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Population boom

There is again talk of the ever-increasing population that is **PLAGUING** our nation! It is absolutely valid, genuine and monstrous. Nowhere in the world today population increases unbridled, unplanned.

Our poverty, backwardness and lack of competitiveness, lack of creativity, lack of resources, indecisiveness, and overall lack of courage and all that is holding us back is mostly our own creation! It really is. Why don't we look at so many national issues that are happening every day? A lot of our crimes, grimes and insincerity are hushed up under the carpet.

If we look at only some of the basic and core areas we can make remarkable and visible progress in our national lives. I wish to point out the following areas, which many of your readers have time and again:

1. **Population planning.** Population should be planned and made productive, and balanced. It should be considered a valuable national asset, entity and able to make real contribution. If population is shaped and made productive, within the sustainable level, then the State can look after the individual as well as the groups in a better way.

2. **Education policy.** It should be able to make genuine, competitive 'managers', who can manage all that they confront.

Education alone will open up minds, and ensure Creativity in thoughts and actions. If we have good education, we can manage



PHOTO: ANURUL HOAN

our lives well and in the crises situation can work out a solution to overcome hurdles. Good Education will teach us to behave well also in politics, in Governance, in Society, in schools, raising children, decision-making, everywhere.

We need good, passionate teachers at all levels. They need their dignity and recognition as well as sustainable salary other allowable perks. Otherwise, we shall not attract talents in offering Education. It is of prime importance. Only raising the salary of the bureaucrats is not going to solve the long-term issues needed for nation building.

3. **INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING.....** This is a serious necessity now. This will create jobs at all levels. We are too far behind many others even at LDC level!

4. **GOOD, RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE.....** Do I need to say anything on this? People holding public office and the government

in power are the decision makers. The nation looks up to their policies and practices. They have to be Genuinely Competitive, capable of assessing the requirement of the 'sectors' and balanced decision making. Not based on political considerations, and the like.

I strongly believe that Sheikh Hasina's govt. will consider these few issues with due sincerity and try to prioritise the projects and issues. We need to look FORWARD, and not backwards if we are to compete in today's world.

Last but not the least, I call upon the Mayor of Dhaka to please come out of his office and see the road conditions all over Dhaka City! ABSOLUTELY APPALING! Pregnant with Dirt and Filth! The drains are 'home' to diseases and are disgusting. How does he allow this to happen? Only improved roads and cleanliness can make a huge difference to our city life.

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Climate change

Global climate change poses a potential danger to the development efforts, ecosystem and productive capacity of our environment. Climate change, particularly the temperature rise due to greenhouse gases may cause rise of sea level. According to one study, one meter net rise of the sea level would inundate 17% of the total area of Bangladesh, particularly the low lying flood plain and coastal areas, including Sundarbans and man made coastal mangrove forests. It is a big threat to land use, its system, related sectors and overall ecology and economy.

The coast of Bangladesh is known as a zone of multiple vulnerabilities due to climate change. It is prone to severe natural disasters, such as cyclones, storm surges and floods. Records of the last 200 years show that at least 70 major cyclones have hit the coastal belt.

Although 50% (1,004,639 hecter) of the forests (including largest mangrove forest-- Sundarbans) of Bangladesh are in the coastal region, these are insufficient to protect the coastal belt.

Deforestation rate is very high in coastal areas. The principle cause of deforestation is expansion of agricultural land through cutting the forest areas. Growth of population and economic pressure are two prominent factors leading to large scale clearing of forests. Almost all of the

mangrove forests in the vicinity of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have already been cleared for other land uses. It increases the risk during the time of any natural disaster like cyclone and tidal surge in the coastal areas.

In the context of climate change, massive, efficient management and protection of forest play a major role for coastal defence.

