



Castles made of sand: Are these houses on land or water?

Dhaka in danger

Since Dhaka is developing fast, and without proper guidance, we may see more cases like the June 1 Begunbari building collapse -- where buildings are constructed on marshy land -- or during an earthquake where soil liquefaction may devastate the city.

MD. ANISUR RAHMAN

DHAKA is expanding in all directions. The city's master plan, the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP), has two parts. The Dhaka Structure Plan is valid from 1995-2015, whereas the Urban Area Plan was valid from 1995-2005. The plan considers keeping at least eight flood-flow zones undisturbed -- Dhaka West, DND Triangle, Eastern Fringe polders, Kamrangir Char, Jinjira, Narayanganj West, Dhaka NW, and Narayanganj East.

Unfortunately, this is not happening. Already, unscrupulous developers have filled a number of flood-flow zones, something that Rajuk has failed to prevent (Ferdousi, 2006). Low-lying areas and flood-flow zones are encroached by both public and private sector-initiated housing projects. Flora and fauna are decreasing, cultivable land area is shrinking, and crop production has come down by a considerable amount over the decades (Rahman, 2007).

The city's eastern part regularly goes under water during the rainy season. This part also holds rainwater runoff for a large

part of the city through natural drains. During the last decade, about 19 housing projects were initiated in the eastern fringe. It is expected that all housing projects will be implemented in the next 10 years. Most of these estates were developed by filling low land with sand, soil and solid waste.

An analysis of IRS image of 1996 and IRS image of 2000 clearly shows that water bodies measuring about 2,300 sq. metres were filled in during the development of Bashundhara and Bashumoti housing estates. Similarly, for Aftabnagar Housing branches of natural drains and large water bodies, covering an area of 66 acres, were lost due to housing development.

In the southern part of Buriganga river, Rajuk (the capital development authority) initiated a residential project on an area of 381 acres. The project site used to remain under water most of the year. The site is demarcated as a water-retention pond in the Dhaka Master Plan. Over the last two years, this area was filled for a housing development. Apart from this, about 3,000 sq. metres of natural water bodies have already disappeared during the Riverview Housing Estate development on the Buriganga River bank's

southern fringe (Rahman, 2007).

In western Dhaka, housing estates were initiated over the last two decades. In 1996, there were 211 acres of water bodies in the Mohammedia housing estate and Adabbor area. During development, about 91 acres of water bodies disappeared between 1996 and 2006 and 68 acres between 2006 and 2009.

Since Dhaka is developing fast, and without proper guidance, we may see more cases like the June 1 Begunbari building collapse -- where buildings are constructed on marshy land -- or during an earthquake where soil liquefaction may devastate the city.

Liquefaction is a physical process of ground failure that takes place during some earthquakes. Because of liquefaction, soft, young, water-saturated, well-sorted, fine grain sands and silt behave as viscous fluids, rather than solids. If pore-space water pressure increases to the point where the soil's shear strength no longer supports the weight of the overlying soil, buildings, roads, houses, etc., then the soil flows like a liquid and causes extensive surface damage.

On September 19, 1985, an earthquake struck Mexico City, with a magnitude of 8.1 on the Richter scale. The earthquake's epicenter was 240 miles from the city. Since Mexico City is situated on land once covered by Lake Texcoco and was filled in for habitation, hundreds of city buildings collapsed due to the heavy shaking of the ground and the quake's long duration, which lasted three to four minutes. Similarly, for the Niigata earthquake and the Alaska earthquake, also of 1964, liquefaction phenom-

ena devastated the cities. Hundreds of buildings collapsed and were damaged due to its affects.

