

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Vicious vehicles

First of all, congratulations for your four page special issue of March 24th highlighting the murderous vehicles and unlicensed drivers let loose in the streets of Dhaka! People die or are maimed for life; families are destroyed, the wage earner cut-down bringing untold misery for the family. Meanwhile, the killer driver at most has to suffer three years imprisonment if caught. Normally, he will obtain bail, and get lost to carry on his killer career in another city or town in Bangladesh!

Meanwhile, inspector of vehicles and traffic policemen, make "hay while the sun shines"! Any piece of paper with a smudgy photograph, but with a Tk.500 currency note attached; makes do for a driving licence! Human carcass haulers

"Zindabad!" Anisur Rahman's magnificent photograph of the bus/scooter sandwich is really marvellous! Lucky that he was not run over, to live and publish it! It must have been at grave risk! The photograph deserves an international award, not to speak of one in Bangladesh for an excellent composition! The title of the article of your report "buses could not care less" is ideally represented in Rahman's photograph! One can say here we have an "ounce of visual, worth more than a ton of words", to use the popular phrase that we know, with license to change the two key words!

Regarding the photo of the 'capped' and 'bearded' driver, without any dashboard instru-

ment; his defence could be that he was using 'eye-ball' instrumentation, with 'hand and foot leverage' mechanism to control the vehicle in the busy streets of Dhaka! However, the accuracy of his 'eye-ball instrument' and 'foot and hand leverage' depends on his eyesight and physical and mental coordination; none of which is a criteria for testing a potential driving licence applicant! All he must ensure to see clearly is the approaching hand of the prospective law enforcer for his fair dues of the day!

Now a word about our pedestrians, they too enjoy crossing the road against the traffic signal, dodging between vehicles or chancing their speed against the approaching vehicle, to see who crosses the potential point of impact faster! After all if the pedestrian fails, he is safe; 'so he thinks', because the driver has the brake; upon which he bets with his whole life or limb at risk!

Lastly, I feel sad. Will your writing and photographs matter? After all, the vehicle inspection and traffic control personnel's 'Gravy Train' has high power prime-movers to keep the 'Gravy Train' going, despite the yellow signal of your special issue, and people's words and opinions! All said and done, as the saying goes, "Charlie Chan carries on!"

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

ACC amendments

I found it amusing that the law minister's given reason for the amendments to the ACC law is a desire to see that politicians are not 'harassed'. Frankly, I would have much more respect for him if he simply told the truth which is that no politician and no bureaucrat wants to be held accountable for corruption and hence, to them, an independent ACC is a huge threat. In fairness, this has nothing to do with the minister's political affiliation since former ministers of the previous ruling party believed the same thing. They want to go back to the days of the old Bureau of Anti Corruption which was a cruel joke, to be very charitable.

Simply put, the ministers, politicians, and bureaucrats consider corruption as an entitlement of their jobs. No wonder they hated the caretaker government so much.

Esam Sohail
Wichita, Kansas
USA



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Powerless!

With the beginning of noxious summer load shedding has returned. We understand that there are problems which cannot be addressed overnight. But suffering masses should feel their hard days are coming to an end. With a few years outside the country, I am living in Dhaka since December 1971. Saw all the government handling the issues in the way they think right. But some of the problems became complicated than cured.

The present govt received mandate to run the country for five years. Digital Bangladesh is one of their profound promises mentioned in the manifesto. Fine. It's about one and a half year gone. But I fail to understand how can we use our automated IT sectors, Offices, Banks, Schools, Colleges,

Varsities And so onwithout uninterrupted power supply? One hour ON one hour OFF is the new load shedding formulae we have been observing recently.

Last night (23rd March) Mr Subid Ali (chairman parliamentary committee) told a private channel that there is no good news for us for at least next two years.

We want to get the services of modern amenities & none of them (including computers) works without electricity.

So I humbly request the authorities to find out some means to minimize the sufferings of the masses.

