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Haiti tragedy

The whole world has observed with terrified looks how the earthquake in Haiti has destroyed almost the whole country where thousands of people are either dead or missing. People are so scared that they refused to sleep under the roof. This poor nation has been affected so mercilessly by earthquake that even it is impossible to start rescue operations due to the intense magnitude of the shocks where all the high rises have collapsed along with its life and properties.

Haiti's earthquake is a red signal for the country like Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh is among the most earthquake prone regions, it doesn't have the required preparation and the kind of equipment to

face such kind of catastrophe. Moreover, big cities like Dhaka and Chittagong are in great danger right now as most of the high-rises don't comply with the necessary building code and other technical requirements as prescribed by the geologists. Our capital city is home to almost 1.3 crore people who are in great danger along with the whole country. We should keep in mind that the catastrophe like earthquake doesn't hit frequently but when it attacks, it is like a doomsday for the affected inhabitants who may take more than a decade to recover. So, we the common citizens request the authorities concerned to take necessary steps in order to have a better disaster management

infrastructure, so that it can lessen the impact and magnitude of such kind of disasters.

Md. Anisuzzaman Sarker
MBA, Finance
Chittagong University

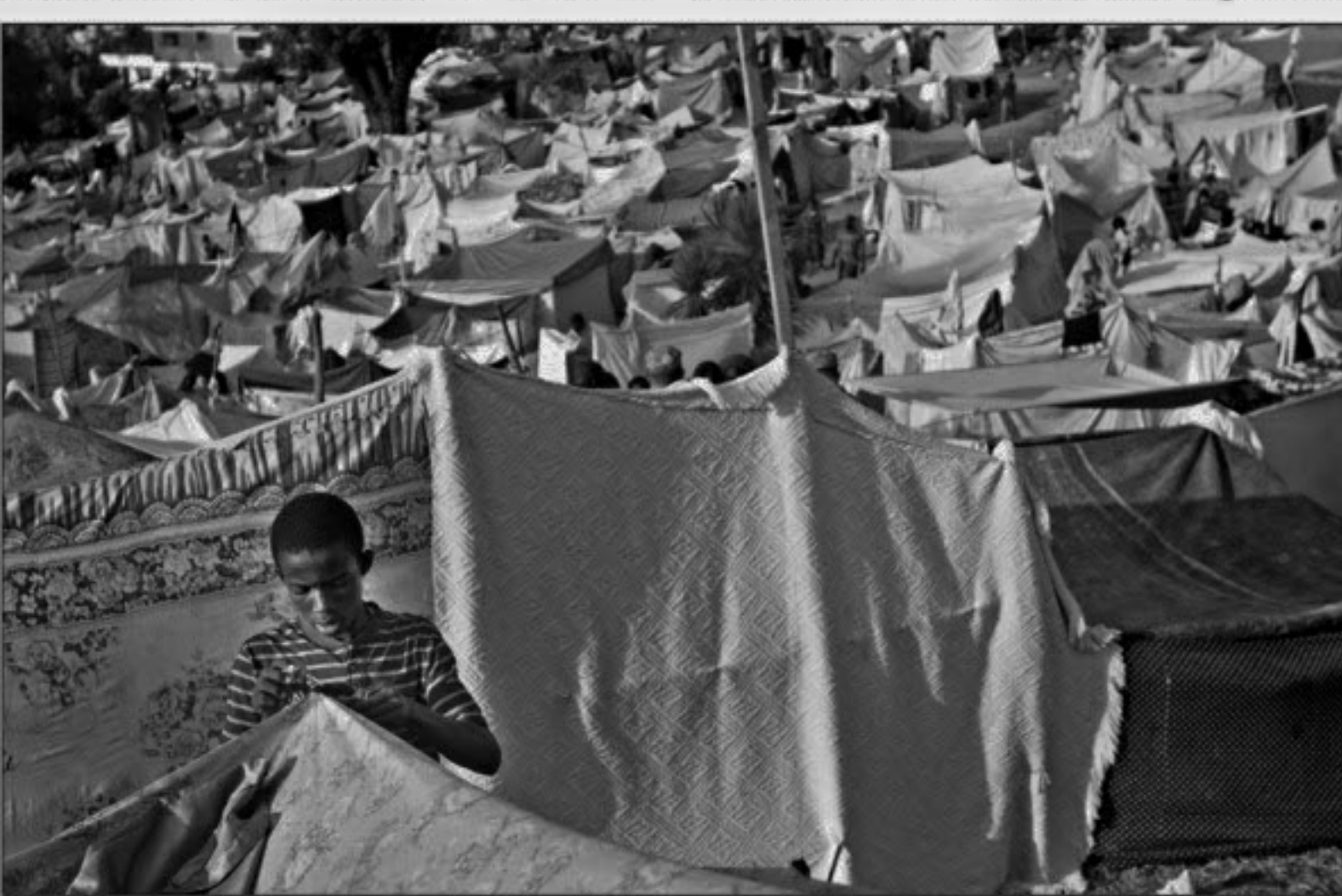
Haiti has been just devastated by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake which hit lately (2nd week of January) and left hundreds of thousands dead. Recently, the Haitian foreign minister said the death toll could be two hundred thousand.

