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Jatrabari-Gulistan flyover

Yet another mammoth flyover, Jatrabari-Gulistan, is under construction at a cost of Tk 700 crore and expected to be complete within a couple of years. Would Jatrabari-Gulistan flyover solve road traffic jams at i) Jatrabari and Gulistan and ii) on public thoroughfares under the flyover full of innumerable road junctions, road squares, triplet road corners and road crossings?

Moreover, where are the parking spaces for vehicles at Jatrabari and Gulistan? What routes the vehicles would follow from Gulistan for onward journey?

How many motor vehicles use the Mohakhali flyover? Isn't there heavy traffic jam on the ground road at Mohakhali railway crossing, Mohakhali forest office point, Airport Road, Ataturk Road corner point and many other places?

What about Khilgaon-Kamalapur flyover? How many motor vehicles use the flyover? Has it not been turned into a gossip centre for the local people? What about the movement of hundreds of vehicles, rickshaws and thousands of pedestrians beneath the flyover roads? Are they traffic jam free?

The big question is whether the construc-

tion of giant flyovers, one after another, would help solve the terrible and erratic road traffic jams of Dhaka city.

There are thousands of narrow, serpent like, crisscross roads, streets, lanes and by-lanes all over the small area of Dhaka city of more than one crore people. How many people in Dhaka, how many motor vehicles, rickshaws, pedestrians can use the flyovers?

We strongly feel that side by side with the construction of flyovers small one storied/two storied over-bridges at important and crowded road junctions, road squares, triplet road squares, triplet road corners, road crossings etc at Farmgate, Sonargaon Hotel, Bangla Motors, Sheraton Hotel, High Court, Topkhana Road, Dainik Bangla, Shapla Chattor, Hathkhola, Nawabpur-English Road, Mirpur, Azimpur-New Market etc, may be constructed. Simultaneously, small underpasses, not giant underpasses, may be constructed at all important roads and streets for round the clock movement of vehicles and pedestrians without any obstruction and wastage of time.

OH Kabir, Dhaka

A big chunk left out

The next national election is not far away. Our leaders are busy with the voters in their respective constituencies. The parties are trying to convince the people. By the way, the whole nation is undoubtedly passing through a very crucial time as the big two parties are engaged in a dialogue. If all the problems can be resolved by the two big parties then the national election will be held in due time. Before election the political parties usually present their manifestoes to the nation about what will they do if they are elected.

They have to deal with the voters who are 18 or above.

However, a big chunk of the population are below that age and are left out of all activities at the national level. The matter deserves a closer look.

A reader
A Child-Centered NGO activist

Our coal resources

I would like to thank Mr. Anu Muhammad, Member Secretary of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port, for an elaborate and

emotionally charged write-up (24th Sept) on the Phulbari incident, which led to a national tragedy and the loss of innocent lives.

With great humility and respect for those who gave their valuable lives and their loved ones left behind to mourn their loss and also those who were injured in police action, we who are not so learned would like to know a little more on the subject. We know very little of coal mining, leave aside Open Cast Mining or Underground Seam Mining of Coal. In fact, we are greatly confused how best our

valuable coal resources can be extracted to benefit our country and its struggling economy.

However, we do know that the best coal so far discovered in Asia lies under our soil and in large quantity. We do know that we do not have the technology and the multibillion-dollar finance for such a gigantic project, nor what is the best method of extraction for us. We do know that the open pit mining method causes destruction to agricultural and other economic activities, while subsidence from underground mining can cause sudden sinking of prosperous land to depths of 10-15 metres and for many miles. Since both the methods seem to cause disturbance we need to know what is best for the nation.

Without being insensitive to what happened and at the same time not being insensitive equally to the future of our children who could benefit from such God given resources available to brighten their future, experts should let the nation know what is actually going on behind the scene. It is one matter to stop a project or condemn a culprit-company, but it is completely a different matter to serve one for the best interests of the country. We need to think much above individual interests or that of a community and think positively for the far greater interest of the nation and the future of our generations to follow.

Mahmoodul Haque
Gulshan, Dhaka

Muslims held without trial

December 06, the date the Indian history would remember forever as on that date in 1991 democracy was finally assassinated in India with the destruction of Babri Mosque and follow-up torture of the Muslims all over the country, is fast approaching. Upon the destruction of the Mosque, the then ruling Congress government had pledged to reconstruct it at the very site where it existed, but till date the construction has not even started. In order to suppress the Muslims who demand the reconstruction of the Mosque the Indian state has only terrorised them through various nefarious actions harmful to and undermining the Muslims. Every year many Muslims are rounded up on the eve of December-6 anniversary and not many from the detainees return home quite safe.

Indians, particularly those settled down comfortably abroad, mainly in the West, are both proud of and obsessed with the so-called Indian democratic values and feel happy to see the Muslims in India painted in dirty colours and portrayed as bad guys. They are perhaps unaware of the fact that this country is retaining detainees without trial. Human rights record of India is known to be very low and the media efficiently hide the facts if the victims are Muslims. The Muslims, who are arrested before December 06 every year and tortured in jails across the country, are neither tried nor released because, according to the government, the arrested persons are "terrorists" and so they deserve

prolonged punishment in jails without trial. It is anyone's guess as to what makes the government both at the Centre and in states not to produce the so-called suspected terrorists before the courts of law and let judiciary deliver judgments. In Tamil Nadu alone, for instance over 350 Muslims were reportedly arrested between 22nd Nov and 06 Dec 1998 and their fate is sealed in Coimbatore and other central jails in the state without any trial.

No one can state exactly how many Muslims are detained in jails in this manner and how many have been killed in jails. The Muslim League having pretensions for serving the Muslim community and a coalition partner in the present central government has not bothered about ensuring justice to the detainees either.

Another December 06 is fast approaching. The prime minister, Manmohan Singh, and the state chief ministers should come out with detailed reports about the Muslims held in Indian lock-ups without trial as well as the general position of the Muslim detainees in the country in all cases. Neither the Human Rights activists nor such organisations have taken up the matter seriously enough to halt the inhuman treatment meted out to the Muslims. The best option before the State under the circumstances is to release unconditionally the illegal detainees remaining under government custody without trial. Democracy is not a joke.

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South Talpatti

There are so many contentious issues like border tension, terrorism, push-in, push-back etc. between Bangladesh and its big neighbouring country India. And South Talpatti is one of the greatest contentious issues between the two countries. Which is now completely out of discussion.

It is a very tiny island which is located at the mouth of Haribhanga river on Bangladesh-India border. Although it's a very tiny island but it has a great significance in terms of geo-strategic matters for Bangladesh. If we get back this island, our territorial sea, exclusive economic zone will be expanded as well. But what's the reality at present? India occupied the island in the early 1980's. At that time, though Bangladesh protested strongly against India's occupation but India didn't listen to Bangladesh's appeal.

But we believe all contentious issues must be discussed and settled peacefully.

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Celebrating Durga Puja



This has been a unique time for the Hindus in celebrating Durga Puja, as this, our most important festival, comes right before the most crucial election we have ever faced.

Firstly, there was an inexplicable game played by the official authorities through the media. We know through our national Puja bodies that around 19,000 mandaps were erected this year throughout the country. But the government claims that the number was 26,000. Why was there this need to misrepresent facts? Nineteen thousand is already the highest number in Bangladesh history. The higher number is ridiculous and incredible.

Secondly, the two major political parties and their allied partners wreaked havoc on many hundreds of puja mandaps this year. Many prospective candidates, especially those in areas with significant Hindu voters, took it upon themselves to arrive, often unannounced, at the puja sites. With their large entourages, to engage in photo sessions, which they would use then to project an image with the electorate. I personally was at three different puja sites in Chittagong

where I was witness to politicians entering with their large number of colleagues, shouting slogans, and often running onto the stage wearing shoes and disturbing the devotees and other visitors.

Do not misunderstand - our pujas are always known as "sarbajanin" - open to everyone. But, why should we have to drop everything and pose like animals at a zoo because those seeking our votes decide to come for a few minutes. Given the current environment, many, especially women and children, became very anxious when suddenly slogans were shouted and security men with guns started overrunning our stages. Also, if you would like our votes, please stand beside us during the five years between elections, when we are worried about electricity, education, health, price of essentials and security.

These are the worries of all Bangladeshis, and my request to all politicians irrespective of political party, is, don't come to our temples and try and segregate our concerns.

Sanjoy Kumar Nath, Chittagong