Jalal Uddin Ahmed
Former Chairman
Aeronautical Institute of Bangladesh



PHOTO: AMIRUL RAJIV

Cultural nights

Bangladesh is a country of rich cultural heritage. Art and Music form an integral part of our life. Unfortunately, efforts to project the same to the music lovers and art connoisseurs have been frustrating so far. The people are deprived of entertainment. Anybody looking for traditional Bangla songs or dances will be totally disappointed since there are no permanent arrangements for the purpose. The other day I felt embarrassed as I could not find any such place for our foreign visitors. The tourists are totally disappointed and confused and leave our country with a poor image. It may be mentioned that all the big cities including those of the neighbouring countries boast of regular Cultural Nights depicting their culture and tradition. Tourists travelling through those cities even for a few hours are able to appreciate the rich cultural heritage. In our country, such shows are limited to some occasions only like Pahela Baishak, Rabindra Jayanti or on anniversary of some academic institutes/socio-cultural organizations. May I take this opportunity to request the Ministry of Sports and Cultural Affairs as well as private socio-cultural bodies to arrange Cultural Nights on a regular basis at least in Dhaka. Similar shows may be arranged at Chittagong, Rangamati and Cox's Bazaar initially on fixed days of the week. This initiative will also open windows to hunt otherwise hidden talents. Such arrangement will also provide

as a source of entertainment in our monotonous life. There are scores of theatre houses/auditoriums across the country lying abandoned throughout the year. Fashion houses are mushrooming in great numbers. I hope they too will come forward and fulfil the vacuum in our socio-cultural arena.

Shamim Ahmed
Gulshan 2
Dhaka

Illegally occupied road

Monipur High School is located at Barabagh under Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216. Two of my children are studying there. To drop them in the school every day we use a sub-lane located at the entrance road of a residential area. People from the adjacent areas use the approach road to go to Monipur School to drop their children. This is a very busy connecting road between Monipur and Barabagh. At the starting point of the approach road a local leader and his son have set up a welding shop and few other shops and tea-stalls. The welding worker does his work on the road which belongs to the city corporation. They occupy at least 20-30% road space keeping their welding materials on the road and putting us in to deep trouble. During this time it becomes extremely difficult for us to go to school. The shopkeepers and some unruly boys tease the school girls while they pass this road and some time comment on the girls and young housewives.

People have already complained against this to the City Corporation, local police, and acting Ward Commissioner (Ward Commissioner of Ward No. 14 is now in-charge) But nobody is taking any action.

We are, therefore, soliciting help from the City Corporation and other departments concerned to take appropriate action so that we can easily commute through this road.

Aguardian
East Monipur
Mirpur-2, Dhaka

ECA

Better late than never! At last the government has declared the Saint Martin's Island an Environmentally Critical Area (ECA). During the last few years it was treated just like a public place.

After the cyclone "Sidr", environmental scientists suggested that the Sundarbans would regenerate on its own and appealed to people not to disturb it. Just within one year the Sundarbans has regained its evergreen view.

Now we hope that appropriate measures will be taken to save the Saint Martin's Island.

Mehruha Islam
Department of Geography & Environment
University of Dhaka

Even softer drink!

World's largest beverage company Coca-Cola recently entered into a fresh joint investment of US \$ 12.7 million with United States Agency for International

Development (USAID) as a part of their global water partnership, the Water and Development Alliance (WADA). With this new investment USAID and the Coca-Cola Company will have committed a total of US \$ 28.1 million since 2005 to support 32 projects ensuring supply of safe drinking water and access to basic sanitation in 22 countries worldwide, Africa to Asia. It may be mentioned here that more than one billion people live without access to safe drinking water and 2.6 with no access to basic sanitation. The WADA established by USAID and the Coca-Cola Company is committed to accomplishing lasting and sustainable solutions to global water challenges.

The Coca-Cola Company and the USAID deserves appreciation for their initiative to help solve safe drinking water problem around the globe. We are looking forward to find a part of the above initiative being implemented in areas of Bangladesh where scarcity of safe drinking water has become chronic and acute.

