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Vulnerable country



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to earthquakes, because it is close to the meeting point of the Indian, Eurasian and Burma (Myanmar) plates. The observatory at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) recorded 86 tremors of over four magnitude during January 2006-May 2009. The meteorological department detected at least 90 earthquakes taking place in the country between May 2007 and July 2008, nine of them above five on the Richter Scale and epicentres of 95 percent being within a 600 km radius of Dhaka city. Experts say it is these minor tremors that indicate the possibility of much more powerful earthquakes hitting the country.

The government needs to formulate effective plans and programmes for disaster preparedness in the event of an earthquake. To make a start in formulating effective plans for earthquake preparedness and damage control, building designs, particularly that of high-rise buildings, must be earthquake-proof. The Building Code must be revised to ensure adequate protective measures for the builders of faulty buildings that can be severely damaged by earthquakes. Also highways and bridges must be adequately reinforced. Warnings of earthquakes need sophisti-

cated equipment which have to be procured and installed in meteorological stations.

To ensure adequate damage control, we need to learn from the experience of the countries prone to regular earthquake, such as Japan and Indonesia.

Md. Nazmus Sakib
Student
Dept. of Geography & Environmental studies
University of Chittagong

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit the capital of Haiti. It is one of the most dangerous earthquakes in recent times.

According to a UN study conducted in 1999, Dhaka is the world's most earthquake vulnerable city followed by Tehran. Dhaka has gone 130 years without a major quake. The Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) found that around 25,000 buildings in the three major cities of Bangladesh--Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet -are extremely vulnerable to earthquake.

On a preparedness scale of 1 to 10, we are close to the bottom. So, we have to take proper steps in this respect.

Mahbub Rahman
One-mail

Cartoon channels and kids

It is very unusual to see that kids do not love cartoons. If we conduct a survey among the kids, especially of 3-5 age group, we will find that most of them love to watch cartoons which they start watching at an early age and the language of these cartoons is mostly English. However, gradually they begin to understand the language, though not everything, and also the context. Even they can explain to us what is happening. Nowadays English learning is a must for all. So if our pre-school going or primary school going kids learn a bit of English from watching the cartoons, that will be a blessing for us because apart from entertaining the kids the cartoon channels are helping them to learn something new.

The famous cartoon channels in Bangladesh are Cartoon Network, Nick etc. And kids learn some fragments or even some full sentences from watching those cartoons. Arik is my brother-in-law's only son who hardly allows anyone to watch any other channels. He is six years old and is a student of class 1 in Milestone Bangla medium school. He started watching cartoons when he was only three and he still cannot speak Bangla flawlessly. However, the way he sometimes speaks a smattering of English really surprises me. In our home no one speaks with him in English, so he only depends on schoolbooks though sometimes contents of her English books are not suitable for his age level, for example, the word "astronaut" (a word in one of his English books) is a little bit difficult for kids. Since every time kids are learning new words, we need to explain everything to them and choose such things which can create fun as well.

In cartoon channels kids not only listen to the word but also watch the performance which makes their learning easier. Listening is an essential part of language learning and watching cartoon has a good effect on the pronunciation of the kids because they unconsciously learn correct pronunciation. There is nothing to be imposed, rather the whole process is natural and many linguists think that natural learning is the best learning.

Total physical response (TPR) is a good way to teach English language to the kids. Finally, I would like to suggest that the parents in our country bear one thing in mind that everything has positive and negative sides, since some kids might only watch it for the sake of entertainment. So, it is the duty of the parents to guide them properly. In addition, if it is possible, parents should sit with them when their kids watch cartoons because they will ask a lot of questions out of amusement and curiosity, especially when they have language difficulty.

Suma Saha
Junior Lecturer
Centre for Languages, BRAC University

Stop student politics

Now it is time to stop student politics. Because students are being used as a weapon to create an unstable situation in the country. Protest or demonstration starts from university first. The political parties are rearing them to have more power to create extreme situations in the political arena. They are using them for their own benefit.

I agree that our students had huge contribution to the language movement in 1952 and freedom struggle in 1971. Nevertheless, I do not support unlawful activities in the name of student politics these days.

