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Environmental degradation



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

The world is getting alarmingly warmer. On the other hand, all the major factors of our environment like air, water are getting polluted badly. We really do not care about our environment.

We do smoke and emit black toxic fume through our faulty vehicles. Not only these, we also dump waste materials from our factories into rivers and we use hydraulic horns on the roads unnecessarily. Apart from all these, we do hurl wastes here and there.

If we look around the world, we will find many countries where every citizen is pretty aware of waste management procedures.

Hence, let us not pollute the environment.

We must not use the hydraulic horn and dump waste materials haphazardly.

Hasnat, AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

and come out through another chamber close by, but neither our doctor nor our matron ever materialized to deliver that "fast-track" service we paid for. When it seemed we had had enough of waiting I managed to draw the attention of the neighbouring doctor's matron and solicited her help. This brought our matron out of the room just to let us know that the doctor was still looking at patients and we had to wait further. There was something strange in her attitude which made my wife ask, "Is the doctor in her chamber at all?" To this the matron, surprisingly replied, "actually...no, she is in the ward now, but don't worry she will be right back." I wanted to know when she would return, again came the matron's vague reply, "probably half an hour," and looking at my face turning red in anger, quickly corrected herself, "no, maybe five to ten minutes, please wait." I decided not to and ran downstairs and asked the guy behind the counter to cancel my slip and issue me a new one for the other doctor who was truly available. The man reluctantly looked at his computer screen and said, "Don't think I can do that, you have already made payment and the record has been saved in our system, it will be a big hassle if you want to change doctors now." I asked how could we see the doctor when she was not in. It suddenly dawned on me that here I was talking to an accomplice because he wasn't supposed to issue me the slip in the first place. Sensing that he was close to getting into trouble, the guy hurriedly got hold of the missing doctor on telephone telling her that her patients were about to leave. An animated conversation followed and to my utter surprise I overheard that our doctor was actually not even in the premises but away in a totally different hospital! As if this was not enough, the guy reported that the doctor wanted us to wait for "just" ten more minutes by which time she would be right back! I was appalled at the unscrupulous practice and lack of professionalism from someone in the ranks of a teacher in a medical university. What is even more appalling is that at a time when we have started to lose hope in our public hospitals, the private ones remain our last resort and if they follow suit, I guess our last vestige of hope would be gone and it would be no surprise if people rush to Bangkok, Bangalore or even Kolkata for treatment.

Mujtaba
Dhaka

Unbearable...

This incident occurred a month ago. I was standing in the balcony looking at the starry sky and recalling past memories. I was brought back from my dream world by the sudden crashing sound of a car. Hearing the sound my mother came rushing to the balcony asking me what's the matter. After a long time I came to know that a sports-car hit the cart of a chotpotiwala while the car hit one of the walls. Within a few minutes the car took a reverse gear and sped away. In the meantime the people gathered around the chotpotiwala. No one bothered to take the man to hospital. Unable to bear the anger anymore I called the security guard to know what was going on there. He replied that the chotpotiwala was dead. Putting a decent suit on, I ran downstairs. One more shocking news was awaiting me. GOD BLESS ME! The chotpotiwala was the same man from whom I used to have chotpoti regularly. He was very excited as his daughter-in-law gave birth to a son. The police arrived and took his corpse away. Suddenly something caught my attention. One of his fists was tightly clutched to something. On opening his fist, I saw that it was a toy. OH DEAR! Rubbing the tears of my eyes I walked along the path of the most ruthless, arrogant and vicious country!

Anthea Taplette
Maple-Leaf International School

Asian Highway Network

A report in your daily of 12.10.08 indicates that Bangladesh is in danger of missing the right to join the Asian Highway Network (AHN) due to its inability so far to meet the deadline for signing the AHN Agreement. A direct access to this 1,41,000 Km long transport artery across Asia up to Europe and the wide network of roads coupled to it, without the slightest doubt, is of great importance for trade, commerce and tourism in Bangladesh, no less than that of all the participating countries and beyond. Although Bangladesh by historical inheritance was one of the founding members of the Asian Highway Network, it has lost that status in the meantime by failing to sign up in 2005, and now it has a mere observer status. Bangladesh will be a total outsider if it fails to sign up the Agreement this time as well.

One reason for the past failure is apparently an utterly wrong strategy to achieve its goal of a route that connects Bangladesh to both India and Myanmar (and from there on to Thailand), rather than from and to India. This failed strategy of the negotiators of the Ministry of Communications is due at least in part to the mix-up of the maximal goal with the so-called "transit syndrome", that has more to do with mutual mistrust than with enlightened self-interest, on both sides. What the negotiators must now recall is that in international negotiations, not the maximal desirable goal but the maximum achievable goal that determines the substance at a given point in time, and that achieving the latter depends on the negotiating skill and clout of the negotiator.

