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Earthquake



Recently we had a 6.0 magnitude earthquake that was not felt severely. Earthquake researchers have predicted a massive earthquake, which may cause devastations, especially in the capital city of Dhaka. According to a study conducted by Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET) in 2003, about 60 percent structures in old Dhaka are non engineered, of those 50 percent are made of flammable materials. We have the Building Code 1993 and building construction rules of 2006. But truly few constructions are being made under those regulations.

Experts say all the non-engineered structures of Dhaka city will collapse even in a moderate intensity earthquake. In my view citizens should abide by following precautions during earthquake:

Indoors:

1) Take cover under and hold on to a piece of heavy furniture or stand against

inside wall.

2) Stay indoors until the shaking stops.

3) Stay away from windows and doors.

4) Never take the elevator.

5) If you are in bed hold on, stay there protect your head with a pillow.

Outdoors:

1) Find a clear spot away from buildings and trees and power lines

2) Drop to the ground until the shaking stops.

In a car:

1) Slow down and drive to a clear place.

2) Turn on emergency flashers and slow to a stop. Do not stop on overpasses or bridges.

3) Be careful about overhead hazards such as power lines or falling building debris.

Md. Nazmus Sakib

Student

Dept. of Geography and Environmental

Studies, University of Chittagong

Quality primary education

Primary education is a basic human right. On top of that, to me, this is the most crucial period of life in terms of acquiring education. In this time, whatever a student learns he or she takes it for granted, and remembers it forever. Life is very tender and green and can easily be manipulated. On the other hand, they can be developed as the best human beings.

The primary schools of our country are poor in quality. They don't even meet the minimum standard of education. Even though these things have been highlighted and focused in the press, no innovative programmes have been launched yet. Though governments have made some scattered attempts time and again, no concrete plans have even been proposed or

implemented.

Without quality primary education people can't move in the right direction. As such, primary education is more important than higher education. It is primary education which sows the seeds of life.

So far, governments have done a great job making primary education free for all. But, making it free of cost is not everything. It is quality education which must be ensured. Otherwise, the plan of making a good nation with quality people will remain an elusive one.

Ariful Islam Laskar
Dept. of English
Jahangirnagar University

42 MPs never paid it!

How unfortunate, I feel pity for the MPs who did pay, that is! I mean, why did they pay

their income tax? Didn't they know that if you are an MP or a minister in our country, the law doesn't apply to you? I request the Treasury to immediately refund all the 303 MPs and apologise for all the inconvenience caused to their families.

Let us be honest, brothers and sisters! MPs are our 'law-makers'. They work very hard to represent us; they go to extreme length to understand our pain, problems and our happiness. They spend so much money to become MPs so that they can do good for us. And in return we ask them to pay income tax. How rude of us!

From now on all our honourable MPs should be exempted from that little irritation called the 'income tax'. It will keep everyone happy, wouldn't it?
Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Myanmar situation

All of a sudden your paper is totally silent on the Myanmar situation. Why? We are anxious to know what is really going on.

Syed Towheed
Virginia, USA

Fascinating innovation

Yesterday (18th October) early in the morning I chanced to come across a running TV programme about two brothers from a village somewhere in Munshiganj, who had built a Wright brother's type single engine monoplane; all by themselves, which they are sure will fly! The programme held me spellbound; and I watched it till the end!

The monoplane shown on TV, parked in front of the brother's residence, was of tubular construction, with the wings attached to the lower part of the body, like any single-engine light plane. It had a two bladed propeller, and from the sound, it was run by a small petrol or kerosene engine. The fixed landing strut, in front had two scooter type tyres. The whole aeroplane was indeed an extraordinary example of innovation and capability shown by the two gifted brothers! They stated that they got all the knowledge about designing and building the aircraft through various websites through the Internet! This is the great blessing of the digital age; where acquiring knowledge and skill is at the end of one's fingertip, literally and factually, 'on any matter that you fancy'!

It seems that they are now awaiting government aviation department's permission, to test fly the aircraft that they built. I would request our authorities concerned, as well as our Hon. Prime Minister, to help and give the necessary permission for the test flight of this wonderful home made aircraft! They deserve all support and help from our authorities.