Haiti's present situation could make anyone sad like me. My deepest sympathy for Haitians. But I also would like our authorities to be learning some lesson from the Haitian earthquake. What should we learn? The authorities cautioned a few months ago that if a 7.0 magnitude earthquake hits Dhaka, most areas of the city would collapse.

It is just not learning a lesson by watching another country's disaster, it should be more than this. What more?

Our authorities should start campaigning for building up mass awareness and prepare to rescue people if a disaster strikes.

Mahmud Ali Kabir
Ex-BSS correspondent
Gopalganj



Students in UK

Now coming to the UK is nothing but a worthless decision made by some students who basically think to build up their career through studying and working in the UK. In the past two years the economy of the UK is facing a meltdown. As a result, the new students who are coming to the UK with a big expectation to study alongside a part time job are in trouble. The main reason for writing this letter is that I feel extremely sorry for those students who are wandering about London for a long time to get job just to survive here. I met a number of students who are staying in the mosques and in replying my questions they said they had spent 9-10 lakh taka. They had to sell their family land to arrange the money.

The whole thing must come under close scrutiny of the government.
Kazi Shobuz
UK

Bangladesh's image

I was searching in the popular internet search engine Google with the key word "Bangladesh" for a web result and got scared to find the result. The reason behind my scare was some photos that automatically came with the web result. I again tried many times with the same key word and always found the same web result with same terrible photos. You can also try and I am sure you will be frightened to see the photos if you are a patriotic citizen of this country. No, the photos do not contain any horror content or ghostly things. One photo shows a cop beating a journalist and another depicts a military parade and contains the caption "Bangladeshi BDR Massacre". These photos portray a negative image of the country to the world. So these are really painful for any Bangladeshi. Today, in the age of information technology, if anybody outside Bangladesh needs to know about the country at first he or she will go to internet and will find a negative impression of Bangladesh. Bangladesh might have many problems but certainly this country is a model of communal and religious harmony. We have a glorious past and we are also an example of rising democracy. So why this country is being portrayed in such a negative way. Please describe Bangladesh in a constructive way. I think Google does not show these photos intentionally as it works automatically by using some programming formulas. The authorities of websites containing these pictures are responsible for this fault. They should immediately delete these pictures.

Ali Haider Chowdhury
Mirboxtula
Sylhet

MP assaults taxi driver

On 17th January 2010, at around 11.15 am, I witnessed an MP, belonging to the JP, beat up a taxi driver on Gulshan Avenue in full view of the public. I was walking down Gulshan Avenue when I saw a blue taxi hit the back of a SUV at low speed and heavy traffic, near Shopper's World. I'm not sure which car was at fault but that is not of concern. The headlights of the ramshackle taxi broke on impact while the SUV suffered nothing more than a few scratches. Both cars stopped in the middle of the road. I then saw the MP come out of the SUV and attack the taxi driver with a sickening volley of slaps and kicks, with scores of people watching the incident. The attack only stopped when another passenger in his car came out and restrained him and coaxed him back into the car.

