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The city we live in

Dhaka is passing through many crises. Power shortage, inadequate gas supply and overcrowded streets already have made lives of city dwellers precarious. Thus additional pressure such as collapse of buildings, fire and unfortunate accidents really point to the uncertainty of life in the city.

To check such problems, many specialized agencies are running their activities. But no satisfactory solutions have been found yet.

The authorities concerned have to act quickly to keep the city liveable.

Barnali Talukder
DU



AMADUL HUCI / DRINKNEWS

Power crisis

The recent decision of approving 360 MW power project by ECNEC is a wise decision as the country is facing intolerable load shedding over the last few months. It is expected that the untold sufferings would be minimised as in future more power is going to be added to the national grid. In fact, the present govt has given greater priority to the power sector.

The prime minister's move regarding setting up different power stations across the country is really praiseworthy. Power has now become a crying need as no development of the country would be possible without generation of power.

Eng. Md. Meheboob Haque
BUET

Raise tobacco tax

The 'Star Business' report on the matter published on 8 June is welcome news, particularly for non-smokers. The tax should be raised sufficiently, so as to discourage people from smoking, as well curtailing the amount of their indulgence. Additionally, since all public places are non-smoking areas, this must be rigidly enforced, with exemplary punishment for those caught smoking there. A severe punishment for this civic offence, can be passed as a law by parliament and a minimum, on the spot, fine of say Tk.1000 (one thousand) at least, should be imposed for this offence.

Second-hand exposure to tobacco smoke is very injurious to health, particularly for non-smokers and children. Curtailing smoking will indirectly reduce the cost of public healthcare and improve child health.

Against their desire, non-smokers and children are forced by circumstances beyond their control, to inhale tobacco smoke, against which their resistance to infection is naturally low. Smokers, develop a built in resistance, because of their continuous habit of indulgence. Their bodily system develops some immunity to an extent, against cough and other minor chest irritations. However, their respiratory system and lungs are affected sooner or later, during post-adulthood.

A strong anti-smoking lobby should be created by citizens. The government should also publicise the dangers of smoking by continuous awareness creation, through out the country, mobilizing all print and audio-visual media in the national interest!

The loss in taxation revenue from reduced tobacco usage can be compensated by increasing the registration fees for deed of transfer for houses, apartments and motor vehicles and other tangible movable or immovable assets, excluding fallow land over Tk. 1 lakh in value. This is needed for overall national health and well being.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Rajuk and public money

Rajuk, once again, is planning to play with the public money, forgetting the sufferings of the people. Everybody understands that the role Rajuk was supposed to play is patently a failure or a wilful shift towards land purchasing, acquiring, selling and extracting public money in as many ways as it can. It has two umpteen benefits for Rajuk and its employees. First: It can collect a huge amount of public money for an uncertain period, even paying no compensation or any wee share of profit or interests out of that accumulated money; two: it can earn a handsome amount of money selling the forms of applications to the public; third, and the most important, is the benefit of Rajuk employees, right from the top brass down to the liftman alike (according to power echelon and responsibility).

The Rajuk workers plunge into a buying spree when it decides to acquire lands for its new projects undertaken almost frequently. They get exaggerated value when acquired and get share when any party gets compensation or as an intermediary earn quite a huge amount of money. So, they are always busy taking and disbursing new projects unabashedly, forgetting the main tasks of this apex organisation.

The government should come up ironhanded this time to prevent cheating by the organisation.

Ahmed Munir

Purana Paltan

Dhaka

Political climate

The forecast of the political weather of Bangladesh is not very good. The way the ruling regime Awami League is treating the opposition parties and stifling dissent reminds people of the BAKSAL (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League) of 1975 when all opposition political parties and newspapers were banned.

During the campaign of the last general election, the Awami League never mentioned that, in honour of the founder of BAKSAL Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, it would go back to a one-party political system in Bangladesh. But now we notice an irresistible tendency in the Awami psyche to return to BAKSAL style politics.

Television channels and newspapers are being shut down. Rallies of opposition parties are being thwarted with bright Awami excuses: Awami affiliate organisations call counter rallies at the venue where opposition parties want to hold a meeting; and then the police step in and declare 144 to proscribe any political rallies. On one occasion, obviously directed by the government high-ups in Dhaka, a local UNO emerged in the midst of a political meeting and declared 144 on the spot. Needless to say, if such an episode occurred in the midst of an Awami rally, the UNO would not have returned home alive.

Unlike the first Awami regime of the 1970s, the present Awami government does not shut down a newspaper without an excuse. It locates a man, takes him away from his home and keeps him in a secret location for 6 hours. Then the country comes to know that this man sued an editor, on the basis of which the government arrests the editor and shuts down his newspaper.

