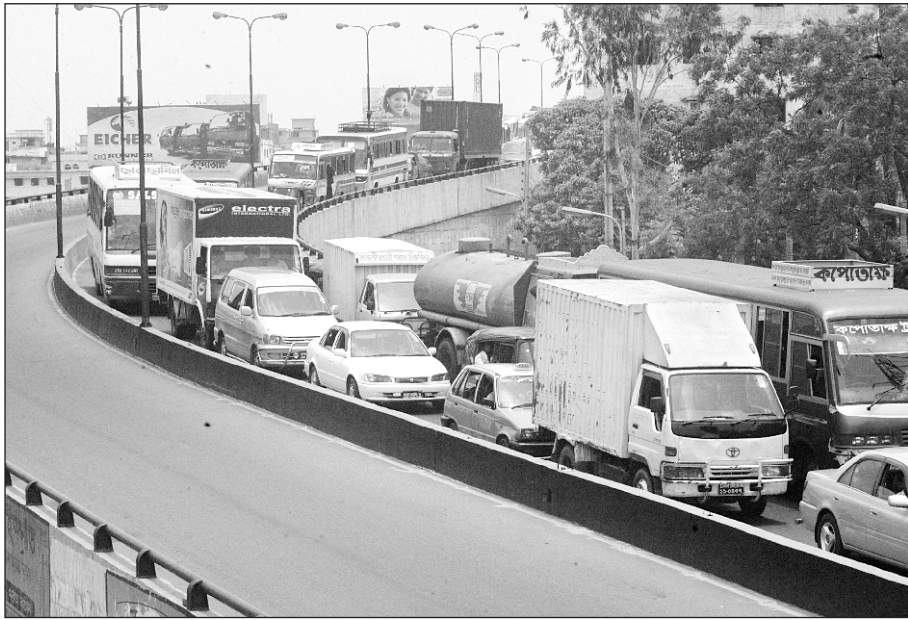


Strategic Transport Plan



We hope that the STP worth \$5.2billions will be approved as soon as possible and works will start for its completion in 10 years, and not 20 years. We have wasted four decades in numerous studies, studies and studies costing millions and millions of dollars to the public exchequer and have got nothing. Since the consultants were selected based on their pre-qualification, hence let's give

support to their recommendations and make it better, as I indicated above, make it happen in 10 years instead of 20. Let's not do away with all the consultant's jobs and go on and on with endless studies without any development. Yes, we need both technological and heavy infrastructure development and also environmental safety. If we look at the developed countries, no

infrastructures have been built ignoring the environment and people. Hence, we assume that the STP consultants have not recommended something ignoring the people and the environment. However, it is possible to have 150 million opinions of 150 million people of Bangladesh. We appreciate the different opinions, but now we should get the job started and finished as soon as possible. We hope and trust that the CTG and the cabinet will approve the STP and make additional plans to mitigate environmental concerns of BAPA.

I personally do not support rickshaws or push-carts and other means of non-mechanised transport on the city streets, however environment-friendly those might be. Two important points mentioned in your report on STP, viz., the development of the circular waterway and making the current city trains more frequent and efficient can be done separately by the BIWTA and the railways independent of the STP programme. These two issues should not hold up the implementation of the STP which envisages metro rail, elevated express ways etc., as these are very important for all of us.

Qamruddin Chowdhury
One-mail

now love one of the late leaders, from the core of my heart. But now I hate myself for supporting the lady, without an iota of knowledge about her deviations.

The caretaker govt. is trying to bring the culprits to book. For doing so if our so-called democratic right is violated, we welcome that. We don't want any more molestation by these democrats, neither we support the way our teachers are trying to draw the battle line.

Manna
One-mail

What next?

Sk. Mujib inspired us to fight for independence, Zia showed us the path of economy to follow.

ErsHAD/Khaleda/Hasina taught us how to indulge in corruption, and what next?

Dr. Majumder
Darmstadt, Germany

Child labour

I would like to congratulate Shatabdi (Rajshahi) for writing on child labour. It is really sad to see such young children being employed for heavy works, which is a complete violation of human rights.

The present caretaker government and the civil society should take necessary steps to stop child labour.

Peter J. Rebeiro
Indira road Farmgate, Dhaka

Ayub Khan's diary

President Ayub Khan's diary currently being serialized in both Bangla and English newspapers draws the attention especially of the old timers for a very patent reason -- they are witness to the events narrated in the diary. One may however differ with the narratives, but the virtues of such personalised enterprise, -- even if it were not beautifully observant and wholly unpretentious -- need not be undervalued for it contributes in good measure to our understanding of time-events to construct history. The episodes that have found mention in the diary apart, I could not help recollect a 'non-event' of President Ayub Khan even after decades now. The venue was the Darling Point, an elegant two-storied building on Green Road, a quiet, middle-class neighbourhood in the provincial city of Dhaka where Mr. Habibur Rahman, a central minister was hosting a private lunch for President Ayub Khan, Amir of Kalabagh, Governor, West Pakistan and Abdul Monem Khan, Governor, East Pakistan. In the interlude before lunch, the guests were chatting in the verandah when, in an aside, the host's daughter emerged and approached the President for his autograph before the other guests. The President readily agreed, he asked for a pen. But none on the table could help. I volunteered my pen. Much to the delight of the host's daughter, the autograph book, euphemistically speaking, weighed heavier with all the signatures of the key figures presiding over nation's destiny. I too gained in the fact that my time-worn Parker pen anointed with history had acquired the status of a memento. For long, I kept it with care before I lost it so sadly. Over the decades, the non-event translates into an episode.

The accompanying photograph records the Chief Martial Law Administrator Ayub Khan's impromptu press interview at the tarmac of the Tejgaon airport in 1958. Among other journalists present were Abdul Wahab, Syed Jafar Ali, Nizamuddin Ahmad, M.R.Akhtar, Syed Asaduzzaman, S.G.M. Badaruddin, Wahid Kaiser and public relations officials Syed Sadequr Rahman, Abdul Matin and Syed Badrul Haque (writer).

Syed Badrul Haque
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Sponsoring space visitor's US trip

This is great news for all Bangladeshis that for the first time Rafiqul as a representative of Bangladeshi students is going to visit space! This news has been released by different newspapers and TV channels in Bangladesh and all over the world.

We came to know from the daily Bhorer Kagoj that the transportation cost for his visit to the US could not be arranged yet. We all Bangladeshi students here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada are proud of Rafiqul. Bangladeshi Students' Association (BSA) Inc, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada cordially wants to take the great responsibility of sponsoring the trip.

We are waiting for the quick response from those arranging Rafiqul's visit to the US.

Md. Asadul Islam
General Secretary Bangladesh Students' Association (BSA) Inc Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Community police

I am an expatriate--a USA citizen--who has lived and worked now in Bangladesh for over 25 years. Today I



CORRUPTION

It is very much true that the whole nation got fed up with the politicians because most of them were involved directly or indirectly in corruption, extortion and destructive politics. Even the party man also has no trust in his leaders. We were moving in a ship whose captain did not know where to go?

Considering these facts, we welcomed the present government and the huge expectation was that this government would create a good atmosphere and develop some mechanism so that the corrupt would be eliminated from the political arena.

But it is surprising to us that from the very beginning the present government is focusing on many issues and we understand that their

main goal is yet to be fixed. It will be suicidal if the government fails to hold a credible election.

Finally, it is my earnest request to all, please try to convince the government to focus on one issue and be rational. It is impossible to remove corruption from all spheres of life within a day or month. You can develop a mechanism/system so that it can be rooted out through a gradual process systematically.

We are unlucky that most of our political leaders and business tycoons are corrupt and they didn't maintain a minimum standard of ethics and values. But we can't afford to put all businessmen and corrupt leaders in jail or hang them.

Engr. Abdul Matin Miazi
Tejgaon, Dhaka

Musharraf's predicament

The army general turned president, Pervez Musharraf, is increasingly finding himself in troubled water after retaining both the coveted positions of the powerful army chief and President of Pakistan for more than eight years, despite constant public uproar and criticism. His recent stunt to remove the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on charges of corruption and nepotism backfired like a hell which not only exposed his evil desire to cling onto power by maiming the judiciary, but it also put him in a tight corner and finally forced him to change his decision and reinstate the chief justice. On the other hand, the hard core Muslim fundamentalists are waging a full-fledged armed demonstration to turn Pakistan into an Islamic republic and impose Shari'a laws. Meanwhile, to play down the home turmoil, Pervez Musharraf flew to the UAE and Saudi Arabia to drum up support in his favour in the upcoming general election. However, that too backfired. During his secret meeting with former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, Ms. Bhutto said that no deal could be inked with Musharraf until he hanged up his military uniform. Furthermore, Ms. Bhutto is also skeptical about whether Pervez Musharraf will allow her to return to Pakistan and contest for the third time in the upcoming election. It is also learnt that senior army generals have advised the president to quit the post of the army chief to avoid further embarrassment. This entire adverse situation may have



posed a predicament to Pervez Musharraf.

One thing which is very clear to all is that the army-led government cannot retain state power for long. Power must be returned to the people.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka

US invasion



It must be clear to all, including those like myself who supported the US military invasion of Iraq hoping that Americans would quickly withdraw after toppling Saddam Hussein, that the US occupation of Iraq is at the root of the catastrophe in that country. As for bringing democracy, US President George W. Bush has failed to realise that democracy cannot be imposed on any people by military means. It must grow from within and over a long period of time. His contention that the American occupation of post-war Germany brought democracy is without any basis. Germany was a democracy before the war; the German people themselves elected Hitler. In fact, Hitler was an example how a democratically elected leader could turn against other democracies when it suited him.

Instead of bringing democracy, the US occupation has stoked the sectarian conflict in Iraq. The once-dominant Sunni

minority hate the Americans because of their ouster from power. The now-dominant Shiite majority, especially the supporters of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, are hostile because they think the US is not allowing them to impose Shiite Islamic rule. Although the al-Qaeda was not present before the US invasion, terrorists have now joined the war against the Americans in Iraq. As former US Senator and 1972 Democratic candidate for president, George McGovern, so correctly pointed out in Harper's Magazine a year ago: "Iraq has become, since the invasion, the primary recruiting and training ground for terrorists. The longer the American troops remain in Iraq, the more recruits will flood the ranks of those who oppose America not only in Iraq but elsewhere."

Or, as James Fearon, professor of political science at Stanford University, recently wrote: "If the US troops stay,

there will be an ineffective continuation of what we've already seen, without getting to a peaceful Iraq that could stand alone. If they go, there could be a gradual intensification for power among the Shiites, increasing splits in the army and police ... and tribal leaders fighting al-Qaeda on the Sunni side."

However, of the two unattractive alternatives, the continued American military presence is the worse. If the United States continues to occupy Iraq, only more Americans will pay with their lives while sectarian violence will spiral out of control. American military intervention has destroyed Iraq and only the US military withdrawal may bring about some kind of understanding among disparate Iraqi groups. By trying to impose democracy at gunpoint, President George W. Bush has proved to be the worst enemy of democracy in the world at large.

Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

Disheartening

Finally, my apprehension has been proved right. I used to share with my family and friends that the present anti-corruption drive of the caretaker govt. would soon lose its momentum. However, I was not sure as to from which direction it would start. I am fully taken aback that the teachers of the highest educational institution of the country have started the so-called campaign to safeguard democracy. However, I am not fully surprised because the institutions these days always boast of not their educational feats, but of their contribution to different political movements. It is not an affront rather an eerie disappointment to hear what we hear from the custodians of our conscience. What is more intriguing is the promptness with which the student wings of different political parties have echoed their support for the movement. What an unholy nexus on the heels of the caretaker govt's effort to stop politics in educational institutions. They are now trying to capitalize on the sentiments of the ignorant political goons of the major political parties.

I was myself a great admirer of one of the two ladies before 1/11 and still

Ms Ishrat Jahan (Shuravi)
Ms Naoreen Sabah (Shiuli)
Gulshan, Dhaka

DU teachers' protest

This comes to me as a great shock when I see a group of teachers wearing black badges on the university campus to express their political views.

Recent occurrences following the arrest of the top leader of one of the biggest political parties are not surprising. But what is surprising is the participation of university teachers in it. It is not new that the teachers protest all kind of highhandedness. Teachers did it many times with a sense of responsibility. These acts are taken very seriously among the common people.

What message are they delivering to those people by wearing black badges and boycotting classes? Two things are very clear from that act--these teachers are politically biased and they do not want to see the other side of the coin behind this arrest. Teachers participate in their own elections in different colour panels, probably not the worst thing in the world, but unfortunately in recent years those colors are over-coated by the party colours. So how does a student expect a fair view from his teacher?

Another thing, if we look at the cadre system in our country - lots of people involved in it are directly or indirectly sheltered by the student wings of the major political parties based in our universities and colleges. On top of that, if the teachers politicise the campus (not to say that they shouldn't or can't have their own political views) - the cadres in a sense get support from them too. Unfortunately, it happened in the past in our educational arena.

Lessons we learnt in those 36 years by being hostage to our political systems are not very pleasant and any change in the positive direction should be appreciated by any educated people. And the teachers are not just "any people".

Sarowar Sikder
Senior Software Engineer Hewlett-Packard Inc. Dallas, USA

Biman is, first, put on a sound financial footing. Unfortunately, turning Biman into a PLC will not help.

Biman has a huge debt and is in arrears with many creditors: for example, it owes the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) for overdue fuel bills. On top of that, Biman will need a multi-million dollar capital infusion to implement Mr. Qamruddin's suggestions, especially the purchase of new aircraft, which Biman desperately needs. Where is this money going to come from?

What the government needs to do about Biman is to sell a controlling interest (51%), or just give it away, assuming the new owners will pay down the debt. Once the debt is cleared off the books, the airline will need to be right-sized, which means laying off thousands of workers Biman has accumulated over the years. If the government can shutter jute mills and lay off thousands of workers without blinking an eye, why not Biman?

In addition, new owners must instill a new corporate culture in Biman that will turn it into a world-class airline. Coupled with new aircraft, a new vision, Biman will be looked at with awe, not derision as it is now.

Niraj Agarwalla
Randolph MA

Very good coaching, professionalism and patience are needed. The players attempt to score boundaries and sixes of every ball! That can't work!

M. Allem
One-mail

BAU

BAU, a renowned public university in South Asia, has a great impact on Bangladesh agriculture as well as its economy. The important thing to say about this university is that there is no session jam in any faculty, while it is a common malady in most of the public universities. I would like to thank the university administration for this. Students also deserve credit as they fully cooperate with the authorities to run the semester system smoothly.

However, the decent campus environment is now polluted by pornographic CDs and DVDs which are now available aplenty.

The university authorities should look into the matter.

Students
Faculty of Agriculture Bangladesh Agricultural University

Comments on Biman

In his letter ("Biman PLC - some suggestions," July 27), Mr. Qamruddin makes some excellent suggestions on making Biman Bangladesh a viable airline. But it is all for naught unless