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Kutubdia power plant

Bangladesh is at the front line of the impacts of climate change. Its low-lying coastal area is the most vulnerable to sea level rise, cyclone, tidal surges and salinity intrusion. Coastal infrastructures including embankments, polders, power generation centre etc. are severely affected by climate induced natural disasters. IPCC Fourth Assessment Report shows that the frequency and intensity of these disasters will be increased due to the changes in climatic system. This means these infrastructures would be affected more severely.

The only wind power generation plant of the country is located at south-western part of Kutubdia Island which is fully exposed to the sea. Construction of the plant was started in 2007 and power production started in March 2008. Fifty generators with 50 fans are installed with 50 pillars. The pillars are 50 feet high from the ground. Each generator has the capacity to produce 20kw electricity if the wind blows at the speed of 14.5 m/s. There is a two-storied building for maintenance of the plant. Its ground floor is at the level of sea surface and first floor is little bit higher than the embankment which is close to be levelled to sea. All equipments including anemometer, thermometer, ampere meter, dry cell batteries etc are installed at the first floor. There are 1000 batteries with 12 V and 200 ampere each. This plant is the only source of electricity for the residents of Kutubdia.

The elevation of the island varies from

0 to 4 m only above the sea level and bounded by coastal embankment. But the embankment has been broken at many places including adjacent area of the power plant. There is clear evident of sea level rise caused by coastal erosion. Modhu Sir, a teacher of about 70 years old of Kutubdia Adorsha Uchha Bidyalay informed that 50 years back the coastline was about 2.5 km west from its present location. He himself shifted his house from west to east due to coastal erosion. The field observation also shows that the erosion process is continuing. A large part of the embankment close to the power generation plant has already been eroded during cyclone Aila and levelled to the seashore. During full moon and dark moon, foots of the pillars are flooded with high intensity of tidal waves. The only building for maintenance of the plant is now at the tip of the broken embankment. It seems a medium intensity tidal surge may wash away the buildings and equipments of the plant. The power plant cost Tk 93 million for 25 years' sustainability. But within two to three years, the plant is under threat to coastal erosion and climate change induced natural disaster. It is assumed that unless effective measures are taken immediately, the plant would be a history for Kutubdia as well as Bangladesh.

Md. Rabi Uzzaman
Research Officer
Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS)

versal economic crisis is deepening poverty.

The foremost objective of the Summit is to get rid of hunger. To realize this, FAO says the occasion aims to put in place a more consistent and efficient system of governance of food security, including rules and mechanisms to make sure sufficient incomes for farmers, mobilizing funds into agricultural infrastructure and access to inputs, and an instrument for early response to food crises.

On the opening day, the Summit adopted unanimously a declaration committing all the nations of the world to wiping out hunger at the earliest. It pledged to significantly augment aid to agriculture in developing countries, so that the world's one billion hungry can become more self-reliant. The statement confirmed the present target for plummeting hunger by half by 2015.

FAO announced in July that Saudi Arabia had approved to meet up the expenses of the Summit, projected at \$2.5 million. The offer was made during an official appointment to the country by Diouf.

The prime minister of Bangladesh also joined this summit. And people around the world would certainly wait eagerly to see the implementation plans of poverty eradication.

Shohag Mostafi
MBA (Strategic & International Management)
University of Dhaka

A promise

During the closing days of Sheikh Hasina's first administration, 1996-2001, a novel Tk 10/- note printed in some sort of plastic was introduced as it was supposed to be longer lasting and did not become dirty quickly as paper notes did. It carried Bangabandhu's portrait.

Soon, she was succeeded by her old antagonist's party in 2001 and they quickly took steps to wipe out all traces of anything good that the previous government had done. This was in line with the working of all the democratic governments we have seen so far. Amongst the casualties was the Tk 10/- plastic note. It started disappearing and being replaced by a paper one that is still current. The polymer Bangabandhu note has not been seen for quite a while.

Sheikh Hasina was naturally and quite rightly peeved at this pettiness and lambasted the administration for stooping so low. In many gatherings she made it a point to give this example to prove how mean and small-minded this action was.

In one such programme that I saw on TV, perhaps in 2002 or 2003, she was very vehement about it all and requested her countrymen to foil this attempt at Bangabandhu's denigration by retaining these notes. She pledged that when her party

came back to power, no matter when, these Tk 10/- notes would be redeemed for Tk. 100/- each as a reward for those who would invest in these notes.

I, and I am sure many others, have retained these notes now for over 6-7 years and await the day when this pledge will be honoured.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Special education

Occupational therapy is a newly introduced health care system in Bangladesh which works in special settings of special education. In many cases this special setting can be made at home for the disabled. Special means that type of education, which meets all necessary things with special equipment, environment, management, techniques, aids and also methods for dealing with the special child. A child learns by seven senses that are tactile, visual, auditory, vestibule, gustatory, taste and proprioception when these senses are properly integrated. All sensations are properly integrated when they get proper stimulation and environment. An Occupational Therapist works with hypo or hyper responsive child who cannot learn in the normal environment. So an Occupational Therapist helps to make a special environment and a special education programme.