Unlike the earlier Awami regime, the current one has a big advantage: it has produced dozens of 'intellectuals' affiliated with universities who issue moral certificates to Awami human rights violations. Many of these intellectuals appear on TV, write for newspapers and sell statements. They are instrumental in distracting the attention of the people from the pressing issues and in bringing in issues in public attention that have no relevance to the eradication of poverty or to the advancement of the country. These intellectuals will present the 21st-century BAKSAL to the world in a sugar-coated way. Since the Awami League uses the secularism slogan to sell its fascist ideas, the secular west may turn a blind eye to a one-party political system in Bangladesh. However, the people of Bangladesh will have to bear the brunt of the atrocities of such a one-party political system.

Shimul Chaudhury

One-mail

Old Dhaka

There are many unsafe buildings in Dhaka city. Most of them are situated in densely populated old town. Once upon a time, the old town was the centre of Dhaka city. Many inhabitants of Dhaka are continuing to stay in the same place.

The Nimtoli tragedy should be an eye opener.

Rahad Jannatul Islam

JNU

Install fire extinguishers

For want of fire extinguishers, a terrible havoc may occur any time anywhere. Dhaka's Japan Garden City is its glaring example. After this high rise building caught fire and a number of lives were lost, our fire department personnel said if there were fire extinguishers in the right places and the residents were trained to use them, loss of life and damage of property could be avoided.

Fire needs fuel, oxygen and heat in order to burn. In simple terms, fire extinguishers remove one of these elements by applying an agent that either cools the burning fuel, or removes or displaces the surrounding oxygen. In this way fire is contained.

Extinguishers should be installed where they can be reached easily and quickly in case of an emergency. There should be at least one canister in the kitchen, although not near the stove. What's generally recommended by experts for kitchen use are small, portable extinguishers, that are easy to manoeuvre and handle in case of a grease fire. These small units are of little height and fit nicely next to the pantry or kitchen door.

Fire extinguishers should also be kept in the basement, near electric switchboard, or wood stove, upstairs or near the bedrooms, and in the garage. The effort of installing fire extinguishers in our homes and work places will protect us from danger.

Citizen

Brahmanbaria

Amar Desh

There was countrywide buzz on sudden closure of a Bangla daily, the Amar Desh and arrest of the paper's acting editor Mr. Mahmudur Rahman. This humming noise was mostly against the government's sudden closure of the daily.

Most people including the editors and newsmen of the country condemned the government for such move calling it undemocratic, a threat to freedom of speech and denying the government's election pledge. I think the government has over-reacted and taken a wrong decision. Well, a person may have committed some wrong but that does not warrant closure of a paper in any democratic country. In this case the government has actually shown intolerance.

According to the government version, the acting editor was arrested for what it called findings of traces of his links with Hisbut Tahrir, a banned organisation in Bangladesh. If there is truth behind this doubt, he could be arrested without closing down the paper. Today he came out with his own statement, reportedly he gave to the court, without any assistance from his lawyers. At this moment we will not believe him 100% because all accused men plead not guilty and bring his witnesses to prove his innocence. If the court finds him not guilty, if the government fail to prove charges brought against him in the court, well, it will be too bad.

We can assume right now that Mr. Rahman will be bailed out soon and will be a free. But the government will not be able to prove his guilt or inno-

cence in many unknown years. This government started re-investigation of 21st August grandee attack on an AL meeting, 10-truck arms haul case and some other notorious cases immediately after assuming power. The date of submission of reports of those cases are being extended at the end of each extension, and I doubt this very much, whether this government will be able to start the trial of those cases during their 5 years tenure.

The ill-advised decisions will create issues for the opposition from within no issues. We want freedom of speech, freedom of opinions. The government should immediately allow the Amar Desh to start its publication. This will rather help the government earn credibility.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Judges and politicians

It is very difficult to make any comment on the behaviour of the politicians about the highest court of the republic. This is neither civil nor conducive to dispensation of justice.

I am talking about the behaviour and comments of the politicians about the system of judiciary and its operational weaknesses. We also see that the courtroom is invaded by huge numbers of lawyers flanked by unruly mob and supporters making the hearing extremely difficult.

We have heard a high ranking political party leader making allegation that the highest courts have been made a party office of the government and are dictating the terms of justice. This particular comment or observation is highly damaging for the moral of the judges, and most likely they are being forced to handle a particular case looking at the face of the politicians and not reviewing the entire process of the judgment as per law.

Before the issue becomes confrontational, the politicians must stop their unruly behaviour and refrain from making derogatory comments about the judges or judiciary.

The HC has already issued a ruling about the rules to be made about the "selection of judges procedures". Why not spend the political force and energy to make a rule which provides full transparency, quality and experience needed to be a judge of the highest court? This is the bigger priority than a political rally to press for a neutral system of judiciary. Judiciary by definition is neutral. We need to allow them to operate without being intimidated, threatened or making changes to suit any particular political need.

Be respectful to the nation. Be respectful to the judiciary and allow them to work without fear or favour as the oath of the justice dictates.

Faqrul Quadir
California, USA

What can we do?

What can we do when life becomes more mortifying than death? Yes, I'm referring to the tragic fire of old Dhaka. This tragedy has left 118 people dead and many more injured. Though it was fierce and ruthless, it wasn't unusual. It's an outcome of unplanned urbanization. We know Dhaka is now a risky place to live in. But people are not aware of this increasing risk. Both the government and city dwellers are responsible for the tragedy.

Salman Ahmed
Khulna

Not fair!

It is very curious how keen the authorities are to claim that they are about to destroy a row



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Acid violence

Acid which is an essential raw material of various consumer products has now become a threat to life.

In most of the cases women or girls who reject the indecent proposal of their male counterparts are the victims

of acid throwing.

Society must resist this menace to protect women and girls.

Engr. M. Helal Uddin
Eastern Refinery Limited
North Patenga, Chittagong

Eve teasing

Though there are a lot of campaigns and preventive measures but the condition is not improving to the desired level. We have to think deeply about the remedy of this problem.

Our society is male oriented and dominated. This kind of attitude must be changed.

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

Maintain sanctity of mosques

The behaviours of people in mosques are at times not decent. It is not surprising in Bangladesh to see people sitting closely together under ceiling fans although there are plenty of rooms in the preceding rows. Again it is intolerable when you see people sweeping away dust just to make his place cleaner. They hardly care about guys sitting next to them who may get covered in dust. Sometimes devotees in the mosques place their foot-ware in an improper way which can and does make mosques dirty. There are yet others who are oblivious of their stinky socks. Sometimes you overhear people mispronouncing verses and they do it aloud when it is forbidden to do so. Sometimes you see people voluntarily fasten up their lungis every time they start a new portion of salat. What is more astounding is

that some of the elderly people take front row sits especially those beside the Imam, most desirable and prestigious ones, unseating others mostly youngsters.

A mosque is a public place and we should be aware of our doings in a mosque. We may be working hard to fulfil the 'Hakkullah', the obligations towards Allah but we should not forget the 'Hakkul-ebad' the rights of the living. It is our divine duty to act in a fair way which, in all senses, should not bother others.

Nurus Sakib
Dhaka

Nimtoli tragedy

At least 119 people have died and hundreds were critically injured. It's really hard to hold back one's tears to see such a horrible tragedy. The deaths were caused by carelessness and unplanned urbanization.

It has been reported in many newspapers that the main reason behind spreading out of the blaze so rapidly was the chemical warehouse.

Apart from this, the buildings of old Dhaka are too congested and that's why in spite of having fire service less than a kilometre away, it slowed down their movement. May Allah keep the departed souls in eternal peace.

Our main problem is we forget these kinds of incidents so quickly.

Kaniz Fatima Sumaiya
Department of Accounting
Eden Mohilla College

Price of rice



I was watching the famous talk show Tritiyo Matra on 19 or 20 May 2010. The two Honourable Lawmakers were invited, Nilufer Moni and Israfil Hossain. Both the MPs discussed logically their points of view but when the price issue was raised in connection with the foods and the necessary commodities, MP Nilufer Moni gave reference to Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister, that she promised to provide rice at Tk. 5/- or Tk. 10/- per kg and now she has failed to do so.

MP Moni had the right to criticise the rice price hike but she or others shouldn't take it seriously.

Sheikh Hasina's intention was to tell the people that no one would starve. The price of rice is not important, what we should consider is whether it is within the purchasing power of the people.

Tanvirul Wahhab
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

World Cup



AMADUL HUCI / DRINKNEWS

I know what it would be like to see the matches of this year's FIFA World Cup. I could easily assume that I can hardly watch any matches because of frequent load-shedding. I missed the first two matches of the opening day of the tournament and I knew how it would be like throughout the tournament. The moment I was about to watch the matches, electricity went off. This is so ridiculous. Is there anything our so-called government is doing for eliminating this problem? I was so angry and depressed. I would kindly request our government to stop supplying electricity the whole day, i.e. from morning to evening and give electricity after the evening so that we could watch all the matches. If they really cannot solve this problem then this is the only solution I can give to them just for the World Cup.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka