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Factories in residential areas

The recent tragic incident of Nimtoli has opened everybody's eye and at the same time raised our level of fear and concern. My younger sister is living at Mirpur-2, Dhaka. Although this is a small housing, this is going to be an



AMDADUL HUQ / DRIKNEWS

Power plant

Contract for Sylhet 90 M.W. combined cycle power plant (2nd. Unit) construction work was signed between PDB and M/S Harbin Power Engineering co. (HPE) on 12.09.05 with completion date on 02.01.08.

It is learnt that HPE completed the execution work and started the trial run operation by early Aug.2008. But the unit could not be put into commercial operation till now even after more than two years of its contractual completion date in the scenario of severe power crisis prevailing in the country. Moreover, this is a gas run power plant and gas is available there.

On the other hand, Fenchuganj rental power of 50 MW capacity on the same premises, planned after Sylhet 90 MW power plant, has already come into operation and is supplying power to the national grid and making normal business.

This is how the power sector is being run!

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Better late...

Almost all dailies on 10 June reported on the punitive action taken by a Rajuk mobile team, to dismantle illegal structures. At least the task has begun and as usual it was too little too late, and at the cost of over a hundred innocent lives was this harsh lesson learned! Shame on Rajuk for not doing it earlier! They have clearly failed in their duties, and must share at least part of the guilt for the building accidents.

Let it now be carried on till it is finished, without any let or hindrance, ignoring all pleas, 't a d b i r s ' and recommendations. The courts may also examine writs on this matter; and issue 'stay order' only if the case is 'water tight' and there are no other options in the matter.

Funnily, once again the real culprit, the person or organisation that illegally stored the dangerous chemical, is as usual 'missing' as reported by the police! Can the IG of Police, seriously speaking, accept such lame excuses from the police and

industrial housing-cum residential area very soon if immediate measure is not taken. At the very entrance of this housing, there is a welding factory which belongs to a very powerful man, just after few yards there is a make-shift

generator plant and a few yards after there is a garment's factory belonging to a very high level police officer. The factory is located along with the residential flats. It was learnt that incidents of small fire also happened in that building. People complained several times to the City Corporation but as one is a very powerful man and another one is a very high level police officer, the City Corporation did not take any action. Apart from these, also there are other factories in this housing, such as water bottling plant, CNG garage etc.

We are, therefore, requesting the authorities concerned to take immediate action to shift these factories from this residential area for the safety and security of the people.

Resident
Popular Housing
Mirpur, Dhaka

detective personnel? They are used to this formula, only to mask their involvement, indulgences or complicity in the matter.

Have the police authorities forgotten the time old factual saying, that:

"Although murder has no tongue, yet it speaks"! Police authorities must find out the culprits, who need to be harshly dealt with. As a legal novice, I believe that it will be right to consider the people, who stored the potentially dangerous chemicals illegally, guilty of 'manslaughter', if the legal expression is valid.

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Neglected North Bengal

A Tk. 38,000 crore budget for development of Bangladesh has been proposed for 2010-11. Zonal allocation for North Bengal is not known.

There has been virtually no development in North Bengal after the partition of India in 1947, except the bridge over Jamuna. On the other hand, available industrial facilities diminished further for various reasons. Shortage of power, and gas and high cost of transportation deter investment in this region. Adequate allocation is required for maintenance of roads and highways. Railway is in deplorable condition. Engines, coaches and wagons need replacement. So, more allocation of funds is needed. The Monga area in North Bengal deserves special allocation. North Bengal produces paddy and supplies it to the eastern side of the Jamuna. So far irrigation is carried out with pumps. In Barind area, shortage of groundwater is threatening irrigation. Further, groundwater is contaminated with arsenic.

The planners have to consider all these factors in order to ensure balanced development of the country.

Serajul Islam

Gulshan, Dhaka

Scapegoats!

The information minister told parliament that the government had not shut

down the Bengali daily and that it was the deputy commissioner of Dhaka, who ordered its closure for alleged violation of the publication law. He said this while responding to the allegation made by a BNP lawmaker that the government had shut the newspaper. "The deputy commissioner, be it of Sherpur or Dhaka district, is the authority to give declaration of newspapers. The DC can cancel the publication in case of any violation of the law," said the information minister. At one stage, during his prolonged speech, he resorted to personal attack against an opposition MP. The Speaker intervened, saying, "Honourable minister, your point is: the deputy commissioner has closed the Amar Desh and the court shut the Channel One". "Yes, Honourable speaker," said the minister adding the present government believed in free flow of information.

It is their political masters who take decisions that are many a time contrary to the advice of the officials, to suit their political ends. The action is meant only to protect the politicians. Bureaucrats are being made scapegoat. Bureaucrats are paid taxpayers' money to advise the government without fear or favour. Just as the armed forces are expected to fight the enemy without regard to their safety, bureaucrats are duty-bound to note down their opinions fearlessly in files. Any risk they are exposed to because of frank and fearless expression of opinions should be treated as a legitimate occupational hazard. The basis of a democratic government is the opinion of the people. Unless the people become conversant with the operation of the Right to Information Act, the purpose of the act will be nullified.

Gopal Sengupta

Canada

BSF and our politics

When the BSF thugs routinely kill Bangladeshis in the border regions, they do not discriminate whether their victims in Bangladesh belong to the Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party or Jamaat.

However, in condemning BSF's regular violations of human rights and its killings of Bangladeshis, Bangladeshis political parties are sharply divided. Some Bangladeshi political parties raise a hue and cry now and then to register their protests against BSF's murderous actions. But, unfortunately, a very prominent Bangladeshi political party remains dead silent with regard to BSF's wrongdoings.

This tells us about the sad story of Bangladesh politics, as the political parties are not united even in protecting the people from foreign aggression. This also suggests the success of Indian foreign policy, as it has a very loyal political group in Bangladesh that looks after India's interest blindly and is ready to ignore Bangladesh's interest when India's political and strategic interest is involved.

If the Bangladeshi party loyal to India were selective in its condemnation of BSF's routine murders, then we would have some consolation. What is frustrating is the fact that its silence about India's atrocities is absolute. When India is in the scene, it does not bother whether the BSF victims are from its own party or from other parties. In other words, the security of the people who voted that party to power do not count much in its imagination.

The whole world is stunned by the Israeli atrocities directed to the Palestinians and to people who try to stand by them. But, there is a striking analogy: Palestine and Bangladesh: Israel and India. This analogy will perhaps explain the reason why India is a strong ally of Israel. More so, the political party in Bangladesh that is silent about India's illegal cruelty inflicted on Bangladeshis is also largely silent about Israel's monstrous behaviour.

Bangladeshi people are politically highly sensitive, but extremely naive. But when they come to know the real story of the friendship between their oppressors outside the border and a party within the country they vote for, they may exercise their democratic rights more wisely in future.

Shimul Chaudhury
One-mail

structure of Bangladesh. I congratulate Sheikh Hasina & Motia Chowdhury.
Opee Monir

From thousands of miles away, I would like to say 'Great' and yes we can do it. We are the successors of scientist Jagadish Chandra Basu and many other great Bengalis. Hope and pray for further success of my motherland, Bangladesh.
James Swapan Peris

After a number of successful research works and development of high yield rice varieties suited to specific weather and other situations by our own scientists, this success would be a huge boost to the golden fibre. It is all the more important now as the whole perspective regarding production and marketing of jute has started to look up for some wise policy measures taken by the government. Congratulations, Dr. Alam and your team.
M.S.Ahsan

Congratulations to our scientists for such an achievement. Thanks to our PM for breaking the news in parliament giving due importance to this achievement.
Hasan A Rouf

Safari park

Is the safari park concept in our country viable? The Dulahazra "Safari" Park is merely a zoo and is in shabby condition. If the proposed "safari park" is planned on the same intended lines, then the government has to think again before embarking on it.

The idea is praiseworthy but the implementation needs more discussion involving wildlife biologists, landscape planners and others. I wish the government listens to the people. It should be more considerate in preserving the natural heritage of the country.

S.M.A. Rashid, PhD
Chief Executive
Centre for Advanced Research in Resources & Management (CARINAM), Mohammadpur Dhaka

Auto-rickshaw

It is highly appreciable that recently in our cities manually driven rickshaw is being replaced by battery driven auto-rickshaw. It is smoke free and is not noisy. So it is pollution free. Moreover, pulling rickshaw manually is inhuman and it causes traffic jam. Introducing auto-rickshaw will play an important role in keeping the environment pollution free.

Steps should be taken by the govt. to let the poor rickshaw pullers buy it at a very cheap rate.

Md Jalal Uddin
Asstt. Teacher
Natore Govt. High School
Natore

Education and our society

Illiteracy has become a major issue in Bangladesh. Along with Bangladesh, many other countries throughout the world are not being developed due to lack of education. Education is a system of training and instruction designed to give knowledge and develop skills. Education helps a person become more aware and get better technical knowledge. Educated people are able to contribute to the country and help it to develop. They are aware of their rights, responsibilities and the importance of education. They are capable of fulfilling their basic needs and maintaining their health, hygiene and safety rules. The uneducated people's lives are not the same. They don't realize their potential and lead a poor life. As they don't know the importance of education, many uneducated people make their children work to have a better life. Many women are also not getting their right to education and several are suffering due to early marriage. Education is a right and a basic need for everyone.

Education has always had positive impacts on society but many people fail to utilise it properly. Many people use their knowledge to do things negatively for society. They misuse it. People should realize their role in a society and perform their duties.

Mahdiya Muyeena
The Aga Khan School, Dhaka

US and Israel

We are shell shocked to see the atrocities perpetrated by Israeli commandos on the Turkish cargo ship which came to Gaza to supply much needed relief. The raid is reported to have claimed lives of 10 civilian aid workers. Israeli blockade in Gaza has left the impoverished region in the lurch. What staggers us to say is that when any occurrence takes place in the Palestinian terrain, condemnations come thick and fast. But any concrete action against the defaulters fly in the face of reality. It has emboldened the defiant Israeli regime to carry out this type of disproportionate attacks on the plea of self-defence.

The US, the staunchest ally of Israel, talks ad nauseam to promote the peace process in the Palestinian region, but does nothing to stop Israel. This very administration is swift enough to arrange a congressional hearing of BP chief or Toyota chief and hold the company responsible for wrong doings.

This lends credence to the idea that all their promises regarding Palestinian peace are nothing short of rhetoric. They have their own agenda for the Middle East region.

Md. Jamil Akhter
Dept. of English
University of Dhaka

Rickshaws at

Tulip Festival

I am writing with reference to letter: "Re-designing rickshaw" by Sikander Ahmed (June 4).

During the Ottawa Tulip Festival last May, a set of pedal and battery-powered rickshaws were used to transport tourists around the festival grounds. The rickshaw drivers can use the pedal like traditional rickshaws or let a small battery run when tired or facing a steep incline. It can carry two passengers like Bangladeshi rickshaws. Both passengers and the rickshaw driver are covered at the top to provide protection from sun and rain.

These dual-powered rickshaws can provide pollution-free transportation without the shortcomings of traditional rickshaws in Bangladesh. They are likely to be a little more expensive. But the rickshaw owners, who are likely to be different from rickshaw drivers, can make greater profit in the long run. Banks can also help by providing micro-credits to rickshaw drivers to buy these amazing dual-powered rickshaws.

Those who are interested can get in touch with the Ottawa Tulip Festival authorities (www.ottawatulipfestival.com). Rickshaws are an important part of the economic life in Bangladesh. They also provide zero-pollution transportation for millions. Mr. Sikander Ahmed has provided some interesting suggestions which should be followed up.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada



AMDADUL HUQ / DRIKNEWS

Soccer frenzy!

As soccer fever grips the entire world, Bangladesh also joins in the bandwagon with great enthusiasm. Sale of flags, jerseys, wristbands and other accessories corresponding to different nations participating in the football extravaganza is at its peak all over the country. Thus the vendors also seem to be making some extra bucks cashing in on people's passion for the world event. We see that the skyline of Dhaka city undergoes a total change with all the colourful flags. Even amid the clashes between the fans of Brazil and Argentina, we still see Brazilian and Argentine flags fluttering from the same pole on the same rooftop which again symbolizes our centuries old spirit of peaceful coexistence.

Market economy

We can only hope that all these unnecessary deaths, caused by the inability of the state in Bangladesh -- not just this government -- to enforce simple building and fire codes, will send a strong message to global donors that a market economy without a responsible state is a human disaster. It appears that for the World Bank and its followers the functional capacity of the state can be happily reduced to minimum levels of competence required to service major investors. Perhaps it is investors like the Unilever CEO who must learn first and then deliver the message to the donors that otherwise promising emerging economies are unsustainable when so many people remain vulnerable to death by market disaster.

David Ludden
Professor of Political Economy and Globalization
New York University

Tangail-Dhaka bus

The main transport is bus for going to Dhaka from Tangail. A lot of buses move to Dhaka

Unsafe buildings

Infrastructures and buildings are gift of modern civilization. Buildings have given shelter, a workplace. But it turns to a matter of great sorrow when this gift of civilization becomes a killer! We have faced this worst situation.

This kind of unexpected situation must be prevented at any cost. To do so, we should keep in mind.

1. Human life is more precious than any other thing (money, profit).

2. Proper design and maintenance is a must (soil test, building codes, safe design, quality control, safety measures, routine maintenance etc.).

3. Law enforcing authorities should be more careful and alert on this issue.

4. Land developers and real estate companies should bear in mind that money and profit is not the only thing. It is a great responsibility of them to ensure safety.

So, I would request all concerned to be more careful and sincere.

Engr. Montasir Mamun
Msc in structural engineering (Civil)
BUET

A wake-up call

The last few days were catastrophic. The shockwaves of Begunbari collapse, Nimtoli conflagration have jolted the nation in terabytes. There goes a saying, "disasters sink nations not because of the poverty of the poor, but because of the poverty of the minds." The harrowing tale of the two catastrophic events once again redefines the poverty of our collective psyche. The clarion call now urges a nationwide awareness.

Home of millions, this bustling city has structures clustered in concentrated fashion that makes it more vulnerable to earthquake. But Begunbari collapse was not an aftermath of an earthquake. Rather the collapses were virtually invited. Ignorant of future, we flouted the rules to build structures in slapdash manner. Building code exists; however, we the very independent people, don't want to follow it anyway. We got to help Rajuk by following building codes. Situated in Old Dhaka, the dilapidated and rickety buildings should be brought under special vigil. Demolition or reinforcement is the option we have. Apart from that, we don't have a well organized disaster management system for emergency. Unfortunately, our management is limited to calling in of the Army since independence. On the other hand, the fire service system needs development throughout the country. Inadequate water hoses and ladders, absence of modern masks and fire hydrants makes our fire fighting team a mere spectator at the time of crisis. Moreover, capacity building is direly needed to combat the future disasters. As time marches off, our enthusiasm wanes off and plans don't march forward until disaster strikes again. We, the whole nation, face a mammoth task to mobilize ourselves to grapple with future disasters. We are the resilient nation that withstood Sidr, cyclone, floods. So, be it. Let's not be greedy but considerate for a future that we shall face together.

Rabul Islam
Department of economics
University of Dhaka

Rangoon and other eastern cities and getting on and off, sitting down and riding on them are much more comfortable and safe than what has been playing on Bangladesh roads for nearly 70 years as stated by the correspondent. It is about time the whole thing was re-designed for comfort and safety and made much more passenger-friendly.

The waterlogged road condition of Bangladesh during the monsoon appears to be the main drawback when a low slung rickshaw would not be able to ply at all, or get any passengers.

So non-accumulation of large quantities of rainwater on the roads is a pre-requisite to any redesign of rickshaws. Town planners and sewage authorities must be aware of this hazard and ensure this does not happen in the planning stage or in maintenance routines. Adding solar panel on the canopy to recharge a small battery to aid the rickshaw puller (if feasible) and to provide a light after dark is also an excellent idea.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK



Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

Jute genome decoded

Golden fibre to become healthy, high yielding, weather-tolerant; Hawaii-based Bangladeshi scientist leads team to landmark discovery (June 17, 2010)

Congratulations! This is great news for our country, the land of the golden fibre.
Chowdhury Irad Ahmed Siddiky

I myself graduated from former USSR and Canada and went back to Bangladesh. Many Bangladeshi institutions rejected graduates from the former USSR, because western graduate professors in our country think that Russian graduates are inferior.
Congratulations, Maksud bhai.
Baz

This proves that our people can achieve anything, because we have the ability. But the problem is that there is lack of proper nursing of talents. Our IT sector is also coming up and they should get proper guidance to do something.
Shakil Ahmed

This is news of great hope and truly we shall call this the first Digital Bangladesh achievement. It has the greatest potential of all, which can revolutionise the social & financial