Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Tuesday, September 1, 1998 **Expectations Unmet**

The tone, temper and texture of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Sunday night national hook-up address on the flood exigency did not quite reflect the kind of analytical seriousness which the gravity of the situation so palpably demanded. The speech sounded as if we are dealing with the aftermath of floods while the evident fact is we are in the midst of them.

No doubt we have to think ahead on a strategy to brace up to the problems that would arise from a recession of waters, but when the people are marooned and floating, and embankments and infrastructures are under a severe pressure, her speech should have been focused on these aspects rather than getting diffused on a variety of explanatory notes. Many felt that the core issue of flood forecasting limitations pertaining to measurements of water-pressure on the land and the rise and fall of marine tides which determine the outflow of water from the delta into the Bay remained untouched.

Content-wise, her advisers or staff have failed her. A failure is also discernible in the timing of the speech. A certain suddenness and planlessness, it seems, marked her address to the nation. And anyone believing in the true power and effect of direct speaking on the audience in this super-communication era would have advised her to go for a live rather than recorded broadcast.

Basically we think she should have spoken much earlier to the nation. The subject not only required to be handled with great sagacity but had also raised some question-marks deserving to be addressed at the onset of second round of flooding.

Better late than never though. The Prime Minister's appeal for sinking differences to face the calamity unitedly strikes a responsive chord in us. She however stopped short at the exhortative level without elaborating how she proposed to galvanise the whole nation behind the relief and rehabilitative endeavors being currently undertaken almost entirely by her party government. The opposition BNP has called for all-party relief committees, especially in view of the involvement of foreign assistance whose utilisation should leave no room for controversy.

The intelligentsia wants a national flood relief committee formed with branches all over the affected two-thirds of the country. We suggest that composite national relief committees be immediately constituted. In order to emphasis their apolitical character representatives from all political parties and the broad civil society should be taken

Living with Terror

Two young men killed in one area within half an hour. It was a drama macabre that unfolded on a busy Saturday morning at east Jurain in the city. Assailants reportedly came in a group and dragged one of the two victims out of his place and hacked him in the sun before confirming death with a couple of shots. A curious coward crowd kept the killers company during the 20-odd-minute carnage. The other target was found running in a desperate bid to escape the chasing death-dealers. But he was outrun soon and the assailants completed their mission by hacking him to death in identical fashion.

Now forget law and order for a while. Insecurity of life due to dauntless movement of criminals has become some sort of a stale, old tale in Bangladesh. It happened. It is happening and it will happen unless an almost miraculous combination of meaningful social resistance and strict enforcement of law is effected by the civil society. But think of the impact of such demonstrative barbarity. What a mind-boggling lesson in practical brutality for young impressionable minds in that crowd!

The reason for Saturday's horrendous double murder was reportedly the struggle for control of the local drug business between two notorious groups of criminals. Also a piece of land owned by the railway became a bone of contention. In fact, one of the two killed reportedly was living on that

This drug-running battle at east Jurain is not an overnight development. It had been going on for a long time - long enough for the law enforcers to know and go after the criminals. Everybody seemed to know them. Yet police have found it beyond their means to get these people behind the bars. It is true police alone can't stamp out crime, societal involvement is necessary for this. But where is the guarantee about enforcement of law?

The All-devouring Noise The Department of Environment has found that

school and hospital surrounds in Dhaka City have a noise level of between 53 and 85 decibels. The DoE says the permissible high should be 45. The department blames hydraulic horns in vehicles. loudspeakers and construction work for the high noise level. An ENT expert, quoted by an environment-awareness organisation, says this constant level of high noise in the city impairs universally the hearing of all people living in the city for more than 10 years.

The main reason has been that no action was ever made against anyone making even unearthly noise past midnight. Why has the society been kept in the dark about its rights to protect not only its hearing but also its peace and taste, culture and privacy? If saving one's ears is important and no one must be allowed to harm one's hearing, it is perhaps more important that a people's culture as reflected in the individual's taste, the soul of a people that is to say, must not be allowed to be invaded and raped by the unbounded vulgarities of the sale promoters of commodities including religion and music and politics.

