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# Re-designing rickshaw

By now it is apparent that for some years at least, (perhaps decades) a vast majority of Dhakabashis and those in other cities, towns and villages in Bangladesh will have to keep on using the existing millions of rickshaws to go about their daily vocational pursuits. What is surprising however is that while just about everything around them has changed, rickshaw design is still the same that I first saw more than 7 decades ago. Since this is by no means a rocket science, I wonder, why this is so. Is it because those who make them, those that drive them and those who use them are all voiceless to be bullied by the 'law' and herded like sheep by the raucous horns of the ever-growing car-owner's fraternity?

Anyway to meet the ends of justice, here are a few suggestions to make rickshaws safer, more comfortable and easier on the pullers. 1) The centre of gravity must be lowered to make them more stable. This is easily done by reducing the 1 foot out-dated spring to about 4-6 inches. 2) The ratios of the two gears have to be adjusted accordingly to make it easier for the pullers. 3) What prevents the one-man-power 'engine' being helped by solar power and/or re-chargeable batteries? Why not give a few of the thousands of 'seized' rickshaws to the brighter lads in the mechanical-electrical department of BUET and let them hone their talent and come up with workable prototypes?

Finally how to rid ourselves of traffic congestion? I won't even mention a) Free parking on public roads or b) empty cars plying unchecked or c) total ban on licence-less cars and drivers or d) unrestricted import of cars or e) traf-



fic lights, freeways, under and over passes etc, but 1. Allow occupied rickshaws one lane on all roads, automatically reducing short distance journeys by sane car owners. 2. By the same token, empty cars are to be banned on narrow lanes/by-lanes. 3. Reduce the millions of pot-holes on public roads to give our spinal discs some respite. 4. Of course, we will miss the daily comedy (actually tragedy) one sees in the narrow confines of Banani and Gulshan and hundreds of similar places where 14-18 feet cars try to circumvent the 10-12 feet inner lanes and 5. if the powered rickshaws can whiz around at about 15-20 kmph, it would certainly bring the arrogant and autocratic CNGs down to earth!!.

**Sikander Ahmed**  
Niketon, Gulshan 1, Dhaka

## Fundamentals of power supply!

The state has inherited and taken up this critical business of power supply, a vital component of economic function in trade, commerce and industry; not to speak of its vital role in all spheres of our daily life! Priority of this vital sector which is as critical as defence has remained a persistent problem in Bangladesh!

While demand for electric power has gone on increasing, and will continue to do so, its production capacity has remained more or less static! This is an unbelievable state of affairs! Instead of expanding power production capabilities, our governments in the last six years or so have been literally "twiddling their thumbs"! Further, the decline in availability of natural gas has only aggravated the problem!

For effective and stable power supply, our generation capacity needs to be rapidly expanded today without any let or hindrance! The government should declare an emergency for power generation and distribution matters undertaken either by the government or private sector!

Alongside, our power generation capacity vis-à-vis uninterrupted meeting of power demand needs to be rapidly rationalised, which is woefully inadequate today!

Let us assume that power need of Bangladesh is, say, 5000MW. Then we must have the generation capacity of at least 20 percent more! This comes to 6000MW! Only then we can ensure uniform round the clock power supply, without any interruption at any time; and the ugly word 'load shedding' can be dropped from our everyday vocabulary!

This extra 1000MW capacity is essential to ensure regular repair, maintenance and overhaul of the plant and equipment! These plants should normally not be over ten years old, while more than half of our present generation capacity running (un-uniformly) is older than this! These are to be taken off line for at least six to twelve months for total overhaul and upgrading. Otherwise, we will only be wasting scarce imported fuel and unnecessarily increase the cost of production of power, and, of course, the misery of 'load shedding' will continue! The only relief may be in the intensity, frequency and duration of

the distasteful "load shedding" that has become a common event today! To really get rid of the problem, we need to install a generation capacity of at least 2500MW of new power plants, which may take with all urgency, say four to five years, and that time another say 2000MW will be needed! We must therefore gear up for installing on an average 1500MW of new generation capacity every calendar year over the next four/five years! One can just visualise where we have landed up power-wise!

