# Electronic Mood Swings

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When it comes to pessimists I can be the most stubborn kind always expecting the worst to happen and that nothing will happen according to expectations. Generally I don't really like being around people who exude constant negativity so I suppose I better get a grip of the situation before I become the person I dislike the most.

But sometimes it's really hard not to get pulled down by the Negativity Ghost. Take a week or so ago when I kept trying to log on to the net, just to check Gmail. I thought it was me, otherwise how would it be possible that after the ninth time of trying to reply to an important email, the result was pure nothing. And you know how frustrating it can be when you can't answer emails. It makes you look so lame. The person at the other end of cyberspace will think that you are just too lazy or too much of a snob to deem it necessary to answer an email, which by the way, was only to show concern for *you*. So how do you explain to people who do not live here, that sometimes, actually many times, the servers just decide to go on strike, for bizarre reasons - too much rain, hence water in the lines, rats eating away the cables, cables destroyed by unidentified objects.




Then I read in the papers with admittedly, some relief: the internet and telecommunications across the country were snapped for nearly 15 hours as the optical fibre line at Patiya was disconnected in the early hours. The report also mentioned that the fibre optic express line (something I will not strain my brain to understand and neither should you) that links Dhaka and other parts of the country with 'the outside world' as it got drowned in the water and was therefore damaged. I'm not sure why exactly these delicate lines were placed under the bridge, over the canal, as the report said, seems kind of ambitious not to expect it to *touch* the water at least. Now they tell me it's because of the earthquake a few weeks ago which shook up the lines, sounds perfectly forgivable, I mean if it was a meaner quake nobody would even have the chance to complain, let alone read about it in next day's paper. It also means I am off the hook as far as my 'jinx' with electronic goods is concerned.

Then somebody said that it might be four days before the Internet services are running properly again. That would be complete disaster as I began to realise how utterly dependent we are on the Net. All our columnists send in their columns through Internet, sometimes even our own writers mail their articles before coming to work. We need to download pictures, new contributions, acknowledge write-ups being sent from all over the globe, get last minute edited copies, the list is endless. A glitch like this could end in complete paralysis for our publication.

Thankfully things didn't come to such tragedy and somehow we managed although we have become quite stoical when it comes to the Internet. One moment you are reading a very important mail and the next thing you know a message will pop up saying "oops, there seems to be an error in downloading, try HTML view or click on 'try again' or just stop trying and give up". Of course we don't just 'give up' what do they think we are, losers? We are done with the exasperated sighs and growling sounds that come out involuntarily from our throats. We just sit back and do other things like twiddle our thumbs or stare blankly at the flickering fluorescent lights while we wait till the computer is 'in the mood'.

Speaking of which lifts can be quite treacherous too. It can get stuck at some unholy height, like the 19th floor and there may not be a vent in sight. The other day, before Ramadan started, I went to a workshop at the LGED Bhaban and found out that people were waiting for lunch to arrive. Apparently there had been a mix up and the organisers were duly upset because the canteen staff of the building announced that they were sending lunch at 2pm instead of 1pm as instructed because they were going by the 'ager' (former) time. Strange that a government organisation would totally defy the state stipulated daylight saving timings! But what was most intriguing was that even when it was 2 pm the food was still not coming. It was stuck in the lift on the fourth floor and somehow the generators (if there were any) could not get the lift going. I imagined with horror, the stuffiness of that lift with the fumes of hot food clouding everything and the poor staff carrying it practically suffocating, unless they were really hungry and decided to sample some of it themselves. I did not want to see the end of this particular nightmare and had an eerie feeling the jinx was at it again. So I did what any pessimistic, superstitious, jinx-afflicted character would do. I bolted, down the stairs of course. ■