Personally, as an engineer, I congratulate, the innovative brothers for conceiving, designing and building a fascinating flying machine!

I hope that they soon test fly their aircraft; re-enacting the early twentieth century's first manned air flight of the Wright brothers! Diganta TV authorities, and all our print and audio-visual media, should extend all their help and resources to enable the gifted young men to test fly the aircraft, an effort Bangladesh can be proud of!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Domestic workers: the flip side

Many women liberation outfits and NGOs are quite (rightly or wrongly) vocal about the rights of the domestic female workers popularly known as maid servants. These 'right outfits' incite them to serve certain interests and make the domestic workers more hostile towards the employers. However, many incidents of abuse, violence etc have been reported in the print and electronic media. We condemn the incidents and demand impartial enquiry and justice.

But blatant acts of blackmailing, emotional extortion by the domestic house workers are also very much true and rampant. It is more prevalent among the female house workers, especially in dual working households. The domestic workers literally hold the employers' hostage. Let me tell you our story. We are working couples with a working son. So, the maids or 'buas' do not have to cook for lunch, except for themselves. They only serve simple breakfast, afternoon tea and 'not so sumptuous' dinner. Our present maid demanded a raise after three months of employment. We argued that it was not the norm. One normally gets an increment after one year of service and sometimes earlier for rendering extra ordinary service.

Later on, we relented as she threatened a 'walk out' and paralyse our household. She again resorted to the same blackmailing tactic after two months! They are more interested to watch TV, talk over the telephone etc than performing their duties! A state of stress and tension prevails in the household. During Eid time they demanded 'expensive' ornaments which are not commensurate with their social and economic status. They fashion themselves as the TV actresses! They live, eat and dress well, still they are not happy and satisfied. They earn and save more than the garment workers who live in filthy slums, hardly eat good food or quality protein. In psychology these acts are called 'Tyranny of the poor'. Most of the 'babais' will narrate similar true stories.

Sometimes the maids express annoyance if asked to cook more dishes! They complain "Apnader bashay onek kam!" In most of the households, negligence of duty by the maid servants leads to quarrel and sometimes acts of violence by the employers (which we do not support). Appeasement has got a limit too. We wish we could manage without them!

We, the tormented, request DS to run a neutral story of the blackmailed and tormented households. After all, both the sides should be heard!

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

More CNG scooters needed

The city dwellers in Metropolitan Dhaka, especially the middle-income group, are facing tremendous trouble while moving from one place to another. Private sedan is out of their reach due to financial limitations. Taxi-cab service is not easily available and also costly for them. When a family wants to join in a marriage ceremony, it needs a low cost vehicle to go to a community centre. When a patient has to be shifted to a hospital, an affordable baby taxi is needed. If a family wants to go to shopping to celebrate a festival, a baby-taxi is required. To appear in a public examination hall, a student needs transport service of a baby taxi. It is the reality in Dhaka metropolis that affordable transport is not easily available. On the other hand, one cannot move to all desired places by available bus service in Dhaka Metropolis. It is very difficult for females to travel by bus owing to limited service and uncivilized behaviour of a section of male passengers. But it is unfortunate that in the past, governments ignored the acute need of city dwellers.

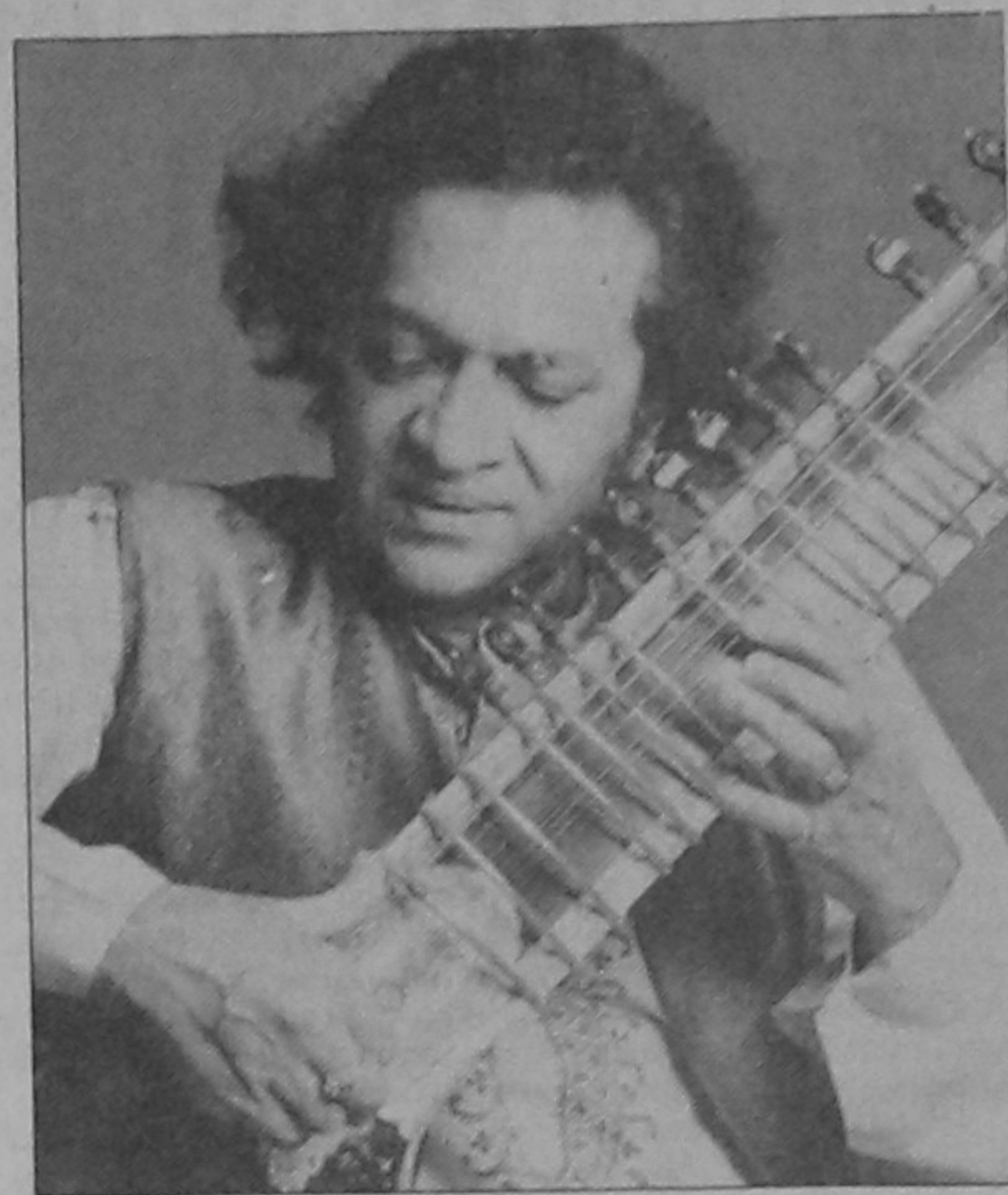
We urge the elected government to withdraw all sorts of financial and administrative restrictions on import and registration of CNG driven baby taxi. Definitely, it would improve the movement of middle-income group people as well as movement of poor patients.

Mohammad Tahmid Ashraf
Shiddheshwary
University-College
Outer Circular Road
Dhaka

Honouring Ravi Shankar

It is our national shame that even after 38 years of independence, we could not honour Pundit Ravi Shankar, who along with the Beatles, brought our cry of freedom to the world at large. We can still honour him while he is alive. If the government doesn't take any initiative, can a citizens' group, sponsored by the media, organise this?

We in the USA can help you in making such arrangements as he is presently living in San Diego, CA.
Iqbal Mahmood
Ph.D., P.E.
Los Angeles, CA



Digital fisheries!

A convener of a upazila Awami Volunteer League in Goforgaon, occupied a pond and dubbed it DIGITAL FISHERIES. I bet he really wishes to realise the dream of his party well, in his own inflected way!

The word DIGITAL, thus, is in flux in Bangladesh. Divorced from its binary origin, it rather, has morphed into an Awami political jargon. Even the arch rival BNP once tried to adopt the term and complained of DIGITAL KARCHUPI during the last general election that was felt to be fair and square by every sane measure. Now DIGITAL is largely an Awami promise and Awami burden as well.

I am pretty much non-digital. Binary is not my forte. But I understand the utmost importance of digital or electronic governance for the very purpose of economic uplift. But this is no panacea, for e-governance is no substitute for good governance and rule of law. This fact is clearly demonstrated by a report in a national daily that an online tender process was thwarted by AL-associated goons by intimidating the prospective contractors for a so-called SAMJWATA.

Bangladesh has gone digital and is going digital with lightning celerity even without a clear vision from the previous or the present government. And Bangladesh, we all know, will continue to go digital no matter what the "slogan" of the government is, because the private sector of Bangladesh, unlike its public counterpart, is smart and understands what DIGITAL means.

Our Honourable Prime Minister has access to many IT experts including her IT-expert expatriate son. And it is no rocket science that she can not comprehend what needs to be done in terms of supportive government policy. But I am sure, at this juncture, nothing is more important than establishing the RULE OF LAW. Once that is achieved, the dream of DIGITAL BANGLADESH will be a real one, for our entrepreneurs are really smart and forward thinking.

Mohammad Zaman
One-mail

Our tigers

This has reference to the news item-Tigers to become extinct in 15 years- filed by Inam Ahmed from Nepal. I doubt Bangladesh Tigers would die down or disappear during the coming 15 years provided the government can control poaching which is the lowest in the subcontinent, can stop killing of stray tigers by the members of the public living close to the Sundarbans and if the sea level does not rise above 10 to 15cm during the coming decades.

Also the government must not allow radio collaring of our tigers because they live in a confined situation-just within the Sundarbans and nowhere else in the country. Logically, due to the impact of the drug used on the tigers they become weaker than those who have not been drugged. Because of the impenetrable nature of the Sundarbans habitat, nobody can follow the tiger for long even after putting a radio collar. We have no means of following them by helicopter or small planes. Very little information can be obtained by tranquillising a tiger and putting a radio collar

on its neck. Rather, the government must start a Wildlife Department that should get sufficient funds to patrol the borders of the Sundarbans to stop poaching and straying of tigers into the human habitations.

The govt also must start a compensation programme and insurance policies for the domesticated animals and people to cover any injury, loss of property and death due to attacks of tigers within or along the boundary of the Sundarbans. Without these our people cannot be motivated to save the tigers living along the boundary of the Sundarbans.

However, this is not the first time Bangladesh missed the bus that seals the fate of Bengal Tiger and other mega wildlife in the Indian subcontinent. It's the Forest Department which is solely responsible for the security and safety of the wildlife wealth of the country because it has failed to separate its wildlife division and create a separate wildlife department. The FD first missed the bus when it did not cooperate with the WWF mission/Guy Mountfort and Eric Hosking's Mission to the then East Pakistan towards the end of 1960s and after independence in 1971.

India came forward and Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, even removed lion as the national animal of India and replaced it with our Bengal Tiger. She encouraged Indian FD and Environment Departments with the insistence of Dr Salim Ali and Bombay Natural History Society to launch a TIGER PROJECT.

Bangladesh was sidelined because FD remained indifferent throughout its whole history and did not know how to get and utilise those foreign funds properly. A few times they got money in the name of wildlife projects they are known to have utilised most of the amount for building rest houses, buying cars, speed boats, etc., without developing the FD manpower towards the Wildlife discipline or for the welfare of the tiger, elephants and other wildlife. It seems they are so satisfied with the extra income they get from selling and planting indigenous and exotic trees by clearing natural forests, as was evidenced during the past caretaker government when sack full of money was found in some FD officials houses, that they had least concern about the wildlife wealth of the country.

The government must start a separate Wildlife Department and trust them with the conservation of wildlife in the country living not only in declared wildlife sanctuaries, reserves, game reserves, bird sanctuaries, critically endangered areas, zoos and captive breeding centres, world heritage sites or Ramsar Sites but also those free ranging in or near human habitations and farming areas as has been done in Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Nepal, our next door neighbour and much poorer than us, has declared such a heartening programme to save the tiger as reported in today's (28th October, 2009) report by Inam Ahmed, who deserves praise for highlighting the tiger episode that our government must get encouragement from.
Dr Reza Khan
A nature lover

