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Trains move slow

Our capital city is almost in the middle of the country. Other important cities are not more than 500km from Dhaka city. So, it is very easy to provide a high quality transportation system either by railway or highway. But unfortunately we are far behind other countries in this respect. My focus is on railway. Railway can be a very profitable sector for government. Rail journey is much more comfortable and safer than any other mode of transport. It can be a first choice of travel and carrying goods. It is unclear to me that even now we are not able to provide a good railway system throughout the country. Last month I travelled from Dhaka to Brahmanbaria by "Mohanagar Provat". It took two(2) hours to reach the place. Distance was 142 km. i.e. it travelled 70 km /hr. Cleanliness and other services of this train is praiseworthy. But what about

other routes? My home town is Jamalpur. There are four inter-city and two commuter trains on this route. Distance from Dhaka to Jamalpur is 177km. But it takes six hours to reach at an average speed of 30km/hr! We want to get rid of this nightmare. People on this route are not travelling free of cost. They are also paying. They also have important works. They also want to reach home early. We want at least 70-80km/hr train service. It is not an impossible task. The easy solution is to construct double-line from Dhaka to other mega cities. Proper maintenance is also required.

Obviously, providing double-line is much more economical than constructing elevated highways, flyovers, bridges, underground or magnetic trains.

M.I.Zahedi
Jamalpur



Pahela Baishakh 1417!

Pahela Baishakh was, and should be a day to remember for all of us! Not for the red and white dresses, nor the songs and cultural activities, but for the 'UNUSUAL' absence of load shedding! Load shedding has become a daily reality—much like the morning cup of tea. That day it was a significant beginning of the New Year heralded by its absence! Till the time of this writing (around 7.30pm!), we have not lost a minute of electricity to load shedding. A rare event, worth more celebration than the New Year with its surprising and possibly auspicious(?) beginning!

This is the surprising fact of life in our locality, just south of the Gulshan First Circle. I am celebrating this freedom from load shedding by penning these words. I wonder how many of our fellow citizens of Dhaka have had such a joyous beginning of this New Year. We are not getting the daily harsh rumbling of the generators, fighting against the all-enveloping darkness that makes today's 21st century look more like the 16th or 17th century, when light was for the lords and the ladies to wine and dine, never for the ordinary mortals whose lives were just a few words away! These were: "off with his/her head" uttered from the mouth of the Kings that possibly ruled our ancestors in yester years!

May God help us, for the AL has no 'Aladdin's Lamp' to

wish the load shedding away. It will get worse day by day! May be we can hope for some relief but not before 2013 or 2014. That is the fact of life. 'Pahela Baishakh' was an exception, possibly one whole solitary day of 24 hours till the morning of 15th April! Ex-supporter of BNP
Dhaka

Good news

Remittance inflow in our country increased by 20 percent in 2009. More than one crore Bangladeshis are now living abroad. Their remittances contribute to our GDP hugely. But there is absence of proper legal platform to send the money. Expatriates are somehow compelled to remit through illegal channels. Recently, Eastern Bank, Dhaka Bank & mobile operator Banglalink launched a cell phone-based remittance transfer system. They will allow the remittance receivers to cash in a day. The banks will offer mobile wallet accounts to the remittance receivers through Banglalink network.

It is a positive development. S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet

Biotechnology

Biodiversity is the multitude of different living beings in a particular ecosystem or on the whole Earth. Biodiversity can be seen and studied at differ-

ent organisational levels: genetic, organisational and ecological. It touches upon both native environments on land and sea as well as agricultural and other man-made surroundings. In agriculture, 7000 species of plants are used by farmers somewhere in the world, critics of Genetically Engineered Food (GE food) claim that the products of biotechnology threaten biodiversity. Every year hundreds of millions of pounds of organophosphate insecticides are sprayed on crops. These broad-spectrum insecticides kill virtually every insect on contact. The run-off from the sprays kills even more organisms in the soil and waterways. In an ideal world, we could just stop all use of these chemicals. But, unfortunately, such drastic measures would reduce crop yields.