Previously, the meritorious students used to join politics. They were committed to serving the nation. But the situation is different now.

The political parties have to address the issue in right earnest.

Md. Abdul Wahab
BBA
Independent University,
Bangladesh

Man made tremor!

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has accused the United States of causing the tremor in Haiti, killing hundreds of thousands of people. Now what about the prediction of earthquake that might strike Bangladesh? Will that be man made too?

In the recent past, when tsunami struck Indonesia, there was also a rumour that it was man made, but then the rumour died down. There was also an earthquake that shook Pakistan and Kashmir killing thousands, was that man made too?

Now if an earthquake really strikes Bangladesh, and hypothetically speaking if it is man made, who will be responsible for the genocide?

Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

People of Haiti

We are shocked and feeling very sad. The people of Haiti were struck by a deadly earthquake. Hundreds of thousands are feared dead and many more injured. It is a disaster of such magnitude that one has to gasp with horror.

Among the natural calamities, earthquakes are the deadliest, because the damage is completely unpredictable.

Living beings are entirely helpless and insignificant to its furious intervention.

Nur Jahan
SS Khaled Road
Chittagong

Cricket

What has happened to our players? Only one or two of them seem to play well in an innings!

It is lack of temperament that makes them so vulnerable to even ordinary bowling. They have to bear in mind that it is a game of total team work, not individual brilliance alone.

Better performance WANTED!

Raja
Dhaka

Hospital explosion

The AFP report on the explosion in a Ukrainian hospital published on January 19 in a local English daily is a serious matter. All our clinics and hospitals should take note of this accident, and review their safety measures as they are one of the largest users of oxygen all over Bangladesh.

The explosion of oxygen canisters and not high pressure oxygen cylinders as reported, must have been due to two primary reasons. One, there was something flammable that contaminated the oxygen. It could be leaking natural gas or methane, or oil or some inflammable liquid and a source of fire. That could be an electric spark or careless use of a lighter or cigarette or any such source.

Oxygen by itself does not ignite an explosion, it needs a combustible material and a spark or flame; to cause such a havoc particularly in the ICU intensive care unit of a hospital! The matter as reported only reflects the poor standard of housekeeping and safety precautions being taken in that hospital, as such explosions are rare. There is more possibility of such accidents in an industrial work place involving gas cutting and welding operation where both oxygen and the highly combustible acetylene gases are normally used.

For such an explosion and fire to happen in a hospital and an ICU for that matter is beyond comprehension! Something must have been seriously ignored at the hospital by the management, beyond the normal levels of

neglect, that one may come across. The explosion, fire and the destruction of the hospital building, is a matter that needs to be thoroughly investigated and reported so that such accidents can never happen again!

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Jamaat

The Jamaat-e-Islami and its leaders were absent during bad times of the nation, they were not interested in history and economics of this country, neither were they present during national disasters or wars--in favour of this Austro-Dravidian race.

So, how can we trust them who are experts only in misleading the uneducated people?

Dr Azizul Karim
GP Australia

GM foods

Common food buyers even in our country search for 'deshi' (country) chicken, vegetables, fishes, fruits, etcetera when they go to the market. In other words, they are not interested to buy Genetically Modified (GM) foods, that is, they want to purchase foods which do not contain genetic materials but with original or natural gene-DNA set up.

Meanwhile, people all over the world have raised a question whether GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) or GM foods are safe and suitable for humans? By inserting genes from another species into a food's DNA, GM foods are being made which often contain virus and bacteria

used to produce genetically modified foods.

In fact, only a few researches have been conducted to determine the actual effects of GM foods on living organisms. Some tests on rats with GM foods had shown negative effect on rats. It was found that rats fed with genetically modified foods had developed liver, kidney, spleen, heart, and adrenal gland problems. It is feared that intake of GM foods may lower the strength of our natural immune system. The genetically modified food may contribute to the development of new diseases plus cancer!

In agriculture, GM technology has introduced a new era. The GMOs ensure higher yield, need less pesticides due to insect and pest resistant property of GMOs, and can adjust with climatic fluctuations, etcetera.