Bangladesh is already experiencing an acute shortage of drinking water as her ground water level has drastically fallen and surface water sources are getting dry to drier due to the adverse impact of climate change.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
SAU
Dhaka

Fish cultivation

On an average Eskimo people live the longest in the present earth, followed by the Japanese. The reason is obvious, the staple food of Eskimos is fish, and Japanese also take highest quantity of fish. Bengalis were called a fish-rice taking nation once upon a time. But the situation is different now. Thanks to the present government for taking up a mega-project of dredging 300 silted rivers. We hope fish production will be boosted if these rivers are used for fish cultivation.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Ramna, Dhaka

Mines and Mineral Rules

The Bangladesh government enacted The Mines and Mineral Rules (1968), and later it was amended. But it has a major gap, the legislators never tried to remove this gap in the law. The Mines and Mineral Rules defined the lessee/applicant for exploration licence and mining licences in its 3(a) and 3(b) section. This law permits the applicant or lessee to apply for exploration licence in any area over the country without considering the environmental and habitation issues. Both Bangladeshis and foreign nationals can have accessibility to apply at any time of the year for exploration licence without showing their capability to implement this project.

The matter should be looked into with a sense of urgency.

Hasan Kamrul
Banani, Dhaka

Flyover at Tongi

I fully endorse the concern voiced by Mr. Niaz A Chowdhury on the above subject. Two day's back, while I was returning from Shingrawly, Shamsheernagar, Moulvibazaar, I took this road. Although I had a very comfortable journey but as soon as I entered Tongi, I got stranded. It took almost one

and a half hours to cross the railway level crossing located under the flyover bridge. On that hot summer day I saw the sufferings of the people, particularly the women and children. There was no traffic system, no police, no volunteer and everything was running with the formula of "might is right". The bus and truck drivers were so unkind to the smaller vehicles.

It was a horrifying experience. I would, therefore, urge upon the concerned departments either to complete this flyover or close this road for the safety of the innocent people.

S. M. Khaleque Zaman
Popular Housing-1
Mirpur-2, Dhaka

Government and people

It is an irony that after self-rule of 40 years, insofar as the average lifespan of Bangladeshis is concerned, we are told that the best is yet to come. More than poverty, what pains the people is the gross indifference and insensitivity of the ruling classes and politicians to their needs. Governance does not end with rhetoric on occasions. We need a strong political will and determination to achieve sustainable development.

Despite being the world's youngest democracy, what we see is an ineffective state apparatus, besides an indifferent bureaucracy, rampant corruption and marginalisation of the minorities. As the number of Bangladeshis in the list increases, we are also witness to the grim reality of freedom fighters and farmers' suicides

in different parts of the country. We have, indeed, come a long way. And besides moving steadily into the league of developed nations, we have also stayed rooted to our culture and ethos. What we need to remember and acknowledge is that the real heroes behind our progress are the masses. Undoubtedly, there has been tremendous progress with the graph soaring high in areas such as communication and technology. But the graph on discipline, decorum, and decency in public life has nose-dived over the years, which is a reflection of the deterioration of human values.

Hunger has not been eliminated, farmers continue to commit suicide, crimes

against women are on the rise, and terrorism is spreading its tentacles.

Hopefully, by the time we celebrate 40 years of Independence, the country will be free from hunger and poverty. Their collective contribution is, I am sure, more than that of policymakers'. It is especially evident in times of crisis when their humanitarian spirit and resilience in managing and successfully overcoming disasters and calamities are palpable. The government should salute its people and ensure that its promises benefit those at the grassroots.