Successive governments in Bangladesh have perhaps believed that government edicts would not be effective against the powerful and multitudinous hordes of noise-makers. There were the laws but no government cared or dared to enforce them. In a capital city across the border, one that is very familiar to our people, they have done it through executive orders. Want to use the loudspeaker in a public place above the permitted decibel? You will need to get a written permission from the local DC or you will land in jail. And there is little unwanted noise now in the city of Calcutta.

The government can very easily save the citizens from hydraulic horn bleatings. The horns can be banned and their import stopped. The culprit vehicies and their drivers may very easily be punished. And there is no reason either why the loudspeakers cannot be eliminated. All that is needed is the true will of the government.

ANGLADESH, formerly East Bengal, was all along an agricultural country and till Independence from the British its industrial development was practically nil, and whatever industries -

which fell to the share of India on partition. From that time till the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country a number of industries including jute and textile were set up mainly by non-Bengali entrepreneurs who had their Head Offices in the then West Pakistan. Problems of protecting workers' interest, labour-management relations and industrial disputes did not go beyond reasonable limits; but there existed stained relation between the Non-Bengali Management and local Bengali

like jute - were there in

undivided Bengal, these were

located in and around Calcutta

workers for different reasons. Pakistan was a member of the International Labour Organisation and the Conventions thereof were observed for protecting the interest of workers and improving the labour management relations. These matters were regulated by a number of legislations including the Industrial Relations Act. 1948 which was repealed and re-enacted as the Industrial Relations Ordinance, 1969. As an 'existing law', this Ordinance has been continuing all along with periodical amendments and it may be referred to as the Parent Legislation of all other labour laws including the Labour Standing Orders Act, Factory Act. Minimum Wages

In this Ordinance 'industry'. 'worker', 'employer', 'management' have been given wide

URING my visit to England, the Netherlands

and France during the

first two weeks of August, I tried

to have a sense of where the

countries are one month after

the heady days of the 1998

World Cup. Here is what I

trains, the World Champions,

stuck on David Beckham.

Britain for the British.

Not that there are no racists in

America, especially in the

South. But in general, I believe

that the Americans are better

people - much more straight-

forward, and intolerant of dou-

changed enormously in the last

twenty years; mostly for the

better. The subcontinental ba-

bies we had known, have come

of age. They are a confident lot:

proud of their English and as

well as subcontinental heritage

More revealingly, they have

made Indian culture a part of

excited to see Masoor Dal make

it to the shelves of the super

market Sainburys. These days

all kinds of Indian dishes -

Kabab, Tandoori chicken, ko-

rma and somosa — are avail-

able in the frozen food section

of all major supermarkets. The

British buy these delicacies as

Halal versions of all these

dian restaurants in London

foods. Indeed, most of the In-

For the religious, there are

much as the subcontinentals.

Twenty years ago, we were

the British.

The England we found had

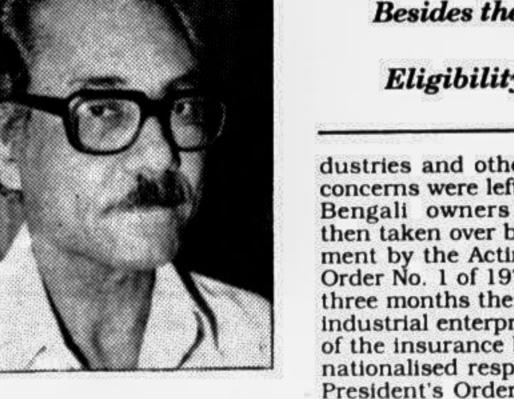
Like their super fast TGV

Trade Unionism Should be Free from Political Influence

by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed

Appointment and promotion of managers are very often politically influenced. Besides there is interference in the Management by labour leaders who act as labour front of political parties...

Eligibility of a person seeking industrial loan is sometimes determined by labour leaders and not by bank managers.



meanings and provisions have been laid down for resolution of industrial disputes by various means including decisions of Labour Courts. Right to form trade unions was freely exercised, and for the training and developing managers at different levels engaged in commercial, industrial and services organisations, a Training Centre

- "Management Development Centre" - was established in 1961 which was later on redesignated, with additional authority, as the Bangladesh Institute of Management. Clash of interests between the managers and the workers was there, but this hardly affected the productivity in any industry or the efficiency of the managers.

In the wake of our War of Liberation the situation in economic sphere like in all other spheres of life completely changed. Practically, all the in-

dustries and other commercial concerns were left by their Non-Bengali owners which were then taken over by the Government by the Acting President's Order No. 1 of 1972, and within three months thereafter, banks, industrial enterprises and some of the insurance business were nationalised respectively under President's Orders Nos. 26, 27 and 30 of 1972 by the Government which adopted "Socialism" as one of the State Princi-

To manage such industrial enterprises Administrators were appointed who had practically no competence, skill and efficiency to run them. Instances were there where Storekeepers, Clerical Assistants and Accountants became Managers and General Manager over-night. On the other hand, Trade Unions misunderstood the idea and scope of nationalisation and exceeded their limit, interfered with the Management and started dictating terms on the managers in matters of appointment and promotion of officers and staff besides resorting to frequent strikes and work stoppages.

Both managers and labour leaders adopted corrupt means for self aggrandisement. Com-

bined result of this chaotic situation was the colossal loss in all the enterprises. Now, such loss is estimated at two thousand five hundred crores of taka each year. In these circumstances Policy of Denationalisation or Privatisation has been adopted for the purpose of stopping this financial haemorrhage in the State Exchequer and also for managing the enterprises through Private Sec-

A Privatisation Board has been established but its progress is very slow. Privatisation simply means transfer of both ownership and control of public enterprises from the public sector to private sector; but what is the guarantee that the privatised enterprises will be run properly if their managers are not efficient having character and integrity?

As I have mentioned at the beginning, for the training of managers at all levels engaged in both public and private sector. Bangladesh Institute of Management is there. Half of the trainees therein are drawn from the Public Sector enterprises and the other half from Private Sector and NGOs. The training periods vary from two weeks to one year. Authorities

in both public and private sectors should take full advantage of this Institute for getting their managers trained.

For officers in the banking sector there is a separate Institute — the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management - which is run by a Board of Governors headed by the Governor of the Bangladesh Bank. There is another Institute of this nature the Institute of Industrial Relations at Tongi. Both trade union leaders and managers are given similar training with particular emphasis on Labour Laws relating to resolution of industrial disputes by peaceful means. So far as managers are concerned, the question is who are they, what is the method of their appointment and what is their educational background? Initial requirement of a manager is a good educational background. But the standard of education is very low at all levels in Bangladesh because in the absence of congenial atmosphere in our educational institutions, students pass their examinations by adopting unfair means on large scale. Appointment and promotion of managers are very often politically influenced. Besides there is interference in the Management

leaders and not by bank managers. As there is a race among student leaders to capture halls and hostels for political purpose, so also there is a race among workers to capture the office of Collective Bargaining Agent for the same political purpose. In these circumstances, temporary suspension of trade unionism in bankinginstitutions is being considered

by labour leaders who act as

labour front of political parties.

ing industrial loan is some-

times determined by labour

Eligibility of a person seek-

by the Government. But right to trade unionism is recognised under the ILO Conventions, and in the absence of trade unions the weaker party, namely the workers are likely to be exploited. So trade unionism can not be kept under suspension for a unduly long time. In the interest of economic development, trade unionism should be left to the workers themselves, free from political interference.

The loan defaulters by exercising political power and other unfair means obstruct loan realisation and sometimes managers are "gheraoed" if demand for realisation of bank's dues is pressed. These are the grim facts which must be faced courageously and with co-operation of all persons concerned including political leadership. Just by providing for training in any Institute or delivering sermons efficient Management cannot be developed.

The author is the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The above is a slightly edited version of his speech delivered yesterday at a

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Europe One Month after the World Cup

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Like their super fast TGV trains, the World Champions, the supremely confident French are still walking on air. The Dutch have come to terms with their performance and have moved on. The English are still stuck on David Beckham.

the supremely confident French are still walking on air. The serve Halal food. One that we Dutch have come to terms with sampled, "Khan's" in Bayswater, their performance and have is worth experiencing both for moved on. The English are still its cuisine and ambiance. Gratifyingly, there are large number of young and confident England was our first destination. We had left England Muslim women wearing chic twenty years ago because of Hijab on the streets of London, as well as in Amsterdam and Tory MP (late) Enoch Powell Paris. We were fortunate and the National Front's incessant racist slogans, "Stop Imenough to say our Juma prayer migration, Start Repatriation at London's fabulous Reagent's

Park mosque. To the racist, whether you Twenty years ago, not a single player in the English foothad a doctorate from Oxford did ball league was foreign-born. In not matter; your skin colour the just kicked-off football seadid. In his mind, his paler hue son, 57 nationalities are repremade him instantly superior.