In my view, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations should form an international research team comprising agricultural scientists, medical specialists, nutritionists, and other related professionals to conduct both field and laboratory oriented research to ascertain the real impact/effect of genetically modified foods on humans plus environment.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Environment pollution



MOHAMMAD ISLAM / DRINKNEWS

Water is being polluted by spreading petroleum and throwing garbage.

Deforestation is taking place all over the world, but on a larger scale in third world countries. In Brazil in 1987 alone, they burnt a forest area bigger than Bangladesh. In our country we had 21% forest in 1947, but now we have only 17% or less of our

total land.

Spend money to educate people on the environment and gather information. Otherwise, an environmental disaster will strike us in the very near future.

Nayon Saha
Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University, Dinajpur

Noisy capital

Hordes of motorized vehicles, including over 3.5 lakh private cars now 'try' to ply on the potholed 7% of space that is road-worthy in Dhaka. Result: horrible jams tie up traffic for miles and hours, forcing the VIP passengers to bite their nails and berate their drivers for not taking another route. What naivety!! The drivers, in turn, vent their frustration by incessantly blowing their horns.

The decibel range of these raucous horns range from gentle (a few) to the most strident (maximum) that technology can devise and it seems these have been specially made for Bangladesh because they believe our drivers are convinced that the louder and more prolonged the noise, the quicker the jam in front will dissipate. So, what effect does all this ear-piercing and constant noise have on the 95%+ humble Dhakabashis who ride on rickshaws (50%), use buses (30%) or those forced to walk on footpath-less roads? 1) The traffic constables on the roads have become thick-skinned because they are already semi-deaf; 2) The Ministry of Environment (MoE) continues to slumber, while 3) The ENT specialists continue to make hay from the unearthly din all around and 4) Cardiologists warn that noise pollution is a major cause of heart disease. But in their sound-proof VIP cocoons, the car-owners remain unconcerned for the welfare of others. Recently, the pesky motorcycles and CNGs also joined the fray by installing horns whose decibel levels are out of all proportion to their size.

DU

Dhaka University is famous as not only the first and best educational institution but also for its glorious historical dimensions. Located at the heart of the capital, the university boasts of, along with many other things, the rare blessing and picturesque beauty of Mother Nature. The age-old grand figure of the towering stout trees, the heart-cooling shadows, the lullaby of the numerous known and unknown birds, the green velvety carpet under the foot all over the wide palm of Nature during summer, the rustling of grey crooked, crinkled and crispy falling leaves driven by the wind during the Autumn days, the murmuring of the thick layers of leaves under the soft and cautious claws of the night cat next to the widow this is how you can portray Dhaka University which elicits the exclamation "WOW!" from the visitors. Juxtaposed with rest of the mechanical and buzzing city, it won't be an example of an exaggeration to call Dhaka University campus the heaven of the capital.

But the campus is losing its beauty these days. The authorities concerned should address the issue.

A Rahman Shibly
Applied Linguistics and ELT
Department of English
University of Dhaka

Campus violence

Campus violence is not welcomed in any educational institution. But in spite of its deadly effects known to all, such violence is visible frequently in our campus. Recently, Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute experienced this violence. Hostilities erupted between the Chhatra League and the Chhatra Maitree, resulting in the death of one student and some others were injured. One party wing tries to defeat another.

This indeed does not bring any bliss to anyone. It greatly affects the environment of education. We believe student politics is not for capturing power but to uphold certain principles. We have to go by certain rules!

Bipra Kanungo
Momin Road, Chittagong



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Duty-free cars for MPs again (January 24, 2010)

This time MPs will be entitled to cars with engines measuring up to 1800cc, SUVs 3000cc and microbuses 2000cc.

This is deplorable in a poor county like Bangladesh. Where else in the world MPs get duty-free privilege? Imagine the cost to the public exchequer to maintain these MPs, many of whom even do not attend parliament! What national issues these MPs are discussing in parliament and what good they are bringing to the people?

The government must stop this luxury with taxpayers' money.

Kantik Syed

MPs are supposed to be the people upholding the highest levels of ethics as they are lawmakers, and ultimate mentors of the democratic Bangladesh. Yet, what they are doing to get duty-free cars is simply disgusting.

