

Funding in dribblets won't help

Incomprehensible allocation for projects

ALTHOUGH this year's development budget is deemed to be the most ambitious till date, we are perplexed by the allocation of Tk 1 lakh each to 64 projects, many of which are in advanced stages of completion, and have been so for some time. Some of these projects are of high priority but received a flat allocation of Tk 1 lakh each, which basically will put them on the backburner. We are looking at infrastructure projects that have completed between 63 percent–90 percent or above of the work. This brings us to the question as to precisely what is the thinking behind allocation of such paltry financial commitments? The ministry of finance believes that this meagre allocation will keep these projects alive, but to what end?

It would seem that our policymakers are simply juggling with finances and keeping projects alive on paper. That is not the only problem. We find that some projects have completed their project cycles and yet have money pouring in, whereas a number of important projects never got off the ground. Would it not be more prudent to simply hold in suspended animation projects that have never truly got going and allocate those monies to projects that are nearing completion? It is understandable that the government wishes to show that it has undertaken a large number of projects for the development of the country, but it would be more realistic to prioritise and fund only those that are nearing completion while deferring others for future funding.

Highways are not parking-lots!

What are the police doing?

A photograph published by this newspaper yesterday of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway is extremely revealing of the general state of our highways. The photograph shows hundreds of private trucks left parked on the highway, reducing the Dhaka-Chittagong highway to nearly a single lane. What then is the point of extending highways if they are to be reduced to one lane at the end of the day because of parked vehicles? And why are the authorities so shy to take any action against these vehicles and their owners?

Only a few days ago, this newspaper had revealed the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway to have been in a similar state. If vehicles are going to occupy our highways and the authorities are going to be least bothered about it, why not simply build parking lots along the highways instead of extending them and wasting taxpayers' money like this?

What is most ironic about the photograph in question is that it shows vehicles occupying a part of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near the Jatrabari Police Station. What we would like to know is how are the police, who are stationed so close to the scene, unaware of what is going on? And if they are indeed aware, why can't they take action to have them removed?

The costs, in terms of long tailbacks, etc. that are being incurred because of these parked vehicles and the apathy of the authorities that is allowing this are immeasurable. We call on the government to take action against this practice and to stop the wastage of taxpayers' money by extending highways only to have them reduced to single lanes because of parked vehicles.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Why no public university in Bogura?

Colleges in Bogura have proved to be the best performers in HSC exams in the Rajshahi board since 2015. In total, 1,688 students from Bogura have obtained GPA-5 this year, while the pass rate in Bogura is 71.20 percent—around 15 percent more than the average pass rate across Rajshahi. In fact, the number of GPA-5 holders in Bogura is way higher than that in Barishal, Sylhet, Cumilla and Chittagong.

Yet, there's no public university in our district. The proposed "Bogra University of Science and Technology Act" was scrapped due to partisan politics. We believe the people of Bogura deserve a public university.

Md Nazmul Islam, By e-mail

Congratulations to our math geniuses!

We are very proud of Ahmed Zawad Chowdhury who has won the first ever gold medal for Bangladesh in the International Mathematical Olympiad. This year, among the 116 participating nations, Bangladesh has been ranked 41st. Aside from Zawad's gold medal, three Bangladeshi students won bronze medals.

At a time when the nation is undergoing a turbulent time, it is indeed good news. We congratulate team Bangladesh.

SA Shishir, By e-mail

Circular fashion: Why and how Bangladesh could take the lead



IN the month of May, I was invited to represent Bangladesh at the Copenhagen Fashion Summit in Denmark. The Copenhagen Fashion Summit is the most influential summit on sustainability in the fashion world. More than 2,500 international visitors and more than 100 thought leaders