It was a revolting sight to see an elected member of parliament physically assault a member of the public - someone who he is elected to represent. Such an attack would not only end the career of a parliament member in any civilized country, but it would also land him in jail given so many witnesses. Sadly nothing of that sort will happen to him. The unfortunate taxi driver would not even think of filing a case with the police. I would bet that he does not even know that he had the right to seek redress; that he was equal to the MP in the eyes of the law. Although it would not matter even if he knew and wanted to seek justice - the institutions in this country that were set up to ensure power to the people would block him at every step.

For people in positions of power in Bangladesh, kicking and slapping the common man on the street is quite the normal state of affairs. For they are high and mighty overlords who control the destinies of mere peasants like the taxi driver. What nerve of the peasant to scratch the car of the overlord! Little does it matter that the law suggests otherwise - that all power in the republic belong to the common citizen.

If the MP truly believes in democracy (which is doubtful to start with given his record of serving under a autocrat) and decency, he should publicly apologise to the taxi driver. That is a pipe dream for which I will not be holding my breath. My regret is that I was not able to react quickly enough to record the attack on my mobile phone video camera. That would at least allow the case to be presented to that great court of the people - the Internet. But it was not to be. Luck, it would seem, favours the high and mighty.
Issam Mosaddeq
Gulshan, Dhaka

BB Governor's move

I know you from 1985 when I used to listen to your lecture as a BEA Member. But now as a politically neutral researcher, I appreciate you for making provisions for the country's farmers to open Bank Account by paying a balance of Tk 10.

In fact, the country's Nationalised Banks & Post Offices have failed to serve the country's common men due to lack of creative intelligence.

These institutions have a great role to play for the development of the country in general & poverty reduction in particular.

Any way, thank you Mr Governor, for your recent move to improve the role of Bangladesh Bank for the welfare of the country's common men.

RA Chowdhury
Member, Royal Economic Society, UK

Stop the land grabbers

It is revealed from the headline news of your daily on 11.01.10 that the land grabbers will not be spared this time. The state minister for housing requested the members of REHAB to boycott the land grabbers. It sounds very heartening that the land grabbers are now known to the minister even. Actually, it is the big developers who indiscriminately grab the poor and "powerless" people's land. But there were none to resist them as because they have money, goons and liaison with the powerful coterie. Sometimes we hear a few emotive utterances from the high-ups but for reasons unknown, the situation does not change.

One of my relatives had a small piece of land at Badda-Satarkul area. A very influential land developer has grabbed it without paying any sort of compensation or value. After his hectic efforts, somehow he could please them to pay a very negligible compensation. They created such a situation that if he had not received the small amount of compensation, he would have lost that amount too. He tried frantically to save his land as he has bought that piece of land with the savings of a lifetime, but he got no help from any corner. Now he has become almost penniless once again due to the unabated lust of the big land grabbers.

When we hear a few bold words of any sincere and devoted top brass of the administration we feel very appeased indeed. We would like to stand beside and thank Mr. Khan, the state minister, for his boldness while there are still allegations that the big land grabbers have blessings of the ruling elite. However, in spite of the disappointments,

people still want to remain hopeful that Mr. Khan will be able to at least expose the ugly faces of the land grabbers, if not eliminate or boycott them from the epicentre of the power. Carry on, Mr. Minister!
Anika Tasnim
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

A lesson

The recent visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India scooped a small news in most of the Delhi based news media. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with her entourage was attending a conference in New Delhi in the presence of Mrs Sonia Gandhi. At some point, Mrs Sonia Gandhi found that some team members of her entourage were sitting in the last row in the conference hall. Mrs Sonia Gandhi immediately asked the high-ups to rearrange the seats in the front row and to change the seating arrangements some of senior party members including some senior ministers were asked to sit in the last row of the conference hall.

Just tell me, what would have happened if the same thing would have taken place in Bangladesh particularly at the direction of the prime minister. The press and the opposition would have gone berserk and the mid night talk shows in the media would have warmed up in these chilly winter night making the mercury rising high with heated discussion. 'DESH GELO, MANN GELO, BAY EJJOTIR SHOLO KOLA PURNOHOLO'

But surprisingly no one in India did make it a political issue or no one even talked

about it in a negative way or raised the question.

Expect respect while you respect others.
Dr Md. Shameem Hassan
New DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Burj Khalifa

The desert flower 'Hymenocallis' is stated to be the source of inspiration for the architects to draw the technical design of Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest and most luxurious modern building. Traditional Islamic design has been incorporated with modern sophistication in constructing Burj Khalifa. There are 58 elevators and 8 escalators to lift a visitor to Dubai's skyline!

While trying to have a look at the top of Burj Khalifa, a question naturally arises in a Muslim's mind whether this sort of lustrous and luxurious venture is prescribed in Islam? The huge amount of money spent to build Burj Khalifa (or earlier burj Dubai) could be utilized to do more welfare-oriented works for people.
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Education and health facilities

We know that Education and Health are two primary needs of human life. Bangladesh is a small, poor, overpopulated developing country. Most of our people are deprived of these two needs. As a result, the development of the country and the nation is not speeding up. Our education and health facilities are mainly Dhaka centric. But most of the people are unable to reach these facilities in Dhaka.

Again, for reducing the pressure on Dhaka, the education and health facilities need to be distributed regionally.
Engr. Mollah Masum Billah
Azadi
One-e-mail

BNP's intention

On 15 January The Daily Star welcomed "expressed willingness" of the BNP to join parliament calling it as an auspicious piece of news. For two important reasons, we also believe that this time the BNP's "intention" is sincere and they will join the parliament proceedings at least for a day or two. As per my assumption, the first reason is '90 days' which is running away and will make them permanently 'unfit' to join parliament.

My second reason is to protect the country from the "sellers of sovereignty" by raising hue and cry in the parliament house to regain some lost image among their supporters. If the second one is not that convincing, the first one will definitely pull them in.

Whatever may be the reason, democracy in Bangladesh will be benefited if the BNP joins parliament, continues to participate and does not restart boycotting.

We expect their regular participation, and not a short lived one.
Shafiqul Islam, NY



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Admission tests

Why should our little children face the tough admission test for getting into the school for the first time?

The decision makers should look into the matter. Let's invest our best for the children and create the best opportunities for them. In order to do this, we have to set up standard schools countrywide at any cost where the children will find a suitable environment to explore their merit and talent. I

think that through this scheme the parents will be reluctant to push their wards into the coldwater in the name of admission test.

It is evident that the leaders of the self-styled, much feared, admission battle will be over!
S. M. Masudul Islam
Programme Manager
Education & Child-rights Programme
Terre Des Homme-Netherlands
Bauphal, Patuakhali

Misunderstanding

The controversy in respect of use of the word "Allah" in Malaysia is mainly due to lack of knowledge of the true meaning of the word. The parties concerned should view the word in the light of 'Surah Ikhlas' and the commonality in other religious scriptures. Removal of misunderstanding will bring about reconciliation and peace.

Vandalizing of places of worship is not a solution.
Mohammed Sadullah Khan
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

AL supporters

Your two correspondents' reports from Sirajganj and Thakurgaon, along with the picture of the rampaged school office at Thakurgaon, reflect sadly on the discipline and orderliness on the part of AL supporters! The reports and the photograph were published in your pages on January 17. It is a sad yardstick of hooliganism of irresponsible AL party men who should be dealt with iron hands by the law keepers, if the AL seriously believes in the rule of law! Or is all this the result of connivance and indirect understanding among the party high-ups!

If this is not the case, and hopefully it is not so, then it reflects the utter failure of the administration under this party's governance, and for this they cannot shirk responsibility in any manner. As the saying goes, "the buck stops here"; whatever lame and hollow excuses the party and the government may have to offer. If the AL party and the government fail to rein in their lawless supporters then their only and honourable democratic option is to resign from the government in the

traditional, old and established norm of democracy!

But resigning after getting voted to power, however, is not in our political dictionary. Our political parties like to be kicked out of power.

Political norms as practiced by all our political parties is based on the subjective part of the popular saying "hear no evil, and say no evil"! The objective part of the saying: "do no evil" is non-existent!

Small wonder, most of the daily spontaneous news reports, published in daily newspapers, are full of these "evils" committed by supporters of various political parties! Majority of these are logically done by the party in power! Is this the right way?

Disappointed voter
Dhaka

Saving the environment

Last month the climate conference held in Copenhagen ended without any binding treaty. Simply put, the developed and the developing countries failed to reach any consensus on the issue -- namely, the reduction of carbon emission to slow down the alarming increase of the planet's temperature.

In our home front we have watched, much to our horror, the rampant pollution of our rivers, the encroachment of the lifelines beside the big cities and the gradual death of those gifts of nature. The woods of this land seem to exist only in textbooks as there are few patches of pristine forests left. Again some scientists predict that the low-lying areas of this country are likely to be submerged with the rise of sea levels.

With the deterioration of the environment the weather pattern has become erratic.

We are facing nasty cyclones, abnormal rainfall and heat waves--fallouts of climate change--on a regular basis.

It is evident that the leaders of the developed countries are unwilling to take a decision that concerns the lifestyle of their citizens. In other word they see no fault in the all-pervasive consumerism which thrives on the mindless pollution of mother earth. On the other hand, growing economies like China and India do not want to slow down their growth. This goes to explain the failure of the climate conference.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

PM's visit to India

Our Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to India will undoubtedly improve our relations with our neighbouring giant. Bangladesh will allow its territory, especially Mongla, Chittagong and Ashuganj ports, to be used by India. Bangladesh will be economically benefited by the transit issue. India agreed to facilitate electricity in Dahagram-Angarpota enclaves.

The Indian prime minister also announced a line of credit of US\$ 1 billion for a range of projects. Although the signed agreements and MoUs are beneficial for Bangladesh, the visit could not fulfil the expectation of people here. Because the main controversial and crucial issues remain unresolved. Solution or a declaration did not come on the killing of innocent Bangladeshi civilians by the BSF.

Noruddin Burhan
One-mail

Clean Dhaka?

Non-motorized vehicles (NMV) run by people without machine, which include bicycles, cycle rickshaws and carts, may play a vital role in urban transport sector in Dhaka. It is used for short trips in many Asian cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Bangkok, and even in our nearest Indian cities such as Bangalore, Chennai etc. In Europe, the government encourages the people to use NMV to save the environment, health, money etc. It removes traffic jams from the cities.

Bodies are fuelled by food diet which plays an important role in how the body performs. There are several benefits of cycling. You can use the cycle to go to the office in the morning. All kinds of medicines, protein deficiency, excessive salts in the blood, indigestion, all are directly involved in increasing the blood pressure and in that case

cycling strongly acts to stabilize the blood pressure, removes obesity, cholesterol, ensures good digestion and eventually it helps to make the actual good shape of the body.

Transport planning and investment in most of Asia has focused principally on the motorized transport sector and has often ignored the need for having non-motorized transport. Without changes in policy, NMV use many go down suddenly in the coming decade, with highly negative impacts on our lives.

The benefits of cycling are known to all, so we need the initiative to make it popular in our cities.

Md. Mozzammel Haque
Erasmus Mundus "AtoSiM" programme
Faculty of Science
University of Amsterdam



PALLABI KOLAR / DRINKNEWS