Rana, CU

BNP council

The leaders of the BNP were spreading apprehension about the possible obstacles to holding the council on time. As usual the blame is put on the government party. However, my observation is, if they want to go ahead despite all the obstacles (?), one possible catch is already there. This is regarding the venue of the proposed council. We heard on the media news that they would hold the council in the "Bangabandhu International Convention Centre." The question remains when and under what name the BNP will apply for that centre. They had renamed the centre after their taking over of power in 2001. I have never heard any top BNP leader to utter the word "Bangabandhu" of "Jatir Pita". Therefore, the high command of the BNP might not agree to apply for the centre under its present name. They might use the name they changed to. This is the catch I just foresee because the BNP might look for any single opportunity to

blame the government if they do not get the centre using the changed name. This is just a characterisation of our overall political culture, especially the policy of the BNP.

The above is just a guess-work. It is, however, very important to note that the BNP itself is airing quite a significant proportion of uncertainty about the council on time or as planned. The chaotic condition being informed in the media every day might have two major objectives such as;

a. A compressed format of the council might give the BNP to hold on to the present structure of legal frame work of the party with major change for making the way for Tarique Zia to take over the party leadership when his mother opts for symbolic head to maintain the much needed unity of the party and its millions of supporters. The democratisation of the party's constitution will be cosmetic and noncommittal.

b. The political blame game would be easy to play and the major issues of any reform in the party can be put on hold to further consolidate the party's position among the rank and file. The BNP is yet to take care of the "reformist groups"

c. There are other disturbing issues which might impact the timing of the council as planned. Here the leadership will be put to real test by the BNP supporters and the people of Bangladesh at large.

Areader
On e-mail

Avoidable traffic jam

Much has been said about the horrendous traffic jam that has made the lives of Dhaka city residents miserable. It has become almost a daily nightmare for those who have to commute to work or come out to attend some important work that must be done. While it is true that absence of necessary additional infrastructure facilities is causing this problem, I, for one, strongly feel that it could be considerably eased by managing traffic by police in a better way.

Here, I will narrate a traffic jam which should not have happened. On Saturday, I was going from my Uttara house in Sector 3 to my sister's house in Mirpur Paikpara via Agargaon. My wife was with me. We were hoping that since it was Saturday and offices and schools were closed, we would have to contend with a traffic congestion problem which would be less severe than during the workdays. But it was only a wishful thinking on our part. We started from our Uttara house by car at 11-15 am and having weathered an 8-minute delay at the Kamal Ataturk Road and Airport Road intersection we reached near the intersection, where the Agargaon Road meets Mirpur Road, at 12 noon (12:00 pm). We were stopped by the traffic police, before we could cross from Agargaon Road to Mirpur Road. There we were kept waiting for 42 minutes. It was a hot, windless

day and it was very uncomfortable sitting in a motionless car. Eventually, when we were allowed by the traffic police to move, I stopped the car on Mirpur Road by the ASA Tower and asked a traffic policeman on duty as to what had caused this most unusual delay. He told us that the prime minister was to pass by this point but since she did not arrive at the expected time they had no other alternative except keeping the traffic blocked on the Agargaon Road, and this took all of 42 minutes till the prime minister passed.

And I was wondering, the prime minister's accompanying security people must have been equipped with the latest technology for instant communication, yet why we had to suffer on the road, not to speak of the discomfort we had to endure. The answer was clear. This should never have happened.

M. M. Rahman
Dhaka

Dowry

Bangladesh is a developing country but it suffers from some evil culture and superstitions. Dowry is one of the worst evil cultures in this society. It has been creating many problems.

The bride has to give a large amount of money, furniture, ornaments and many things to the bridegroom. It is a terrible thing. Women & their family suffer a lot due to dowry.

Poverty, illiteracy, narrow mentality, negative attitude to women, dependence on husband and living on their income, social corruption etc are the main causes behind dowry.

Every year many young women commit suicide or face physical torture after marriage because their parents could not afford to give dowry. Day by day, marriage has become a kind of business (!) and exploitation of the parents of a girl.

Our religion (Islam) does not permit dowry. Dowry must be banned once and for all.