Biotechnology has shown that it can reduce the impact on the environment while maintaining or increasing yields. Therefore its incorporation into world of agriculture will help protect biodiversity.

Jewel Rana
Dept of Biotechnology
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

Internet

It is obvious that, our government is committed to turning Bangladesh into a 'Digital Country'. Highlighting such a great plan, the prime minister has called on the whole nation to use Internet as a means of exchanging infor-

mation, news, views and so on. As the benefits of Internet are well known, I needn't discuss them here.

Electricity is an indispensable thing for using the Internet. But it is a matter of regret that load shedding has now become an insurmountable barrier to the use of internet. As a result, people are suffering in studying (in case of students) or sharing news, views, information etc in due time with anyone living in the country or abroad. In this situation, how can the nation anticipate that the government would make the dream of 'Digital Country' come true?

At last, we urge the government to deal with the above-mentioned problem as early as possible.

Faisal Saleh
A student
Amirabad, Lohagara
Chittagong

Transport problem

Female students of public and private universities still suffer due to poor transport system.

There is no specific transport system for the female students. The problem may aggravate further in near future, as the number of female students in the universities is increasing.

Recently, students demanded that the transport facility for the faculties and the students be improved.

We hope the authorities will take the necessary steps to reduce transport problem for the students, not only at the university level, but also at schools and colleges where students suffer a lot.

Rowshan Ali
Student of a private university
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Global warming

Global warming is a common issue today. The Arctic polar cap and Himalayan ice are melting and the sea level is rising gradually. Global warming and melting of ice is directly going to affect people living in the coastal areas. Sea level rise is a grim possibility and it poses a serious threat to people living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Twenty-five percent of our coastal areas may be submerged in the next fifty to hundred years, creating a huge problem of resettlement of millions of people living in the coastal districts and can turn into a major national disaster.

An awareness campaign should be launched to educate our people. Consider adoption of measures to mitigate its adverse environmental consequences. Climate change can also cause frequent floods, droughts, extreme weather and ecosystem which will disrupt food production in the affected areas.

Md. Tanjil
University of Chittagong

What is going on?

Being citizens of an independent country, I know the first thing that people need is security of life. But are we getting it really? Keeping our eyes in the newspaper, every day we watch all sorts of crimes being committed.

Law and order has deteriorated and ten people are being killed every day on an average!

Md. Al-Helal
Faculty of Fisheries
HSTU, Dinajpur

Shocking indeed

I am greatly disappointed by the news of physical harassment of females by youths on Dhaka University campus after sunset on the day of Pahela Baishakh. A social resistance, especially from the young generation, is needed to avert this kind of incidents on such occasions. Strong vigilance and harsh punishment to the criminals must be ensured.

But it should be unearthed whether the culprits were some organised "eve teasers" or it was planned by some quarters to bruise the secular image of the country.

Pradyut Kumar Saha
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Indians honoured

UNESCO has selected The Indian National Anthem -- "Jana gana mana..." composed by great Bengali Poet Tagore as the best national anthem of the world. It may be mentioned here that the National Anthem of Bangladesh -- "Amar sonar Bangla..." is also composed by him.

The UNESCO award has not only brought a great honour for the Indians but also all the Bangla speaking people of the world.

While heartily congratulating the Indians, I would request the Indian government to attach more importance to the expansion and learning of the Bengali language. The Indian TV channels should also include Bengali songs in their musical competitions along with Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, et cetera.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Coastal and marine pollution

It is known that coastal areas are among the most sensitive zones around the world. The coast of Bangladesh is known as a zone of multiple vulnerabilities due to various forms of pollution which made the whole coastal and marine environment vulnerable.

Coastal and marine water pollution in this region is mainly due to direct discharge from ships and other marine activities, direct discharges from rivers, waste oil, indirect discharge from terrestrial activities, untreated effluents from establishments like hotels, waste dumping from other countries, surface runoff and drainage from port areas, open dumping of solid waste domestic and industrial effluent discharges through outfalls and various contaminants from ships. Marine pollution also arises from sea-based activities, including marine transportation and offshore mineral exploration and production activities. In the port of Chittagong in Bangladesh, it is estimated that about 6,000 tonnes of crude oil are spilled a year and crude oil residue and wastewater effluents from land-based refineries amount to about 50,000 tonnes per year.

Such types of pollution are very detrimental to the marine ecosystem. Crude oil makes a layer on water surface which protects the penetration of sunlight. As a result,

Droughts



IQBAL AHMED / DRINKNEWS

Droughts are recurrent features in Bangladesh, affecting plant growth and leading to loss of crop production, food shortage and for many people starvation. The records of incidence of drought in Bangladesh indicate that the north-western region of Bangladesh is the most drought prone. During the last 50 years, Bangladesh suffered about 20 times from droughts. The 1973 drought was one of the severest in the past century and was responsible for 1974-local famine in northern Bangladesh.

The hydrological and climatic conditions of Bangladesh are characterized by too much water in the wet monsoon season and too little water in the dry months creating a drought condition. About 230 rivers flow through Bangladesh territory, of which 57 rivers are coming through India. Most of these enter the international boundary along

the NW and SW regions of Bangladesh. The natural flow of these rivers is interrupted by upstream withdrawal of water for economic and household uses as well as for construction of water management structures. These structures obstruct the normal flow of water in rivers such as the Ganges (at Farakka), the Punarbhaba (just beyond Banglabandh) and the Tista rivers. These mostly divert dry season flow of the rivers, which create not only a scarcity of surface water in North-Western Bangladesh, but also tend to affect negatively the recharge of groundwater in these regions, ultimately leading to moisture loss in vast areas.

Md. Saidul Islam
Dept. of geography and Environmental Studies
University of Chittagong

the dissolved oxygen (DO) and biological oxygen demand (BOD) declines dramatically. Finally, a number of marine species are affected seriously including their respiratory activities. Coastal pollution has an effect on sand dune vegetation and fauna. It also changes the soil properties of the coast areas.

Ocean use licensing, total pollutant limit, controlling pollution from ships and ocean disposal of solid waste, proper management of agrochemicals and domestic waste, proper management of industrial waste including ship breaking industries etc. are some important solutions to coastal and marine pollution.

Md. Humayun Kabir
M.S. in Environmental Science
Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences
University of Chittagong

BCS results

The process of the 28th BCS started about two years ago and its viva was complete on 10 January 2010. If the authorities were serious enough then in this computer age such a long time would not be required for publishing the final results.

We hope that the PSC will publish the results without further delay.
Dipankar Bar
Trunk Road, Feni

Killing of students

How dangerous times we the students are passing through! Students are being killed one after another! Student politics has been turned into an excuse for killing people! As if anyone belonging to any political group or scholastic institution can be killed any time! And afterwards, though some committees are formed for investigation, hardly any one is found guilty in the end due to lack of enough evidence.

In the TV, I saw one deceased student's father saying "What can be done?" It is their fate to be wretched and to see their dreams shattered. He was working in the field near his son's grave while saying all these. He was not crying at all, seemed he had forgotten how to cry! He has been working hard for so long and dreaming his son would bring peace in their miserable life! The son arrives in the end as a dead body to rest in eternal peace.

Parents who are sending their sons and daughters to the universities believing they will turn their dreams into truth are the actual deceased ones who never had anything to do with it but pay in the end. They are being left with nothing but a graveyard to live with.

When will we behave a little more sensibly?
Arafath Shahrior
Former student
Chittagong University

track, upgrading of existing stations, addition of a few new stations, electronic ticket pass, covered walkways with escalators etc. to the nearby bus stops would make the STMS excellent.

4) Multi-leg sliding sky walkways can easily be constructed to connect Motijheel, Karwan Bazar and other similar points with the nearby STMS stations.

5) The project can be implemented within two years' time at least partially and with a reasonably low cost in comparison to other mass transit options.

6) Implementation of the project will convert the rail route as the principal travel artery of Dhaka that with other options for other parts of the city would give a sustainable, clean and affordable mass transit system.

7) Implementation of the project can be a great example of Public-Private partnership in Bangladesh.
S. M. Shafiqul Alam, PEng.
General Secretary
Bangladesh Society of Road Professionals (BSRP)

Something fishy?

To the Bengalis it seems like something fishy is going on in India. Despite a fivefold increase in fish production since independence, many Indians prefer to go for chicken and meat rather than the Bengali staple.

What's up? Before letting one's imagination run away with all kinds of theories, one should look at the Indian ethos.

Barring Bengal and the coastal states, most Indians prefer to go for chicken and meat. The unbearable temperatures for a good part of the year may have something to do with it. In fact, there is one school of thought in India that fish should be shunned in the months without an 'R' because it rots easily. Which means it's okay to consume this Bengali delicacy from September to April and avoid it in the hot summer months. As for the monsoon, it is believed that the fish breeding season is not conducive to its consumption.

In North India, sea fish are the most popular bhukti, surmai, singhara and so on.

Of course, the Bengalis are an exception to this rule. In colonies such as Chittaranjan Park (popularly known as CR Park and once upon a time as the East Pakistan Displaced Persons' colony,) they have a feast of sea and river fish to choose from.

So carry on fishing in Bangladesh. Forget about your giant neighbour at least when it comes to fish.

Kavita
New Delhi
India



ONLINE VOICES

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Controversial 2 left out of oath

Chief Justice decides to swear in 15 HC judges; state minister for law declines to comment; bar chief says image of judiciary brightens (April 18, 2010)

Congratulations to the Chief Justice. And also to the SC Bar Association for its due role. The situation demands stronger protest and a bolder decisions.
Nilufar Yesmin Biswas

This picture tells a lot. Oh my god, these are the people supposed to protect us from injustice!
S. Ali

Nice work by the government and great decision by Chief

Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim (not administering oaths of two newly appointed High Court judges of questionable character).
Kawser Jamal

I think this is the right gesture from the Chief justice. A person who kicks the door should never be allowed to be a judge. I am not sure what is meant by accused in a murder case. Was it a false case? I think the court works on the philosophy of

innocent till proven guilty. Thus, if he was acquitted, then it can't be said about him.
Talat Islam

We need judges who have competence and proven temperament to be judges. As a nation we should be careful about those we put in our top justice departments. Stay above politics, please!
DR

It's a shame that no one cared to look into their past and the president appointed them to the prestigious positions. How could the nation keep its trust in the judiciary if such appointments are made?
Anonymous

I think the Chief Justice has set a unique example of holding high the image of the apex court. We were under the impression that newly appointed judges would be selected and recommended by the Chief Justice. But now we see the reverse!
Abul

The Honourable Chief Justice has proved that he has a strong personality and can do anything against injustice.
Hossain

It is a good decision to get back the dignity of the Supreme Court.
Mahfuj

Congratulations to our Chief Justice for deciding not to administer the oaths of the controversial appointees. This decision will enhance the respect for and credibility of our judiciary.
Shahidul Islam

Congratulations to the new Chief Justice for his bold step. Congratulations also to DS for printing the photos of the two controversial newly appointed judges.
A. Chowdhry

If picture tells a thousand words, then this picture also says a lot about the persons responsible for picking them as candidates for the highest post

in the judiciary. More transparency is needed for the general people to know what are the criteria which are used while selecting judges.
Saqib

The decision of the Chief Justice not to administer the oath of office of two controversial appointees is a silver lining in the cloudy sky of Bangladesh judiciary. To uphold the dignity and honour of the Supreme Court is a must, and the Chief Justice sided with what is right and also what is just. Our respect, even if by inches, has edged higher for such a milestone decision.
Reaz Hassan

How come these two could be selected as the judges of the High court?
Zahurul Haque Sagar

Such an embarrassing situation would not have arisen if nomination & appointment of judges of the HC were made under certain statutory rules in this regard.
N. Khan