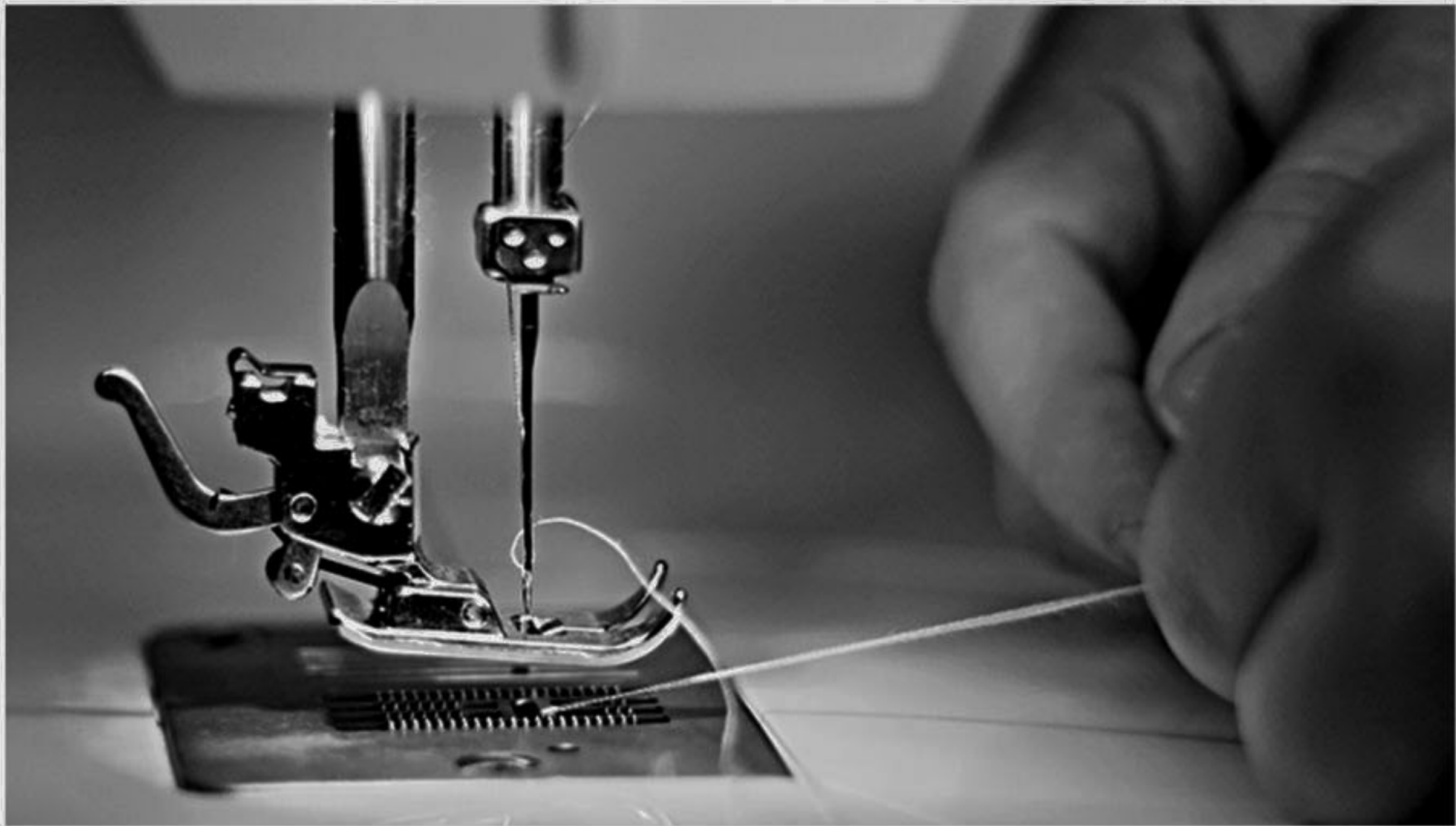
discussed the challenges that the fashion sector and the value chain associated face today.

Since 2014, the term "circularity" has been on the forefront of the Copenhagen Fashion Summit as the new black. Words like sustainability, green production and ethics are today basics in the world of fashion and apparel. Circularity is the latest buzzword, one which stretches beyond the fashion industry. It is a terminology that academia has been conceptualising for years and only now industries are starting to understand and put into practice. We are still at 1.0 in the new movement towards rethinking how we produce, consume and recycle, new values to protect

waste. With great success. You dispose of your waste. You are rewarded financially for handing in waste by a deposit. Waste is turned into energy that fuels the society. A business model that rewards the consumer, the society and ultimately the environment. A full circle.

Britain alone is expected to send 235m items of clothing to landfill this year, the majority of which could have been re-worn, reused or recycled. Major retailers are coming under pressure to tackle the waste issue. The fashion world has attempted numerous tries to adapt to circularity. H&M, one of the largest fashion retail chains in the world, has set up containers in their shops where people could dispose of their used clothing. You get five pounds off your next buy once you bring in your used clothes. H&M says it has collected about 40,000 tonnes of garments since launching its scheme in 2013, which it passes on to its partner recycling plant in Berlin. What can't be reused is down-cycled into products like cleaning cloths or insulation fibres, according to an article run in *The Guardian*. Even Zara, which spearheads the Inditex group, and Adidas are on to the same circular idea. However, the programmes are not as successful as you

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the environment, and what business models we can develop from here that will support a circular production. It all started as a philosophy around economy. If we cannot create a philosophy around an economic model, then it is of no use to anyone.

The circular economy is an academic alternative to a traditional economy which is linear, where you produce, consume and throw away. In the circular economy scenario, you keep resources in use for as long as possible, and extract and harvest the maximum value from the products whilst in use. Then you recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life and thereby you create a new business model. Something from nothing. From no value to value.

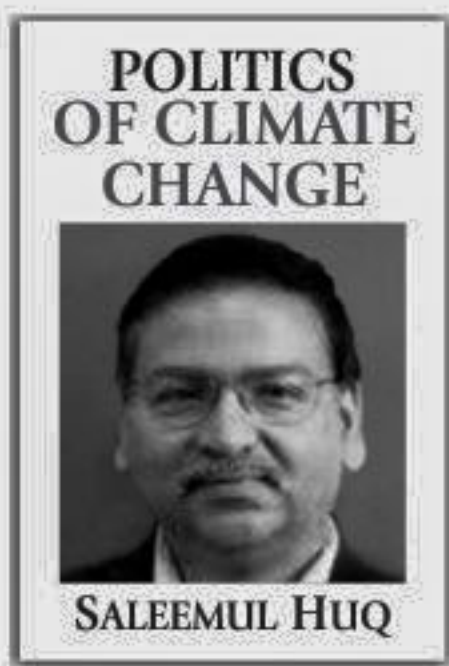
In Europe, you have for years been able to recycle plastic, tin cans and other materials. There are cities where the collective traffic is fuelled by recycled organic

would want. The main issue is that consumer behaviour dies hard. The consumers are yet not used to recycling their used clothes and would rather chuck them in the waste bin than bring it back to the stores or donate to the Red Cross.

This is where the opportunity for the Bangladesh textile and apparel sector lies. As we as a nation do not sell directly to consumers yet, we could co-create circular business models with the big apparel and fashion chains that are ready to look for a circular business model—there could be an opportunity for Bangladesh to start to investigate what we could offer to the European chains in relation to circular concepts and business models and keep loyalty and business flowing for Bangladesh. So what is circular fashion?

Bangladesh has two apparent business models to offer to the Western brands and retailers. The first option would be value adding and innovating together

A note on the environmental aspects of Rohingya camps



IT has been nearly a year since the latest influx of the Rohingya people after they were forcibly driven out of Myanmar and into Bangladesh. Since last August, over 700,000 refugees, mostly

women and children, have been housed, fed, clothed and provided with medical attention by a combination of Bangladesh's military and civilian authorities and NGOs as well as the UN and other international agencies, of whom there are over a hundred working day and night in the Rohingya camps.

Over the last year, the problem has been treated as one of emergency humanitarian assistance but now the government and international agencies are beginning to think about the long-term prospects of looking after the Rohingyas in the camps as well as trying to either let them return to Myanmar or perhaps relocate some of them elsewhere.

But there is also the crucial environmental aspect to think about—both inside and outside the camps.

The first point to note is that if we were to look at a satellite image of the region from exactly a year ago, we would see a pristine forest with wild elephants roaming there. A look at the satellite image of the area today shows the world's biggest refugee camp in Kutupalong-Balukhali and the fourth largest city in Bangladesh struggling with the overflow of refugees, living in makeshift shelters perched on the hills.

The immediate environmental hazard inside the camps is the possibility of landslides due to heavy rains during the monsoon which has already started. Fortunately, Bangladesh government and the international agencies have been working tirelessly to prevent the worst disasters by relocating the most



PHOTO: K MARTON/SAVE THE CHILDREN/VIA REUTERS

The Kutupalong refugee camp is seen after a storm in Cox's Bazar on June 10, 2018, in this image obtained from social media.

vulnerable households, building drains to allow rainwater to flow without damaging the shelters, reinforcing the paths so they don't wash away, strengthening the shelters to withstand high winds and, most importantly, training the people in emergency management. So far, these measures have prevented any major catastrophe but the worst is not over yet.

The second environmental issue within the camps is managing waste, both human and plastic and other types. So far, there have been a number of units of faecal sludge management for communal toilets installed, but more will be needed. Also, better general waste management needs to be ensured.

A third element inside the camps remains water and sanitation, which has been given priority since the beginning and has been managed reasonably well.

A fourth and final environmental

hazard inside the camps is indoor air pollution as well as fire hazards from cooking inside the shelters. These are being dealt with through a shift towards communal cooking and by raising awareness of fire hazards.

The environmental challenges are not only inside the camps but also outside them as well. The continued dependence on fuelwood for cooking is leading to continued cutting of trees outside the camps, leading not only to loss of forests but also loss of biodiversity. This will need to be addressed by providing alternative fuel for cooking.

Initially, there had been a number of deaths due to trampling by wild elephants passing through their traditional trails where shelters had been placed unknowingly. These have now been mitigated by actions by the IUCN and local people ensuring that the elephants take alternative routes.

Finally, the authorities have decided to set up a regular environmental monitoring programme both inside and outside the camps in order to collect data on a regular basis and provide monthly environmental status reports to the authorities. The monitoring programme will be developed and run by Bangladeshi experts from universities, research institutions and government agencies who will provide regular updates on the environmental issues, with recommendations for mitigating the worst problems.

While it may be impossible to avoid some level of environmental degradation, it should be possible to minimise it by regular monitoring and taking preventive actions where needed.

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