We know that the maximal goal is, a route through Bangladesh connecting directly to Myanmar. Pursuing this maximal goal last time naively (without the required support of at least two sponsors from the member countries) the negotiators of the communication ministry have not only not

Election debate

Let me begin by saying that it gave me great pleasure reading what appeared in a front page article of your daily on 15 October 2008, "With the completion of the electoral roll with photograph, Bangladesh is now also the proud owner of the world's largest electronic database of 8.11 crore voters" this is really commendable.

I am not an expert on political matters, and therefore would not like to venture into some unfamiliar (and perhaps sensitive) territory by remarking about the nature and state of politics in Bangladesh and its various intangible ramifications.

What I would like to do, however, is bring to your attention a fundamental practice of the electioneering process of one of the greatest democratic institutions it is the US Presidential Debate.

A debate between the main contenders prior to an election helps define their respective positions. It is primarily on the basis of such debates that voters can decide which party to vote for. Those who aspire to take on the responsibility of governing a nation and leave a historic signature on the fate of its people owe it to the latter to not only inform them of their political intent but also be able to defend it.

I strongly feel that the voters of Bangladesh will be denied a very basic right if the mainstream political leaders do not lay out their plans for the future of the country for the benefit of its citizens. Press conferences once in a while, and political speeches delivered in front of a group of screaming supporters, are not quite enough.

The leaders who dare to take on the responsibility of what is to happen to the country in the next five years should also be able to face their adversary in a debate (or a series of debates) to be broadcast to the whole nation. The voters of Bangladesh have the right to be able to decide as to who is the better choice. The leaders, in turn, should be able to convince the electorate that what they bring to the table is good for the country and its people and be able to defend it standing face to face with their opponent. This is the kind of knowledge, courage and determination we would like our leaders to demonstrate. It is easy to score when the opposing team is not on the field. It is only when two teams face off each other that their true strengths, intents, values and morals are exposed. This is transparency at its best!

Dr. C. Zaman
Ottawa, Canada



MUNEM WASSIF / DRINKNEWS

Thoughts on cricket

The two-page report on the Round Table on Cricket covered a fairly wide range of cricket related issues. This letter reflects my opinions, related to some of the matters discussed, along with some memories from the past which were not well covered in the discussions! The last time I played cricket, was way back in the 1960s in friendly inter-project games while in Khulna Newsprint Mills, which in those days had a regular cricket pitch!

We used to play often on a matting wicket. I still remember our college team playing with Chittagong Club way back in 1949, with Abdul Hafeez Kardar, the first Pakistan Captain, playing for them! Both the game and the lunch were a treat for us young college students! In that era most matches were between schools, colleges and the various faculties of Dhaka University. Here Dacca Medical College was probably the best team with Damal as captain. Next was possibly the SM Hall team in the early 1950s. I still fondly remember our Engineering College team touring to play with MCC (MC College, Sylhet); a sort of a cricket holiday, with visits to the tea gardens! Today my involvement in cricket is limited to watching it on TV!

On the subject of school cricket, Nirman School Cricket Tournament comes to mind. Mr. K.Z. Islam, a cricket enthusiast and a philanthropist, organised as well as financed the tournament. However, there was no talk about it, though the school cricket issue was mentioned a number of times during the round-table discussions. Is the Nirman School Cricket no longer being played? I also wonder why he was not invited to the round table discussion, given his keen interest in cricket?

Regarding the ICL exodus, I feel that BCB has probably made a mountain of a molehill and a direct collision was not perhaps a sober reaction. The

BCB response was as immature as probably our players' approach to playing in ICL. But then they are the wise men, upon whom the future(?) lies! After all human resources management is never a part-time matter!

The fact is that we not only lack natural talent (like Afridi), but our skills in nurturing potential talents leave much to be desired. Patience unfortunately is not one of BCB's strengths.

Today our Test status is at stake and one wonders if the BCB can deliver, despite talking of rainbows tomorrow, which unfortunately never comes!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Corruption everywhere!

Congratulations to Mr. Wahid for his article (October 7th) 'The toll collectors are here', which explained to us how corruption actually works and how it can get such a grip on our society.

It is immensely sad and very worrying. How does one break the power of such a system - because system it is - in which the powers of evil get firmly entrenched in the structures of society in such a

that many despair of ever breaking its power?

However, I also feel sorry for those trapped in the system. They are just those who want to make a living, have a network of friends and something to do each day which gets them out of the house! And, of course, it is not only the poor. Some of these guys are graduates!

I remember when my previous school was attacked by a corrupt property company. The thugs that had been installed in a room there were frequently visited by smart young graduates from the company who came to support them. When I asked one of them why a business came against a school in a mob, broke down the wall and beat up 3 young guards who later went to the hospital and had a total of 17 stitches put into their heads and necks, he replied, "We don't beat people up, we kill them!"

Some of them visited the school - it was the Eid holidays and I was sleeping on the floor of my office to make their lives as hard as possible. They arrived in nice, white punjabis on smart motorbikes. They said they were coming for a meeting and I told them that, if they were coming for a prayer meeting, they were most welcome! They roared off again. I felt great compassion for them. How do young men who want the good things of life, avoid falling into the hands of such corrupt businesses?

How much moral teaching do we give young people in all our religions on what they should do when they get a job and, in some cases, they are immediately approached by colleagues who inform them how the 'system' works in that job and how extra money can be made 'on the side'? That even happens in a lot of schools in which new pupils are informed how the cheating system works there and so have to choose whether to please their new friends

or upset them!

Moral education involves explaining how the truth, justice and wisdom that we find in them is APPLIED in the real world and how each of us can learn how to survive as a moral person, walking uphill into the sun rather than downhill to the devil, taking our society with us.

In every country, young people need help in the actual skills of how to survive as good people in a naughty world. Is everyone just expecting someone else to be doing this? The evidence is that moral education, of the kind needed, has slipped through the gaps.

Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Callous doctors

The consumer society in Bangladesh is constantly being cheated and deprived of services due to lack of awareness and accountability. I would like to share my bitter experience of a malpractice in what I think is a violation of consumer rights. It was last Wednesday evening when I drove all the way to a hospital in Uttara to get medical care for my wife. I enquired if gynaecologists were available for consultation, paid the fee for "fast-track" service and walked my ailing wife up to the doctor's chamber hoping to get some kind of speedy service and proper care for my time and money's worth. As we approached the chamber a matron took the slip from our hands, motioned us towards an empty lounge saying, "the doctor is attending to other patients, I will call you as soon as she is done with them," and vanished inside the doctor's room. We waited in good faith, counting the minutes as my wife shifted uncomfortably in her chair in pain. I walked up and down the lounge looking at new patients arrive, go in

Population boom

I am amazed at the total lack of any concern whatsoever in Bangladesh about the menacing problem of population boom. That this menace is eating away at whatever little progress we have hitherto made does not seem to attract the attention of anyone either in the media, or the social elite, intellectuals, policy makers, think tanks, and least of all, the politicians. The discussions day in and day out revolve around elections or Hasina /Khaleda and their activities.

How a naive populace is being misled into smugness! Please highlight the fact that the reason and source of most of our troubles is the over population and if drastic measures are not taken immediately, we will face deeper trouble.

Will we wake up to reality and start doing something in right earnest or sleep like Rip Van Winkle and only talk of elections?
Ahmad Kamal
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Easing traffic jam



PHOTO: STAR

Numerous reports and letters appear almost regularly in your daily relating to frustrating traffic jams in Dhaka city and valuable time lost by commuters. One may observe that even if there are only ten cars on the road the drivers will block each other on red signal without any consideration to which way they will go on green signal. I personally believe if some common sense approach is applied and strictly implemented by the police, there is every possibility that traffic jam will be eased. There are a few basic traffic rules that should be strictly adhered to and the violators must be punished with heavy fines. First, all roads must have two lanes, one for vehicles that intend to take a left turn and another for vehicles intending to go straight or turn right. No U turns or changing lanes, even if one lane is empty, should be allowed. For buses to drop or pick

up passengers a parking bay should be created at all bus stoppages. Heavy fines should be imposed for illegal parking. By the way, let illegal parking be handled by a private company as done in London.

To begin with the road from ZIA to Bishwa Road can be used as a project to educate the drivers to follow the two lane rules. A contingent of traffic police should be posted along with signs and banners urging drivers to follow the rules on this section of Airport Road. Gradually the rule can be implemented in all major roads of the city except for the section of the road from Banani rail-gate to airport where passengers are proceeding to catch a flight.

Whatever theory we may come up with, the fact remains that our drivers and most owners of vehicles are not educated on traffic rules and for this government

should make frequent announcements on traffic rules on television (may be in the form of cartoons like Meena) and radio. Private television channels should also join the campaign to educate drivers on traffic rules. If this campaign is carried out for a couple of years, I am sure the results will start showing.

Interestingly, in Kolkata I see the drivers still do not dare to overtake or take a U turn in the middle of the road and the government is constantly implementing new traffic rules with stern warnings, unlike any other city in the sub-continent. Illegal parking is strictly dealt with. I feel ashamed to see Dhaka, once a most cherished city, turning into a lawless place. Let us save Dhaka from the onslaught of traffic jams.
Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka