

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.

Indo-Bangla relations

With unalloyed support for independence and strong opposition against the barbarism committed by Pakistan in 1971, India, no doubt, contributed much to the establishment of Bangladesh, showing great neighbourly approach to the war-stained people of the latter nation. With the passage of time, the relations, however, between the two countries have been termed as a 'complex' one, as there has been fluctuation, if not bitterness, between them.

Bangladesh, being almost entirely encircled by India via a land border stretching 2400 kilometres, considers its relations with India to be vital for political and economic reasons. During Mujib government the relations with India were at the peak but with the fall of the government mentioned, bilateral issues concerning the interest of the two neighbours, slowly but surely, started experiencing, in most of the cases, dissatisfaction. Issues such as South Talpatti Island, the Tin Bigha corridor and access to Nepal, the Farakka Barrage and water sharing, border killings and the construction of a fence along most of the borders gave birth to mutual misunderstanding. But the issues never turned extremely serious.

In recent years, India increasingly complained that Bangladesh does not secure its border properly, though many small pieces of land such as Padua, a part of Sylhet division, and South Talpatti Island, belonging to Bangladesh along the border region are still under Indian military occupation. However, India fears an increasing flow of economically depressed Bangladeshis to its territory and it accuses Bangladesh of harbouring Indian separatist groups like ULFA and alleged terrorist groups. India estimates that over 20 million Bangladeshis are living illegally in India, which has no reasonable footing. The Bangladesh government has consistently denied these accusations.

'Tipaimukh' barrage issue has recently been a much talked about topic and managed to cause a hue and cry, for it is entirely concerned with mutual interest. The Indian government has planned to construct a controversial dam and a barrage on the upstream of the trans-boundary river Barak, with the intention of stopping the flow of water to Bangladesh which will, no doubt, cause a devastating effect in the latter nation. Bangladesh water experts, environmentalists, politicians and people in general protested the move in a peaceful manner. But their counterpart seems paying no heed but showing 'Big-brotherly' attitude, making the issue worse.

On top of that, Indian High Commissioner Pinak Chakrabarty has not only undermined the people concerned for their opposition to construction of the barrage but also termed 80 percent of the Bangladeshis seeking Indian visa as 'touts and bro-

kers' at a conference in Dhaka. Regrettably enough, he delivered the highly objectionable and arrogant comments in front of high officials including the foreign minister herself with no protest.

Diplomatic relations among nations can never be developed blowing hot words and showing a 'Big-brotherly' attitude. If diplomats create a gap, who will bridge it?

Sarwar Hussain
Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering
University of Chittagong

Transport problem

At present there are eight double-decked buses for the students of JNU. But these are not enough for the students. So, the students have to waste their money and valuable time using public transport.

We request our Honourable VC to take necessary steps to solve the transport problem in order to mitigate the sufferings of the students.

Md. Anamul Hoque
BBA
Department of Finance
Jagannath University, Dhaka

Mobile phone

The necessity and popularity of mobile phone, makes it part of our daily life. People mainly use this handy device for the purpose of communication. But now it has become a popular medium of entertainment too, as some advanced technology like MP3 player, mega pixel camera, video recorder, Internet connection etc have been added to it. Especially, the young generation or teenagers show much interest in such mobile phones.

The mobile phone or cell phone with dozens of facilities can improve productivity and quality of life. So the proper application of this device with modern technology has to be ensured first.

Unfortunately, evil-doers are taking advantage of cell phone. Everyone must abstain from misuse of such phone.

Sohel Nawroz
Student, Faculty of Fisheries
Bangladesh Agricultural University
Mymensingh

Administrative reforms

The Awami League govt has initiated a number of sector-wise reforms. The prime minister in keeping with her election pledges has already announced that Rangpur would be the next division. It is only decentralization that can improve the socio-economic conditions of our people. It is only natural that for all practical purposes all the five southern districts namely Faridpur, Madaripur, Rajbari, Shariatpur and Gopalganj be incorporated within the fold of Barisal Division. This would minimize the sufferings of common people who have to travel all the way to Dhaka for legal and administrative purpose.

It is simply not understood why an individual should travel from outlying upazilas

of Madaripur and Gopalganj when travelling to Barisal would be much more convenient and less time consuming and less expensive. It would also be easier for Dhaka Division to handle administrative and legal issues in a much more efficient way.

Shamim Ahmed

Gulshan 2

Dhaka

Letter writers

We feel enriched and proud that we have many renowned, top class and famous writers, editors, columnists, journalists and press reporters in our country.

In this connection we would like to state here that some letter writers from our different walks of life, social workers, conscious citizens, teachers, professors, rich, middle class and poor people, lawyers, businessmen, retired govt. officers and so and so forth write and contribute to 'Letters To The Editor' column of various newspapers, national dailies, weeklies and magazines on different subjects, problems and offer suggestions for the welfare of the people.

These letter writers spend and devote their time, energy and money without desiring and expecting any personal benefit or gain. They neither believe in yellow journalism, hatred, greed and injustice and so they write without fear, favour or ill feeling towards anybody.

"One wonders what is the recognition, designation and status of these letter writers in our society, in our day to day life?"

Can't a letter writers be regarded, accepted and respected as freelance journalists?

Would our learned readers, writers, editors, journalists, intellectuals and think-tanks and members of the public kindly enlighten us with their valued suggestions and opinions on the matter?

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

Diplomats

Bangladesh, being a third world country, other nations' influence is always predominant here. As we need financial help from the developed countries to finance our development works and to build infrastructure, it is necessary to look forward to them for help. Because it is not possible to run development works with our limited resources. Consequently, taking the chance foreign countries' representatives meddle in our internal politics.

An ambassador has admitted in the media that they wanted change (1/11) and emergency to be promulgated.

Politicians should be able to address the problems discreetly and refrain from creating a situation where their own role is marginalized.

Zonaed Emran
MSS student
Dept. of Political Science
University of Dhaka

Let's not be biased

I could not help but notice the letter by Mr. Sikander Ahmed in The Daily Star on August 14, 2009 and honestly, I can't say that I am surprised. As I have previously seen on many occasions his letters here that ONLY support the existence of rickshaws in Dhaka city roads.

The fact of the matter is, (I am absolutely sure) that everyone in Dhaka city will agree that rickshaws being an extremely dangerous form of transport and which is very degrading to the puller is one of the MAJOR causes of Dhaka city's traffic jams. But I of course realize that Dhaka has a lot of vehicles on its roads that are actually more than it can handle. Besides, our traffic control system is barely under any system at all. There are almost no traffic signals in use and low number of traffic managers make it almost impossible to control traffic in a systematic manner. Surely, the rickshaw pullers don't make life easy for the poor traffic officers.

I understand that we cannot simply stop rickshaws right away and ban them in Dhaka all together, all of a sudden.

But, careful, impartial, and responsible thinking will make us see that unless we begin to think seriously on ways to bring and end to the rickshaw era, we run the risk of a breakdown of our entire transport system. Rickshaws are well on their way to take over the city's every corner. Any reasonable person will agree that if it was not for banning rickshaws on Mirpur Road, it would be IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to move on that road today. But do people like Mr. Sikander see it? I request him and others alike (I am sure not many out there) to please start to think about the future and be responsible towards our children and their lives. Do we really want to leave them to the anarchy of these careless and unruly rickshaw pullers?

Let me once more be absolutely clear that I am not against the rickshaw puller (the man), I am against the idea of man pulling this completely outdated inhuman object while others sit back and treat him like an animal. If we truly care for these people, then we will begin right now to think how to get them out of this miserable life and in turn help make our roads free for traffic movement that is suited for the year 2009 and beyond.

Let us all be IMPARTIAL and think deep. PLEASE!

Rahat

Mahabag

Dhaka

Tax collection

Bangladesh is developing itself through thick and thin although many of us are not satisfied with our pace of growth from 1971 onwards. As we are famous for deficit budgets, we need assistance from international banking giants like WB and IMF. We have seen their suggestions for governing our state which in many cases have stood against our collective interest.

The financial institutions have a bad track-record of destabilizing many economies through political channels. If we want to control our own affairs, the only way will be creation of lots of internal sources of finance. Levying tax is one of the ways of internal financing. Many sectors are not bearing the yolk of taxes. Land owners in the city of Dhaka are out of tax network. Most landowners don't pay any taxes. If tax is levied from these moneyed landowners properly, it will add a huge amount of currency to our public coffers. In order to minimise the gap between the rich and the poor, taxes should be levied more on wealthy individuals. To materialise this, the govt. must expand the function of the tax department to rural areas.

A tax friendly mentality needs to be created in our society. We should boycott tax evaders in all sectors.

Mostafa Kamal Molla

Dept. of English

Haji Mohsin Hall

University of Dhaka

Minister's position

What is more disquieting now for the city dwellers than the frightful traffic jam? And it is not beyond the knowledge of the Communications Minister. Horrible, from Shyamoli to Gulistan, a path of 4-5 kilometres and a journey of half an hour at best took two hours by bus. The other main thoroughfare, Old Airport Road, especially from Jahangir Gate to Sheraton Hotel always sees the dead jam that many times the DS brought to the notice of the authorities through vivid pictures. But it is quite disheartening and dismaying that the new government with over six months in office could improve upon nothing in matters of traffic management, nor it is observed to be wrestling with the problem to reduce the commuters' awful plight.

We only heard some words 'monorail', 'underpass', flying in the air, but not a single instance or bit of 'doing something' in this sector did we notice so far. But there is no end of daily addition of vehicles on the same streets with not a single inch being added to, only to make things worse. Whereas the Communications Minister's first meeting with the Engineers of Roads & Highways and DCC/Rajuk should have been to sort out this single but major issue and trash out what road infrastructure could be built soon, either flyovers, monorails or underpass or metro system, considering their feasibility, cost benefit and time (no over ambitious plan that takes a decade). If that has been done where is the groundwork? To get rid of the 'hell' we have no alternative but to plunge into doing the same on top most priority taking into account both alternatives, how fast we can build the system and how that could be implemented/achieved. The Hon'ble Minister seems to be more interested and busy with the bigger/biggest enterprises like Padma bridge and the road infrastructure of inter-districts.

It would not be out of place to mention here that Kolkata had no flyover in 2000 when I first visited the city and I saw 12 flyovers almost completed when I visited it in 2006 the last time, and what a pity during this time we could build only two. Either jump into building flyovers or underpass on the merit of 'which gives early solution,' or scrap further influx of cars/buses on the streets. Let us walk to our destinations by the pavement, but do not force us to walk on the tailing cars making long lines due to all time gridlocks or snarl-ups.

Ahmed Niaz

Shekher tek

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Admission trade

The success in making an educated nation lies in the ability to offer free access to education, both at the intermediate and higher level. In our country, though we need to get the nation educated, the situation is bad for a number of reasons. One of those is paramount and poses a grave threat to the whole education system—that's admission trade. During admission season, our national dailies' headlines become replete with the news where we get the real picture of admission trade in which the student wing of the ruling party takes the position of market leader. Worse still, the trend is getting worse with the passage of time and the amount of bid depends on the status of the educational institution for example, while Dhaka College hoodlums demand Tk 50,000, in Sylhet or local districts the amount is Tk 15,000-20,000. Maybe not all young politicians are involved in this virulent practice, but it undermines the education system as a whole.

Finally, the nonchalance and irresponsible education administration helps turn this into a practice, either by not taking any concrete action, or by taking it lightly.

This must come to an end.

G.M. Farhad Kabir (Aabir)

Dhaka University

Water-logging

Water-logging is now a common problem in Dhaka and Chittagong cities during heavy downpour in every monsoon. These two cities have experienced severe water-logging for the last decade or so. Even a little rain causes a serious problem for certain areas.

Development Authorities (like as RAJUK, CDA) are responsible for water-logging in the two cities.

Despite torrential rainfall (420.4 mm) on July 27-29, the port city experienced for the first time an amazingly less water-logging this year than ever before. For this



All the water bodies and open spaces have been turned into built-up areas cashing in on the absence of a complete master plan. Due to lack of open space, rainwater can't percolate into the ground and it stays over, contributing to water-logging. According to various sources, there were 43 canals in Dhaka city. At present only 23 canals are there, the rest 20 canals have already disappeared. On the other hand, inadequate drainage system failed to accommodate the heavy load of discharging out the rivers or canals connected. According to official figures the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) has now 285 km long pipe drains, 65km drain and 9 km box culverts while Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has 999.468 km open drain and 1052.98 km pipe drain and in Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) area, total length of drainage is about 416 Km (Pucca-318 Km, and Kutchha-98Km) which is insignificant for these two cities. Besides this, lack of effective coordination between WASA, City Corporation and

remarkable improvement, city dwellers have given credit to the CCC's extensive renovation works including dredging and widening of the existing 144 canals for the last eight months. Because of canal digging and eviction of huge illegal encroachments people didn't confront of water-logging this year.

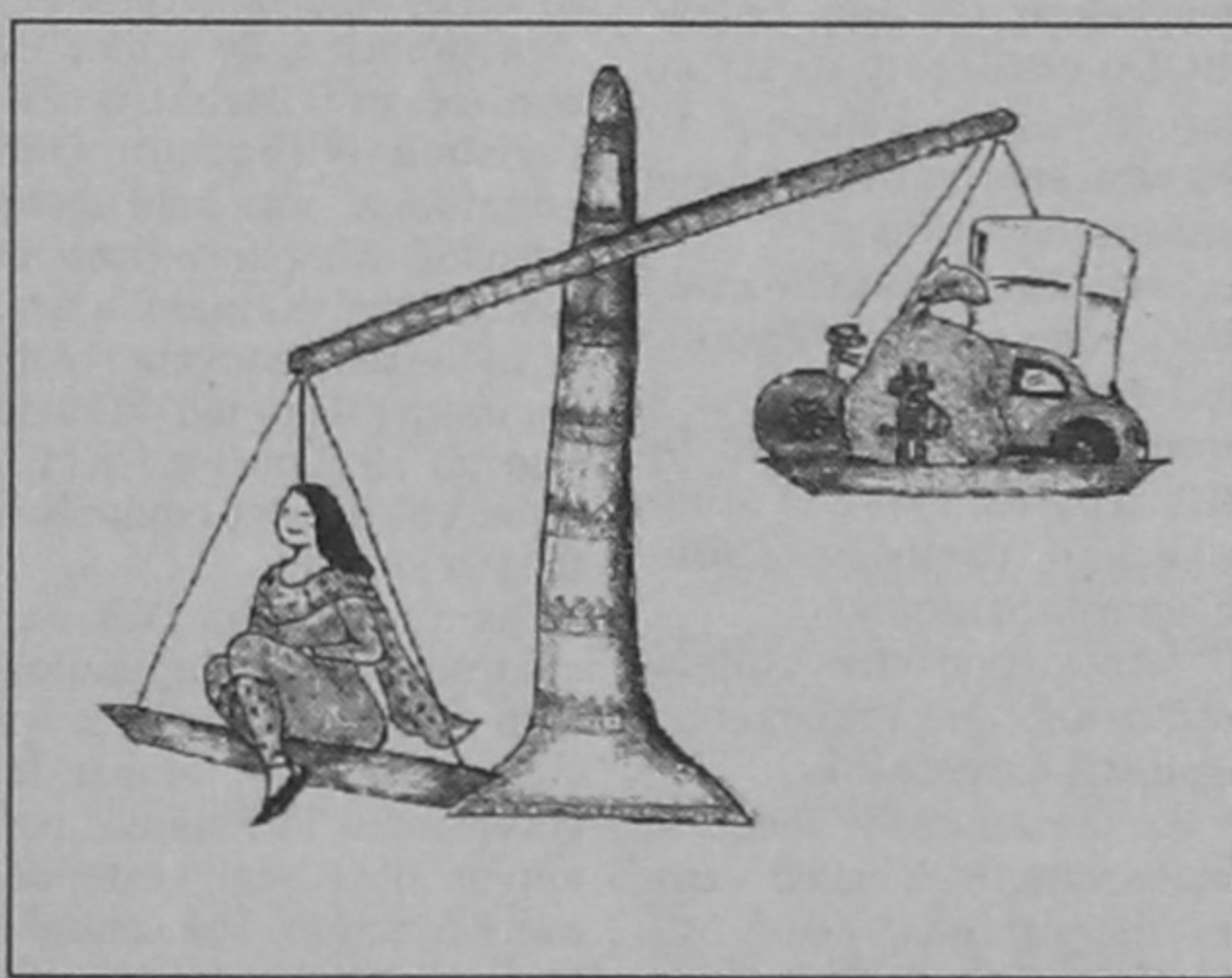
Like Chittagong, Dhaka City Corporation and the authorities concerned should take proper steps to restore canals and wetlands. Beside this, it needs proper recycle management, because polythene and similar substances are creating an unnecessary hindrance to flow of water through insufficient drainage system. Above all, there should be a comprehensive storm water drainage improvement plan to overcome the water logging problem as well as its environmental consequences.

Md. Rana Abbas

Student

Dept. of Geography
& Environmental Studies
Chittagong University

Dowry



The dowry system is the most contemptible as well as abused custom in our society. This heinous system is corroding the moral fabric of society. It has created never-ending troubles. It has become one of the major reasons of suicide of a large number women. Starting off with the best of intentions, it has now degenerated into a money making scheme, making despicable both the giver and the taker of dowry. There is no provision of dowry in Islamic rules.

Multifarious social ailments like wide-spread corruption, moral degeneration, intention to be rich overnight, dependence of women on their male-counterpart are some of the factors functioning behind this social malady. It should be banished once and for all.

Md Al-Amin Khan

Notre Dame College, Dhaka

been falling over time. Capital investment is not needed at this level and it should be shifted from primary to secondary level. Higher Secondary level can be replaced with 12 years of secondary level education. The university education also needs major reforms. Compared to five in 1971, the country has now thirty public and almost fifty five private universities. But the quality of education has deteriorated instead of improving. The major causes are misuse of autonomy, recruiting unfit teachers, corruption and above all excessive politicisation. Protecting education from politicisation is a must for public universities. For achieving Digital

Bangladesh by 2021, English literacy rate should be increased and English needs to be brought back to its earlier position. There is a strong relation between English literacy and ICT development and English is the lingua-franca for ICT.

Today the entire world is gradually becoming a digital world. I think the destination for the new generation is correctly pointed out by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Now her government has to realise that a 'digitally empowered nation' is a vision that can be achieved only through joint efforts by all sectors.

Samir Bhowmik

Lamabazar

Sylhet



Preventing floods

Almost every year, most parts of the country are being inundated after a sporadic or spasmodic cloudburst for some time during the rainy season. And the consequences are well known. But is it indefensible? If the government tries its best, it can certainly mitigate inundation of the regions, urban as well as rural, at least in

part. What should be done? If the big rivers, which are very shallow, and thus enhance the chances of flooding, are dredged properly and on a regular basis during the dry season, then the rivers would not become so turbid as they are now. We can get two-way benefit. Thus, the government should imme-

diately initiate action-plans and implement those for the greater benefit of our people, especially the destitute who are mostly affected by this natural calamity almost every year.

Gopal Sarkar
Telecom Engineer
Axiata Bangladesh Ltd.
Bogra