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Society, Culture and Sports

This review contains the major important issues of Bangladesh which were mostly discussed among the people in 2018.

The Bangabandhu Satellite-1 was one of the most discussed issues among people in Bangladesh. The satellite launched from USA on May 12, 2018, which has given Bangladesh the status of satellite owner country. Many changes have taken place in 2018 in the ICT sector of Bangladesh. The beginning of the year was marked with the launching of 4th

Bangladesh climbed three spots up in the Human Development Index. In 2017, Bangladesh was at 139 among 189 countries from where Bangladesh moved three notches up to the 136th place in 2018. The Rohingya refugees were also in public discussion in 2018 but this time people's attention was to the issue of their repatriation. The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received prestigious '2018 Special Distinction Award for Outstanding Achievement' for her responsible and humanitarian policy in hosting the Rohingya refugees.

generation (4G) internet services. In addition to that, a test of 5G internet was also carried out in the same year. However, due to the increasing accessibility to high-speed internet services, many social, voluntary, and financial organizations got established which started providing different services.

Bangladesh stood 3rd in the global ranking of outsourcing. Currently, around 650,000 freelancers are working in Bangladesh, who are mostly young. Nowadays, many young people are considering freelancing as their profession due to freedom to selecting time and type of works.

Another issue of people's attention in 2018 was the Mobile Number Portability (MNP) service which allows mobile users to change their operator having their phone numbers unchanged. The ride sharing companies widened their services in Dhaka and some other big cities of the country, which helped people access their required transportation and other services.

Some changes have also taken place in the cases of social safety net program in Bangladesh. Both the coverage and the amount of the allowances under the social safety net program have increased. In the fiscal year 2018-2019, the government allocated BDT 64,177 crore which is 13.81 percent of the budget. The government fixed the minimum monthly salary of BDT 8000 for the garment workers with effect from December 2018. The wage disparity between public and private service holders has increased.

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The overseas employment was also continuous in 2018. Although the overseas employment was 1008,525 in 2017, it decreased to 684,962 till November 2018. The issues like violence against female migrant workers abroad and safe migration were one of the most discussed issues in the year. Particularly, when the female workers returned home from Saudi Arabia, the media covered their stories of inhuman tortures by the employers, these issues got significant attention from people of different socioeconomic background.

Bangladesh won their maiden Gold Medal in the International Robot Olympiad 2018. The pass rates in SSC and equivalent examinations decreased in 2018 comparing to the previous years. Although there was still some allegation of leaking question papers in the public examinations, it was less than that of 2017. The literacy rates increased to 72.9 percent which was higher than the previous rates though there was no particular step taken to increase the literacy rate in the country.

The non-political 'Nirapod Sorok Chai' movement by students was one of the most discussed issues. Although the movement started from the Dhaka city, it rapidly spread to the other areas of the country. Moreover, the quota reformation movement also became the topic of the public talk in 2018.

A trend of making online and YouTube-based music video, drama, and short film was observed this year. Due to less advertisement and good stories, only some programs have already been found popular. The use of YouTube has increased among young people. Young people are using their talents to make different programs like music, dance, motivational speech, review of daily necessary products, etc. for their own YouTube channels.

The creative books were published during the entire year, which proves the creative mind of the people of the country. Like previous years, Bangla Academy organized 'Amar Ekushey Grontho Mela 2018' where a total of 4591 new books were published. Total sale

was BDT 70.5 crore which was 5 crores more than that of the previous year. The quality of book and subject matter remained a matter of question this time also. Among the total numbers, Bangla Academy claimed the numbers of quality books was only 488. In addition to that, the percentage of the books published in different times of the year may not be more than 5 percent. Dhaka International Lit Fest was also organized in 2018, where writers and readers of different countries attended. This time, the gathering of the Pulitzer winner writers, the Oscar winner actors, and the famous thinkers attracted young people.

The interest of people in fashion and beauty practice increased this year. Besides, among the urban people, the trend of using beauty parlor increased among the people living in villages or rural areas. The trend of using gent's salon and parlor by urban men also increased. Although there was no significant change seen in case of men's dress, women found interest in readymade dresses like readymade folded *Saree*, etc. The fashion Hijab was also popular among the women while the trend of keeping beard adopting different styles was observed among the men. Some different hairstyles were also seen among some young people. The use of three-quarter pant among men and jeans among women has increased. The trend of going parks and restaurants forming a pair has increased among young people.

Without any threat, *Pahela Baishakh* was celebrated amid traditional festivities and enthusiasm. The shopping trend on the occasion of different festivals has increased among middle class people of Bangladesh. The internal tourism like visiting different tourist spots and the trend of taking food at a restaurant during the festivals and the public holidays have also increased.

The use of social media has increased. Despite its negative use in some cases, the awareness of mass people increased. The increasing interest in modern and updated technology was also observed among young people. There was competition among them for buying the latest product of some famous companies. In urban areas, particularly in Dhaka city, the use of motorcycle among men and scooter among women has increased in 2018.

The budget for music video and film making increased. A total of 56 movies got released in different cinemas of the country and only 8-10 got good responses from the viewers. Only one movie was made on the story of liberation war. At the end of the year, the film "Hasina: A Daughter's Tale" made based on the life of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina got released in both cinema halls and televisions, which drawn the attention of people from different backgrounds. The debate on joint venture film production was also live in the media. A group of local directors and artists claimed that the joint venture movies were not following the rules properly and going to be a threat to the local culture of Bangladesh.

Except some rural places, there was no mentionable event of *Jatra*, *Pala gan*, *Kawaligan* organized in the year. The *Orosh* has been seen to be organized in different *Dargah* of *Pir*. The folk festival was also held this year which attracted the people of different ages. The fusion of popular old folk songs with modern music has got popularity among young generation.

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At the end of the year, the participation of players, actors, and artists in election campaign got the attention of people. The use of different entertainment media for election campaign was also observed this time.

The year has also been marked with some important achievements of Bangladesh in sports. Among all types of sports, the achievement in cricket was higher than others. Besides the maiden T-20 Asia Cup win by national women cricket team, the men also won record numbers of matches this year. Bangladesh team (men) won 21 matches in 2018 which is the highest numbers of winning in a year.

Bangladesh's position was positive in football also. Although the football team could not play any international game in 2017, Bangladesh organized 2 international tournaments and played 8 matches in 2018. The football team also jumped up from 197 to 192 in the FIFA ranking. Bangladesh also has some achievements in the age-based football of both boys and girls.

Women and Children

In 2018, women's contribution to different sectors was remarkable. At the beginning of the year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won Global Women Leadership Award. Bangladesh got highest position in South Asia in gender equality which was another achievement of women in 2018. In the year, women's participation in workplace has increased from 33.2 percent to 36.3 percent. Through this, the position of Bangladesh in South Asia has been elevated to second place. In addition to workplace, women's contribution has increased in education, health and economic sectors. According to Global Gender Gap Index, girl child and women's participation in education sector has increased to 51 percent in 2018, which is highest compared to any time in the past. Child marriage and maternal mortality were also on the decrease. In the GDP growth, women's contribution increased by 20 percent, which was around 15 percent in 2017.

In 2018-19 fiscal year, to continue the development of women, gender budget has been set Tk.1, 37,742 crore, which is more than one-fourth of the total budget. But the violence against women continued throughout the year. In addition, Bangladesh women cricket team won T-Twenty Asia Cup while the football team won SAF championship which makes the achievement of women

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more visible throughout the year. At the end of the year, the highest number of women's participation in the 11th parliamentary election showed gender equality one step further. It is notable that in the 11th parliamentary election, a total of 69 women contested in the poll, 22 of them have been elected which is highest in the parliamentary history of Bangladesh.

In 2018, Bangladesh has achieved tremendous success in reducing child mortality rate. UNICEF recognizes the success of Bangladesh in cutting down the number of under-five infant mortality rate to 28 per 1,000 live births. In the education sector, 100 percent participation of girls and boys continued. Additionally, Shima Sarker, a mother carried her 18-year-old disable son to the examination centre, included in the list of BBC's 100 influential and inspirational women 2018 as the second Bangladeshi women. This will inspire the participation of disable children in education. Furthermore, reform of traffic law through movement for safe road was one of the significant achievements of children in the year. As a result, at least 99 percent of motorcyclists are wearing helmets now, which was not more than 15 percent earlier. Road accident has also been decreased slightly as an outcome of this movement.

Economics

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the economy of Bangladesh is the second fastest growing major economy in the world with an average 6.5% GDP growth rate from the last decade. As per gross domestic product (GDP) Bangladesh is placed at number 42 (in nominal) and 31 (in PPP). Total amount of GDP is \$285.817 billion (nominal) and \$751.949 billion (PPP). Besides, Bangladesh placed 2nd in jute production, 4th in rice production and 12th in tea production. GDP growth rate of Bangladesh has reached 7.86% in 2018 while in 2017 the

growth rate was 7.28%. This 7.86% growth rate is the highest GDP growth rate of Bangladesh after the independence. Like previous years, major contribution of growth has come from the service and industrial sectors. The contributions of service, industry and agricultural sector on GDP in Bangladesh are 52.11%, 33.66% and 14.23% respectively. This year total amount of exports is about 41 billion USD (BBS, 2018) which is 10.81% more than previous year.

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Along with GDP growth rate, per capita GDP also improved in fiscal year 2018-19. While in the last fiscal year (2017-18) per capita GDP was USD 1610, in this fiscal year the GDP per capita raised to USD 1,752. This also breaks all the previous records of GDP per capita. The labour force survey (March, 2017) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) accords that 2.6 million (2.18%) of the total 62.1 million labour force remained unemployed. However, according to the World Bank (December 2017) unemployment rate of Bangladesh is around 4.2% (male 3.1% and female 6.7%). Although unemployment is a major problem in Bangladesh for last 10 years, yet, there is no significant plan to reduce unemployment in the 7th Five Year Plan. According to BBS (October, 2017), the present poverty rate is 24.3% in Bangladesh. The report also revealed that around 12.9% are below lower poverty line (extreme poor) while it was only 13.7% in 2016. In aggregate, Bangladesh has achieved success in poverty reduction. However, income inequality has increased in recent years due to having the fastest growing rate of the rich people of Bangladesh in the world. First 10% top rich people earn 26.9% of the total income while bottom 10% earns 3.8% of the total income. Hence, top 10% rich people earn 8 times more than bottom 10%. Though total GDP and total national income have been increased from the last decade, the poor and the needy hardly enjoy the benefit of that. The average inflation has been around 5.78 percent in this year which was 5.5 percent in the previous year. In budget proposal, budget deficit continues in this fiscal year as well. In fiscal year 2018-19, the total budget is BDT 4, 64,573 crore which is 19.8% of total GDP, development budget is BDT 1, 79,669 crore which is 38.67% of the total budget and deficit budget is BDT 1,25,293 crore which is 26.97% of the total budget. However, the budgeting system has not been changed yet. It is better to follow needs-based budget rather than existing budgeting method as proposed by the BISR for the last couple of years.

Misuses of money and money laundering have increased due to having no practice of needs based budgetary system as often discussed by the citizens when this news get published in the newspapers. High dependence on external sources (foreign assistance) has decreased in the recent years.

Foreign reserve of Bangladesh Bank has decreased in 2018 than 2017 by 7.5%. The total amount of foreign reserve is USD 31056 (BB, November 2018) which was 33,493 million in 2017. Remittance is now considered as the life blood of accelerating economic growth in the country. Foreign reserve growth rate is negative compared to previous fiscal years' rate. It is now important to use the reserve for more income generating activities.

Total remittance inflow in Bangladesh is about USD 14294.8 million increases by 5.7% (up to November, 2018) than 2017 which was USD 13526.84 million (BB, 2018). Bangladesh now can finance around eight months of imports which is higher than the minimum three-month requirement. It is high time to ensure the utilization of foreign reserve in income generating activities. Although in the share market, banking sector has experienced its highest index in 2018, loan defaulter scenario has not been changed yet. In June, 2018, more than 10% of the total outstanding loans were reported to be defaulted and the amount of default loan is BDT 131,666 crores which was BDT 62,172 crore in December 2017. Most of the banks have tried to obscure their volume of default loan even though the central bank asked the commercial banks to reveal the actual loan default amount. State owned banks had largest volume of loan default, however, some private banks also had remarkable default loan in 2018 as well. In 2018, the banking sector exposed further weaknesses. Especially increase on non-performing loans, capital inadequacy and poor governance in the sector has hampered the smooth operation of the banks.

To refund and to recover the loss of the government owned banks, Bangladesh government has to spend public fund which could discourage the taxpayer. To overcome all these limitations, here central bank must play a significant strict rule developing a system for change.

Politics

In 2018, the most discussed topics in case of politics were parliamentary election, organizing big alliance centering election, cancellation of Jamaat-e-Islami's registration as a political party, punishment verdict of Khaleda Zia and Tarique Zia, formulation of alliance with the big leaders of small parties, passing away of 7 times elected old age leader Suranjit Sengupta, disqualification of many well-known leaders in election, participation of artists in election and election campaign, mostly talked nomination business, not participating in election by the prominent leaders, light conflict centering the election, 'innovative technique' of arresting workers and leaders of opposition parties, AL winning in 259 parliamentary seats, formation of Government by Sheikh Hasina again, etc were main.

Although it was widely talked about the type of government during election, but at the end of the year election was held under the ruling party. Despite all registered parties have participated in the election, but the two major camps were under discussion. JPs and its alliance lost its appeal before the election. As a result, election result was not in their favor.

BNP has shown some innovative ideas about formation of election-centered alliance. Bikolpo Dhara has shown some innovative ideas centering election. But about the “innovative technique” used for arresting the opposition leaders and workers as reported in the newspaper could not show any counter innovative ideas. In case of election campaign there was extensive use and misuse of social media. But digital security act 2018 has prevented it to some extent. At first Oikya Front Alliance has given 3 nominations in each constituency which created a sensation.

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In the last election, there were 1,840 candidates which crossed all earlier record. In addition to that there were 60 women candidates and 79 marginal community candidates which was also a record. But getting nomination of women due to inheritance is not been considered as women empowerment. Although round the year, there was discussion on EVM, but finally there was election using the EVM which was also discussed widely. In six constituencies, EVM was used.

In the whole year, there was no major *Hartal* or blockade. No prominent leader was killed. Centering election, there was formation of some small alliances and political parties. Change of political parties by some well-known leaders was also discussed widely. Importance of Islamic parties centering election was increased. But their success in election was very insignificant.

Safe road movement by children and quota reform movement were discussed round the year. Centering quota reform movement there was conflict and blaming and counter-blaming was going on for a part of the year. Role of government was debated in many times in the year. To many people steps taken by government was not acceptable.

There was complain against arresting of workers and leaders of opposition camp which was going on before election as reported in many news media. Suit was filed against lot of people. A word named “*gayebi mamla*” or “ghost cases” has been discussed widely throughout the year. In the year, ‘culture of destroying the opposition’ in politics could not be overcome. Instead of using intelligence against the force, no alternative was observed in politics in the whole year, which could enrich the politics.

In the year, dialogue with the alliance and parties by the government was very important event. But from that dialogue there was no significant fruitful outcome. The opposition could not show

the bargaining power. At the end of the year by giving some controversial statement, Oikyafront leader Dr. Kamal Hossain was criticized.

In politics, opposition could show some sign of creativity, but that did not well stand against the strategy of the ruling party. No alternative leader of Sheikh Hasina has come up in any other party. The attitude of Oikyafront was like a defeated party before election. Result of election therefore was not in their favor.

Law and Order Situation

In the year 2018, various kinds of crimes occurred and law and order disrupting situations prevailed like the earlier year. An analysis of the crime-statistics report of Bangladesh Police reveals that the total number of crimes increased a little bit in 2018 compared to 2017 and the number of murders has increased slightly. At least five incidents of rape or attempted rape in running bus have been reported in national dailies till October 2018, which was three in 2016 and six in 2017. Some incidents of child torture were 'viral' in social media. Many women workers returned from Saudi Arabia this year after being physical, mental and sexual abuses. It is claimed that the number is to be about one thousand from January to June. The number of pending criminal cases was 19,18,527 in various courts up to July 2018.

The significant enacted laws to control and prevention of crime in the year are: Gazipur Metropolitan Police Act, 2018; Rangpur Metropolitan Police Act, 2018; Road Transport Act,

As a part of the 'zero tolerance policy' against drugs, the number of deaths has crossed two hundred in anti-drug operations. It was also continued the capture of militants either alive or dead, a rescue of huge weapons and explosives during the RAB and police operation in militant den throughout the year. There were no remarkable incidents of specific targeted terrorist attack except a militant attack on Professor Dr. Zafar Iqbal in March. There was no such communal riot in this year.

2018; and Digital Security Act, 2018 to control cyber-crime. The 'Road Transport Act' has been enacted with a provision of the death penalty if it is proven an intentional accident aiming to killing (defined as murder). Law and order situation deteriorated on several occasions after spreading out of rumors or clash with security forces during featured events of 'Quota Reform Movement' and 'Road Safety Movement'.

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In some cases, police were attacked due to tensions and conflicts. Minorities did not face any major attacks, though there were some social tensions throughout the year. Because of the continuation of the same government’s regime and strict surveillance, the year ended without any major political violence, temporary extreme volatility and collision, killing or firebombing.

The incident of cross-fire has also increased slightly which mainly occurred between the members of law-enforcing agencies and habitual terror criminals, forest-robbers or drug-dealers. Some pirates and forest-robbers have been killed or surrendered to law-enforcing agencies on several occasions. Some complaints of kidnappings and disappearances for a political reason have been reported in public media in this year also. Filing cases against opposition and arresting the political activists continued throughout the year. But centering the election anticipatory rate of arrest was high for fighting the unlawful situation in the last two months of the year.

There was an allegation of increase of money laundering through foreign trade this year as the year was the last of the ruling government's tenure. Number of mobile theft and robbery, embezzlement of money after taking big amount of loans from the banks, many types of crimes committed by misuse of technology, especially rumors, forgery, and fraud have increased. As reported business of mobile smugglers has increased with around BDT 4,500 crore in 2018 which was around BDT 3,000 crore in 2017. Gold smuggling continued throughout the year, which was evident from incidents of gold seized at different periods. Besides, there has been ‘nomination trade’ and illegal transaction of cash money during the parliamentary election as reported in the public media.

There was no major violence in the country related to national parliamentary election in this year. Two youths were killed and 15 injured in election violence in Mohammadpur in early November. After that, some injuries and killing took place centering election excitement in different districts of the country. Those took place between two opposition political parties as well as the two opposing factions of the same political party. For example, indigenous people in Chittagong Hill Tracts were engaged in political clash which has been reported in almost all public media. At least 19 people have been killed and several others injured in election-related violence across the country during the 11th national parliament election day. The Ansar members, including government supporters, members of the opposition and general people, were among the killed. But the supporters of the ruling party were the victim of violence in most cases.

Law and order situation did not deteriorate much as apprehended during the parliamentary election this year. In particular, political leaders and activists did not involve in major clashes with the law enforcing agencies centering different political programs. Moreover, law enforcement agencies were alert this year to counter any kind of violence. For example, they had some significant successes due to increased special surveillance on social networks and prevention of dissemination of propaganda and rumors by blocking of fake online news portals.

Environment

In the year, a number of significant events took place in the case of environment. National Environment Policy 2018 has got approved which would contribute to some extent in the environmental improvement. Some initiatives have been taken by the government to produce organic fertilizer from garbage. The number of environment friendly garments is now highest in the world from Bangladesh. In the field of livelihood, some positive changes have been noticed, especially the trend of hunting and selling migratory birds in public has decreased. The popularity of environment friendly bricks is increasing in the country.

In the year, the positive aspects of environment were the less hill erosion due to heavy rainfall and less number of deaths compared to previous year. In the urban area, activities have increased in case of clearing garbage. The effort to make organic fertilizers and recycling increased slightly.

However, irregularities in the brick kiln were observed throughout the country. As per government report, it has been claimed that the achievement is 65.58 percent in case of environment friendly brick kiln. Illegal sand extraction is continuing in different places of the country. Recycling of plastic is continuing. Air pollution measuring devices have been established in several areas of the country. These devices show that in some areas the amount of pollution (PM 2.5 and PM10) remains greater than the acceptable level in 100-120 days of the year. As a result, many people are seen wearing mask in the dry season.

In the year, more people were seen wearing mask than the previous year. The position of Dhaka city in case of air pollution is still unacceptable. Death due to air pollution is continuing. Efforts have been made continuously to increase the use of friendly stove, but still it is not widely used throughout the country. The lack of public and private initiatives can be seen in this regard. It has been claimed by the government that ETP has been set up in all major industries. Zero Discharge Scheme has been adopted, which was 100 percent effective only in three organizations.

Awareness increased slightly in order to increase biosafety. No information was found on number of birds increasing anywhere in the country. In the coastal areas, to encounter the impact of climate change, crab and shrimp farming are increasing though it is still limited to pocket areas. The trend of climate affected people's coming to the city is continuing.

Testing the quality of water of major rivers is continuing. As a result, water quality was at an acceptable level in the last year. Monitoring of marine pollution shows that in the Chattogram coastal area, for some time in the dry season, the DO value was 6.3-8.5 and pH was 7.0-8.4 and TDS was 842-13391. As a result, these three values have fluctuated in dry and monsoon season. Plastic waste disposal is increasing in rivers and ocean areas.

The government has identified 13 ecologically sensitive areas. In order to protect Saint Martin, tourists' travel has been made limited and some more activities have been undertaken. In St. Martin, birds' census, forestry and turtle hatchery have been established. Some activities have been taken to protect the Halda river also.

The amount of producing organic food is increasing day by day, and its demand is increasing also, although according to researchers it is harmful for the environment.

Scientific Invention

A group of researchers at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology has invented a low-cost method for early detection of cancer. It would take five minutes and cost just BDT 500 for using a device to test blood samples to intense beams and analyze. The program titled "Innovative Biomarker Detection System Using Nonlinear Optics" was funded by Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) of the University Grants Commission.

Dr. Mubarak Ahmed Khan, the former Chairman at Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and chief scientific officer at Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation (BJMC) has invented a biodegradable and eco-friendly bag from jute cellulose that looks like polythene bag. This invention is 100% eco-friendly, sustainable, recyclable and will be mingled with soil. Moreover, it will turn into fertilizer. This bag is called 'Sonali Bag'.

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Dr. Mohammad Jobayer Chisti of icddr'b has come up with a “low-cost device” to save lives of babies' suffering from pneumonia. In developed countries, hospitals use ventilators to help children with pneumonia to breathe. But it is too expensive for hospitals to have such machines – each costing up to BDT 12 lakh– and need trained staff to operate them. But Dr. Chisti decreases the cost into BDT 100 only by using shampoo bottle.

In 2018, Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) has invented 5 new technologies. Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute has invented 4 new technologies in 2017-18 fiscal year. And Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has invented 22 new species of 16 crops and 23 new crops production technologies which would help to acquire sustainable food security.