

Weekly Holiday in Bangladesh: A Rational Proposition

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In this moment, a debate on the weekly holiday issue in Bangladesh is being circulated in the air. One group argues that, the holiday should be on Sunday. They claim that, this holiday will help maintain a strong business communication with the western countries which will foster their economic and business growth. On the other hand, the other group is refuting the argument of the first group stating that, weekly holiday on Sunday instead of Friday will weaken their religious feelings. Hence, clearly, we are on a serious debate and the nation has divided into two groups and the situation is such that no group wants to admit a defeat. However, we must converge into a rational solution. But, what is this solution?

I personally don't believe in any weekly holiday system. Instead, I support the **off-day system**. I also think that work should be continued in 3-shifts instead of 1-shift and this system must be maintained in most of the industries where applicable. I mean, I support the 24-hour work system where applicable. I would like to ratify my concept as the following-

Firstly, Bangladesh is now underdeveloped and economically less stable. Hence, we need to do a lot of work for advancement and this advancement demands ceaseless works. In this vulnerable stage, two days or even one day weekly holiday don't make any sense. A worker may need rest, but the whole organization doesn't need any rest; it should run continuously for higher productivity.

Secondly, at the present holiday system, whether it is on Sunday or Friday, most of the people are using the weekly holiday in unplanned or unnecessary ways. On every Sunday or Friday, what do the people usually do? They do the household works, but they can't do their personal works in any office. For example, a man working in a manufacturing company needs to go to the electricity office for his personal purpose. On weekly holiday, his office remains closed, but the electricity office also remains closed. On weekday, the electricity office remains open, but his office also remains open. Hence, if he wants to do his own work with another office, he needs to take short-leave from his boss. But, a man needs to do many works with many offices for his own family. In this circumstance, how many times this man should take leave from his boss during his office time to go to another office for his own purpose?

This problem can be cured through introducing an off-day system. I mean, every organization should be open everyday. The employees can enjoy off-day according to a monthly schedule. On the off-day, the employee will not need to go to his/her office, but s/he can do his/her own works in other offices. Again, the people can also design some recreational program according to their own wish. If a person doesn't have any important work or doesn't need recreation in any week, the person will not need to enjoy any off-day. In this case, the incumbent will get extra money from the office. I mean, people should use the holiday for meaningful purposes. Sitting idle or unnecessary sleeping can't be termed as a preplanned and meaningful work.

This off-day system can be materialized by applying **work measurement techniques** and by maintaining a certain percentage of extra workforces (say, 20%) as a buffer which will cover the predetermined absenteeism.

Thirdly, there is no obligation of weekly holiday (Friday) in religion (Islam), if timing is adjusted with every prayer especially the Friday prayer.

But, I think many of the people may not support my idea. This means, they need weekly holiday. OK fine, if it is really needed, then I think there should have only one day holiday in every week and this holiday **should be on FRIDAY** in Bangladesh. Let's see whether there is any logic behind this proposition:-

Firstly, what percentage of total workforces of the country (both govt. & private) is involved in international business? I think this percentage is very small. Again, international business doesn't mean that the incumbents are supposed to maintain contact in every moment except some emergency cases. Again, if the situation really demands, then the concerned offices or the relevant incumbents can also work even on Friday and this system still exists at present.

Hence, it is not necessary to change the FRIDAY holiday just to facilitate a negligible percentage of business requirements.

Secondly, we think that, the western countries are not happy with us on business issues, it means, we can't satisfy them. But, is only the Friday issue responsible for our entire image problem? If we search the causes using a "Cause & Effect Diagram", we will be able to show many business gaps or mismatches with the western countries that are hindering or retarding the business processes. We have many mismatches like poor quality, low productivity, higher price, insufficient backward & forward linkages, poor port management, political instability, lack of safety & security, low labor standard, unsatisfactory health, hygiene & humanity situations, poor supply chain management, low technology etc. If we analyze the relative contribution of the factors (using Pareto Analysis) those are devastating our business image values with the western countries, I think the Friday issue will not be proven more negative than the other issues. But, in every case, we the Muslims (?) always try to prove the religion as the number one hindrance to any progress, it's really a shame. Again, our Friday issue is our "difference" with the western countries, and it is certainly not our weakness or limitation. Every nation has some difference with other nations. Setting a business relation doesn't necessary mean forgetting or hiding own values and differences. It is still possible to maintain good relationships with other nations while protecting own identity and positions, if we can develop attractive business image and brand through good quality, low costs, ethical dealings etc.

Thirdly, we have 5-12 hours time differences with the western countries. So, if we really want to maintain real-time business communication, then we need to start our offices at night. Will we agree with this proposition? Again, all of the 57 OIC countries except 3 countries maintain Friday as the weekly holiday. What problems are they facing now?

Fourthly, though the holiday on Friday is not compulsory, it is almost mandatory to create a religious environment that is helpful for the Friday prayer. If we look at the history, we will find that, the western world has chosen Sunday as holiday from their religions. Then, why we should not choose our weekly holiday from our religion point of view?

Fifthly, we always try to adjust ourselves with others especially with the western countries. But, why we can't think that the other countries should adjust with us? One-fifth of the total population of the world is Muslim, we have about 57 Muslim majority countries and many of these countries are very rich. But, what percentage of our total business is with the Muslim countries? Why we can't decrease our business dependency on the western countries through shifting/developing business ties to/with the Muslim countries? People fight to protect their own identity, but unfortunately we fight to loose or forget our identity. Self-dependence and self-motivation are mandatory to protect self-identity, values and positions. But, have we any motivation to protect our self-identity, values, positions and differences? Now, many of the Muslim countries are not considered as "business factors" with the western countries. Hence, we should eradicate our internal business set-backs and should try to improve our positions so that we are considered as "business factors" immediately. Then, we should try to be dominant in the business world. I think dominating the business world may be the right and permanent solution to protect our own positions, differences, and values. Adopting political, cultural or financial slavery can't be the first option for a nation that possesses even a single drop of self-esteem.

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