Mohammed Jamal Uddin
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Popular writer

13th November was the birthday of Humayun Ahmed, the most popular writer of this country. He is now an icon of thousands of new writers of this country. With the passage of time, his popularity is increasing.

There are hundreds of reasons behind his popularity. The first and foremost reason behind his popularity is the simplicity of his language. There is a magical charm in the lines of his novel. He has written a huge number of fictions. Among these my two most favourite fictions are "Brishti Bilash" and "Krishna Pokkha".

Though I am a lecturer in English language yet in my leisure hours I sit with the novels of Humayun Ahmed. I do not enjoy a sound sleep at night without reading his novels. Like me there are thousands of blind fans of Humayun Ahmed. I wish him a long and happy life.

Pradip Das
Anovelist
Dhaka

Students abroad

I am a student at The Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden. I have already passed my one-year of education successfully and now attending my final semester. I have completed my B.Sc. in engineering from BUET in Bangladesh.

I am writing this to protect the general interest of all the students coming abroad for higher education, especially Europe.

Since I have been here I have come across some so-called students who have not completed their H.S.C. or even S.S.C. and somehow got admitted in universities. These students are not only harming the reputation and future of bona fide students but also blurring our country's image.

Mohamamd Abdur Razzak
Masters student
Materials science and engineering
The Royal Institute of Technology
Sweden

Reducing traffic congestion

The Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that her government plans to construct elevated and underground railways, flyovers, orbital waterways and circular roads around the capital to ease traffic congestion and to solve the transport problem.

Understandably, this is a very ambitious and time consuming programme, some of which though based on various suggestions may not be implemented during the tenure of the present government. In this regard, a few suggestions are put forward here which can be implemented at a minimum possible time with the country's own resources and during the tenure of the government.

1. **Circular water ways:** Water way is the cheapest means of communication and as such should be given top priority. In the proposed waterway system, some difficulties are encountered because of some low height bridges constructed earlier because of which during high water level plying vessels cannot cross and during low water level loaded vessels cannot ply because of low depth of water in the river. This problem can be solved as follows.

(a) With modification of one end span of the concrete bridge with steel draw bridge which will open for river traffic and close for road traffic. Examples of such work are available in Rotterdam (Holland), Paris and Moscow. Steel parts can be fabricated locally.

(b) The problem of low water level can be solved either with dredging of the channel across the steel draw bridge and also protect the eroding bank to maintain a

stable navigable channel round the year. The other alternative for this is to construct navigable locks at appropriate locations to retain monsoon water during low water stage to help uninterrupted movement of both passenger launches and also cargo vessels. Examples of such locks are available in many countries. The required steel gates can be manufactured locally.

(c) The government has already ordered that the river water should be kept clean of industrial effluents and garbage disposal. This should be strictly implemented.

(d) As desired by the government, beautification of the river banks should be ensured through construction of walkways and planting beautiful trees to attract both tourists and locals.

2. **Railway:** Railway is the cheapest communication means next to water way. So, this should be expanded and utilized through all possible means.

It will be appreciated if the government of Bangladesh considers the above suggestions seriously in the greater interest of the country.

M.H. Khan
Former Member
Bangladesh Water Development Board

Paturia-Daulatdia river terminal

We travelled to greater Faridpur district recently from Dhaka. We were stranded in Paturia ferry ghat for several hours in the morning. We did not mind as the weather was foggy and ferries could not cross the river as visibility was poor. An act of God. The Ferry anchored. We proceeded. The road to ferry was a dirt road though - not good for the tires. We crossed and returned on

the same day.

It was all chaos in the late evening in Daulatdia end on our return trip. There were two lines of private cars, jeeps, SUVs, private mini buses etc., instead of one. The ghat controllers cleverly made the approach road to ferries in such a way that there was passage for only one file of loading vehicles and one file of unloading vehicles. We were hauled from one line to another and we had to fight with the ghat touts. They mete out favours to the deserving ones (Read bribe) in collusion with ghat controllers. One minibus hit a car and a fighting chaotic situation prevailed for some time. Ever body was in a hurry which in fact delayed the process of loading of the cars into the ferry. One car tried to overtake our car in collusion with the touts. Then we, law abiding professionals from Dhaka, decided to take a firm stand and announced that we were going to place our car blocking all the cars to their way to the ferry. It yielded the desired result! So, muscle power and might won instead of rules and laws!

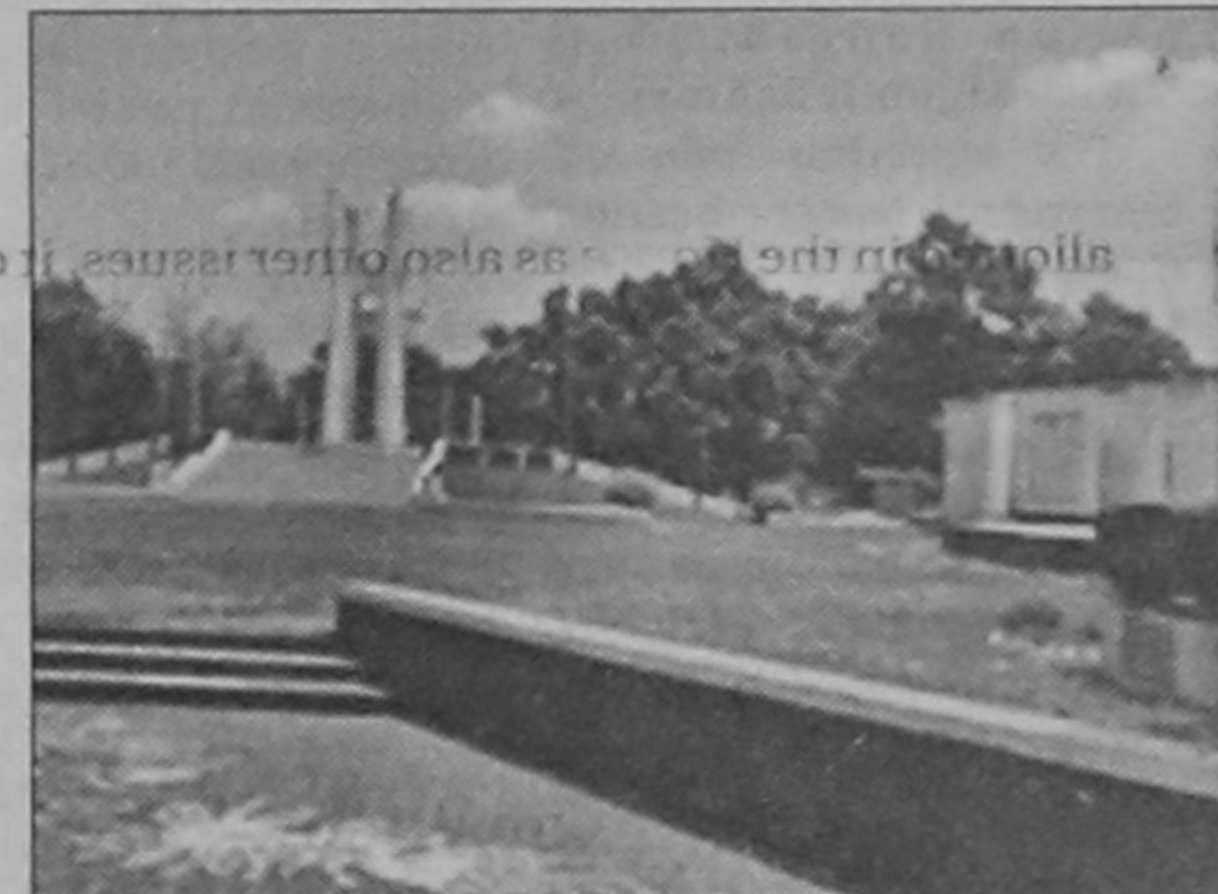
In view of the above scenario we suggest the followings as remedial measures for mitigation of sufferings of people in the above ferry route.

