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Rubana Huq

The Blame Bank

July 4, 2012



Adam started the blame agenda. In fact, he started the double-inclusive blame game when he responded to God:

“The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Adam blamed both God and Eve. Eve, too, claimed no responsibility and exclaimed, “The serpent duped me, and I ate it.”

God bought none of their excuses and the deal got cancelled; Adam and Eve were pushed out of Eden and forced to look for alternative employment. Adam began looking for a job and Eve began to bear his children, tolerate labour pain, till epidural came to rescue the women, much, much later. So, every time we go outdoor to sustain ourselves, let’s blame Adam and every time a woman goes into labour, let’s call Eve names. Blame game is the easiest game on earth and it is also the oldest.

We have just been blamed. But let us not forget that many a times, there is an acute political angle to blame games directed towards our land and, often, blames are agenda driven. This toxic blaming exercise takes least energy as lifting a finger and pointing it towards the ‘other’ is not a movement that burns much calories. But yes... one has to admit that there is a societal reliance on accusations. And very often, while one accuses, a loop theory sets in place. If one travels from Point A to Point B and then from Point B to Point C, and finally joins Point C to Point A, the loop theory comes into effect. This journey may or may not breed results. One may end up being a greyhound chasing a mechanical rabbit at the end. But who cares, it’s essential to spend or waste time instead of hitting the bull in the eye, so be it.

Blaming is at its best when there’s a hammer close by as, in that case, everything, including human beings, nations, and borders simply look like nails.

Well, this land of ours just went under the hammer and gotten nailed in the process. The story began a few months ago...

In another part of the globe, in September, a particular police force had raided an office of a 22-year-old engineering and construction firm in connection with corruption information provided to them by a bank. Needless to mention that the same bank banned the firm from bidding on new bank contracts. Alas! But they were supposed to be our supervisor for building the 6150 m multi-purpose bridge, which would have four lanes and one rail track, connecting our South West to our Northern and Eastern areas, costing us approximately US \$3.00 billion. Rumour has it that the same entity had connection (unrelated to us) with a consultant who was accused of plotting to smuggle Libya’s Gaddafi to Mexico. The same company also had a vice president who was detained by the Mexican police, a chief executive who had to resign under the weight of the allegations, and another ex-VP who was arrested in Switzerland and taken into custody on fraud and money-laundering allegations.



No wonder that the firm's shares are currently down 38 percent from their 52-week high on July 5, 2011. But that's just a company while we are not just a nation. We are a nation, which looks up with optimum faith, and is ready to take responsibility. We are much larger than a firm, any individual, a portfolio, and loyalty. We are a democracy. We can take critique, but we can't take a hammer.

While loans are tied to a tight examination of governance and corruption, what must be taken into cognizance is that very often the "right" policies of these institutions create dilemma for countries like ours as Poverty, Corruption, Inefficiencies are related to poor governance, which is, again, part of underdevelopment. Receipt of loans conditional on good governance makes it extremely challenging for the less privileged lands. This is also perhaps why the Western aid has often failed in Africa. This is also perhaps why many impoverished borders have been suffocated by aid and loans where pure corporate exploitation has taken over, devoid of human interests. Didn't Brazil's Polonoroeste development programme, inaugurated in the Amazonian state of Rondonia in 1981 cause intense migration and land rush that destroyed the rainforest? Didn't a dam-building project in Narmada River Valley in India result in the forced resettlement of people between 1978 and 1993, causing serious social turmoil?

Besides, don't these loans pile up over time and cause high debt among developing countries giving birth to "perpetual debt" that the poor people of the world are often saddled with? This is what Kevin Danaher in his book, *50 Years Is Enough*, refers to when he writes: "External debt per capita for sub-Saharan Africa (not including South Africa) is \$365, while GNP per capita is just \$308". The summary is clear: countries often end up spending more on debt servicing obligations than spending on their basic priorities.

The EU along with many international donors regards participatory governance as a key factor to development. But the partners must also realize that enhancing transparency, ensuring human rights along with improved financial management is not a scenario that we need to be prescribed, but it is also a requirement from within. While cancellation of loans are forced down our necks, while we wear our conscience as an albatross around our label, let us also remember that bans, slams and embargoes do not ensure political reform, rather heighten resentment in lands that banks need to function in, also for their own survival...

A plan has fallen through the cracks of our system. A flaw has been cited. A point has been raised. All are noted with no thanks, anyway.

[Rubana Huq](#) is a poet, researcher and an entrepreneur.

Tags: [Bangladesh](#), [corruption](#), [Padma Bridge](#), [World Bank](#)



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3 Responses to "The Blame Bank"



[Syed M. Hussain](#) on July 5, 2012 at 6:14 pm

A superb read. And a brilliant indictment. If I had Ms. Huq's e-mail address, I could be specific and detailed in my comments. I had forwarded this article to my two sons, who themselves write well, to keep this among the model pieces of the art of creative writing.

And Ms. Huq has on this site an impressive 39 posts. Mine is only a paltry 18 on [bdnews24.com/blog/en](#).

May you go on opening our eyes and enriching our lives!

Syed Muhammad Hussain
 Bangladesh Ambassador (rtd.)
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 05/07/12

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Rezaul Karim on July 5, 2012 at 1:37 pm

The chief financier of the Jamuna bridge was the World Bank. The technical and engineering issues about the Jamuna bridge were controlled by the WB, three European engineering consultants and a Korean MNC. We got a bridge with lot of cracks and a maximum train speed of 10 kph. The Jamuna bridge is supposed to last from 80 to 120 years, but with the cracks, the bridge may not last more than 50 years. The railway bridges at Bhairab and Paksey are nearing 100 years. With the WB handling the Padma finance we may end up with two cracked mega-bridges. We have to be very cautious.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

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Golam Arshad on July 4, 2012 at 11:30 pm

Rubana: Blame Who? Blame is in uniform! Goliath can and will rock the WEAK, wait till David returns. Appreciate your sharp wit and wisdom. Done as always, a very good job in this article too!!

Like or Dislike:  2  0

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