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Traffic congestions

Refer to the letter dated D.S. 01.11.08 by Aminul Islam with the above heading where he emphasized the movement of trains. I do agree with him but what I think Aminul Islam missed out is or got confused with the American study of 130 cities is the commuters who travel in trains do not live in the city and are mostly residing minimum 60 miles not kilometres outside those cities. They come to work in and around the city by train. This is also a regular practice for many in Europe as the cost of living outside the city is much lower than the main city.

However, coming back to the issue in context of Dhaka and Bangladesh, first of all we do not have a proper inter-city train service and talking of train service within Dhaka probably has not come to the far and busy working brains of our policy makers. In a letter dated 26.09.08 I did mention a circular broad gauge rail line so that the city commuters can easily avoid the hundreds and thousands of traffic lights and save gas, petrol and time for moving in and around the city. The underground railway is a long term and expensive way of transport and will not be used by the poor or the low middle class for everyday travel.

Kamlapur Station (which is still incomplete) was built almost 45-50 years ago and none had the vision during the mid 1960's of the population boom and expansion of the city. During the construction of the rail line they could have easily built the track much higher not necessarily on metal structure but by filling earth (like the Berri Bandhs) as we see in many parts of the world including India that trains travel above

the city and the cars, buses do not have to face a level crossing inside the city. But unfortunately we do not have a system like that and the railway system is such an old one like many other areas of Bangladesh government that to travel to Chittagong we have to go all the way to Tongi on the Northern side and then go towards the southern side which is ridiculous. The railway lines need to be reallocated and trains going towards Chittagong, Comilla, Noakhali, should use the same track built for Narayanganj.

This will save valuable time, fuel of the locomotive and the traffic congestion in the city due to trains.

For smooth traffic movement inside the city there is no alternative to making new straight roads and crossings as we in Dhaka have only 7% roads against the minimum requirement of 27%.

No matter what we do, if new planned roads and inter-sections are made, even if we get rid of all the other types of vehicles and just keep the cars on the roads, we will still have the tailbacks, honking and sufferings as those who are driving the cars, those who own them (individual/corporate) and those who give them the licence are not educated on the traffic management system properly.

The city and eventually the country can see improvements when the government takes action on building new roads and simultaneously teach and modernize the BRTA as far as the traffic congestion and driving disciplines are concerned (Only a group of persons from a developed country can be given this responsibility). Removing rickshaws, stopping trains, closing or changing the schools timing are not

going to improve the present traffic congestions in Dhaka and eventually Chittagong, as the port city is expanding and the city does not have enough roads to accommodate the traffic in the coming years. In 5 years' time, Chittagong will also have the same problem as we do have in Dhaka today.

The government which will come to power should start implementing the STP/MTP, if possible from day one of assuming office. Otherwise, the situation in Dhaka will never improve and will go from bad to worse in 24-36 months as the city will have a lot more reconditioned cars, more VIP movements, political meetings and processions on these 7% roads.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Khaleda becomes voter

I would like to draw your attention to the above news item published in various dailies on 30/11/08.

Any citizen who becomes a voter has the right to cast his or her vote. At the same time it is the obligation of a responsible citizen to become a voter first, before aspiring to become a candidate.

The situation was just opposite in case of Begum Khaleda Zia, the chairperson of the BNP who had two terms as Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Begum Zia had to be approached three to four times by the Election Commission officials to make her a voter. Finally, she obliged the EC by becoming a voter at her residence on the penultimate day at 6:30pm.

I do not know what message she conveyed to the nation by doing so.

AK Shamsuddin
Mississauga, ON
Canada

Mumbai attacks

It is not a question of religion. It is purely political. Whenever a problem occurs surrounding political issues involving a Muslim nation or any adverse situation with a group which has Muslim members, the term 'Islamic Terrorism' is loosely used. India has been facing terrorist attacks from all corners including Kashmir, Assam and the South. With Muslim extremism, Maoism, Hindu fanaticism and other forms of hooliganism - India is now faced with the challenge of safeguarding the largest democracy in the world. A fierce suppressive response from the government may further jeopardise India's democracy. Diplomacy is required with the cooperation from neighbours.