The ferry ghat controllers ought to give serials to the boarding cars while tickets are issued.

The approach road to the ferries should be paved. More ferries should be commissioned on Paturia-Daulatdia ferry route.

We request the minister concerned, IWT, IWTa to consider the above suggestions, set out rules and act in the interest of the common law abiding citizens.

Dr. SN Mamoon
On e-mail



Remembering the martyrs

As a part of my frivolous ways of squandering the summer vacation, I managed to sneak into RU campus and finding none in the deserted area, I ran helter-skelter forlornly and eventually found myself standing before this museum surrounded by an eye-catching gigantic Shahid Minar on one side and RU central mosque on the other.

Propelled by an desire and recovering my poise, I went inside and after writing down the required information, I was allowed to enter the galleries showcasing the everyday

things used by the martyrs, the books written by them and some photographs clinging to the threads of their personal life, their struggles to be emancipated from Pakistan. Notable among them were Dr. Shamsuzzoha, Professor of Chemistry, who embraced martyrdom in 1969 and Nurul Islam who strongly led the protest after the death of Dr. Zoha, killed on 18th February, 1969, Martyrs Asad, Harun, Barkat and Rafique.

Shatabdi Biswas
On e-mail

Terrorists at work

Lashkar-e-Tayeba is the name of a Pakistan based militant group, second biggest international terrorist group after Al-Qaeda.

The activities of this group are mostly cantered in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. We were a bit less concerned while our IGP and the DG of Rab recently assured the people that their presence in Bangladesh has weakened due to the anti-militancy drives. Now, almost every day their members are being caught, new hiding places are being uncovered with jihadi booklets, deadly arms and bomb making materials and new members are being arrested. It seems they have already set their feet very deep in Bangladesh and their number is not that small as has been anticipated by the law enforcers.

The IGP and the DG of Rab have already changed their tone about them and apprehended that it may take a longer time than expected to

contain them fully.

Today, 15 Nov, there are headlines in some Bangla dailies stating that this terrorist group members are scattered all over Bangladesh in the guise of textile technicians, labourers, students, madrasa teachers and employees of private business houses. In some places they are training madrasa students to make and hurl bombs. As citizens of Bangladesh we are very much alarmed. This group has destabilised Pakistan, inflicted heavy casualties in India and their next target is destruction of Bangladesh. They have high links in both Pakistan and some Muslim countries who do not like Bangladesh flourishing as a democratic country.

They have friends in Bangladesh who shelter them and provide them with hiding places.

We have a big consolation that the Bangladeshis in general have no support for these so-called Islamic jihadis. There are however some supporters who do not like an

unified education system.

They want to keep a significant number of our children uneducated in the name of giving madrasa education for their pecuniary benefits, they want to keep our women indoors.

Their agenda is to keep people as their blind followers. They are in favour of closing girls' schools like the terrorists in Pakistan.

These are the people who get the money and materials from their foreign friends. They are misinterpreting Islam and making us "suspicious" travellers in the outside worlds.

Bangladesh will have to come out of the clutches of these elements. As the people of this country are very much aware, I believe it will not be very hard for our law enforcement agencies to eradicate them from this soil. This is the time to hit when the country is being ruled by a party which will not shelter these elements. Let us all lend our hands to the government.

Shafiqul Islam
NY

Poaching



The three hill-tracts of Bangladesh namely Rangamati, Khagrachari & Bandarban are not only commendable for there natural beauty but these regions are also full of natural resources. These account for one-third forest resources of our country. Wild animals, trees, agricultural resources etc are found aplenty in these regions. Recently, a news report was published in one newspaper that a wild elephant was found dead in Bandarban. More than 12 elephants were killed by poachers in recent times.

It is alarming news for us. Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong