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Traffic jam on Dhaka roads

Anyone here as well as a visitor from abroad has to go through the mess and everyone asks if any administration in Bangladesh is working. Shame to the people in charge. Patients on ambulance rarely reach the hospital emergency. We are a poor country and the roads are quite wide but mismanaged. Keeping as it is, can we not mark the sides for ambulances, emergency services and VIP traffic? That way at least the administration can be clear to their conscience that they have made it possible for sick persons to reach emergency and fire fighters the spots in time. The slicing out of the road won't hinder the traffic.

I am sure everyone here knows that the major source of trouble is the unruly buses. At any time I have seen and counted at least 10-12 buses following each other and competing to pick up passengers. They have no timetable and are waiting anywhere and everywhere. In many cases the bus stops have been placed either at the turnings and/or next to the traffic lights. There are traffic police and sergeants who are either unfit or unwilling to do the jobs they are being paid for. There is no supervision by seniors.

I am not an expert in the field but observing the mess on the road, may I suggest something for the experts to consider.

(1) These days communication has improved a lot and an effective Control Room should be set up having monitors posted at the parking lots and at all the bus stops.

(2) There should be a parking lot exclusively for the buses at the starting and end point of a bus route. If required the starting and end point of the routes may be

extended or shortened as required to have the parking facility.

(3) All entry and exit of buses should be monitored and recorded.

(4) The bus stop should be curved out from the road and if required land may be acquired with due compensation to owners.

(5) A bus should be allowed to leave the parking lot or the first stop on receipt of confirmation from the second stop that the earlier bus had left the stop.

(6) There should be strict order and enforcement of not dropping off and picking up anywhere excepting the designated bus stops. If the existing bus stops are located near the turns and traffic lights, they should be moved at least 300-500 meters from those points. Parallel parking of buses to drop off and pick up of passengers must be stopped.

(7) The city has quite a few residential areas with many roads to and out from the main roads and this is also another factor creating traffic jams at the entries and exits to and from the main roads. Can the authorities not consider closing access to the main road with maybe 3 or 4 points open? That's what is done in any residential area in other countries. I am sure our policy makers are visiting other countries if not every alternate day but for sure once a month and have practical knowledge.

If the traffic is stagnant can we not imagine how much fuel we are unnecessarily burning with resultant environmental pollution? We are poor and can we afford this luxury?

Hope the suggestions will be considered by the learned policymakers.

Habibul Alam
Banani, Dhaka

Sonadia port's prospect

ABSS report was published in most papers on the 13th July about the construction programme of this deep sea port located at Sonadia Island off Cox's Bazar. It ambitiously reported of the work programme to have the port operational by 2020! Best of luck to the programmers! Hopefully they can do it, but "what is sauce for the goose" in our brand of politics, "is never sauce for the gander"! We can only hope and pray!

Unfortunately, we were not informed by the dailies, if the location is on the island or the mainland. Hopefully, it is the mainland, because for an island location, the link with the hinterland (Bangladesh) will only be possible by water transport! Even with a shore based location, the road and railway link between the proposed port and the hinterland will be a colossal and ambitious task. The perennial point to ponder is, will it be a meter or broad gauge railway link? Hopefully, all this has been addressed in the nine volume 2500 page study, prepared over the last three years as reported! I am hopeful that the transport aspect has been clarified as it relates to the railway rolling stock assets, which even today is not adequate. What will happen to Chittagong port? Will it be downgraded to a coastal port more for inland transport; or remain as a South East Asia feeder sea link only?

Hopefully, our newspapers will highlight these issues from the report and publish it along with the location shown in an enlarged map, including proposed road and rail links. If this materialises, then South East Bangladesh will be developed and the only loss may be the pristine beaches of Cox's Bazar, which will naturally become a crowded hub for rail and road transport.

We eagerly look forward to further information being published by the dailies, along with needed maps and sketches.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Trade deficit

The balance of trade is the difference between the monetary value of exports and imports of output in an economy over a certain period of time. A favourable balance of trade is known as a trade surplus and consists of exporting more than is imported, whereas an unfavourable balance of trade is known as a trade deficit or, informally, a trade gap.

At first Bangladesh started to open up its economy by liberalizing its trade policy during the mid-80s. Later it got momentum while the concept of globalisation of market spread all over the world. So Bangladesh started to join regional and world economic forums e.g. Saarc, WTO, BIMSTEC etc. aiming at

Tipaimukh, a looming threat

From the very beginning, environmentalists, experts, eminent citizens and conscious people are vehemently opposing Tipaimukh dam. They know that the dam will have disastrous effects on Bangladesh, as we are suffering due to the construction of Farakka Barrage.

We have become very disappointed to learn that the JS team which went to India came back without visiting Tipaimukh site and the delegation has become convinced that the Tipaimukh project was still in conceptual stage and New Delhi would not do anything that will harm Bangladesh. The team may become happy with the sweet talk but the matter is not so simple, we are not feeling happy or assured. We can foresee that India will go ahead with the project.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that she would not let

India do anything which will harm the country. We hope she will remain firm and true to her words. We also hope that Indian Prime Minister Monmohan Singh will

keep his promise of not doing anything which will inflict sufferings on the people of Bangladesh.

Nur Jahan
One-mail



boosting international trade.

However, there are lots of arguments for and against this globalisation concept across the globe. There is little doubt that globalisation is a threat to weak states like Bangladesh, but for disciplined and efficient states it provides opportunities to foster growth and economic development. As a result, Bangladesh suffers huge trade gap with next-door countries. It currently suffers a significantly large deficit with India. In the year 2007-08 Bangladesh's imports from India stood at US\$ 3375.10 million, while exports amounted to US\$ 358.08 million. It is to be noted that only 1 per cent of India's total imports are from Bangladesh, whereas over 15 per cent of Bangladesh's total imports come from India.

Bangladesh also suffers trade gap with Pakistan. The two-way trade between these two countries in recent years has been in the range of US\$ 300-\$350 million, and Bangladesh's exports have hovered around US\$ 70 million only.

Though Bangladesh is one of the signatories of SAFTA effective from 1st July, 2006, it does not bring any trade benefits for the Saarc nations. The main impediment of trade in South Asia is lack of confidence at political level and most of the countries in the region consider business from the political point of view. Besides, the political and military rivalry between India and Pakistan is another significant reason for Saarc's inability to play a crucial role in integrating South Asia.

Finally, I would like to mention that Bangladesh should pursue bilateral FTAs with its neighbouring countries such as India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka etc. It would significantly help to narrow

down the trade gaps with its neighbouring countries. Besides, as Bangladesh has deficiency in negotiating skills, it cannot bargain effectively before the global forums to capitalize on its logical demands. So, Bangladesh has to take the initiative to augment negotiation skills of the government officials by arranging suitable and timely training programmes and devise appropriate policies. Otherwise, we will invariably face huge trade deficits with the neighbouring countries and the rest of the world.

Suman Saha
MBA (Strategic and International Management)
University of Dhaka

Missing for three years?

I read the news of the missing of a government official. The family alleged that the police are not taking any action. He left home for morning walk and did not return. It shows that the criminals remain active since early morning. Actually, the streets remain quite empty in the early morning which facilitates the criminal to implement their scheme. So, in the morning there must be more patrolling by the police.

I do not understand how can a person remain missing for three years. The police must be more sensitive on this issue. Because he is the son of a freedom fighter. The issue must also get more media coverage. This is the month of August. The most significant for any Bengali because we lost our Father of the Nation in this month. The police must vow to find out the son of a freedom fighter within this month.

Pradip Das
Dhaka

IPO for senior citizens

In these days of spiralling prices of almost everything, especially those of everyday consumption, like food, conveyance, rent, clothing, etc, it is the fixed income group who is suffering the most. In this category fall the retired senior citizens who are not able to work and whose savings are being constantly eroded by inflation, taxes etc.

The government has already recognized their plight and in each succeeding budget offered them an increasing allowance. But these are a few hundred taka only per person per month, available to just a few lakh people, which is a drop in the ocean. Many such people however, are respectable and dignified and do not go for this paltry dole, that involves buttering up many dubious characters with sweaty hands.

The government has further introduced since last year income tax concessions for those above 70 years of age. This is commendable, but not enough.

The Stock Market has been quite vibrant of late with many

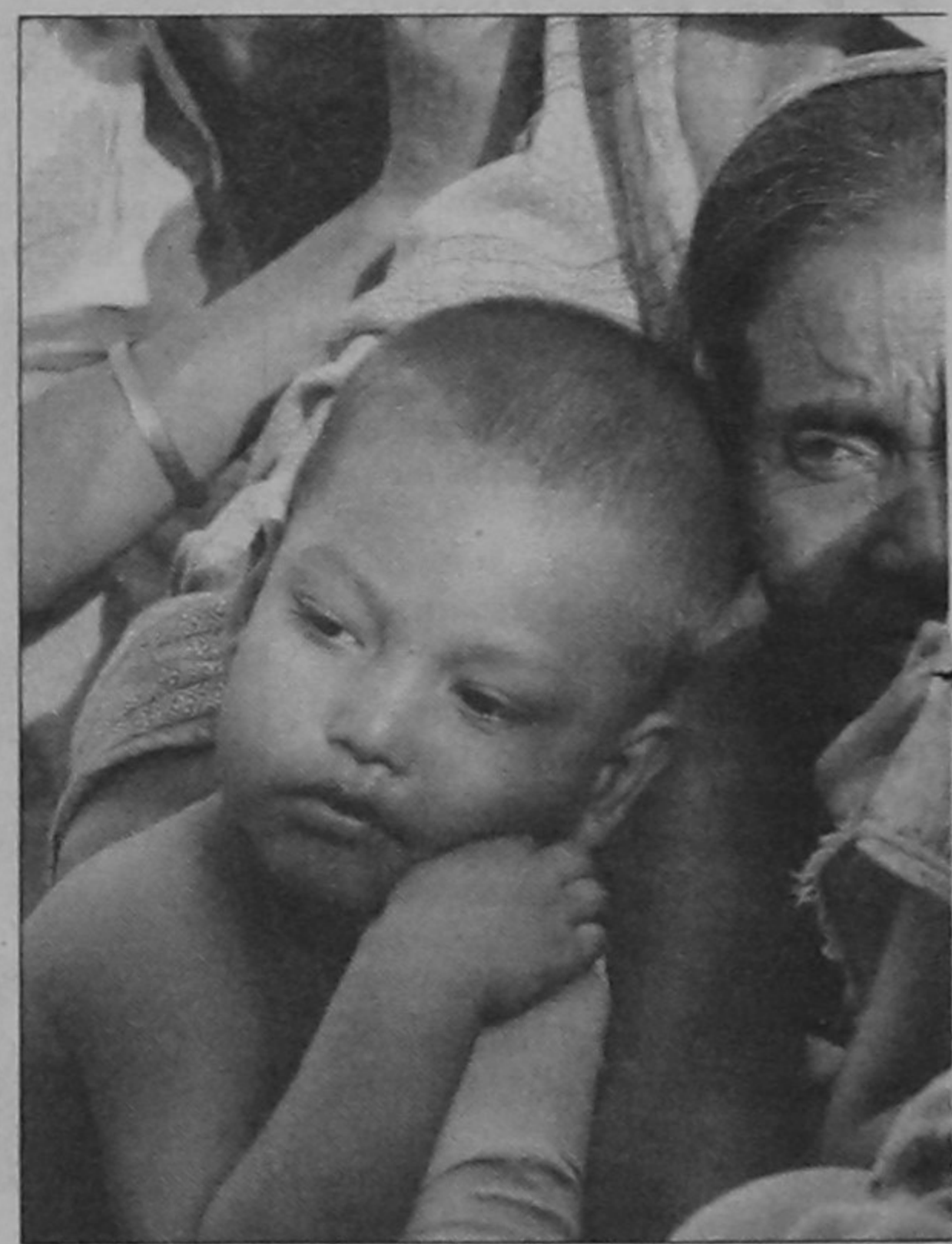
IPOs being floated, but such is the number of applicants that it is a very lucky person indeed who gets an allotment through the inevitable lottery. What I propose is that since there is a special quota for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) in each IPO, there should be a special quota also for Resident Bangladesh Senior Citizen (males 70 and women 60 and above). The only addition in the application form would be a small column for "Date of Birth" and a crossing with coloured ink on top to identify and separate Senior Citizen applications for allotment purposes. Excess applications could also be subject for lottery to make everything fair and square.

My second suggestion is that interest/profit payable on each fixed deposit of maximum Tk 5,00,000 of senior citizens, representing their modest savings, should be exempt from the 10% deduction now in vogue.

Will the government, SEC and Dhaka Stock Exchange kindly give favourable consideration to my suggestions as soon as possible?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Poverty alleviation



I am very much agreeable to the comments made by the Honourable Finance Minister on the NGO credit programme and its rate of interest relating to poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development in rural areas.

In Bangladesh, thousands of NGOs have been working since long with diversified rural development programmes. Besides, some of these NGOs are also involved in commercial activities.

Presently, over 56,000 NGOs have been working in the country at various locations, including some international relief organisations and UN bodies and all of these activities are directed towards rural development and poverty alleviation to achieve sustainable development for the rural women and hardcore poor.

If you take the real value of money delivered to the rural people by these NGOs over the last 30 years, for rural and economic development, definitely we could have had positive change, but in reality, the visibility toward changes is limited and dismal and not much prospective.

The finance minister has rightly pointed out how the money is being used and why the borrowers fail to achieve expected results.

We need to address the following to have the answer:

Some NGOs give emphasis on earning on credit programme, rather than looking into development prospect and adopt aggressive methods to recover the money.

Some NGOs never guide the borrowers on the use of the money borrowed.

The government should address all such issues.

Nasarullah
One-mail

Electricity generation

The shortage of electricity is a major problem for Bangladesh standing on the way of its development. Day by day the problem is taking a serious turn. We have introduced DST. Experts will make analysis of the whole matter and subsequently draw a conclusion for future guidance. Whatever may be the conclusion there is no other option but to go for construction of new power stations for increasing generation. Following actions are necessary.

1. Proper maintenance, overhauling, close professional supervision. De-rated power stations should be brought to its rated capacity.

2. Close supervision and monitoring of the running power generation projects, so that these come to operation as scheduled or earlier.

3. Installation of solar, wind, mini/micro hydro and other non-conventional power generation plants all over the country.

4. Construction of 1x125 MW coal based power station beside the existing Barapukuria power station.

5. Reservoir capacity of catchment areas of Karnafuli Hydro power station has to be increased through dredging and other necessary means to get full production from the power station.

6. Parallel work should continue for nuclear power plants.

7. Load management, demand side management, holiday staggering, CFL lamps, working shift changing etc are the common measures to be taken along with systems loss reduction measures.

Apart from the above measures, gas compressors have to be installed at the soonest in the gas transmission line in the required position to maintain uniform pressure in the gas transmission system which will help to regulate gas pressure.

Finally, when we can import consumable goods and luxurious goods, why cannot we import electricity for the progress of the country?

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

Tigers' record win (August 17, 2009)

The fielding was awful. Coventry was dropped twice and the first one was at 13! The decision to use expensive bowlers was confusing. Shakib needs to do a better job as captain.

Ahsan

Congratulations, Tigers. We are so proud of you. You have shown superb performance against WI and bottom ranking Zimbabwe.

The next task is to conquer the real cricket powers.

We have faith in you, go ahead with persistent hard work and endless effort. God bless you.

Dr Islam

Awesome display of keeping cool nerve and patience. Congratulations, Tigers.

Azman

It's a great victory. But the Tigers have to improve their bowling.

Md Anowar

This may not be as good as it can get, but winning the series before the final match was still a mark of dominance over the Zimbabweans. Coventry deserves applause for equalling the highest individual run record, Rasel was witty enough

not to have conceded more runs to break the record. This is a big win that will give confidence while batting second and chasing 300 plus, hats off to Tamim, he showed character. Others also deserve applause!

Zaheed Mahmood

Congrats to the players for their great achievement. Best wishes for the heroes-- Tamim and Mohammad Ashraful.

Asif

We feel proud of BANGLADESH. We expect this type of achievement all the time. Carry on Tigers...

Mafi

Well done, Bangladesh cricket team! Now it's time to perform against the real powers. We expect to see much closer matches against those teams.

Sabuktagin Rahman

This vicious and despicable crime has far-reaching, profound and long-term consequences for the victim. The victim should not let the rapists win by committing suicide. That would be another tragedy and unfortunately girls in Bangladesh have taken their own lives when repeatedly subjected to sexual harassment, let alone rape. I think

they are unable to deal with their shame and humiliation. And precisely that's why rape victims typically are reluctant to testify before the court.

Abdus Samad

Tigers! Is there anybody who can stop you? We believe NOT. Special Congrats to Tamim.

Advocate Bablu Sherif

Girl gang raped (August 12, 2009)

We are shocked at this heinous incident. For God's sake, please take action and bring the culprits to justice.

Mahbub Ali

Such a collapse in morality is unacceptable in a civic society. I hope the victim will get justice.

Rahman

We hope to see the culprits given exemplary punishment as soon as possible. If justice is delayed, it will be denied.

Prodip

I hope these offenders are brought to justice and this child is given the full medical attention she desperately needs.

Husain

I would like to see crossfire justice. But it will not happen.

Sawgat Chowdhury

The law enforcement agencies should form a highly competent cyber crime unit at once and the personnel there should be recruited from the private sector. There is an ominously increasing trend in such heinous crimes as reported in the article. Unless there are few exemplary punishments coupled with an even stricter legal framework in place, this trend may spiral out of control. In the USA, FBI employs immense resource to nab this type of criminals and we could follow their example.

Hafizur Rahman Arman

I am surprised that the officer-in-charge claimed he was unaware of the incident.

Syed Sobhan

By all means, it's a heinous crime against a minor girl. The whole country must come forward to protect the helpless girl, and demand punishment to the criminals.

A. Islam

We don't need the police who don't even record a case.

Md. Abdullah

Exemplary punishment should be given to the culprits and the law enforcers should give due security to the victim and her family.

Misbah Uddin Kadery

Why do we need the proof that this girl is raped by two persons since they play it on CD and mobile. They committed three crimes:

1. They raped a girl.
2. They recorded it in mobile.
3. They printed it on CD and distributed it.

These two people should be punished for committing three crimes.

Kais

The law-enforcing agencies should help and ensure that the girl and her parents get fair judgement by submitting charge sheet against the rapists.

Parvez Babul

Best wishes for the Tigers. I am speechless about Tamim's batting. Thanks to him for a valuable innings.

Arju

Unexpected and uncivilized. Nasarullah