Quota for war heroes' children

It has been reported (DS October 18) that the government is taking an initiative to grant 30 per cent quota to the children of our war heroes in the ensuing selection of assistant judges. I would request the government to give a second thought to the idea. A judge must possess a very high level of IQ, profound knowledge and integrity. A war hero's son or daughter may not necessarily have those qualities of head and heart and may not qualify in the selection tests. There is nothing wrong in that. Everybody is not cut for everything. If one does not qualify in the tests for the selection of judges one may try to do something else where s/he might excel. If a wrong candidate who does not have the required intellectual ability, knowledge and integrity is appointed as a judge s/he will be failing to apply her/his judicial mind correctly. People who will be going to such a judge will be deprived of justice. People will suffer in the hands of such an incompetent judge for about 30 years or so till s/he retires. Merit and competence should be the only criteria while selecting candidates for posts like those of judges, and nothing else. It is said that judges dispense justice on His behalf. People who will deliberately select wrong kind of people as judges will surely be held responsible by God on the Great Day of Judgment. That is what we all believers believe in.

Our war heroes are the greatest sons and daughters of our country. Their children deserve our highest consideration. They must be looked after by the state. Everything possible must be done to ameliorate their hardship. But nothing should be done which ultimately goes against the interest of the people of the country. They may be given free education in educational institutions run by the government; they may be given free medical treatment in all government hospitals, the deserving ones may be given ration at subsidized rates, they may be given bank loans on very soft terms to do business; they may be given government khas land for farming; or they may be given priority in appointment in such jobs which are not as sensitive as that of a judge.

Brig Gen (Retd) Syed Ashrafuzzaman
San Francisco, USA

New school timing
My daughter's school begins at 8:00am. So, she has to start from home at 7:00am. During the time of her preparation at home, it is almost dark and thus 2-3 bulbs have to be lighted. Before introducing the new timing we did not need to switch on any light. Like us, thousands of people switch on their bulbs before sending their wards to school. I do not understand why schools have been brought under this new timing as schools break up some hours ahead of sunset.

In this case we cannot save electricity, rather we have to wastage it.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Managing traffic

Time distance in Dhaka town is far more than the real distance. To reach a destination of 15 minutes drive with respect to distance may often require two hours or so. Almost every day some reports and editorials are published in the newspapers about traffic jam. Experts are also giving their views and opinions for mitigation of the traffic jam but with no results. Energy and time both are lost in the traffic jam.

It is quite natural that population and the number of vehicles will rise with time. The problem lies with unplanned construction of roads, malls, schools, colleges, govt. and private offices, business centres, housing estates, hospital etc. The government probably gets maximum revenue from the transport sector of Dhaka city but unfortunately minimum expenditure is made on the development of the roads of the city in comparison to that of other parts of the country where traffic density is less and revenue income is also less. Experts are advocating elevated expressway, underground railway, mono rail, construction of car parks etc. etc. which are all time and money consuming. But we need a solution to the problem today or tomorrow. This is difficult but not impossible. This is hopefully possible by offering better customized traffic management. Our experienced traffic police and local experts can contribute to solving traffic congestion. Some suggestions are as follows.

(i) Deployment of more traffic policemen with better salaries and ensuring strict compliance with traffic rules.

(ii) Schools should run buses for their students to obviate the need for using private cars.

(iii) Relocate less important government offices outside of the capital.

(iv) Vertical crossing of the roads needs to be discouraged as far as possible. Vehicles will cross the road going along the flow of the vehicles in the natural sequence without stopping and disturbing the flow of the vehicles while crossing the road. Vehicles' flow should be allowed to go uninterrupted.

(v) Pick up, trucks, push carts, vans etc. should not be allowed to run during peak time.

(vi) During peak time, all trains will wait at the airport railway station.

(vii) Repair of roads and footpaths should be done immediately. Footpaths should be made ready and free for use.

(viii) Garbage collection places should be situated off the roads.

(ix) Buses should not be allowed to stop anywhere they like. Rather buses should stop at bus stops or alongside the edge of the road without disturbing the flow of vehicles.

Over and above, traffic load shedding like electric power load shedding should be imposed. The methodology of traffic load shedding should be developed in a pragmatic and customized way. Say, for example persons/families/offices having more vehicles will be allowed to ply on the roads with even numbers and odd numbers on alternate days except holidays.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka



PRITO REZA / DRIVEN