

CETP lacks desalinisation component

A good example of bad planning

WE are stunned as to how planners of the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate failed to plan for a desalinisation facility when designing the central effluent plant (CEIP)! The saga of relocation of tanneries from Hazaribagh has been going on for more than a decade, and after all the drama of the CEIP installation, we are now faced with yet another river turning toxic. We are informed that the CETP installed at the new location cannot integrate a desalinisation facility, although the Industries Minister informs us that officials have been directed to find a solution. We wonder whether the other alternative that would require the individual tanneries to install de-dusting machines can be implemented at all, and if so, would that help in mitigating the situation.

In the meantime the Dhaleshwari River will continue to be polluted by an estimated 40,000 tonnes of salt annually by the tannery industry, which is in the process of relocating to Savar. With the CETP unable to handle the salt used, the saline and waste water will be discharged into the river. So, the country is now confronted with the possibility of the polluting tannery industry that is largely credited with destroying the eco-system of Buriganga River inflicting the same consequences on the Dhaleshwari. Only this time, we cannot pin the blame on the industry.

We wonder how long this game will continue. If it takes decades to solve one environmental problem, how long will it take to solve the more complex ones resulting from climate change?

Persecution of the Rohingya

Heed UN official's call for COI

THE United Nations rapporteur on human rights on Thursday has asked that a Commission of Inquiry (COI) be created to investigate Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya. The UN official stated that the "systematic, structural, and institutional discrimination in policy, law and practice, as well as the long-standing persecution, against the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine State" calls for the COI, which is the highest-level probe body of the UN.

The UN rapporteur last month also pointed out how the government of Myanmar is incapable of carrying out a credible investigation and so it is imperative for the human rights council of the UN to act. Indeed, the plight of the Rohingya has been reported widely enough, but the authorities in Myanmar have either denied or downplayed the extent of the persecution of the Rohingya.

The mounting international pressure calling for an end to the atrocities – which some have termed a genocide – have been largely ignored. The UN official has stressed the episodes of violence in 2012, 2014 and now may "amount to crimes against humanity." On top of the structural deprivation of human rights through denial of citizenship, horrifying reports of murder, arson and rape have resulted in an influx of the Rohingya community into bordering Bangladesh (more than 69,000 since October, reportedly).

We hope that the UN rapporteur's call to investigate is heeded by the members of the human rights council. It is evident that the Myanmar authorities have failed to ensure the protection of the Rohingya and put an end to these human rights violations. We urge that the UN take a firm and decisive position and put international pressure for an end to the atrocities.

Making the budget more vibrant



BIRU
PAKSHA PAUL

THE budget is a seasonal music that hardly runs out of notes. Most people criticise it as ambitious although that is how it ought to be. Some people call it anti-poor and often call for a *hartal* that makes the poor even poorer. Some call it anti-business even though the business community always wins the last tug-of-war with the government. We are drawn into the whirlpool of these repetitive criticisms every year because the budget does not change its framework and taste. Time has come to change its structure and attitude to accelerate growth in a vibrant Bangladesh.

The budget follows a pentagon model with five steps and priorities of action. First, it decides current spending; second, development spending; third, revenue income and grants; fourth, the fiscal deficit, and finally the budget fixes its prime target of growth and welfare. While the budget is almost 17 percent of GDP, revenue income covers around 12 percent of national income, leaving a fiscal deficit of almost 5 percent of total output. The ratio between current spending and development expenses stands out to be roughly 65:35.

The existing structure of the budget is fine as long as the current spending is considered. But the dysfunctionality of the residual portion on the annual development programme (ADP) warrants a fundamental change in the budget structure to not only avoid enormous waste of infrastructure resources frozen in the pipeline, but also to empower the economy's graduation into upper middle-income level at a fast pace. Only 50 percent of ADP was implemented in the first 10 months of the last fiscal year of 2016. In the first 7 months of the current FY 2017, ADP's implementation made no less than a record, but still it is only 33 percent. Quality, of course, is another concern.

This progress in ADP happened when the bureaucracy is enjoying its honeymoon of incentives after the recent record salary-hike, ascertaining that something is wrong with the concept of ADP – and therefore it should be remodelled. Foreign unused resources in the pipeline have recently exceeded 35 billion dollars. In June 2016, the amount was no less than 22 billion dollars – enough to build 4 Padma Bridges and a world-class Patalrail network for Dhaka. The national loss we are incurring by stubbornly sticking to the old style of ADP under the bureaucratic apparatus and thereby eliminating all



opportunities of competitive outsourcing is irreparable and self-damaging.

The best way to end the recurring dramas of ADP failures and the pipeline stories of unused foreign resources is to create an independent infrastructure part in the budget as soon as possible, before we start witnessing Greek tragedies on infrastructure repeatedly. Let us start a tripartite model of the budget from 2020 so that the government gets ample time for homework. Instead of a two-layer style, the budget should now have a three-layer approach: 1) current budget 2) development servicing budget, and 3) infrastructure budget.

It is not just the addition of the third part on top of the old one. The new approach will only take the current budget as usual, but the part with ADP should be entirely revamped. Only one-third of the existing allocation of 13 billion dollars may stay with this annual part only to regularly service the development projects already built. This part will also include project governance. For example, the Joydevpur-Mymensingh 4-lane highway has turned into the longest parking lot for trucks and buses and the safest freeway for Korimons-Nosimons-Kakras and rickshaws to roam in either direction whenever they wish to, impeding speedy vehicles and thus thwarting the purpose of its construction. We build highways and forget that spending for street governance is an integral part of it. Servicing and governance will be the principal tasks of the servicing budget. The rest of the amount will join the infrastructure part – the most crucial

segment to transform the country's landscape.

The traditional ADP is not adequately serving the actual purpose of building the platform for boosting long-term growth. ADP does not go with the template of an annual budget while maintenance of the existing development projects does. And hence the necessity of splitting the old format of ADP into two parts is valid. The infrastructure part should be at least of bi-annual timeframe because of the longer gestation period of infrastructure investments. If we let the Seventh Five-Year Plan (7FYP) end in December 2020 and start both the budget and the 8FYP from the calendar year of 2021, the economy will be more benefited for various reasons economists had already interpreted. In that case, the infrastructure budget can follow odd-numbered years while revisions on the budget may be scheduled in even-numbered years.

The building of infrastructure should be outsourced and given to a internationally reputed firms through a fair competitive process. Tying top bureaucrats in most managerial positions will simply delay projects, and that is not how Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan built their infrastructure in a fast and efficient way. Neither does India nowadays. Even sensible bureaucrats with patriotic spirits are not likely to relish this style of nonprofessional engagement. We made mistakes by making them managers of jute mills and sugar mills after independence. We paid a big price until we embarked on a

market economy. Bureaucrats are primarily regulators and administrators to ensure national discipline and to serve the law for the noble cause of the republic.

We thank the government that has recently considered the BOOT (build, own, operate, and transfer) model of outsourcing the construction of the proposed Dhaka-Chittagong Elevated Expressway (DCEE). That is how it will be built for sure in a swift way. Even PPP (public-private partnership) models could not show expected results, because Bengalis never excel in partnership. This is more so when a party of the team is the government, which will bail out the private counterpart anyway.

This is a new age of thinking on infrastructure. Last June I was thrilled to visit AIIB (The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) in Beijing. Its president Jin Liqun placed a big stone at the gate to show its strong foundation on finance and its mission. When one of our teammates from Taiwan hurled a question to an AIIB boss on how they would contest the hegemony of the World Bank, I could not wait to hear the answer although the response gave me a new look. He said that their task is not to fight the WB, but to fulfil part of the funding demand for Asian infrastructure. As he added, many Asian countries do not even know how deficient their infrastructure is. I am sure we fall in that category.

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The unsolved mystery



MAHMOOD HASAN

FROM A BYSTANDER
THERE has been a bizarre case of murder at the busy Kuala Lumpur Airport on February 13, 2017. Kim Jong-nam (46), estranged half-brother of North Korea's leader Kim

Jong-un, was apparently killed by two female agents.

Surveillance video at the airport shows a person in white shirt coming up from behind Jong-nam in the crowded terminal, smearing his face with some liquid and quickly walking away. Jong-nam, feeling dizzy, went to the airport clinic and sought help. He died on the way to the hospital. All this happened within twenty minutes of the attack.

Jong-nam, travelling under the pseudonym "Kim Chol", was supposed to catch a flight for Macau where he lived with his family.

Kim Jong-nam was the eldest son of Kim Jong-il, the late supreme leader of North Korea. Jong-il reportedly had two wives and three mistresses, and three sons and two daughters. The first mistress, Song Hye-rim, who died in 2002, was a film actress and mother of Jong-nam. Jong-il's second mistress Ko Yong-hui had two sons – Kim Jong-chul and Kim Jong-un. Kim Jong-un is the current leader of North Korea. Incidentally, the two brothers never met as they grew up separately.

Though Jong-nam was considered heir to Jong-il, it was a bizarre turn of fate that Jong-nam did not succeed his father. In 1998, Jong-nam was appointed to a senior position in the Ministry of Public Security – the stepping stone to succeed Jong-il. Fate turned against him when he was arrested at Tokyo airport in 2001 for travelling on a forged passport. Jong-nam fell out of favour of Jong-il, who was enraged at Jong-nam for embarrassing the Kim family. Besides, Jong-nam's liberal political beliefs questioning Stalinist policies and dynastic succession and call for reforms convinced Jong-il that Jong-nam had turned into a "capitalist". By 2003 it

became clear that Jong-il was promoting the youngest son Jong-un to succeed him. And around that time Jong-nam went into exile and began living in Macau with his family apparently under Chinese protection. He also had a residence in Beijing. Jong-nam was close to his powerful uncle Jang Song-thaek, source of his finance and conduit to Beijing. Song-thaek was executed in December 2013 on orders from Jong-un. China protected Jong-nam and probably wanted to use him as replacement, in case the Jong-un regime collapsed.

So how was Jong-nam killed? After autopsy Malaysian Police confirmed that Jong-nam was killed by VX nerve agent. Police has identified eight North Koreans, including one diplomat – four had fled Malaysia, while four others were in Malaysia. Police has already arrested four persons – a Vietnamese woman

believed they were taking part in a prank video. They have been charged with murder.

The crucial question facing the police is, how did VX get into Malaysia? Was it smuggled in through a diplomatic pouch (from North Korea)? Or was it made in Malaysia? VX is a deadly toxic substance and is banned by UN Resolution 687. It is classified as a weapon of mass destruction.

The incident has triggered angry reactions from Pyongyang and a diplomatic standoff with Kuala Lumpur about the identity of Jong-nam. Pyongyang said that the man who died was Kim Chol, the name on the diplomatic passport he was carrying. Malaysia, however, confirmed that it was Jong-nam who was the victim. Taking a stern step Malaysia recalled its ambassador to Pyongyang, while the North Korean Ambassador

but Malaysian officials said it will be handed over to the next-of-kin after matching DNA samples of Jong-nam.

Why was Jong-nam killed? North Korean leaders in the past have eliminated family members and other senior leaders considered a threat to the regime. Some of the reasons may have been Pyongyang's new missile tests which invited fresh UN sanctions in November 2016; developments in South Korea where President Park Geun-hye was impeached in December 2016 which raised tensions in the peninsula; Beijing's protection of Jong-nam; election of Donald Trump as US president; upcoming joint US-South Korea military exercise in March 2017; and criticisms of the regime and calls for reforms by Jong-nam. These factors may have all added up making Jong-un uncomfortable. He saw Jong-nam as a serious threat and may have decided to remove his half-brother.

Reports indicate Jong-nam kept a low profile and never challenged Jong-un's leadership. South Korean National Intelligence Service, which keeps a close tab on North Korea, said that there was a long-standing order from Jong-un to eliminate Jong-nam, and described the assassination as "international terrorism".

Why was Jong-nam not killed in Macau? Perhaps because Chinese protection of Jong-nam was fool-proof. Malaysia was an easier place to commit the crime. The airport was chosen for the ease with which attackers could get away.

Fanatic dictators are always nervous and insecure and tend to eliminate all perceived opposition. Though there is no concrete information about how many family members and senior officials have been purged by Jong-un, there is enough intelligence to believe that hundreds of people at different levels have been executed.

While lots of rumours continue to circulate, it will be very difficult to link Jong-un to the murder of Jong-nam. But most narratives, as of now, point fingers at Jong-un. The true story may never get out and the mystery surrounding the murder may never be solved.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Provisions for senior citizens

In a report published today by one of our leading Bangla newspapers, the honourable Finance Minister reiterated the need for better provisions for the senior citizens in our society. Many face neglect from their children, who remain overburdened under professional responsibilities. Meanwhile, there are insufficient seats in old homes to accommodate these senior citizens in need of care.

We need to train and provide a larger number of caregivers for them. Even the Parents Care Act 2013 has several disparities regarding the amount of money to be allocated to older citizens. The act needs to be implemented more stringently and efficiently.

The concerned authorities need to build more old homes and ensure safety and maintenance standards that are up to par. With the life expectancy of citizens increasing due to the improved healthcare, more money should be allocated in the social safety net of the next budget, so the various needs of older citizens can be catered to. The private sector can also help by offering them appropriate job opportunities with decent incomes. Meanwhile, as a society, we must come forward to raise awareness regarding these issues and provide platforms for the voices of our older citizens.

Zubair Khaled Huq, By email



An immigration officer escorts Kim Jong Nam, son of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, getting off a bus to board an airplane at Narita airport near Tokyo on May 4, 2001.

TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA: AFP

named Doan Thi Huong (28), an Indonesian woman named Siti Aishah (25), a Malaysian man named Muhammad Farid Bin Jalaluddin (26) and a North Korean man named Ri Jong Chol (47). According to police, after the attack the two women washed their hands at the airport washroom and fled the scene. Both women said they

Kang Chol in Kuala Lumpur made atrocious remarks about the handling of the investigation. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak described the Ambassador's statement "uncalled for". Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman warned Kang Chol to stop lying or face expulsion. North Korea has demanded the dead body of Jong-nam,