Mong Sano Marma

They should never be allowed to import tax-free cars while millions of people remain extremely poor. Lawmakers are already rich people. Why should they be given this privilege? I am dead against this policy.

Dr Reaz Talukder

This decision shows how our politicians love Bangladesh and its very poor people!

Badiuzzaman Khan

This is Bangladesh. We will never learn!

MK

Microbus for personal use? Or to run a transport company?!

Mahmudul Amin

Is this the democracy that we have been lured to by these very politicians? Who says Bangladesh is a third world country? Even mighty India is nowhere near us. Look at the privileges and perks enjoyed by our MPs. We have no shame left in us. When people are dying for want of warm clothes and when people in Sidra affected areas are still in dire distress, how can they ask for a luxury car each?

Khalid Hussain

The MPs started to put themselves above all again slowly - getting plots, flats as special category applicants etc.

Now they are telling us that 1,800cc cars are not a luxury!

Saleh-Rahim Ahmed

Please don't use the term 'lawmaker'. Do they really know the term and its possible application? We the people gave them power and they are the people who misuse the power and our assets.

Shozib

What a joke! We would like to know which countries allow duty free cars for MPs. Why should they get such privilege?

Hasan

This is misuse of public money by the people's representatives of one of the poorest countries in the world. By allowing Tk. 40,000 per month for fuel etc, the finance minister is turning the public exchequer into 'Gouri Sen's' fund.

This is simply unprecedented.

AKS

Every job has its own set of privileges and I assume the salary and allowances of an MP in Bangladesh are reasonable and comparable to their counterparts in India, Nepal or Sri Lanka.

Salah

They are asking people to save energy and forcing us to use lesser cc cars. Then why should they use heavy cars? They should set examples by using small ones.

Salim

Our MPs can buy luxury cars from their own purse. Why did the speaker support this? Only the lawmakers who don't have any car can get this benefit. It is ludicrous that for car maintenance

they will get Tk-40,000 every month.

Nasirullah Mridha

The nation is simply shocked to know it. Everyone has to pay duty to the government when he wants to import anything, which is a legal obligation for him. Therefore, MPs, those who are responsible for making laws for the country, cannot evade it.

Mayen Uddin Tazim

MPs are the leaders of the people. They have the money to buy a car, they also have the capability to pay taxes.

Ersadul Bari

Mega dredging plan for over 300 rivers

Work to start with 4 major rivers; Tk 5,000cr projects on cards (January 20, 2010)

This government wants to spend \$720 billion on river dredging! Be real... This will end up like the rest, party officials will devour all the money, work will get started in name only, and the whole thing will end up as the opposition's failure to co-operate.

When will Bangladeshis wake up and make the politicians responsible for all their actions and promises?

Abul Azad

Dredging is perhaps a technology intensive proposition. In addition to that, we must consider using indigenous labour force to excavate small rivers and canals.

Shafi Khan

It's a very welcome move to save the rivers, their navigability, sites of aquatic

life and sources of irrigation. Whatever the cost, it must be done and the govt. needs to monitor it, so that none comes to grab the river basin.

MAS Molla

The Bangladesh government's plan to dredge 310 rivers is commendable. Many rivers in Bangladesh are dry, causing climate change and depriving the people of water for farming and other purposes. We hope that the plan will be well implemented without wastage of money.

Mobaiddul Huq

Do whatever you like, but please don't waste public money. We often see that a party govt's main aim behind all such expenditures is to distribute favour among the party men both in cash and kind. Had our top leaders been a bit more patriotic, honest and visionary, this country - with its enviable natural resources - would've gone decades ahead of where we are now.

S.Ali

The government should do this work properly & immediately.

Sumon

There is no doubt that this type of work is very much necessary for solving navigation problems of the major rivers of Bangladesh. But the real problem is corruption. There is lot of scope of corruption in this type of projects. Another problem is management capacity of the Water Development Board.

Md. Shahidul Islam

Before talking much, the government should buy some Amphibious Dredgers.

Hasibur Rahman