> sented. Foreign star's include Holland's Bergkamp and France's Desailly. One of Britain's concern before it joined the European Union in 1973 was that the non-whites from other EU countries would invade its shores. Surprise! Surprise! With all EU member-countries now having the same passport, WHITE Europeans, with the desire to make a better life in the English-speaking world, have

invaded Britain. They are everywhere, hawking, vending and in hotels and restaurants. The subcontinental children occupy the upper echelon of the British Society, yet maintain their strong link with native culture, including Hindi movies. Of course, Nasser Hussain, England's premier batsman bats at number three, and Mark Ramprakash strengthens England's middle order batting. Other children of subcontinental parents are fine tuning their tal-

ents in the county cricket. We watched England clinch the summer test series by beat-

ing South Africa in the fifth test at Headingly, thanks to Nasser's 90-plus score in the second innings. Bangladeshis do not seem to have done as well as the Indians and Pakistanis.

This is time the subcontinental children grabbed some political power in the UK. Nations require renewal every few decades. Margaret Thatcher transformed the British society in the 1980s and made it ready for the challenges of the new millennium. She took on the British trade unions and destroyed them. She administered bitter medicine to the welfare state in the form of free market reforms. Consequently, Britain is now thriving and

prosperous. The flip side of this is that things are far more expensive in Britain. Hotel rooms (much smaller than in the US), food and transportation are more than twice as expensive as in the USA. People are thinner, smoke much more and indulge far more in public show of affection. The Spice Girls have become mainstream. And the English have not yet forgiven Posh Spice's (she is reportedly pregnant) fiancee.

"We will never forgive you, David Beckham, for destroying our summer", wrote a female columnist in the Times of London. German colleagues that I met said that they were not surprised by Germany's defeat at the hands of Croatia. "If you look back, you will notice that Germany struggled in all previous matches." A Danish colleague explained to me the reason behind Brian Laudrup's film star-like pose after he equalized against Brazil.

With our children we hopped the usual tourist spots -Madame Tussaud's, Big Ben, Westminister Abbey and the Parliament, the changing of the guards at the Buckingham Palace, Tower of London, Mohammed Fayed's Harrods (where there is a memorial to Diana and Dodi), the Royal Observatory at Greenwich (origin of Greenwich Mean Time), Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square etc. In early 1977, we had sampled the only McDonald's restaurant in London— in Piccadilly Circus.

These days, there seems to be one on every High Street. England has become far more Europeanized and as well as Americanized. Retracing our educational roots, we took our children to a day trip to Oxford. Oxford too has changed. To my horror, my very conservative House, Christ Church, has also gone co-ed. Upon introducing myself, the Scouts (attendants) treated me very courteously and addressed me as "Sir", as they

My wife and I visited our laboratories and snapped photographs in front of the Rhodes House. Finally, we visited the track at Iffly Road, where I had run for Oxford as a student. This is the track where Oxford graduate Sir Roger Bannister ran the first sub-four minute mile (3 minutes and 59.4 seconds) in 1954. There is a plaque that commemorates the event.

We flew from Heathrow to Amsterdam on KLM in about 40 minutes. At the airport we bought a "Museum boat" ticket that allows one unlimited oneday trips between Amsterdam's world famous museums, on the exciting glass covered boats. "Anne Frank's Diary" is on my elder son's summer reading list. "Anne Frank Huis" was our first

destination. With Hitler's rise in Germany in the 1930s, Otto Frank relocated his Jewish family in Amsterdam, by the main canal (1942-44). Soon the Nazi followed. Otto Frank hid his family in the attic of the house, which doubled as an office during day time. Little Anne, who wanted to be a writer, recorded the events and her thoughts in a diary. Her neat hand writing is on display in the house. The Franks were betrayed by someone, and the Nazis deported the

We also visited Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum (which features Rembrandt's "Night Watch" and "The Jewish Bride") and Van Gogh museum (200 oil paintings and 600 drawings)

We were familiar with sev-

family to concentration camps.

