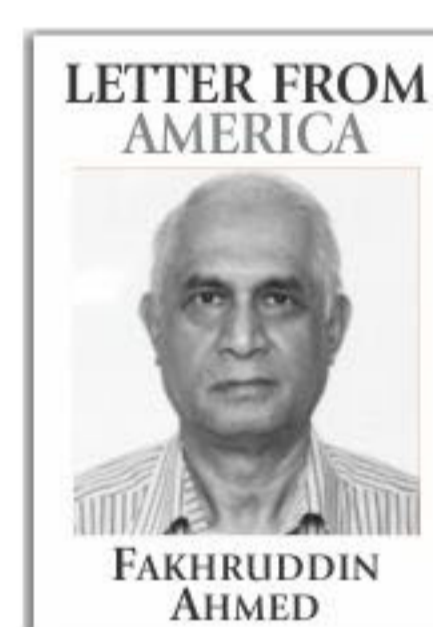
such relocation has been stuck for many years with unresolved decisions on cost sharing of various components of the new industrial estate. Yet, there is no denying the fact that unless this relocation is effectively done, the leather sector will continue to suffer from 'entitlement failure' despite significant improvements in broad general infrastructure.

Factors responsible for such entitlement failure include the lack of resources to undertake sector-specific infrastructure development, lack of reliable data to determine finance and manpower requirements of projects, lack of infrastructure development framework

to the government alone. It is binding on policy makers to come forward with strategies and mechanisms to encourage the participation of the private sector in such sector-specific infrastructure development. Such mechanisms should not only provide strategies that are rarely implemented, but practical ways of turning them into tangible projects through the provision of adequate finance.

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## Barack Obama A most consequential President



FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

LETTER FROM AMERICA  
PRESIDENT Barack Obama delivered his eighth and last State of the Union address on January 12. It was essentially a victory lap. He has earned it.

President George W. Bush's unbudgeted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and reckless domestic and military spending had driven America's economy into a great recession by 2008. America was in dire straits when Obama assumed the presidency in January, 2009. "Too big to fail" financial institutions began to fail. The Stock Market crashed. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted to a dangerously low 6500. The unemployment rate skyrocketed to over 10 percent.

Fortunately for Obama, for the first two years of his presidency, both the House and the Senate were under Democratic control. Within days of Obama's presidency, the Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, popularly known as the Stimulus Package, which pumped \$831 billion into the ailing economy.

The Stimulus Package was based on the Keynesian macroeconomic theory which stipulates that during great recession the government should offset the decrease in private spending through the infusion of public funds to save jobs, and arrest further economic downturn by investing in infrastructure, education, health and renewable energy.

Nobel laureate Paul Krugman had warned that the stimulus package was inadequate. Republicans, who had no

problem bailing out Wall Street's financial institutions with 700 billion dollars of tax payers' money at the behest of President George W. Bush in 2008, were furious with the Stimulus Package, and predicted that it would lead to financial disaster. The 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney had prescribed: "Let Detroit (meaning the American auto industry based in Detroit) go bankrupt!"

Fast forward to the present, and the numbers speak for themselves. There has been steady job growth under Obama (13.7 million new jobs in the last 69 months); from a high of 10 percent in 2009, the current unemployment rate is 5 percent. The Dow has nearly tripled from its 2009 low of 6,500 to over 18,000, making the rich even richer. And Detroit's auto industry is booming. If Obama were to gloat, one would understand.

President Obama's greatest achievement, however, is the Affordable Health Care for America Act (2010), the so-called Obamacare. America was the only western democracy without national health insurance. For a hundred years, presidents of both parties attempted and failed to enact national health insurance in the face of fierce resistance from the medical lobby and Republican politicians.

With a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate (60 Senators) and a majority in the House, Obama had a two-year window (January 2009- November 2010) to enact the healthcare legislation, before the Republicans regained control of the House in the 2010 mid-term election. (The president's party always loses in the mid-terms.) Obama attempted to work with the Republicans for a bipartisan healthcare bill, but realised that the Republicans were not interested in helping Obama achieve a monumental legislative victory. Instead, they tried to run

out the clock on him.

When Senator Ted Kennedy died on August 25, 2009, the Democrats lost their filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. They went ahead with the modest healthcare legislation the Senate had already passed, and discarded the more ambitious one the house had passed (which they knew that the Senate Republicans would filibuster.) Overcoming intense Republican opposition, the Affordable Care Act passed in the Senate on December 24, 2009, in the House on March 21, 2010, was signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010, and upheld by the Supreme Court on June 28, 2012.

The Affordable Care Act ranks among the most socially progressive legislations in America's history, alongside the following: President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal social welfare programme, The Social Security Act (1935) for seniors; President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programmes such as the Civil Rights Act (1964) that outlawed discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin; national social insurance programme, Medicare (1966) for seniors; healthcare programmes for low income Americans, Medicaid (1965); Voting Rights Act (1965) which allowed African Americans to vote by removing legal barriers. Republicans had opposed all these legislations. Thanks to Obamacare, the number of uninsured Americans has dropped below 10 percent for the first time ever, and 17.6 million Americans and climbing have gained coverage.

Another of Obama's achievement is the normalisation of relations with Iran, severed after Iranians took over the American embassy in Tehran in 1979, and held American diplomats hostage for 444 days.

Last July, America and five other world powers struck a landmark nuclear deal with Iran, which, despite staunch opposition from Israel and its friends, mostly in the Republican Party, survived a vote in Congress. In exchange for Iran foregoing its nuclear ambitions, crippling sanctions on Iran have been lifted, and Iran is now free to sell its oil, and conduct normal business with other nations.

Obama also normalised relations with Cuba, broken after President Kennedy's botched Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. Last August, America reopened its embassy in Cuba. Restrictions on travel to Cuba and American companies wanting to do business there, have been eased.

Obama spearheaded the world's climate change agenda. In early January the world came together at the Paris climate talks to sign a historic climate deal with ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Last October, Obama also signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal, involving 12 Pacific Rim nations, with provisions to cut trade barriers, protect labour and environment interests and ensure intellectual property rights.

The continuation of the Obama legacy depends on who is elected President this November. If it is a Democrat, Obama's achievements will be fortified. If it is a Republican, attempts will be made to dismantle many of Obama's signature legislative successes. House Republicans voted over 50 times to repeal Obamacare. Last December, the Republican controlled Senate also passed a repeal bill, which will be successfully vetoed by Obama. Republicans now control both the House and the Senate. If they also win the Presidency, Obamacare will be under serious threat of repeal.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Measures against Zika virus

Zika virus is spread by Aedes Aegypti mosquito which is also responsible for spreading dengue. Often infected person shows symptoms like fever, rash and red eyes. There is no vaccine, only prevention can help to remain safe against Zika virus.

The concerned departments of the government and NGOs should immediately undertake programmes to eradicate Aedes mosquitoes by destroying their breeding grounds. Dhaka City Corporations should start spraying programmes throughout the city and adjacent areas.

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PHOTO: AP

### 'Amar Ekushey' sculpture in bad shape

It is very sad that the historic 'Amar Ekushey' sculpture of JU has been in a poor condition for years. Parts of this great piece of work have already fallen apart exposing rusty iron rods. The colour of the sculpture has also faded. But the university authority is paying no attention to this.

We want to draw the attention of the university authority so that they take effective measures to repair it as soon as possible.  
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