



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.

Parliamentary election

In our parliamentary elections, a candidate can contest from three seats. It was five in the past. What a world we are living in that we have a shortage of candidates, and so a person has to contest for more than one seat. I don't get the point--keeping the number of corrupt politicians as small as possible?

Mahmudul Hasan
Engineer, Texas Instruments, USA

Traffic management

I went out to pick up some Eid items the other day and noticed a number of things contributing to our Eid traffic problem:

1. All the five traffic policemen that I went past on my journey were on their mobile phones and not bothering with regulating traffic flow.
2. There is a big problem with supermarkets and stores that were built with inadequate parking, or the owners sold the designated parking space to maximise earnings.
3. Restaurants have closed their parking areas to make a fast-track outdoor buying system for Eid purchasers while keeping their restaurants open too - which cannot be hygienic as I see no fridges outside!
4. Beggars have increased tenfold slowing down traffic (with the traffic police sitting nearby).

5. Schools are open in inappropriate places in residential areas with no parking and no adequate roads and no school bus system, causing terrible jam.

To add insult to injury, I see the resumption of construction of a market in Banani which was earmarked in the master plan as a parking lot and was previously closed pending investigation. I also saw commercial offices and banks previously operating without commercial permission continuing business as usual, sometimes in residential areas. Any way, once again we must brace ourselves for an Eid traffic nightmare as a result of bad policy making, corruption and inadequate and uneven enforcement of the law. At the very least, the government should let stores remain open till late night during this month to reduce daytime traffic.

S. Shawkat
Gulshan, Dhaka

Tsunami scare

A wave of panic engulfed the nation on 12 September night when the Indonesia earthquake prompted the weather department to issue a tsunami warning. Thousands of people in coastal regions moved towards the town. In a country just recuperating from flood, the tsunami would have been a big disaster, to say the least.

No one can possibly forget the Indian Ocean Tsunami that ravaged

the coasts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and several other countries in 2004. Tsunami is basically the creation of destructive waves triggered by underwater earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other underwater explosions, landslides, large meteorite impacts and testing of nuclear weapons at sea all these have the potential to generate a tsunami. The waves may rise hundreds of feet and their devastating speed can generate enough momentum to crush coastal settlements.

Our country is in a bit safer position because it is a delta. Moreover, the slope of the coast at Cox's Bazaar from land to 300 feet at sea has a very low gradient. Massive waves are unlikely at shallow water. However, that does not guarantee protection from tsunami.

The coast along with the fishing and business vessels are under threat. The weather department should be constantly vigilant. By developing better communication, building higher shelters, and ensuring swift evacuation, we may alleviate the consequences.

Ananya Das
Cephalon International
East Basaboo, Dhaka

The shackled tiger?

The well known 'Golden Bengal' was one of the richest regions on earth, famous for 'Muslin'-- the luxurious fabric, precious jewellery, silk, spices, jute and tea. It was the

goose that laid golden eggs which lured 'traders' from all around the world who turned into 'rulers'. It had far greater economic, intellectual and cultural excellence than the rest of India which gave birth to the 'Bengal Renaissance' starting with Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the 18th century. Bengal was the birthplace of numerous notable intellectuals including Tagore, the first Asian Nobel laureate in 1913 for 'Geetanjali', Physicist Sir J.C. Bose, pioneer of radio and micro-wave optics investigation in 1895 and Chemist P. C. Roy, founder of 'Bengal Chemicals' and discoverer of medicinal compounds using cattle bones in 1896.

India was a very bitter pill to swallow for the British. In 'partition and destruction of India' in 1947, the final product of the 'British Empire', the foundation was laid not for two but three countries: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This event of 'independence' was justly described by Mahatma Gandhi, once dismissed by Churchill as a 'half-naked fakir' as 'nothing to celebrate'.

Today the 'Bengal tiger', after painful reincarnations as East Bengal, East Pakistan and finally Bangladesh, 'shackled by poverty', is exploited as a breeding ground for 'bonded labour' to feed the 'fashion hungry' Westerners!

MM Rahman
London

VIP and non-VIP roads

There are four types of roads in Dhaka i.e. (i) VIP roads (ii) Non-VIP roads (iii) Two-lane (ways) roads and (iv) One-lane roads.

On VIP roads only the motor vehicles ply, rickshaws and push-carts are forbidden. On non-VIP roads all sorts of vehicles ply.

We feel that since rickshaws and push-carts are not allowed to ply on the VIP roads due to various reasons, plying of motor vehicles should not be allowed on some non-VIP roads whose breadth is less than fifteen feet which causes traffic jams.

Hundreds of motor vehicles, buses, trucks, cars, rickshaws and push-carts ply one after another continuously on two-lane (ways) and one-lane (way) roads resulting in great difficulty, wastage of time

etc. It is imperative that speed breakers, zebra crossings or underground passages are made in all important and busy points of the roads for the safety of the pedestrians crossing the roads.

Would the DCC and the DMP kindly look into the above long-neglected matters and do the needful as soon as possible in the interest of public?

OH Kabir
Hare Street
Wari, Dhaka

New taxpayers

I refer to your staff correspondent's report in the August 28 issue. In the drive to widen the tax-net and raise government resources for the income tax, this is definitely a welcome step. If the drive is further extended to all the districts and upazila towns, big hats and bazars in the rural areas, the number would increase significantly. Without such widening of the tax net, it would be impossible to increase the tax revenues in a big way. Apart from this, the following steps would be effective:

- i) NBR should adopt a strategy which would not frighten the possible tax-payers but encourage them. It appears from newspaper reports that many depositors are now withdrawing their money from banks and investing the same on land, jewellery, etc or buying dollars. This would be disastrous for our economy in the long run.

- ii) Rather than imposing any penalty on undeclared money, the owners of such money should be inspired to disclose the same in their next income-tax return, without any penalty or payment of arrear tax. It is said that there is two lakh crore taka in the market, which is not income tax paid. If even 25% of this money can be brought under taxation, the revenue earning would increase several times. Corruption cases may be looked into by the ACC, not by the NBR.

- iii) All the money deposited in the banks are in a way tax-paid, at 10% on interest. Across the board, the effective tax rate on earning from bank deposits may be much higher as even a small investor who otherwise would not have paid income tax is paying 10% on his interest earning. In our country, the

Helping the flood victims



PHOTO: AFP

I went to my village to see for myself the condition of flood victims. It was really pathetic as I saw people struggling to keep themselves afloat. I tried to raise funds with donations from the affluent in our locality (Naya Paltan).

I think we still have mis-

givings about relief operations. Some people even thought that my humble effort was aimed at drawing the attention of others. They even smelled some ulterior motive!

It is really surprising that even the people who can afford to help the victims do

not come forward. They should come to the rescue of flood victims with whatever they have at their disposal.

It is their duty to help the people in distress.

Touhidul Abedin
84, Naya Paltan
Dhaka

Women's contribution



PHOTO: AFP

Nowadays women are participating in every sector of development. But the working conditions in offices or mills and factories are from ideal for women.

The issue deserves a closer look.

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