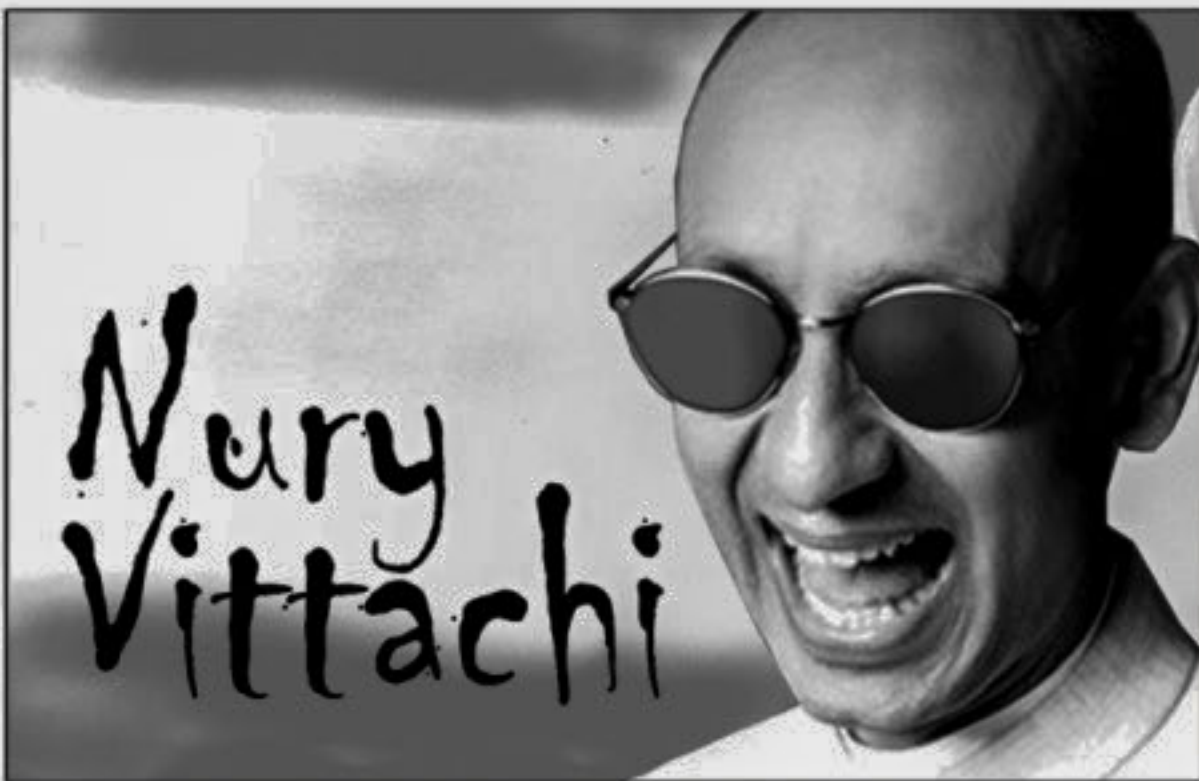
A recent study by Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP) on the liquefaction susceptibility of Dhaka indicates that the city's eastern and southwestern parts lie within the high to very high liquefaction susceptibility range. These parts are recently filled and developed marshy lands.

The CDMP study also identified several active faults within Bangladesh, based on historical events and evidence from geological investigations. The Madhupur and Dauki faults, about 90 and 230 miles, respectively, from Dhaka, are those identified by experts. The 1985 Mexico City earthquake caused a considerable amount of damage, even though the source was 240 miles from the city.

In Dhaka, an earthquake from either Madhupur or Dauki may cause severe liquefaction effects to buildings, especially those developed on marshy lands on the eastern and western fringes, and even within the city in the infill areas like Begunbari, part of Mirpur etc.

Proper land-use control mechanism is required to ensure Dhaka's future development, considering the possible liquefaction effects of earthquakes. In-depth studies and research in this regard would be helpful for the preparing Dhaka's development in the coming decade.

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Here is the news

IND readers raced to help international tourism chiefs who have been running out of slogan ideas. Lift Lurker came up with a unique slogan which could be shared by a pair of West African countries: "The Congo: There's only two."

Not bad. We could use a similar idea for the two Chinas: "China -- totally unique (both of them)."

He also came up with a slogan for Bangladesh: "Best Indian Food in the World."

I shook my head at that. "No, you'll deeply upset a certain other place which claims that title: Glasgow."

Mr. Lurker suggested that encouraging an element of competition would add spice to tourism campaigns. For example, Jakarta tourism chiefs have been using: "Indonesia: 100 years of Nation's Awakening." So someone else could produce something like "Korea: 200 years of nation's awakening." And so on.

Reader Christy Chiang perked up at that. She liked the competition idea. For example, Australia's slogan is "Where the bloody hell are you?" So she suggested New Zealand could have a slogan that went: "Relax, dude, they're all here."

Meanwhile, reader Paul Fox suggested: "Hong Kong: a fragrant harbor for all the wrong reasons."

On the subject of the sea, how about that BP oil spill? Did anyone body have the same thought I had? The sea is now full of oil and fish. Add some diced potatoes, throw in a match and hey presto! A billion cubic liters of freshly fried fish and chips.

The news pages of the newspapers have been really weird lately. Here's a round-up of seven favorite items, along with forecasts of how the stories will develop.

News item: A modern art dealer in New York City pleaded guilty to a swindling his clients out of US\$100 million.

Prediction: The judge sums up the case: "In other words, business as usual."

News item: At least £57 million of small change is lost down the back of British sofas each year, researchers estimated.

Prediction: New Prime Minister David Cameron will visit all his subjects and slip his arms into furniture cracks to cut the deficit.

News item: United Airlines is offering door-to-door luggage service for US\$75. Prediction: They'll soon introduce extra charges for fussy passengers who want it delivered to the right country.

News item: Sandra Bullock is back at work after her marital dust-up.

Prediction: In her new movie, "Ms Uncongeniality," she plays a woman who tortures her husband to death.

News item: Hypercritical judge Simon Cowell did his final stint on American Idol last week.

Prediction: He becomes chief judge of the International Criminal Court and when any country misbehaves, he says: "Oh come on!" and nukes it.

News item: The FBI plans to use Facebook to communicate with criminal suspects. Prediction: They'll send out a wall message saying: "Give yourself up or we will de-friend you."

News item: Paleontologists digging in China's Henan Province have unearthed a dinosaur called "the roadrunner."

Prediction: Further investigation will reveal it died after a creature called a Koyo-T-rex dropped an ACME brand piano on its head.

Anyone else spotted anything silly in the news?

For news that will drive you insane visit our columnist at: www.vittachi.com.

Can't we stop this brutality?

Traumatic, humiliating and frightening reports of stalking and killing of school and college going girls are pouring in with each passing day. Never before has the government faced so harrowing a time with so much of criminal actions jeopardising governance, development, initiative and vigour.

MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

ONCE again the grisly attack on Aleya, a teenage girl, by her suitor Khokon because she refused to marry him comes as a pathetic reminder of the societal breakdown and worsening crime situation the country has been witnessing these days. Aleya died after struggling for life for five days.

These days beating, rape, acid throwing, and even murder of school and college going girls and young housewives by depraved individuals are alarmingly on the increase, which is why no one is shocked any longer to hear of such atrocities.

Crimes by juveniles have awakened the country to the beast that has broken loose in some young people in rural Bangladesh even. A report published in Prothom Alo on May 30 said that when Shah Alam of Lalmonirhat was going to his brother's house,

accompanied by his two college-going nieces, they were way-laid by a group of gangsters.

They beat Shah Alam, tied him to a tree, and gang-raped the sisters. The most sickening aspect of the macabre crime was that they made a video of the girls after forcing them to go naked, and threatened to make the video public should Shah Alam lodge a complaint to the police.

Chronicled in the analysis of the researchers, eve-teasing manifests as the first depraved action that ultimately turns into sexual harassment and much more. Reports published in the newspapers indicated that, battered and tortured by the molesters, 14 teen-age girls took their lives during the last three months.

More and more youngsters, acting individually or in gangs, are running amok. Even admitting that adolescents have always been violence-prone, the sheer magnitude of the horrendous

crimes committed by these mobsters appall people inured to such incidents.

Admittedly the horror of such violence has been with us during the last few years, persistent, secret, silent but brutal. Most shockingly, these days it is spreading like an epidemic to more and more homes, the secret becoming more public.

What is chilling about many of these young criminals is that they show no remorse or conscience. Young folks brag about their exploits and shrug off the victims' pain. What distinguishes these boys is not their anger but their lack of moral values. Acts of rage are usually followed by reflection and shame. In the cases described above, these characteristics are entirely missing. These young criminals are psychic amputees. They have lost, perhaps never developed, that psychic appendage we call conscience. Loosening family ties, the growing influence of money, and the burden of competition are some of the changes that are pushing these youngsters into the fast lane of life. Lack of communication, near absence of guidance on moral values and absence of proper rearing are compounding the derailment.

Taking the case of affluent sections in the society, most parents think that substituting time and loving care with money is adequate compensation for a

child's needs. This is incorrect, and it is time parents woke up to their lapses. Most correctly stated, it is the parents of these youngsters who should be taken to task for instilling, or allowing to be instilled, wrong values in their children. They get too much money and too much power at a young age.

It is high time citizens woke to the menace of young criminals, often backed by rich and influential parents, running amok in our society. Because of their contacts, mostly political, they consider themselves above the law. This encourages them to break the law.

Teenagers often get their values from their peers. Then just think what these values are? In our society today, emphasis is less on caring for others than on getting money, women of their choice and instant gratification. If a big shot can get what he wants, often by illegal means, then a teenager may think he should be able to grab the spoils in the only way he knows.

The worsening crime situation calls for introspection by all, parents, law enforcers and the society as a whole. We must all assume our responsibility for being indifferent to the circumstances that breed crimes of this sort. Strangely true, communities are taught to find faults in everything but themselves.

Sim, Indrani, Mahima, Fahima,

Pinki, and Elora took recourse to ending their lives instead of suffering humiliation, ostracism and torturous existence day in and out. This must be a silent protest against a male-dominated and influence-ridden corrupt society that only identifies a woman as the sole offender.

Traumatic, humiliating and frightening reports of stalking and killing of school and college going girls are pouring in with each passing day. Never before has the government faced so harrowing a time with so much of criminal actions jeopardising governance, development, initiative and vigour.

Even the prime minister, in a cabinet meeting on May 31, expressed her resentment and unhappiness over bureaucratic tangle and slow pace of work in all sectors of the country. The prime minister's call for halting crime and catching the criminals regardless of their party affiliations went unheeded.

The cabinet approved the Speedy Trial Amendment Act-2010 in an effort to curb violence, criminality and corruption. The people only hope that it will not be an exercise in black humour.

Stalking, sexual harassment, rape and even murder are no longer confined to seedy back lanes, but have moved swiftly to opulent areas. Crime now, as it appears, can creep up to

anybody's front door. But the concerned ministry's response has been to ignore the crime graph or to shuffle police officers. As for the police, they seem to be running out of alibis.

The overriding feeling is that the country as a whole is being policed by a beaten force. Special squads are being formed to check crimes, but all these have hardly yielded any result. There is largely a feeling that a criminal-policeman-political nexus has fuelled the crime scene in the country.

The criminality seems to be spinning out of control, undermining the country's once good name. The blatant and brazen criminal acts have so shaken public confidence in the law enforcement agencies that many are even questioning the need for them. S.I. Gautam murder case investigation is a reminder of the shoddy probe and slipshod investigation that has plagued this vital agency.

Terrorism, extortion, rape and murder are no longer abstractions or something associated with Dhaka city alone. They are the most destabilising force in the lives of the people today. The society needs heightened vigil against crime and criminals now.

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