

My daughter waving the flag at Cornell's 151st **Graduation Ceremony.**

PHOTO: **IHTISHAM KABIR**

A Changed World

recently attended my daughter's graduation from Cornell University. The important day one of pride and happiness for our entire family - recognized her four years of hard work in two fields: Mathematics and Statistical Science. For me it had additional significance. That's because me and my son also graduated from the same university.

Compared to my time there almost forty years ago, Cornell had many new buildings, classrooms and dormitories, but its magnificent hilly terrain remained the same. Walking through its grounds evoked mixed emotions. Sometimes I felt I was treading on my own footsteps from decades ago, but at other times, changes accumulated over the decades weighed heavily on me. Through ceremonies and receptions, parades and cheers, photographing and saying goodbyes, I found myself reflecting on ways the world has changed in forty years.

Back then, 4.5 billion people made Earth their home. Today it has almost doubled at 7.7 billion.

Back then, the world was divided into East and West. Tension between the United States and the Soviet Union - the Cold War - shaped the global political landscape. Since then the Soviet empire has collapsed. China has risen. Globalization has led to prosperity for many.

Back then, several revolutionary technologies were nascent. Today, advances in those technologies have changed human life on this planet.

And this change has been vastly positive. For example, the United Nations' Human Development Index shows the quality of life in poorer countries - with some exceptions - has steadily increased over the last four decades. Changes in richer nations have also been dramatic.

Back then, Bangladesh was impoverished. Today she holds her head high among nations, being self-sufficient in food, a roaring tiger in exports, and well on its way to

become a middle income country. Life expectancy of her people has increased from 43 to 74 years in forty years.

This improvement in the planet's overall human condition has come at a cost. Consumption of earth's resources has had a dire effect.

We are in the middle of the sixth Mass Extinction in history with plant and animal species becoming extinct at an alarming rate. The previous five Mass Extinctions before us - including the death of dinosaurs - had natural causes, but this one is man-made. Earth's climate is changing due to greenhouse gases we generate. Plastics have spread themselves to every nook and cranny of the planet in the form of microplastics. Not a week goes by when we are confronted with another environmental disaster in the making.

So this question haunts me: what kind of a planet are we leaving for our children?

In the midst of despair I see rays of hope. They come from those who will inherit the planet from my generation, youngsters like Greta Thunberg, the Swedish schoolgirl whose climate strikes have mobilized thousands of schoolchildren, like Rajit Iftikhar, young Bangladeshi-American engineer who took Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man, to task for not doing enough for our planet. Back in Bangladesh I draw inspiration from dedicated younger conservationists and scientists who ceaselessly work in the field for conservation and the environment. One such group that I know is the Bangladesh Bird Club. Its members have worked for twenty years researching the birds in Bangladesh and reached out to numerous schoolchildren teaching them about birds and nature.

If anyone can clean up this mess, it is our younger generation. We can help by not aggravating their task.

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Budget implementation Bangladesh's Achilles' heel

Salehuddin Ahmed says at post budget dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The budget for fiscal year 2019-20 is traditional, proposes an impossible revenue collection target and will be difficult to implement, three renowned economists of the country conveyed yesterday.

"In light of my previous experience, I can bet that the revenue collection target will be impossible to attain," said former caretaker government adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam.

He was speaking at "Post Budget Dialogue FY 19-20", organised by Brac Business School at Brac Centre Inn.

The budget assures taking steps against willful loan defaulters but does not mention how to determine such cases, he said, adding that it also lacked directives for forming a regulatory reform commission and for facilitating ease of doing business.

Regional disparity is evident and income inequality is rising with some 22 percent of the population below the poverty line but the budget gives no hint on addressing those,

university.

The allocation for young collection. entrepreneurs is a welcome move but it remains to be seen how it will be utilised, he said, adding that solutions were also required to ensure that actual beneficiaries gain from the widening of the social safety net.

"Whether this budget will benefit the nation in the long run remains to be seen," said another renowned economist, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, at the not rising.

weaknesses include absence of banking sector reform proposals, ways to address rising default loans, providing just prices for produce and ensuring good governance.

professor, also lamented that the budget would be passed in 15 days without any parliamentary discussion and standing committees were not getting involved in making recommendations.

Salehuddin Ahmed said that the also spoke at the programme as a budget was traditional, attempting special guest.

said Islam, a visiting professor at the to appease all and giving too much emphasis on VAT for revenue

Terming budget implementation the country's "Achilles' heel", he said product prices just rise in Bangladesh but never decrease.

Apprehending that increasing dependence on national saving certificates will stifle private sector credit growth, he said private sector investment had remained stagnant, because of which employment was

He lamented that the budget According to him, the budget's overlooked the need for diversification of other sectors while providing incentives for ready-made garments export.

Ahmed urged cutting reliance on the banking sector and focusing Khan, a Brac Business School instead on the capital market and taking up new initiatives for the latter. He, however, lauded the budgetary allocation proposal for young entrepreneurs and widening of social safety net.

Mominul Islam, managing director Former Bangladesh Bank governor and CEO of IPDC Finance Limited,

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Counteract effects of sedentary lifestyle: Walking can be a refreshing and healthy addition to our daily

routine. Here's how to

get started.

1. Get appropriate shoes and attire. No need to go overboard and buy expensive gears. Just get shoes that fit well and can support you. Regular t-shirts and trackpants will work fine.

2. Find a suitable walking location. Parks are the best but any open area can be used for walking.

Don't push yourself too hard. Walking for a long time right from the get-go will probably lead to sprains. Start small and gradually increase the time and distance.

4. Maintain proper posture. You should stand tall, look straight ahead and lift your chest a bit. The arms should move freely with your body.



PRABIR DAS



As the world cup is on, cricket fever has gripped the nation. Students after their coaching class take the opportunity of a vacant road yesterday afternoon to play cricket, with backpacks functioning as stumps. The photo was taken on Isa Khan Avenue at Uttara 6.

Climate finance spending must be efficient

Experts want to see real impact of public money spent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed national budget has offered 7.8 percent of total budget as climate financing in the coming fiscal, aiming at ensuring sustainable development, protection of environment, containing pollution, protection of biodiversity and tackling adverse impacts of climate change. In the current fiscal, the allocation was 8.1 percent.

Experts, however, demanded that climate spending must be efficient, targetoriented and achieve actual impact of the public money spent on climate change.

Prof Ainun Nishat, noted climate change researcher, said considering the current state of affairs, the actual climate spending still remains a riddle due to a lack of clarity. Which development intervention is really dedicated to climate change is not clear, he added.

"Any climate spending must be factorised in development work to understand what

actually has been done to tackle climate change," he said, adding, "Over Tk 3,000 crore of the climate change trust fund has been spent over the past half-decade, but it is not clear what this public money has achieved in terms of combatting climate change."

The proposed budget maintains that Bangladesh has been placed in the 6th position among countries vulnerable to natural disasters due to climate change. Therefore,

formulated an adaptive, long-term, integrated and macro-level mega plan called "Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100" with the vision of achieving a safe, climate change-resilient and prosperous delta.

Implementation of the mega plan will require a huge investment of 2.5 percent of the GDP for flood control, preventing river erosion, river excavation, dredging, river training (structural measures taken to improve a river and its banks) and navigation.

While appreciative of the government's allocation of climate financing, Tanjir Hossain, lead of Resilience and Climate Justice programme of ActionAid Bangladesh, said the civil society's demand has been allocation of a minimum 5 percent of the GDP for climate finance.

So far, nearly half of the climate finance has been spent in the name of capacity building -- with a lion's share of the allocation to water resources, agriculture the government has and disaster management ministries.

"But we have never seen an impact assessment of such spending; we do not know why expensive river embankments collapse regularly one after another," Tanjir Hossain said.

To get the desired benefits of climate finance, it is crucial to examine whether fund allocation has been in keeping with the climate adaptation and mitigation goals, whether the proposed climate projects are consistent with the national climate action plan and how much money

is needed for implementing the Delta Plan, added Hossain.

Dr Saleemul Huq, director of International Centre for Climate Change and Development, spoke about the government initiative to incorporate climate financing in the national budget and to spend the fund through 25 designated ministries.

Capacity of these ministries has been enhanced with a UNDP project and they are now expected to be capable of identifying the areas of climate fund spending, he said.

"Previously, we were not aware who was spending the funds and how," he said, "But this time, the ministries are designated with specified areas of climate fund for relevant development works."

Now, the success of the government's appreciable move depends on how the ministries' efficiency is reflected through identification of climate-related schemes, Dr Huq added.

20PC WAGE DEDUCTION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

'Proposal would institutionalise bonded labour in Malaysia'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Millions of migrant workers will be at risk of debt bondage in Malaysia if employers deduct 20 percent of their salaries to prevent them from fleeing workplaces, two rights bodies said in a statement on Thursday.

Malaysian rights body Tenaganita and global antitrafficking organisation Freedom United submitted a petition to the Malaysian human resources ministry, calling for cancellation of the proposal.

Malaysian Human Resources Minister M Kulasegaran in December last year announced that he was in favour of the

The two organisations immediately launched an online campaign to stop this plan, and by now have collected 18,194 signatures, calling on the minister to scrap the idea.

The issue bears significance for Bangladeshis as some 800,000 Bangladeshi migrants work in Malaysia. Between one to two lakh of them are estimated to be undocumented in the Southeast Asian country, which suspended recruitment from Bangladesh since September last year on allegations of a syndicate of recruiting agents and charging high cost that goes up to Tk 4 lakh.

The rights bodies said many migrant workers are already trapped in debt bondage, unable to pay off exploitative recruitment fees. Kulasegaran's proposal will make the situation worse.

It cannot be a win-win solution where migrant workers are said to be able to collect the deducted amount when they leave the country after their work permits have expired, said the statement.

"We should be focusing on the root cause of why workers leave their employment. A significant number of those who flee do so due to exploitative working conditions, which include the withholding of wages, abuse and being overworked."

"In reality, after years of experience working with migrant workers in Malaysia, we are very clear that this proposal would only encourage forced and bonded labour. In fact, it would only further institutionalize bonded labour, also violating international labour standards," added the statement.

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ART EXHIBITION

Grits and Grains by Igbal Bahar Chy Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka Time: 9am-12pm, 5pm-8pm

Eka Ek Nari

Venue: Bangladesh Mahila Samity Time: 7pm

MUSIC Kendraka 3.19 Venue: EMK Center Time: 6pm

THEATRE

DISCUSSION

Human Library An event where visitors hear personal stories of selected individuals. Venue: Goethe-Institut

Time: 3pm

THEATRE Sea-morog by Bangladesh Theatre Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Time: 7:15pm

formed a human chain in front demanding for farmers

of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, allocation of rationing system and ensuring employment for 100 days in the national budget.

Bangladesh

Khetmojur Samity

PHOTO: STAR