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Monorail system: a personal view

May I refer to the report published in your newspaper on 27th November 2008 (Thursday) after the roundtable titled "Significance and task of rail in developing economy and communication". Prof Dr M Anwar Hossain, Vice-chancellor, Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology (AUST), Dhaka has given the clear and rightful message that underground rail system would not be an economic and effective viable option to reduce traffic congestion and transport crisis. I agree 100% with Prof Dr Anwar Hossain, about their conclusion after the round table discussion. I feel that the government and its relevant agencies should think twice, if not thrice, before they start digging mass graves all over Dhaka city considering the geographical condition of our soil, electricity problems and other factors related to construction and maintenance of underground rail system.

I would however like to make a humble and simple suggestion here as it keeps my mind knocking all the time

is serious and determined. In that case, all the railway gates (not less than 50 I suppose) from Kamalapur to Abdullahpur/Uttar Khan/Tongi will be lifted and in their places those junctions will be 'rounds' or 'traffic lights' controlled by police. No one will have to wait for minutes and hours for trains to pass. On the contrary, monorail will run over the 'land road' uninterrupted and also vehicles (car, buses, etc) will run on 'land road' uninterrupted independently of each other. I have travelled in various parts of the world over the east 30 years, and seen practically transport systems of many of the developed and developing countries. As a patriotic citizen of Bangladesh, I strongly feel that the construction of the above mentioned two transport systems from Kamalapur to Abdullahpur/Uttar Khan/Tongi will be the most economic and viable option for mass transportation and will go a long way towards mitigating traffic congestions in the

Newspaper holiday

Many of us cannot think of even a single day without newspapers. But on account of many occasions our newspaper offices remain closed and we are deprived of it.

You may argue that as a human being every man needs some holidays or vacations, and so you stop printing papers on some days. We are not against your "need" but we are not in favour of your stopping printing papers.

On such occasions hospitals cannot and do not cease to function. The electronic media continues its activities without any break. How do they arrange? Please consider the point raised by me.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Bangladesh economy

Today as we look at the prices of daily necessities, in particular the food stuffs, from the point of view of an economist they would term it as "MARKET FAILURE" (i.e. right goods are not available at right price & in right quantity). The free market forces of demand-supply are unable to meet the consumer demand. Although some people particularly those who have affordability are still having a pleasant life. But just imagine what type of life the majority of our people are living? They are finding it hard to have meals twice a day. The main reason behind it is lack of job opportunities due to low business confidence.

Besides, there is a hint of government failure because the government's several attempts have failed to pull prices down, rather the prices kept on climbing.

So, the gap between the rich & the poor is further widening, leading to greater inequality. So it is high time that the leading economists, businessmen, government officials & other parties involved sit together & get the citizens of the country out of this mess.

Something really needs to be done immediately!
Faiyad Rahman Chowdhury
A level student
Banani, Dhaka

Teachings of religion

Combined effort is absolutely essential to uphold the message of religion. Showing abhorrence to it and thinking of a 'tit for tat' policy will just keep the solution far.

Md. Masum Billah
Senior Manager
BRAC Education Programme

Great contributions

Bangladesh or Bengalis made quite a few contributions to mankind of which Oral Saline, Micro-credit and UN Peace Keeping are well known. We are so proud of these great achievements.

I am sure all of you readers have heard about AIDS, cancer, diabetes and similar deadly diseases menacing the universe. There are many clinics, hospitals and research centres but I doubt very much whether most of them heard about another disease known as Polycystic Kidney Disease which is known as PKD. This disease is not much heard about as only a few fall victim

to it, roughly about fourteen million people each year. In comparison Bangladesh has one hundred and fifty three million inhabitants. Till date there is no cure for this disease. This is a genetic disorder of the kidney from birth. The kidney functions just like a normal kidney and begins to reduce its function as the person ages. By the time the person reaches the age of 30 hypertension begins to develop.

The patient and regular doctors, without knowing the real cause prescribes hypertension medications, which reduces the blood pressure. By the time the patient reaches 35-40, he begins to feel weak and depressed. The patient assumes this is the result of age and does not give much attention.

Then come restlessness, loss of appetite and finally a strong sense of smell. The regular doctors prescribe immediate ultrasound (scanning) and then only it can be determined that the kidney does not work anymore, or kidney failure. For survival the patient must undergo regular dialysis which is extremely expensive or a kidney transplant.

Some will blame the regular doctors for failing to detect the disease earlier, others will prepare to face death. Even if doctors could detect the disease, he actually could hardly do anything. There is no cure.

People fluctuate their emotions back and forth between hate and sorrow, rocked between the waves of life. They turn their sorrows into anger and frustrations. When financial restrains limits treatment and care their visions fail to see any element of beauty of life.

PKD hits the rich and the poor, the kings and paupers, the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Atheists, the devoted religious and unfaithful, believers and non-believers. It has no limits and boundaries and Bangladesh is not spared.

Bangladesh being a developing country has very limited resources. The average family is more concerned to provide food for the family then participate in medical care of family member.

A country with one of the most densely populated places of the world, a nation of about 153 million people, and the annual per Capita Gross National Product (GNP) is less than \$500. How can we make a contribution is the question.

You may feel proud that a brand new research organization has sprung up in California, United States of America. The organization is made up with Bangladesh origin Microbiologists, Nephrologists, Academics, Doctors, PKD patients, Renal Nurses and Social Workers. Members come from different areas of the USA.

The Charitable dialysis and Research Centre will be soon established in Chittagong, Bangladesh. They wish to make a gift not only to Bangladesh but also to the human race of the world which is a cure or at least delayed progression of PKD.

Will you, children of Bangladesh the world around, join them with your support and encouragement?

Surely together a difference can be made, or you are too busy?
Henry E Haider
One-mail

Mortally sick Buriganga



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Let me start with an observation made by late American President J.F. Kennedy about half a century ago: "Man have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world or to make it the last." All our activities prove that we have chosen the second option, that is, to make it last.

Perhaps the most cruel activities of mankind include damage to nature: air, water & warmth. Emission of excessive gas from thousands of industries makes the earth warmer which now stands as a serious threat to the whole planet and peaceful survival of mankind.

Let us now see what we are doing in our country. The river Buriganga was once a source of clean water, channel of transportation and hub of fishes that used to serve millions of people for hundreds of years. It is now wearing a look of a big drain carrying all types of wastes, industrial or domestic. We have chosen this river along with other rivers of our country for this purpose without caring about the impact of it. Greed made us blind. We established various indus-

tries/factories on the banks of this river and all wastes including chemicals are made to pass through it making the water toxic, which is poisonous for the fishes and other aquatic beings. With the emergence of a huge number of brickfields, another problem has been created. Their wastes like burnt ashes of coal, broken bricks all are thrown into the river causing the riverbed to rise and creating navigability problem. It comes from a report that big barges with goods cannot move in the river. One thing we should realise is that we have no right to put the next generation to suffer for our cruel activities. Posterity will not forgive us for the failure to contain this. Let the people concerned stop it right now and establish effluent treatment plants. Navigability of the rivers must be restored through regular dredging. Let us not put our own survival at risk. Let all the rivers get back the original shape and look.

MA Alim
Ex-Banker
Indira Road, Dhaka

Our leaders

.....If sadness, Oh mother mine, casts a gloom on your face, my eyes are filled with tears..... (Tagore)

This was the month when our people as a nation took charge of their own lives.

Well, some folks just had to spoil it. We got betrayed. This time not by the invaders, but by our own. The people we chose to be our leaders turned blind to our needs. We were left orphans. The power we gave them to use in our favour, were abused against us.

As a young Bangladeshi, I see & hear our leaders have become rulers, dictators, oppressors and agents of the past invaders. And with my kind of job, which involves sharing views with all age groups (especially the youth), I see one thing in them, they are aware of everything. And they want Bangladesh to be the country they learned about in their school days.

I thank Allah the Merciful that He has opened the eyes of our brothers & sisters. Say: "Can the blind be held equal to the sighted?" Will ye then consider not? (Sura An Anam Verse 50). The young Bangladeshis are willing to take the challenge to reflect on our lives and the forces that shape our values. We can see, hear and speak. The only thing we lack is courage, a just leader and a good cause. And then nothing can stop us.

For years we waited, not a patient waiting, but an anticipation with enormous determination, an anticipation

characterized by struggle, by martyrdom, by torture, by oppression and yes, also by laughter and joy.

In the past, we were oppressed, in the present we are under oppression and will always be if we remain this way. Allah has given us order to fight.

"Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths" -- (Sura At Tauba Verse 13)

Our seniors have forgotten to become truthful & to fight for what is fair and just.

Tauqeer Haider
Shantinagar
Dhaka

Global financial crisis

The current global economy is experiencing slowdown and crisis. Stock markets around the world have been rocked by a massive crisis of confidence, stocks and shares dropped to the lowest level across the world in October.

Governments around the world have taken packages over the last month totalling more than three trillion dollars, including loan guarantees and cash injections to restore confidence in the financial system and reverse a sharp slowdown in economy.

In Bangladesh our economic structure is so vulnerable that a little economic impact will cause great dislocations. Bangladesh may face a significant impact of the current global recession if the crisis continues for a long period.

Global slowdown in the

leading economies is likely to adversely affect export of our readymade garments and knitwear products. Because there will be no demand in the developed countries. Remittance receipts from overseas will be less because there will be job cuts.

Foreign Direct Investment FDI may slow down due to global uncertainty.

To resolve the problems both the public and private sectors should monitor the global economic situation regularly and take necessary measures.

Farid Ahmed
West Dhahmondi
Dhaka

Open University

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is a great platform mainly for the dropped out students. It is furnished with good establishments all over Bangladesh. Luckily, I am a degree student of BCU. My Tutorial Centre (TC) is one of the colleges in Dhaka, so my Regional Resource Centre (RRC) is Dhaka. This why I am to visit Dhaka RRC very often to collect programme related information. But as ill luck would have it, recently I had to acquire some sad and bad experience at Dhaka RRC. I want to mean that some officials concerned of the RRC don't attend the students professionally. They always seem to be annoyed with the students, so non-cooperation is a regular phenomenon at the office. Very often, officials refer the students to the lower staff who are quite unable to solve the problems. There are some problems which might be solved by the officers only. Actually many students don't know even where they will complain against the ill-behaved staff. Even I don't know the table where I should go to for seeking remedy. It must be noticed that BOU is a public university; it runs with taxpayers' money. So the students have every right to be treated well at the BOU office.
Sufferers
BOU

Math competition

A math competition was held recently at Latu Mondol High School in Mymensingh. Hundred and twenty-one students from 7 educational institutions participated in the event.

The competition was held in two sections-- junior (class six-eight) and secondary (class nine-ten).
AK Manik
Mymensingh



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

since I visited Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2007 about a year ago. To face and avoid traffic jam effectively and economically, I would like to put forward two simple questions for the honourable readers and the authorities concerned. The questions are: (1) Can we not shift the Kamalapur Railway station outside Dhaka city for example to Abdullahpur/Uttar Khan/Tongi? (2) Can we not set up monorail system as it is run in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?

If the answers to the above questions are 'yes', then we will have two transport systems over the same space. One the 'land road' for the vehicles along the present railway track up to Abdullahpur/Uttar Khan/Tongi. Secondly, we can have the monorail system (similar to the one in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) above the 'land road' all along the previous railway line. The construction of these two transport systems would not take more than 3 years, if I am correct to say so and if one

Dhaka city. These two transport systems mentioned above can be constructed in other major cities of Bangladesh such as Chittagong also. This is my humble and simple suggestion to the present and the future elected authorities to take into consideration the issue of solving traffic problem and to reduce traffic jam in Dhaka and other major cities. Again, I would like to request the authorities not to start digging mass graves expending huge sum of money (Tk. 23,000 crore or so). Let us go for simpler, economic and viable options first. Once these are established, perhaps then we can contemplate about setting up underground (metro) railway system later on.
Prof. Dr ASM Giasuddin
Professor & Vice Principal
State College of Health Sciences
C/O-State University of Bangladesh
Guest Professor
Medical College for Women and Hospital

Retire at 60!

I am seriously thinking to help mobilize public opinion to put a plan for all stakeholders in the power game, including civil society members, to go for retirement after 60 years of age. This also applies to all public servants including the politicians and bureaucrats, irrespective of the service he or she belongs to. Just to give a chance to our new generation to try, but be careful about the business community, they are more Christian than the Pope.

Kindly do not misunderstand us, we are patriotic and peace loving citizens of Bangladesh living abroad in retirement. We want good of our country and sincerely want democracy to be restored for peace and prosperity of Bangladesh. Please listen to the voice of the people and not of the hierophants for any personal gain, which is temporary and might tarnish the image further.

A reader
One-mail

Political killing

Zafar Sobhan's "Straight Talk" on 12 December points out the role of violence and its impact on voting. Our political process has examples of killing prospective candidates; with the "bullet" being more effective than the "ballot" to keep away the better candidate, permanently! This has happened in our political arena and may well happen again.

Sobhan's most telling statement, which I quote is: "Not coincidentally, perhaps, it seems as though it is only politicians from one side of the political aisle that get killed, these days." I would rather say it is not these days only. Over the decades, killing of Sheikh Mujib, the jail killings, the killing of AL leaders in processions, bombing in the main street of Dhaka were clear indicators of what really was happening.

They even managed to get a

volunteer to confess to the bombing! It could not have been any more ridiculous.

The fundamentalists and their allies; the various branches of "Jehadis" and "Lashkars" were all incubated in Pakistan, with CIA blessings for driving the Russians from Afghanistan. They had important links here and are now under the umbrella of Jamaat-e-Islami-- the BNP's bosom pals! For these people, killing is the simple way to permanently eliminate any serious contender. For them "bullets" are a realistic option against the uncertainty of "ballots"!

No wonder, all these killings, including the bombing of the AL procession on a main street, remain unsolved, buried under mountains of papers and reports-- never to see the light of the day! Violence and killing in this election have just started.
Ballot ballet watcher
Dhaka

Well done, forest department

Bangladesh is rich in biodiversity even though it has a lot of problems to tackle. Among the faunal composition of its rich natural heritage there are several species that deserve high priority attention both from the general masses and also from the relevant government department. The Forest Department (FD) is the management authority for the wildlife in Bangladesh.

In a recent incident a gharial (Gavialis gangeticus) got entangled in the long-line (hazari borshi) and was captured by the fishermen at Kalasona point, Phulchari on 16th November 2008. The fishermen later brought it to Bogra with the intention to sell it to earn some money. The fishermen, in this case were aware that it is illegal to cap-

ture the gharial but greed overcame their morals. On getting the information from Dr. Zuberi, Member, Crocodile Specialist Group/South Asia & Iran, I informed the relevant officer of the FD. The FD officials responded positively and quickly, seized the animal in Bogra and took appropriate steps to release it at the same place from where it was captured. The FD deserves an appreciation for saving the life of a critically endangered animal. I hope that the FD keeps proper documentation of such incidents for future references as such records carry immense scientific value. In future if any similar case happens the FD should mark/tag the animals for future identification and I may help the FD with this.

Gharial population is dwindling in Bangladesh and is recognized as one of the most critically endangered crocodilians in the world. We should feel proud that we still have this and should take appropriate measures so that it continues to survive in our country. This also brings in the issue of increased and continued activities for enforcement and awareness raising for wildlife protection by the Forest Department and NGOs working in the field of nature/biodiversity conservation.
S M A Rashid, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Advanced Research in Natural Resources & Management (CARINAM)
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