It has to look into its own backyard and examine its own domestic policies to unify the nation.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

The Mumbai carnage must be an eye opener for every peace loving government to come to an agreement to map out the breeding grounds and causes of such inhuman acts - killing innocent people including women and children in a planned way. It is necessary to draw a plan to prevent terrorist acts without any religious and political bias. This is more a problem of perverted ideology which might have been generated from threat, frustration and ill advice by mercenary leaders. Identify the causes and seek genuine remedy, instead of the blame game.

We are not sure how effective are the strategies for combating terrorism after 9/11 in the USA. The major focus might have been shifted for including several other agenda in the process. Terrorism is gaining ground due to our failure to identify the causes and implement the plan to combat it. Kindly identify the disease and offer accurate treatment and not any religious or political operational plan to combat terrorists who have no borders.

I hope we have heard Mr M J Akbar, a reputed journalist of India, who gave a brief interview to BBC Bangla about his reaction about Mumbai carnage. He was very rightly critical of the role of the Indian government in combating terrorism. I think Bangladesh might get some lessons from his comments - especially how we had initially handled the "Bangla Bhai" issue including the very dubious role of the then government. In Bangladesh, the militants are active and seeking recognition as political parties from the EC under different names.

I think the UN role should be more transparent and effective to deal with the thorny issues.

A reader
One-mail

Admission test

I would like to draw your kind attention to the admission tests of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and Government Dental Colleges on the same date and time to be held on 5 December 2008 at 10.00am. This coincidence has created great frustration among the candidates seeking admission in the first year courses of agricultural and dental education, because they have purchased admission forms from both of these educational establishments.

This problem may be overcome easily if the time of either is shifted keeping the date fixed on 5 December 2008. You are aware that the admission tests of the Ka-Group of Dhaka University and Jagannath University were held on the same date - 21 November 2008. The admission test of Dhaka University was held during 10.00-11.45am while Jagannath University's was held at 03.30-05.00pm on the same day. So, if the admission test of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University is started at 10.00am and the time of the admission test of the Govt. Dental Colleges is shifted to 03.00pm, the candidates can appear in both the tests.

Syeda Fatema Khatun
Tallabag
Dhaka

Our politics

According to "Dialectic Process", there are "thesis", "antithesis" and finally "synthesis". If we try to analyse our politics, we may term the rule of the AL right after the independence the "thesis".

The birth of the BNP was the "antithesis". Although there is no instance of caretaker government in the world other than Bangladesh, I think the CTG is the reality for our country, so we can define it as the "synthesis" of the process.

Can we reject the truth? I think, not and thus we should strengthen it considering the interest of the country.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

providing primary healthcare services in urban areas is vested in the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives (MOLGRD&C). The Municipal Administration Ordinance of 1960, the Pourashava Ordinance of 1977 and the City Corporation Ordinance of 1983 clearly assigned the provision of preventive health and limited curative care as a responsibility of the city corporations and municipalities. In 1995 the MOLGRD&C issued a circular indicating three committees would be formed at different levels ensuring effective health service delivery which are: Inter-ministerial committee; Central committee at City Corporation/Municipal level; and the Ward Health Committee at community level.

The number of municipalities is growing by the month in Bangladesh. There is an urgent need to focus efforts on enabling public-private partnerships which are meaningful and lasting.

We would welcome working with ADB and MOLGRD to design a new phase of

Urban Public Health Sector Development Programme through sharing our experience, evidence in urban health programme with practical demonstration of sustainable community and municipality involvement in health awareness and referral systems.

Izaz Rasul
Head of Urban Programme
Concern Worldwide

Going after Iran?