Gopal Sengupta
McGill University
Canada

Quality of education



AMADUL HUQ / DRIKNEWS

I agree with the recent comment made by Mr. Olav Seim of UNESCO on the quality of primary and secondary education in Bangladesh. One of the major challenges in education sector in Bangladesh, for that matter in many Asian developing countries, is how to improve the quality of learning. We have been quite successful, mostly with the assistance of donors and government's commitment to increase the enrolment in primary and secondary level (the demand side). Our major focus should now be to find ways to reduce the level of dropout and improving quality of education to contribute to developing a good pool of human capital. One important way we may achieve this goal is through enhancing the student engagement in the learning process which is seriously lacking in our culture of education. Through the strategy of student engagement, the students will enjoy the learning and they will do it in a much more qualitative way than what they learn in the conventional, supply-driven and teacher-centered learning environment. As the students enjoy learning in this way, the level of dropout will naturally fall. This means we have to work in the supply segment (capacity building of educators) and the environment side (policy and socio-cultural level). Our curriculum should be designed in such a way that it is updated and articulates the right learning objectives, output, pedagogy, assessment and, most importantly, the alignment of all these so that the students can see how it is going to contribute to the development of good human capital who will be able to use the learning to address the challenges they would face. In ensuring this learning environment, we also work on building the capacity of educators so that they are able to create the learning environment in which the student engagement is enhanced. The policy makers' vision is paramount in this case. They should pay high attention to facilitate changing the culture and environment of our learning and teaching.

Abdul Moyeen, Ph.D.
Educator and Development Consultant



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MPs motor on 4,000cc

NBR issues policy on duty-free car next week (March 31, 2010)

If the government and the MPs have any sympathy for the country, they may use this money for improvement of the critical gas and power situation. It is a sin and unforgivable crime to spend money in a poor country for importing cars for the lawmakers.

TH

A reward for no- performance. The NBR is making rules for such a reward. Cannot they make rules to ban these cars in Dhaka city until the traffic condition improves?

Faqrul

The Finance Minister said there are too many cars on Dhaka street and that's why price of CNG needs to go up. And there are all sorts of privileges set up for the cars of MPs. Our MPs, govt officers themselves, do not bother to use public transports and instead are given cars bought with tax payers' money. Even though no effective public transports for general people are there, the blame goes to public for too many cars on the road!

Why don't the newspapers raise their voices on behalf of us?

Asif

Not a piece of good news for us to rejoice. The PM assured she would ratify all the ordinances of the CTG but she has gone back on her words. Because it is of their personal interest at the cost of the state. No wonder, the poor will get poorer and the gap with the rich will get wider. We have condemned ex president Ershad for this national loss. But we had a much better administration under him. Even after all that humiliation by the CTG, they have not given up.

Abul Zakaria

Please stop it & create an example that our MPs can also use ordinary vehicles. My lifetime achievement & sacrifice is not less than an MP's. Shall the NBR or the state allow me to import a luxury car without any tax? Honourable Prime Minister, we want to see examples at the national level and not at personal level as created by you.

Hasan

Do the members of parliament know how the country is running? Do they know how the people are living? Do they know gas, electricity and water are

some of the things that have become so scarce? They are creating a permanent division between 'them' and 'us'.

Haq

When our common people are passing their days with power cuts, they may not like their MPs riding luxury cars & jeeps. Honourable Prime Minister, please reconsider the decision.

Reza

What the hell is going on in Bangladesh? They have already put the country on the edge of destruction.

Masud Isa

Why do we need 4000cc vehicles in Bangladesh? If it is a safety concern, the safest cars like Volvo are around 3000cc. And SUVs are not safer than sedans.

Talat Islam

Good, MPs are so lucky, why 4000 cc, why not more, highly comfortable, dignified and anything!

While we see in newspapers that the MPs and ministers are spending millions of taka on

different occasions, the 4000cc car is nothing!

Rahim

The caretaker govt took the right initiative. Why will the public pay taxes for the MPs to have luxury cars?

Aneira

Only 345 lawmakers are working hard in this country! They deserve more facilities.

Md. Firoz Zaman

We know their contributions for the common people. They do not speak for the common people. This kind of incentive will not help the cause of good governance.

Akmal Mustafa Tipu

At least, this is one issue where the AL, BNP, Jamaat and JP will all together agree in unison. Sign of National Integration!

Nell Sangma

We must go for the royal system of government. All the state perks will go to the Royal family depending on their status.

Ameen Sayeed