**Engr. S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka

## Signing of official files

The prime minister has revealed that Begum Zia had called the government officials not to sign official files. This means she has instructed the government officials to abstain from work. In other words, this call is an instigation to the officials of the republic for non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Is it not tantamount to treason against an elected government? It has been trusted by the people and the officials are the machinery to implement

all plans and programmes of the government.

I think she should realise that she is not the only one who loves the country, she is not the only one who is supposed to guard the sovereignty and security of the country and all others are out to sell out the country to neighbours. She should look back to what she had done, what was the security condition during her rule.

It was during her reign that the people who were appointed to look after the security of the state, breached the security law, were dangerously trading arms with a separatist group in the powerful neighbouring country.

She has no right to give a call for civil disobedience. She should come to senses, and realise that there are others who are equally patriotic and they love country and are ready to sacrifice their lives for their motherland, Bangladesh. She is one of the 15 crore people and should realise that others are equally concerned about Bangladesh.

If she is innocent, why does not she respect the country's judicial system? A true patriot should abide by the law and does not try to evade it.

**Shafiqul Islam, NY**

## Historical facts

Apropos to the letter of May 21 "Historical facts" by Mr Satyaki Chanda of Kolkata, India. It may be correct that Lord SP Sinha was given a peerage and became Baron Sinha in the House of Lords as the first Bengali peer. He also mentioned Kumar Bhattacharya in 2004 but failed to mention Baroness Pola Manzil Uddin who became a Baroness in 1998 and thus became the first woman from Bangladesh to get the title. Recently, Rushanara Ali was directly elected to the House of Commons with a Labour Party ticket in the Bow and Bethnal Green constituency and became the first woman and Muslim to win a seat in the House of Commons.

**Dr Mahbub Murshed**  
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

## Blocking Facebook

Well, here's a newsflash for everyone it's not just Facebook that contains such things, it can be found all over the Internet. So it begs the question, when will the Internet be banned in Bangladesh?

It's quite possible for a friend in England to download some objectionable material and send it to me over my mobile phone. I guess we'll be losing those as well soon.

Let's hope nobody says anything controversial anytime soon in a face to face discussion the government will ban speech as well.

Of course, what this episode really teaches everyone is that, if somebody says or does something you don't like, you

shouldn't try to reason with them and make them see sense. Instead you should simply shout very loudly and hope that the insulting is drowned out. But all that does is sweep the problem under the carpet it still remains.

It seems people have missed something Facebook is the medium that has been causing problems, but it's also the medium that could help to solve them. But surely reasoned debate using Facebook would have more of an impact than a blanket ban on the website!

If anything the ban will do more harm than good. To westerners it will be perceived as a breach of the freedom of speech and freedom to protest governments that put the shackles on these things are never looked on favourably.

Even though I am not in England now. I can already imagine the pictures being broadcast over the airwaves. Pictures of angry mobs, burning flags and chanting for the death of various people it's hardly a positive image to portray to the world. The worst thing about it is that these people will have created a negative impact out of a situation where morally they were in the right.

Banning Facebook, death threats and violent protests have done nothing to convince the world that any wrong has been committed. It is the peaceful people, a group in the majority, who will suffer due to the inability of some to solve a problem without creating a conflict.

**John Paul Sergeant**  
A teacher  
Sylhet

## Plastic water tank

Simple knowledge on light tells us that black colour absorbs all the seven colours of the light spectrum causing heat production and white colour reflects all the colours of light spectrum and keeps the immediate environment cool. That is the reason why people living in a desert ecosystem wears white head to knee garments to keep them cool. For some unknown reason our rooftop water tanks are made of black plastic and during the summer days it picks up all the heat from the sun and amplify the heat several times. This magnified solar heat, especially during hot summer days, would slowly dissolve small amount of plastic into the water contained in these black water tanks. Many of us boil this water and use it for drinking. I presume over the years, continuous consumption of water from these rooftop black water tanks is going cause serious harm to our health, particularly the growing children. If we are to use plastic rooftop water tank it is better to use white water tanks which would reflect heat during the hot summer days and much lesser amount of plastic would be released

# Bravo, Musa

Climbing up to the height of the Great Mount Everest by the first Bangladeshi, Musa Ibrahim, proves that our youth could make the impossible possible, if they have the goal and determination. It is an inspiring example for the nation, especially for the young generation who dare to dream of a change. Reading front-page reports in the Internet edition of Bangladesh newspapers or listening to BBC Bengali Service on Musa's achievement, I could only imagine how much challenge he had to take for rolling up to the top (of the Everest); how much effort he had to make to overcome financial and other limitations. Hats off to Musa. I feel proud not only of the generosity of Musa's sister and other relatives, but

also the greatness of my country. Musa's achievement will inspire us in formulating our future dreams and goals. Let's keep this spirit up for nation building.

Congratulations, Musa Ibrahim.  
**Dr. Uttam Kumar Das**  
Fulbright-Humphrey Fellow 2009-2010  
University of Minnesota Law School  
USA & Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

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A Bangladeshi has again proved our ability. He has made us proud.  
**Rahad Jannatul Islam**  
One-mail



into our water.

There is some concern also about using plastic kitchen-ware in the microwave oven. Whenever something is heated there is an increase likelihood of pulling chemicals out into the substrate. Chemicals can be released from plastic polycarbonate food container and plastic packaging materials used in some microwave meals. It is better to use natural materials like corolle or stonewares for oven cooking.  
**Dr. M. Rafique Uddin**  
Banani, Dhaka

## Lost glory

Student politics, no doubt, plays a very significant role in elevating political standards of a country and also in keeping political situation concern-free. It brings success as long as it remains within a level.

I am sorry to say that student politics in our country is in bad shape. It has loomed in the country as a grim form of violence, terrorism, killing etc. Its dark nature has aroused a grave concern among all of us. It has lost its glory. The entire nation is now embarrassed by its dangerous impact.

Today our students who indulge in politics seem to be reluctant to work for the country's welfare. But in the past students played a vital role in politics with integrity and a sense of commitment. When we look back to history, we are impressed by huge contribution of student politicians to the well-being of the country. Our liberation war and language movement make us realize the importance of student politics. During our liberation war in 1971 and language movement in 1952 students played a constructive

role in saving this country and its language.

In those days student politics was committed solely to retaining the glory of the nation. So the nation was blessed with multiple benefits by student politics.

The sad truth today is that the majority of student politicians are interested in power and money. On the other hand, most of our meritorious students are not interested in student politics.

Things must change for the better.  
**M Faisal Saleh**  
Chunati Hakimia Kamil (MA)  
Madrasa  
Lohagara, Chittagong

## MPO list

We welcome the revision of the MPO list. The recently published SSC results and MPO distribution lists have given rise to many questions. Being a founder of a technical school and a senior academic, the same questions have arisen in my mind too. The school that has achieved 100% success with grade -A (minimum) was not in the initially circulated list. But the lucky ones in MPO list have lots of students who failed in SSC examinations. Even if we make a comparative study or survey in only one district, say Faridpur, a clear picture of disparities come out. The studies or survey can be conducted on the following points in addition to previous criterions; (a) Recent SSC results (b) Profile of founder with vision (c) Scope of science and technology education (d) Remoteness (e) Competence in social reformation and (f) Capacity for adaptation of science and technology to create Digital Bangladesh.

This was not a very difficult task in the present age of technology. There are thousands of students who study and do research on related subjects at universities in Bangladesh. Any university properly equipped could be given the responsibilities. If SSC and HSC results of can be provided confidentially and honestly, why can't the MPO listing be done using the similar strategies? If the government fails to understand the present situation, it might create a big problem for the nation.

**Prof. Lutfor Rahman**  
Founder of K.M. Vocational School  
Former VC and freedom fighter

## Alcoholic beverages

We do hope that the prime minister will be an architect of a crime free Bangladesh.

The cheap quality, alcohol mixed toxic drinks like Cobra, Speed, and Tiger etc are openly sold everywhere in this populated city. Nobody knows how dangerous side effects they have and young citizens using them display restlessness, arrogant behaviour, committing all sorts of crimes including killing innocent people like ATN Bangla Cameraman and Police officer Goutam. Bus drivers and truck drivers responsible for horrible accidents suffer from hangover effects of these drinks.

I would request the government to ban these so called soft/energy drinks.  
**Dr. Nagma Newaz (Tomosha)**  
Child Specialist and  
Environmental Activist  
BSMMU, PG Hospital, Dhaka



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## Green signal to unified education system (June 1, 2010)

What is this? Why do we always keep changing our educational policy? I don't understand why we can't take a permanent decision on education.  
**Rana**

This is good news. I just hope that the educators will come up with progressive philosophy and scientific curricula.  
**Shahnawaz Khan**

Why does the Awami League always bow to pressure from the extremists? It's a great policy but the word secularism should have been kept.  
**Fayaz**

This is a good educational policy. But the problem for Bangladesh is that the government that will succeed the present one may try to change the system introduced by the present government.  
**Mobaidul Huq**

The education ministry should be divided into several parts and for every part there should be a deputy minister and they will work independently.  
**Baz**

Our education system should be as developed as India's. Indian education is better evaluated abroad than our education.  
**Kazi Firoz**

Now that an education policy is in place -- again -- it is imperative to infuse quality, access, relevance, connectivity (of the different levels), and performance metrics into its delivery and attainments.  
**S. Andaleeb**

A unified education system is a long awaited demand of the people of Bangladesh. I congratulate

the government policy makers for this action.  
**Shafiqul Islam**

Overall, highly appreciable policy. We need to implement it urgently to develop the whole country.  
**Dr S Rahman**

This is a good move by our govt. Qualified religion teachers should be appointed.  
**Nesar Ahmed**

It's really appreciated that information & communication technology has been included. As a student of peace & conflict studies at DU, I think peace & conflict studies should be added from the primary level.  
**Hrithika Barua**

How will the government implement primary education? It is impossible with the existing infrastructure. Firstly, primary education was never given priority in Bangladesh. Salary scale, etc are too poor to attract the qualified people to this profession.  
**Kuntal**

I like the policy. The best job done by the present government so far. Now want to see its implementation.  
**Tapo**

The proposal seems superb. Now we are waiting for its implementation.  
**Saif Rasel**

The National Education Policy, 2010 is the silver lining in the dark clouds in our history. Heartiest thanks to the ruling party for the great effort to establish a unified schooling system. It's time to make the dream a reality.  
**Gopal Sengupta**

The government deserves a big round of applause for this unified education system. We do hope it would bring an end to all kinds of discrimination caused by the previous one. We wish a proper implementation of the policy.  
**Sabrina Karim Murshed**

It's a great achievement of the government and a real need of the country. My heartiest congratulations to the education minister and his team.  
**Nazrul**

The govt has taken the right decision by changing the education system, but this policy should not remain confined to paper only. The govt should take proper initiatives to implement it and put greater emphasis on moral education.  
**Md. Asaduzzaman**

# Of hoisting flags



As the football World Cup nears, football loving fans are becoming engaged greatly in preparing their favourite country's flag to hoist in order to demonstrate their individual staunch support for their favourite teams in the imminent World Cup. After every four years, it is like every house is studded with different countries' various colourful flags floating in the vacuum. Many fans are planning to make gigantic flags to show their great support towards their favourite team. While many others are making the provisions for electricity supply back up as our quarter digital country is going through a

little dearth of electricity supply. Whatsoever, the point I want to make is that we exhibit our utmost staunch support by hoisting our favourite teams' flags during the season with a warm, enthusiastic heart, but during our Independence Day and Victory Day we do not show ourselves in the same mood.

What is wrong with us? Why can't we hoist our very own country's flag to exhibit our patriotism?  
**Hasnat**  
American International University-Bangladesh  
Banani, Dhaka