Only Otto Frank survived. An-

ne's diary, discovered after the

war, became a best seller. The

rooms where the family lived

have been left as they were in

eral of the impressionist master Van Gogh's masterpieces, especially his self-portraits. Although he was to influence such geniuses like Piccaso in his wake, Vincent Van Gogh, who had tried to be a priest, never thought his efforts, from early depiction of peasant's life to later anguished paintings, were going to amount to much, and shet himself to death. Like Venice. Amsterdam is a city of canals. There are 100 miles of man-dug canal in Amsterdam; which are spanned by 800 bridges. The Dutch joke that the 9-feet deep canal has three feet of mud, three feet of water and three feet of bicycles! Indeed, bicycling is a Dutch passion. In a city of 750,000 people representing over 100 nationalities, there are 500,000 bicycles in Amsterdam.

There are also numerous Indian, Indonesian and Middle Eastern restaurants. We felt strange listening to old Hindi

songs while dining in an Ams-

terdam Halal Indian restau-

I asked a shopkeeper why two names are used interchangeably to describe their nation — Holland and the Netherlands. He said that the official name is the Netherlands which consist of two provinces, North Holland and South Holland. We took the train from Amsterdam to Paris. Up to Brussels the train was slow. However, after Brussels it speeded up.

This train and the TGV channel train we took from Paris back to London, run on the magnetic fields. They are so fast that everything nearby is a blur. To make things out, such as the golden arch of McDonald's in the French countryside, one has to look out in the dis-

These trains, very quiet and still, approach 200 miles per hour. Our hotel in Paris was by the 307-meter tall Eiffel Tower (built between 1887-90), which now features an electronic billboard counting down to the new millennium. We took the customary walk on the Champs-Elysees, between Arc de Triomphe and Place de la Concorde One of the pleasures of visiting Paris is to sit in a roadside Caf on the Champs-Elysees, eat croissant and hors d'oeuvres, sip coffee, while watching the people and traffic go by. We were in Paris on August 12. could not help remembering the scene on the same street exactly a month earlier, when the French conquered the sporting world. At the architectural marvel Notre-Dame cathedral (built between 1163-1345), I am always reminded of the hunch back and the temptress that de-

Road distances in France are calculated from the "0 km" point on the square it stands. At the Louvre museum, we paid our respects to Leonardo da Vinci by once again viewing ever-enigmatic Mona Lisa, and Venus de Milo. As we entered a souvenir shop, the first item of merchandise that we were offered was football superstar Zinedine Zidane's T-shirt. We found out that "France 98' Championship T-shirt costs less than the Zidane T-shirts! As the Championne du Monde (Champion of 'the world), France is still basking in the glory of its World Cup victory.

stroyed the priest.

Lo the Editor...

The extremists and the US

Sir. The present stand-off between Islamist terrorists and the US may seem to have deepseated causes. Some of these causes are historical, while others have recent origins. It is not easy to forget the grave injustice done to the Palestinians, following their ouster from their homeland, in which some western powers including the US had roles. The subsequent history of conquest of Arab lands by Israel and the weakkneed policy of the US have all seemed to compound in creating widespread frustration among the affected people in those lands, spawning terrorist attitudes in some of them. The terrorist attacks carried out from time to time by Palestinian extremists in Israel and its occupied areas are apparently reflections of the deep frustration

The recent causes of frustration in other areas relate to the half-hearted and dilatory policies of the western powers including the US in tackling the Bosnian crisis which resulted in the killing and persecution of thousands of Bosnian Muslims. The latest instance is the Kosovo crisis. Inspite of the initial firm stand of the US, the province of Kosovo, where 92 per cent of the population are Muslims, came under brutal attacks of Serb forces, forcing thousands of them to flee their homes and the western powers including the US followed the path of dithering and so far failed to effectively tackle the

of the Palestinians.

In this scenario, the activities of the Islamist extremists.

though extremely reprehensible and deserving condemnation, may look like desperate outbursts of anger at the supine policies of the US when Islamist causes are at stake.

A. S. M. Nurunnabi 29, Dhanmondi R/A, Rd#1 Dhaka.

Let's forget our dreams

Sir, I think each and every citizen of Bangladesh gets confused in their lifetime to some degree by their elected government. Truly indeed one thing we did achieve — the independence, and that is all. For people like us the dream was a little different before the independence.

We thought that the rights would be set forth for us, justice would be prevailed, and above all government would work for the interest of the common citizens? But alas! what is happening now? Every party sends out a strong signal to the common people about their steps to be taken once they are elected and look after the wellbeing of the common people.

But once they get elected they just forget their bunch of promises and nothing interests them more than protecting their own interests. And we see the same faces everyday in the cabinet preoccupied with praising the present government even though the government is no longer the same.

Where is the dignity of those people who wear different masks to blame the previous government they had served before? Where is the hope that the corruption will come to an end? As long as the attitude remains the same for the power-hungry people, there are no hopes for us — and let's forget the Sonar Bangla dream

Md. Alam USA

Flood and the preparedness

Sir, The recent flood has brought an unprecedented suffering to the people. Those who are directly affected by the flood have no end of the misery. We in Bangladesh have been facing the natural and man-made calamities for centuries. The people of the delta have the courage and ability to overcome such crisis but their comes a time when this resilience gives in and despair sets in. How much more do our people have

to take before they can smile? Once the floodwater begins to recede we are going to have to rebuild everything that the mother nature has crushed down. Are we prepared to do that? In a situation such as this, whether we like it or not. we have to seek out assistance from others. In this situation, I can't but condemn those who so vehemently opposed the exit! SOFA/HANA agreement. This was a situation where we could have used the assistance of the

Are they floating in the knee-deep floodwater? Akku Chowdhury Banani, Dhaka.

United States in the disaster

management. Where are those

patriots who opposed this assis-

OPINION

Dr Sabrina Q Rashid

Yell at ZIA

We have only one international airport and we feel quite proud when we check in and walk into the departure lounge and then up to the plane, or when we land and walk into it. That is as long as we are inside it, it is more or less up to the international standard in arrangements and cleanliness.

But once you step out, with your luggage and all. You are in for a shock. Everything is in total chaos. The porters almost force their services upon you. You see hundreds of faces staring at you expectantly. For, each face with its pair of eyes is searching for his dear one, whom he has come to receive. The system is awful, for among these sea of faces you have to search out the face of your dear one, whom you expect to be there to receive you. There is a very big chance of you missing that particular face or he missing yours among hundreds of faces coming out of one single

Even if he catches sight of you or you do of his face (as that is all which is visible of the waiting persons!). The only way for you two is to yell at each other and then hundreds of faces will turn towards you expectantly! What a strange way of being received.

In Haethrow, which is the

world's busiest airport, with one plane landing every half

minute! (so I was told). When you step out through the exit you walk in straight into the arms of your dear ones! The feeling is terrific, after a long arduous journey and lots of expectations. It is really incredible how they have made such a wonderful arrangement with hundreds of thousands of people coming in and going out of the huge airport. How come our relatives were standing right at the exit with no sea of people around them (as it happens at ZIA)? I think they have multiple exits and not one as at ZIA.

Why don't our airport management staff go there and find out how they run such a busy airport so smoothly and efficiently. Seeing to the passengers as well as the receivers convenience.

Next if you can't find your dear ones face inside the building, you step out into the open space. Here first of all a gush of extremely hot air will welcome you. The glass on top of this open space seems to have a greenhouse affect, trapping intense heat inside it! Again a sea of faces outside the fenced area. How can you find amongst them

the face that you are longing to see, so much by now! For the distance between you two is 50 feet or more.

So all you can do is walk up to the fence and the gate and search the faces, for your person's. At last! there he is , trying hard among a sea of people and cars to draw your attention. waving his arms frantically, his voice hoarse with shouting your name and from arguing with the guards to open up the gate, so that he can drive in to receive you and load your bags and baggage. But, the guards won't open! For the space inside is already jammed with cars. Even if their passengers haven't arrived or they don't even know when they will, but they are sitting there occupying the precious space!

So this is our country. Indecipline everywhere starting from the airport. Why can't they have a system of announcing on the microphone for the car whose passenger has already arrived and waiting. So that the passengers are quickly collected by their cars and leave the precious limited space. If this doesn't work they should learn how other airports manage such problems and thus solve ours, saving the passengers from this misery after a long tiring journey.