We know that it is easy to say but difficult to do. Though it would be very difficult to ensure proper education for the disabled, but we have to start now.

Md. Zahir Uddin Akanda
Occupational Therapist & Child Development Specialist
Alokito Shishu Adabar, Shaymoly, Dhaka

Bangabandhu murder case

Although I don't agree with our Prime Minister and her party on many issues (as a matter of fact with most of the politicians in our country), however my hats off to her for the way she and her government dealt with the Bangabandhu Murder trial. She has been in power for the second time and could have easily taken the path of revenge through military tribunal and hastened the trial. But instead of that she believed in the legal process and let things happen accordingly. At the end of the day this was a moral victory for our society and a sign that still the rule of law exists. It is true that corruption, nepotism and lawlessness are the permanent warts on our social fabric and it is questionable how much justice she could have gained had she been an ordinary citizen, but this is still a breath of fresh air.

This is definitely a milestone in our legal system.
Zafar Hadi
California, USA



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Root of all problems

We have numerous problems. Shall I name some? Well, the much talked about traffic jam, terrorism (not by international terrorists but by our own fellows), water logging due to blockage of sewerage lines, shortage of drinking water all over the country, shortage of electricity, unemployment, 10 feet solid silt due to polythene on the river bed of the river Buriganga and so on. My apology if I have made you tired of reading. But the list may be much longer. What is the number one reason as the root of all the above mentioned problems? The answer is excessive POPULATION.

Everybody knows about the root of all the problems and that is excessive population. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the planet. But for mysterious reasons nobody talks about this! The population in entire Finland and Norway, each much bigger than Bangladesh, is 10.3 million which will be half the population of Dhaka City. Whereas the area of these two countries is around 179000 sqm, which is 3.33 times the size of entire Bangladesh! Venice is crying to increase their population. Hungary is losing its population. But in Bangladesh?

What is the population of this country? I can throw a challenge that none in this country has any information or data in this regard. Some source specu-

lates the population of this country to be 150 million! I beg to disagree as there is no such data bank or info centre to establish this theory. UNFPA also echoes the sayings by our bureaucrats! I remember in the early sixties there was a large billboard on the west side of Dhaka GPO, saying that 'Every day 14,000 children are born in the country', 'Keep you family size small' (that was for East and West Pakistan). My hats off to Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the then autocrat president of Pakistan. He at least gave a momentum to population control in the sixties in this country.

Today there are no activities of population control by any sector, neither by the government nor by any NGOs. All intellectuals in the talk shows speak to control the on-rush of people to Dhaka by decentralizing this and that. But, unfortunately, for unknown reasons, except one or two, none uttered anything on this problem.

Give incentive to families having one child and take away some facilities from those having more than one child like no trade license, no rickshaw pulling, no job or no promotion. Please do some thing, please.

Md. Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan
Mirpur, Dhaka

A suggestion

Since there are no immediate plans in the government's mind to start construction of new roads in the next 06-12 months to combat traffic congestion, what they can do is put barricades in different residential areas to control the entry and exit of traffic to the main roads. Like they have in some areas (though not used). Two of the gates/entry points will be used only for entrance and two can be used for exit purpose only. This can be implemented in all the so-called residential areas we have, including Dhanmondi and Gulshan with one way traffic in-between the demarcated area. For example if someone wants to enter Dhanmondi, he can use road

27 and take the 1st left turn (HSBC Bank) or 2nd left turn (Nandos point) from the eastern side (Rapa Plaza) to enter Dhanmondi and go to different directions and leave Dhanmondi from the southern side which is road # 2 going towards the Mirpur Road.

This may sound weird but this will certainly help reduce the traffic congestions in all parts of this residential area and at the junction of Mirpur and Shatmasjid roads. This will also help those residing in this area to develop the habit of walking a short distance plus will also save a lot of money for each family not using the car or rickshaws (with an exception for elders and disable persons). This will certainly help the city corpo-

ration and eventually the government to combat the mad traffic congestions all over Dhanmondi.

Similar steps can be taken in Gulshan, Baridhara, Mohammapur, Mirpur (according to sectors) Uttara, Rampura etc.

This will sure minimize the congestion but sure will create the tangle again at the entry and exit points but this can be controlled if these two roads, road # 27 (East to West) and road # 2 (West to East) can be made completely one way 24x7 by removing the road dividers (islands).

Will our city father and the departments concerned take up this plan on a trial basis?
Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi Dhaka

Law ministry's statement

The Hon'ble President has granted waiver of punishment to the son of the deputy leader of the House which has created a controversy in the public mind. To clear this controversy, the law ministry has issued a statement to the press explaining the constitutional powers of the Hon'ble President which says, "The waiver of punishment was not a violation of law". Interestingly, the statement

did not explain anything about the person, whether he was pronounced guilty or not, the extent of punishment he was handed down by the court etc. We believe, the Hon'ble President even if he has powers to waive in some cases, he hardly exercises such powers except some extreme cases where the state interest is bigger than that of an individual.

So, it will be difficult for the people to accept the statement.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Food security summit

The World Summit on Food Security was held in Rome, Italy, from 16 to 18 November 2009. The FAO says the worldwide food security situation has worsened and continues to pose a severe threat. There are one billion chronically starving people in the globe and current reports say this number might grow by 100 million. Food prices linger persistently high in developing countries, while the uni-

From personal experience I've seen how much ignorant the drivers are about the traffic rules. And how much they tend to defy the rules even though they know those. I hope this new move will make the drivers follow the rules for their own sake, as they are not going to have the traffic police to blame for the sufferings. But lack of use and supervision obviously caused the automated system to break down. I hope the authorities will take the necessary steps soon.

It's time for changing people. You change yourself first, and others will follow.
Md. Jobayer Bin Shafique

Traffic signal breakers are law-breakers. This is nothing surprising as we live in a country where a convicted fugitive gets presidential pardon!
MK

I wish there were some public service announcements in all the TV channels in Bangladesh, that would help people follow the traffic signal pattern. The country is in dire need of some guidelines, and TV can play a critical role in this matter.
Syed

This is a good initiative, and we must hold on to it, despite the initial roadblocks/failures. It will take some time to get used to

it. But once this stage is over, it will only get better for everyone, God willing.
Raihan

Thanks to the DMP commissioner for his courageous step. The system is bound to develop. We need to hold our nerves. Chain the drivers of public buses, most of whom do not have a valid driving license. Forcing them to abide by the traffic law will improve the situation dramatically.
Touqueer Ahmed Khan

I think this is a great initiative to maintain the automated traffic signalling system. Though it seems to be ineffective, but in the long run I think it should be effective. Our drivers should try to understand the system. It will be a learning session for them to follow the rules. The main responsibility of the traffic police should be to check that the drivers are following the rules strictly.
Abduallh Al Rahed

Automated traffic light signals will not work unless and until these are synchronised with the volume of traffic passing through the different roads at different times of the day and the night. This means the duration of red light and green light at a particular traffic intersection will have to vary through the day and

the night. I am not sure whether the police have this very important data with them from hour to hour for the different intersections in the city. Without such data, introduction (or reintroduction) of automated traffic signals can never produce the expected results.
M.M. Rahman

To get an impression about any city and behaviour of the countrymen, the best thing is to see how they move. So, to create a positive impression we have to follow this modern but basic signalling system not only in Dhaka but in all other cities and towns. I would urge the authorities not to scrap this system again.
Shafiqul Islam

How long did the Bangladesh government advertise regarding the traffic rule change on local TV, radio and also through other media of the country? There should have been a thorough awareness campaign done at least a month before putting the system in place.
Kabir

I think that it's a better way to control traffic jam. But most of the general people and drivers are not very much aware of this system.
MD. Alamgir

This is a good initiative I think. Though there could be some prob-

lems at the initial stage. But I hope for the best, as the authorities have planned to observe & take corrective measures before finally implementing this rule.

Drivers disobeying the traffic signal must be fined.
Also pedestrians crossing the road among running vehicles & slowing down the traffic flow should be controlled strictly.
Rabeya Akter

I was on the road and found out that the traffic officers and sergeants were still using their hands for signals. So, what's the use of initiating the new system?
Jawad

I would ask the DMP to learn first, then practise and finally implement it for the public. Don't make the people suffer further.
Ms

A standard city should have 25% of its total area as road. But in Dhaka it is about 8% only. Besides, the population limit that Dhaka can support is three million. But it exceeds 1.5 crore. So, how can we expect a road without traffic congestion?
Tanjeel

An awareness campaign should have been conducted before introducing something like this.
Zack

ONLINE VOICES

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Traffic goes haywire (November 23, 2009)

Bangladesh needs to build a modern city with modern infrastructure. The new city will ease the pressure on Dhaka.
Ahmad

It will take time for the drivers and the pedestrians to get familiar with the automated system. It's not a good idea to expect some sort of solution overnight. But I would like to thank the DMP traffic division for their initiative. This is the best action they have taken ever. But we need an integrated system. It is not possible for the DMP to work alone, they need the co-operation from the drivers and the pedestrians. And the DCC traffic division need to be co-operative as well.
Golam Morshed

This is silly action. People of Bangladesh are not so law abiding that they will oblige to any technology straightaway. First, through

massive publicity in the media people have to be made aware of the new system and penalties for not obliging. Do we have speed cameras or close circuit cameras to spot violators? Can we impose penalties correctly? If all the drivers and vehicle users have national ID card, it must not be difficult to spot them if close circuit cameras at traffic lights work. In Australia, we have to be so alert all the time. There is no way that anyone breaching any traffic law can escape. We understand in Bangladesh it is no so easy. But without preparation piecemeal solutions are a waste of time.
Saleque Sufi

Nobody should be above the law - Bangladesh really needs to educate people on these issues slowly. An automated system will not change the traffic problems overnight. It will take its time for sure, so we need to be patient!
Dr Samiul Haque