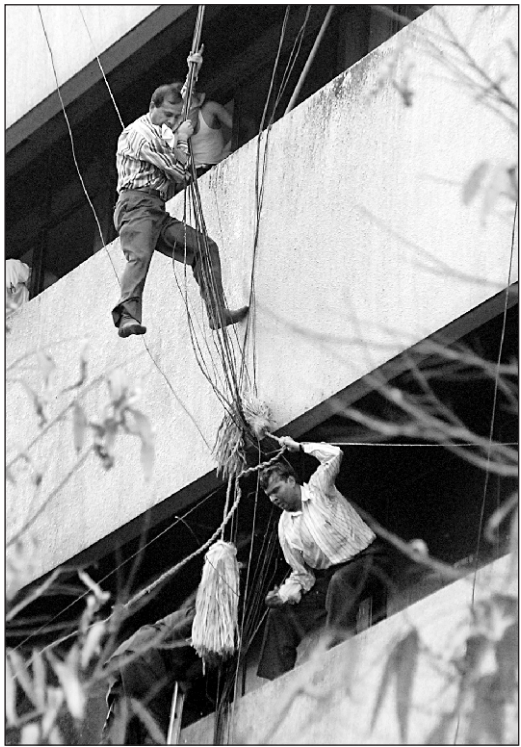


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



No emergency escape

Thanks to Mr. Tawfique Ali for the article "City high-rises ignore emergency escapes" (DS, 5th March, 2007). The article pointed out some of the gross violations of the fire safety code in buildings. I quite agree with the comments put forward by the architects, engineers and the fire service officials. From the article, we learned that the fire safety code already exists in the building construction rules. However, the officials do not have the necessary manpower to enforce the code. And manpower increase in a government-run organisation would not occur overnight. What are our alternatives then? In my opinion, the print and the electronic media should try to raise awareness among public by frequently publishing or

broadcasting ads that teach them about building safety. We are sure the BSEC building lacked fire-fighting equipment and had no proper fire escape routes. We should all look at ourselves and think what we can do to avert such incidents in our own buildings. We cannot bulldoze all the buildings and rebuild them, so we should seek expert opinion on how to improve the fire-safety of each building. DS can take the first step in this matter and set an example.

I'd also like to add something that all the architects you interviewed failed to mention: the use of glass as a partition is deadly in case of a fire. The glasses used as sliding doors etc. in Bangladeshi buildings would easily explode or break if the fire in a room reaches a

certain level, causing splinter injuries, even death. In western countries, doors are usually made of fire-resistant materials and partition glasses are wire-glasses which would crack, but not break (like car windshield). It is important that our media point these out and play a role in educating people about them. Also, as a fire warden myself, I cannot stress enough the importance of frequent fire drills in every commercial building.

Fire causes panic, and panic itself can kill. Fire drills help reduce this panic, and save lives.

Himu Hasnat
Student Hall Warden
London Metropolitan University, UK

ing their established procedure practiced successfully for so long to a lesser or greater extent! On the subject of tender, I wonder why do not we tender out the governance of Bangladesh through transparent open bidding. The various political parties will set up the terms and conditions of tender; like taxation and revenue generation, aids and grant mobilisation, also development and revenue expenditures (not forgetting their trickle down fund component), and present it for normal adult franchise. The parties will explain to the masses, who are not so well versed in economic models about their proposals, and the people will vote instead of individuals the parties whose programme seems to be the best. For this tender, the party shall pay the national exchequer costs of tender documents, earnest money and irrevocable performance bonds, which can probably finance the balloting process. The best party's proposal voted by the people will then nominate their ministers and MPs, to carry on for five years. Dare we try this out for one experimental term? It will be no worse than our past ten years of politically managed trickle down of national wealth. May be it's worth a try; if not anything it will be the mother of all tenders.

A curious citizen
On e-mail

NGO sector

After the liberation war many people of Bangladesh and abroad came up with ideas to reconstruct the ruined country, save people's lives and help the citizens of the new country survive. Some of them started working independently and some of them under various organisational banners, but both approaches were aimed at helping the country through relief and rehabilitation interventions, distributing relief goods and reconstructing infrastructure. In that decade the main international organisations included the UN organisations, CARE International, Oxfam, Caritas, World Vision, and Concern, and national organisations included the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB). As far as I know Brac also started working in that decade on a small scale. At that time there were no good organisational structures and there was no programme to develop professionals' capacity, as the organisations worked to respond to the immediate crisis.

In the decade of the 1980s, many new national NGOs were also established, and started working with the aim to help people and empower them for the overall development of the country. In this decade, micro-credit programmes were also introduced by Brac, Grameen Bank, and some other organisations on a large scale. Many organisations' interventions were multifaceted, and included programmes such as health, education, credit, and agri-livestock through which they supported people to shape their own destiny.

The development concept encompassed the enhancement of people's potential and in this decade, relief and rehabilitation programmes were being withdrawn slowly in favour of programmes that built self-reliance. Some social scientists explained that development should start from potentialities which are inherited by the people, and a number of social scientists joined the development journey and started to develop human resources. Some significant training institutions were also established in this time, based on the concept of building people's potential.

Many organisations also undertook many efforts to build staff capacity to run their programmes effectively and efficiently. It is true that many good organisations had a large budget to build the capacity of staff through training, both in-country and abroad. Many potential

Child workers in hazardous occupations

In Bangladesh, out of the economically active children about 3.2 million are employed in various farm and non-farm sectors. Of those, 2.4 million and 0.8 million are employed in rural and urban areas respectively.

Generally, all types of child labour obstruct schooling, socialization process, and physical and mental development of the children. But there are some forms of child labour which are more harmful and detrimental than others. A little more than 40 percent of total child workers are engaged in these hazardous jobs in Bangladesh.

It is significant to note that hazardous child labour is unacceptable and deserves immediate attention and resource allocation to address it. A quick and simple attempt has been made to identify the child workers engaged in various hazardous occupations. Researchers, development experts, government and NGOs have identified more than 34 worst forms of child labour which are treated as hazardous for child workers. The extremely hazardous occupations for the child workers in Bangladesh include: 1) Welding workers 2) Bus/tempo

helpers 3) Engineering workshop assistants 4) Blacksmiths 5) Brick breakers 6) Electricians 7) Gas burner mechanics 8) Construction workers 9) Salt factory workers 10) Tannery workers etc.

Child labour is the result of vulnerable socio economic condition. There are sev-

eral major cases of involvement of child workers in hazardous jobs-- acute poverty, death of bread earners etc.

The issue deserves a closer look as it is a major threat to children in Bangladesh.

Sharmin Rashid
Uttara, Dhaka



staff also obtained degrees abroad to build their own capacity. The training programmes were mainly management and programme related. It is worth noting that the NGOs' training programme was huge, and more than any other sector, and it is true that no one can go without training in his or her relevant field in this sector, something which is rarely found in the other sectors.

In the 1990s, a lot of NGOs had grown up, and the NGO sector became one of the biggest sectors in the country.

After September 11, the flow of donors' fund decreased and an invisible crisis was observed and many international organisations had no funds to run their programmes, and they started seeking funding from a number of other different sources, which was not always successful. It is also true that many projects, as well as many organisations, became the victim of politicizing.

As there were no funds, there were no projects or programmes, and many skilled and efficient people became the victim of redundancy and unemployment. This situation continues till today, and currently there are many unemployed professionals who are well conversant in Bangla and English, who have the capacity to run any kind of office and join in with any organisational culture, but they still remain jobless.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that these unemployed NGO professionals can be seen either as an untapped resource, or as a burden for the nation.

These resources should be used for the best interest of the state. Because we know that there are many people in Bangladesh but the question is that how many are skilled and competent?

Mozammel Haque Neogi

On e-mail

CU students' demand

I have read with interest Professor M. Zahidul Haque's (Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka) letter to the editor on the subject. The

letter appeared recently in a number of dailies. Professor Haque supported the demand of the students of the department of

journalism of Chittagong University for placing it (the department) under the social science faculty. It is fine. The demand appears to be relevant, reasonable and time-sensitive in many respects. Let us keep our fingers crossed.

Interestingly, Professor Haque's observation on emerging nature and dimensions of the subject - I mean, communication and journalism - is praiseworthy. He was successful in identifying, among other things, evolving faces of the subject that represent interconnectivities it is currently enjoying with other academic disciplines ranging from "agriculture to medicine".

The time is ripe now for world people to initiate and support the process of BMR (balancing, modernization and rehabilitation) in areas of

knowledge and its application at local, national, regional and global levels. An underlying assumption here is: an all out effort towards knowledge reforms could eventually be instrumental in the establishment and

operationalisation of a 'new' knowledge order in the foreseeable future.

In fine, we wish the students of Chittagong University all the best in their above and other good endeavours.

Dr. M. S. Haq
Dhaka

Televise trials

I was astonished to read about the level of corruption that the ministers of the immediate past government indulged in. No wonder, Bangladesh was branded as the most corrupt country in the world.

Such a reputation has destroyed our image around the world.

We are relieved to see that the interim government is taking action to punish these culprits. We want to observe the judicial process against them live. I demand, on behalf of all Bangladeshis, these trials be televised live.

I also demand that each victim of these corrupt people be allowed to speak during the trials. It will not only give us the appreciation of our judicial system but will also warn future criminals.

Mohammed Rashed, On e-mail

Looking forward

The situation in our county changed from the day when the new caretaker government took office. I think people will agree with me on the point that we are better placed now.

As citizens we expect the betterment of our country. The new caretaker government is on the right track and we can look forward to a bright future.

Md. Rajibul Hasan
Dept. of English, Islamic University, Kushtia

Ensure good governance

The EC, Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) and other constitutional bodies have already been reshuffled or going to be reconstituted. The EC has taken the decision to introduce transparent ballot boxes, to update the voter list and other necessary steps to make inactive the politically appointed field level EC officials. Meanwhile, the AL president urged

the government to hold the polls within June and to transfer power to elected representatives.

I think the government should clear the garbage and create the conditions for good governance before holding the election.

MAH Nazim
Dept. of Political Science
University of Dhaka

Be courteous

As a society take everything for granted from the people who work under us, especially domestic helps, drivers, peons, and guards. We need to eradicate this attitude. Every individual should be treated with respect. It is never too late to teach ourselves how to be respectful. Go ahead and try to say please and thank you to your domestic help or driver. See how you feel. More importantly, see how they feel. You are recognising them as a person and you are grateful for their service. Along with changing our attitude, we should teach our children to say please and thank you and treat each and every individual with respect.

Fuad Wadud, USA

Good decisions

Commuting within Dhaka city is getting worse day by day and creating havoc for us. We welcome the decision taken by the local government adviser to shift Kamalapur Station to Tongi and the flyover from Panthapath to Gulshan, and to remove the Foara in front of Sonargaon Hotel (Daily Prothom Alo, 6 March 2007). Also, mandatory driving licence for rickshaw-pullers and blue book for each rickshaw will help reduce traffic jam.

We hope the decisions will be implemented in right earnest.

Walul Islam

On e-mail

Phasing out rickshaws

I am no moron as to suggest the withdrawal of rickshaws from the city overnight. I am aware of the hardships and the sufferings that these poor rickshaw-pullers shall have to undergo. At the same time, we should not forget that the profession is one of the most arduous on earth. In this hi-tech age, the slow moving rickshaws simply pull backwards all our endeavours. Extremely time consuming, rickshaws are responsible for the severe traffic congestion. It takes hours to reach Motijheel & Dilkusha-the commercial hub of the country or even Sadarghat-the water front of the capital. As an alternative, rickshaws may be gradually phased out from the city streets in the next

couple of years. This would allow the rickshaw-pullers time to find alternative jobs. Initially, they may be allowed to ply in the lanes and by-lanes. The withdrawal of the rickshaws have resulted in marked improvement in the traffic movements in Elephant Road and Mirpur Road.

I would suggest, as the first step, rickshaws be phased out from Gulshan, Banani, Motijheel & Dilkusha, Bangla Motor to Malibagh. As an alternative, more and more maxis should be introduced (like the jeeps in the Philippines).

The present CTG has already taken some epoch making decisions. I am sure the authorities concerned will rise to the occasion and take the bold step to minimise the sufferings of the common people and get rid of this inhuman profession once and for all.

Shamim Ahmed

On e-mail

Allotment of residential plots

I refer to the news-item, captioned "Construction of residential plots for government officers" published with three photographs on the last page of a Bangla daily on 24-02-2007.

It may be mentioned here that the area near Kalatali of Cox's Bazar Sea beach is an important site for deposit of valuable minerals, Black Gold worth millions of dollars. We are very much surprised and shocked how and why the

Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the district administration of Cox's Bazar have allowed the allotment of residential plots for the government officials in the mineral deposits site.

The authorities concerned may kindly look into the matter and take necessary action.

OH Kabir

Wari, Dhaka

Mother of all tenders!

Shahnoor Wahid's satirical article on the subject lucidly described tender process manipulation by politicians as an established route to wealth. But what is wrong, if our MPs adopt this novel way of trickle down of wealth from the top. I remember hearing an eminent economist in some training programme overseas of the capitalist theory of trickling down national wealth from the top down. It is possibly one way to make everyone rich! And what better way than to start from your immediate family, then uncles and nephews followed by in-laws and outlaws? If every minister and MP practices this, then soon we may have around three crore families basking in affluence! Small wonder our ex-PM insists that there is nothing wrong in her way of this excellent practice of making everyone wealthy! After all her MPs followed her guidelines; and more often than not, exceeded the target of wealth redistribution! This is the reason why the established political stalwarts do not need new entrants like Dr. Yunus derail-

Dhaka needs a more thoughtful solution to solve the chronic traffic problems. One of the pragmatic solutions, I would rather say the only solution, is to start thinking of building mass transit monorail which could be built along the middle of the road network mixed with underground routes.

Providing flyover from Rajarbagh to Panthapath will diminish the opportunity of making mass transit, and as a result, the persistent traffic jam will remain the same at the other two ends of the flyover. This will eventually build up another traffic chaos which will even be more difficult to solve or to alter as seen in the case of Mohakhali flyover. I urge the decision makers to seek proper suggestion from local or overseas traffic planners and work out a detailed traffic plan for a long term solution.

Many times in various public forums and in the newspapers,

the importance of mass transit monorail has been reiterated. Even various foreign investors had BOT (Build Operate Transfer) proposal forwarded to the government but these were not considered seriously. As Dhaka city has reached a mega-city status with growing urban complexities in the built environment and transport networking, further delay in implementing mass transit monorail would accelerate degradation of city life where social, physical and economic losses will be enormous.

We have expertise, knowledge and opportunities. Please do not underutilize these assets to solve the city's basic problem!

Dr. Q M Mahtab-uz-Zaman
Associate Professor
Department of Architecture
BRAC University



Billboards in Dhaka



One can easily name Dhaka city as the "City of hoardings and billboards". At Gulshan, emergence of indiscriminate structures of hoardings and billboards has turned the area into a most ugly looking one. Every day new hoardings are coming up in many places to the great annoyance of the city dwellers. To the DCC only commercial consideration matters. Environment, beauty etcetera have no place in their dictionary. It is generally believed that corruption from top to bottom are rampant in DCC in allocating spaces for these hoardings.

At the time of expansion of the roads in front of the

Sheraton Hotel recently, the structures of the existing hoardings were removed to the great relief of the city dwellers raising their expectations for a more beautiful city sans those obnoxious billboards and hoardings. But to their utter disappointment, new structures have again emerged in the area.

Earlier it was suggested to DCC to convert this area, previously used for parking of Sheraton Hotel, into a green park to be maintained with the assistance of Sheraton Hotel after removal of the advertisement structures. This would certainly enhance the beauty of the

area situated at such a prominent place besides improving the free flow of air in the city. But the DCC did not pay any heed to the proposition and the area is again cluttered with odd looking large billboards and hoardings.

Such hoardings could be conveniently shifted and relocated outside the city on different highways as being practised in other parts of the world. Is there no authority in the country who could save the city dwellers from the curses of hoardings and billboards?

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
On e-mail