The news report published by you on 24 November is the warning siren announcing the impending attack on Iran by Israel. The trigger finger of Israeli armed forces is itching to go after Iran, their lust for Muslim blood is still not satisfied!

They cannot stand Iran living in

peace and remaining stable. For this they are even willing to have a peace treaty signed with Syria. After all they have what they wanted; which is Golan Heights; that Syria managed to lose to Israel! No one now bothers about it. I heard reports of it in Turkey; when I was there way back in 1968! It was reported to be a sham of a battle with units of the Syrian army unnecessarily sacrificed to fulfil the greed of top Syrian officials!

Now Iran is in Israel's cross-hair. There will be no dearth of money and weapons supplied by American Jews. It will come rolling in; while the US government officially turns a blind eye! May be the two could even go for a joint enterprise; and the CIA will manage to create some incidents or accidents, to justify the USA joining in a punitive action with Israel to destroy Iran! It will be no surprise, if Israel's stock of atomic weapons are also used! After all Israel is America's bulldog let loose in the Middle East; and now sharpening its teeth to latch on to Iran, now that Iraq is in America's pocket!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Urban healthcare programmes

In Dr. Ishtiaq's editorial posted in The Daily Star on November 11, 2008, a very timely call was made for effective public-private partnerships for primary healthcare for the millions of urban residents in Bangladesh.

Over the past decade, Concern Worldwide and political and administrative leaders and the residents of nine municipalities in Rajshahi Division have developed, tested and replicated in multiple locations a very promising model for better health that actually puts government policy into practice. What is of particular importance of this model is the impact that it is having on the poorest residents.

The government of Bangladesh has overall constitutional responsibility for health, nutrition and population services and through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOH&FW) and some other ministries it is an important provider of health services. The mandate for

Crucial sectors

Nothing remarkable has yet taken place in our country as far as the expansion of the industrial sector is concerned. Financial constraints and lack of technological support are said to have been the main reasons behind this situation. However, in no way can we ignore the base of our main economic development - agriculture sector. Nor can the expansion of the former sector be overlooked, for it is of great importance in developing a country rapidly.

Implementing some effective plans that involve bringing all the existing lands under cultivation and giving special subsidy in agriculture sector can play a vital role in attaining self-sufficiency in food. The farmers, these days one of the neglected sections, must be provided with all the facilities ranging from government subsidy to technical support. To be precise, technical support refers to ensuring proper power supply for irrigation, scientific know-how and so on. Alarming enough, the farmers are often deprived of these supports, leading them to stay away from farming. Giving this sector a scientific look is the need of the hour. Cultivable lands must not be used for other purposes.

Considering the needs of the present day world, we have to proceed accordingly.

Sarwar Hussain

Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering
University of Chittagong



SHEIKH HASAN / DRINKNEWS

Nomination business

What I saw on television, the way MP candidates gave job interviews, looked like a private company hiring an employee. The way the parties distribute the parliamentary seats among themselves reminds me of the story of the monkey distributing the cake (Banorer pitha vagh). Where is democracy? Where are people's voices? The base of democracy is debate and election. From my constituency the candidate should be chosen by local party members, not from Dhaka. He or she must be a local party member for at least three years, also requires three years as a tax-paying local resident.

If there's more than one candidate, then locals arrange a debate and by the secret voting system, where only a member who has at least three years of membership can elect the candidate from the constituency. Only the central executive committee can approve the nomination. If there are any serious allegations against the candidate, the committee can ask locals for a second choice. This culture must begin from the grassroots level to electing the party chief. At least every three years there must be party counselling for a leadership race. Our party leaders are afraid to go to any debate or party leadership contest because they don't have any vision or leadership quality, so they are selected on the basis of family backgrounds. But it is not a family business.

The elected party leader has no right to kick out any member from the party because of disagreement. In the future, this person could lead the party by virtue of his leadership qualities.

Security is the biggest concern in Bangladesh politics. That's why lots of good people who always think about the nation's welfare, stay away from politics. The law enforcement system is fragile and corrupt.

Any abuse of power for personal gains must be stopped. This is the only way we can get rid of corrupt politicians. We should make room for patriotic, devoted lawmakers who's only aim is a better nation.

Nokib-E-Kibria
Toronto, Canada

Parenting magazine

Recent research from the new fields of epigenetic and social neuro-science has found out that everything we think, say, do and experience has a profound impact on everything and everyone around us - especially our innocent children! So, modern parents ought to create a congenial atmosphere in order to educate, nurture and raise children. And for this reason,

every conscious parent really needs to know about vaccinations, autism, ADHD, sensory integration issues, education, learning challenges and styles, emotional intelligence, food, chemicals, nutrition and health, how children think, learn and develop, which are the most nurturing and supportive parenting approaches.

Now, the question is how many of the parents of our country know about these crucial stuff? Very negligible number, no doubt. Moreover, parenting issues are so varied and vast that it is impossible to know all these things on the part of a parent. In this perspective a quality parenting magazine can play a great role in providing parents with everything they need through the contributions of child development specialists, paediatricians, forward-thinking parents, educators and mentors who are dedicated to helping all children achieve their fullest potential, irrespective of their origin, colour and creed.

The print media of our country and those who are working with children's rights here should come forward to establish a parenting magazine which would be a source of resources that fathers and mothers need to know for raising their kids holistically, compassionately, supportively and emphatically. A parenting magazine

the existence of which is sadly missing from the long magazine list of the country is the dire need of the day.

Mohammad Rukanuddin
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Bangladesh University
Dhaka

Men and women

In our Holy book, it is mentioned that women and men are equal. But men claim that women have been created to cater to their wishes (whims and fancies), give birth to children to perpetuate the family line, manage the home and be responsible for the smooth running of it, together with all issues related to family. Men, on the other hand, they claim, are ordered to earn their daily bread, a very difficult and arduous task, and return to the family fold to be pampered by their women. This is the role of Man.

A woman is required to be mother, wife, friend, nurse, housekeeper, partner, advisor, ally...the list is endless. The only difference being, she doesn't get paid for all the work she does. In society, Man is given credit for his accomplishments together with the credit for accomplishments achieved by their children. God forbid, if Man fails, Woman is the scapegoat...she should have tried to be more supportive, less demanding, advised him better, cooked

and served more healthy food, given him and not the children more attention and time...the list seems endless.

Keeping in mind, that ours is a combination of democratic, orthodox, liberal, patriarchal society (depending on whose opinion it is), it is interesting to note that men have through the ages continued to dominate and share blame, not glory with women. God bless us all.

Islam
One-mail

Ban smoking

We know smoking is a bad habit. But in spite of most of the smokers knowing the consequences of smoking, they have not given up this habit. In fact, people earn money for a better living and should spend on things that are not harmful. Our new generation smokes as a fashion or style without knowing its bad effects.

The law in Bangladesh forbids smoking in public places which has not been followed properly by the unscrupulous smokers since the enactment of the law. They smoke even in the bus which causes great trouble for the non-smokers.

It is high time we should say loudly, "Ban smoking. This is for the sake of all the living beings in this world!"

AKM Anisul Haque

Department of English

Metropolitan University

Sylhet

Decentralization



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

The Election Commission has declared election schedules for the upcoming national and upazila elections and now the political parties would move forward with their election mandates and manifestoes.

For the national parliamentary election, I would urge the major political parties to consider decentralization of the administrative structure.

Time has come to think over, is Dhaka a suitable place to live in? It has struggled with many social and economic problems and it cannot be considered a suitable place for

healthy living, with the unexpected growth of population, road traffic and limited infrastructural facilities.

Apartments are being constructed haphazardly without following the building codes and the city is expanding rapidly without giving substantial importance to basic amenities and facilities.

The political parties must come forward to consider and recognize the policy of decentralization; only decentralization can save the general people from such ordeals.

Nasarullah
One-mail