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# The miserable city

Every big city in the world has its own problem but there are none like Dhaka which has multiple problems and needs a miracle to overcome the shortcomings in the near future. Like everything else in Dhaka, the quality of life is fast deteriorating. At present looking around us one will notice Dhaka doesn't have any decent/modern facilities which the Dhaka dwellers can enjoy. The traffic, gas, electricity, drinking water sewerage and other utilities which are being provided by the government is fast deteriorating mainly due to mismanagement and non availability of modern equipments and corruption in these departments.

What the government actually can do is stop supply of the natural gas as the country is already in scarcity of this fuel, if the supply to the CNG stations and for household use can be stopped through the pipe lines, the outcome will be excellent. Out of 1 million vehicles 80% will go off the road as soon as the CNG is disallowed to be used as fuel for vehicles. Out of this 80%, half the vehicles will certainly stop plying on the roads as they are 20-30 years old which are dependent on CNG as the only form of fuel. Owners of these vehicles will certainly stop using these junks due to high Octane costs and consumption. This step sure will help the Dhaka city's traffic to reduce over night from the day this can be implemented by the government. The result will be tremendous as around 1.25 to 1.50 lakh vehicles will be seen plying on the present 7% roads the city has and will be having for the next 20 years.

The gas which will be saved can be diverted (whatever we are left with) to the power plants which are now functioning par below the capacity. Once the power supply is ensured, the government and its think tank can concentrate on making roads and highways, flyovers, tunnels and footpaths of international standard. In the meantime they can start the widening of the city's ring roads by earth filling and in the eastern side of Dhaka they can start the berrihandh to stop the eastern side from



flooding during the monsoon. This will help the city to have a circular road supported by a two way broad gauge rail road. Once all the gas fired power generation units are activated, the government will also have enough time to install the coal fired power stations as well as the high profile nuke power station for electricity generation.

Again, it will need a miracle to shift different government and private offices outside the capital. But what can be done is the cantonment, the BRD headquarters, the Navy headquarters as well as Dhaka university should be reallocated for making rooms for construction of high rise residential buildings as well as roads for free flow of traffic for the over-populated Dhaka city. Dhaka cantonment can easily be shifted to the other side of Buriganga River, Dhaka University can be reallocated on the eastern side of Dhaka, the Navy H.Q. should be transferred to Chittagong and BDR can easily be shifted to Munshiganj

which is only a few kilometres away from the port city of Narayanganj. With this mini decentralization life in the city will improve though it will not be significant but it will give some sort of relief to this over-populated city for the next 5-7 years if not a decade.

The present government should immediately enact a law by forcing all the English medium and big public schools to provide school bus which will also reduce the number of vehicles commuting all over the city twice a day in the same route wasting valuable fuel and loss of man hours. If the residential areas can be separated from commercial and semi commercial activities the traffic madness all over these areas plus the main roads will also reduce as we've witnessed this during the zone wise weekly holidays declared by the government.

I am sure there are experts on these issues and may be the government has plans for the future like the STP/MTPE. **Sohel Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Contempt of court

Freedom of press, freedom of speech and freedom of expression are important rights of citizens in any democracy. So, we believe, everyone has right to exercise these rights as his inherent right. I also I believe in the right to information and making it public is the press freedom. The press has the right to mould the information to a certain extent and put it before the public. The press has also right to publish verdicts of courts, criticise and question rulings.

A newly emerging democracy, compared to other old democracies already established long before, is not that bad in Bangladesh. Here we can see hundreds of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and many private tv channels which are regularly printing, airing opinions and publishing news items on their individual choices. Private TV channels are projecting talk shows, interviews of different political believers. Debates are being aired on regular basis allowing the participants to express their individual opinions without any hindrances or guidance.

There are nearly 100 political parties in Bangladesh, the highest in the world I believe. Most of them have their own mouthpieces. So, we must say, as an emerging democracy, this trend is absolutely favourable.

But publishing concocted stories to create rivalry among the conflicting supporters, assassination of characters without digging

the roots do not fall within the right of "freedom of press". Big headlines of a hollow news story and imaginary news items not an honest service to the press.

I think everyone should maintain restraint in exercising his or her rights. **Shafiqul Islam, NY**

## An unresolved issue

I hope Mr. Tony Blair and his wife enjoyed their brief stay in Bangladesh (20-21 August '10). I would like to take this opportunity to remind Mr. Blair of his letter to me dated 06 June 2006, in response to my article styled "100-Dollar Laptop: UN Secretary General's Office shouldn't be used for exploiting the poor". Let me quote an extremely pertinent portion of a sentence from my article regarding my invention 'Radio without battery', which states "my invention was hijacked first by a British and then by an American". While in office as PM, Mr. Blair found my article interesting and he referred it to the Commonwealth and his foreign office. But till today, I haven't received any response from any corner. My article was published in almost all the national dailies in the country in addition to 6094 websites including Wikipedia. Some foreign enthusiastic people brought out CDs on the article too. Publication in the Wikipedia was done on the initiative of a native American. Actually, most of the people who wrote to me on the article, were quite sympathetic

towards me on my invention being hijacked. My suggestion with due explanation to limit the expense of an international patent to a minimum, for the third world country inventors in addressing what I called "rich people's property (whom) effectively, instead of intellectual property", was hailed as the greatest invention. Earlier, on the initiative of our present PM's office (previous term), our High Commissioner in UK wrote to the alleged inventor, but I am not aware of any response.

**Nazmul Huda**  
Siddheswari Road, Dhaka

## BTV

Honestly, in the last few years did any of you watch Bangladesh Television for a minute even? The obvious answer is a big NO. There's no denying the fact that with time, many private television channels sprang up and viewing the so called national television channel turned to a part of an old fairy tale. When only BTV aired shows and all, people of Bangladesh jumped onto it and it changed the entertainment world's geography, but if we take it as it is today, watching this channel is now part of history.

Not that we don't watch it. If standard programmes and news bulletins are aired, why should we miss them? But BTV is not living up to our expectations.

**Mahbuba Sharmeen**  
Preema  
Penfield School, Dhaka

# Corporal punishment



It has taken quite a long time to dawn on us. They should have stopped it long time ago. Most of the teachers using punishment at schools are sending an indirect signal to their students in case they go to their private tuition table they will be shown mercy. This pecuniary interest of teachers that go unchecked corrupts them.

Such teachers also use their discretionary power in practical examinations of science group for drawing students and earning hundreds of thousands of taka from every batch. On no logical grounds can it be thought

that corporal punishment make students studious and focused on lessons. Rather, it distracts them in every possible way. Students need to call their powers of concentration into play in a class-room based education. If assaulted, how can they find the lesson interesting?

I would like to request the authorities concerned to train the teachers up in child psychology for the sound psychological health of primary and secondary level students.

**Roney**  
One-mail

## Billionaires and donations

In the PCP article Abdul Matin's (Aug 19) wish that Bangladesh billionaires should follow the likes of Bill Gates to give most of their money in charity is a no-no proposition in Asian countries including Bangladesh. This will only come about when there is a hefty inheritance tax (like western countries) for the rich (over a certain value of his/her estate at death), so that greed and ambition for dynastic accumulation of wealth is curbed by legislation to enable wealth to trickle down to the poor in society.

Inheritance tax broke the power of English landed gentry and aristocracy, and this is the sure way forward for reduction of poverty in the land and re-distribution of accumulated wealth.

If 10 billion is taken away by the state out of a fortune of 20 billion when one dies, then it is much more satisfactory to give 15 billion away in charity when one is alive in worthwhile causes. (Non charitable gifts must be taxed at the same rate as inheritance tax, but only charitable gifts would be exempt, as in the west).

There may always be a few exceptional wealthy persons (e.g. late R.P. Saha), but that does not disprove the logic of the necessity for such an inheritance tax to be introduced in Bangladesh. But does anyone have the courage to grasp the nettle?  
**Engineer Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

## Obama's stand

Recently US President Barack Obama forcefully endorsed the plan to build a mosque near ground zero saying the country's founding principles demanded no less. The President made this comment at an annual dinner in the White House State Dining Room celebrating the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The president said, "As a citizen, and as a president, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country". This assertion of President Obama reflects his government's goodwill to establishing peace based on trust and understanding.

While sincerely appreciating President Obama's straightforwardness and noble intentions, I would request the US President to apply his good offices to initiate dialogue towards settling the Palestine issue and creating a new horizon of relationship between the United States of America and the Muslim world.

I sincerely wish President Obama's mission to peace a grand victory.  
**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University  
Dhaka

## A road map for Biman

A group of young engineers and fresh MBAs from DU were picked-up in 1978-79 to be trained as true airline professionals. But within years the whole group had to

leave Biman because of frustration due to influx of non-professionals from outside who were introduced as fill in the gaps measure and also by and large due to internal politics of the existing employee group. As a result the national airline lost a highly potential group of employees who could have taken care of the business and run the organisation professionally today. It is a lost opportunity.

Biman was turned into a PLC with all the good intentions, but as the govt neared its ending, it got more involved with vested-interest group. Big business interest overcame all other ideals and principles. Quickly it constituted in a hurry a new Biman board of directors and picked-up a new chairman and a new CEO and MD...all to suit the purpose of buying brand new aircraft from Boeing. Biman badly needed those aircraft, no doubt about that. But there are reportedly some deals behind the scene regarding the price per unit of aircraft, other related services and most importantly the financial deal at a much higher interest rate comparatively. It was done all in a hurry and hush-hush way.

A high-powered investigation is a timely need to get to the bottom of it. It has to be an open investigation, so that people like me are able to come forward to take part in the investigation without any fear. A group of well-known businessmen, a syndicate, are looting Biman over the years. It was known to every

government that came to power and every politicians that took charge of the MoCAT ministry.

Biman will never be able to run professionally unless we are able to uproot the vicious cycle. The country's highest office must have its blessing in doing so and it will be an uphill battle.

**Sheikh Monirul Islam**  
Ex-Biman employee

## Indian visa

It seems almost impossible to get an Indian visa without going through a myriad of hassles and harassments! Hardest hit seems to be those of us who are either tourists or those who want to visit India for medical purposes.

What surprises me most is that the Indian High Commission had promised a sea of change in the whole visa process by introducing the e-token system. To a certain extent it has worked; I no longer see the lines of people queuing up all day in front of the High Commission. What remains a mystery, however, is how to exactly get an e-token off the Internet. I have seen people waiting till 4 in the morning to get one of those fabled tokens!

Getting an e-token is merely the first step. The date on the e-token tells you when you can submit your passport. But usually the date is at least two weeks from the day you get the e-token. This means that a visitor needs a minimum of 3 weeks. The irony is an Indian citizen visiting Bangladesh needs only 2-3 days to get the paperwork processed. Where is the

justice in all this?

Good news is, in most cases, once you submit your passport, you usually get it back with an Indian visa. The operative word is "usually" since sometimes, you get your application rejected without any kind of rationale or reasoning, without any recourse to appeal immediately. And that's when another journey begins, which I call "the dance with the dalals" (middle-men)!

Patients waiting for their visas have it worse. Aside from the 3-week wait, they also have to submit "authentic" paperwork certifying their maladies, as well as the bona fide quality of the institution they are visiting.

The first part is easy enough, but providing "authentic" documents of the validity of thousands of medical centres in a huge country like India sometimes proves extremely difficult. Often, confusion leads to further delays, and eventually even visa rejection.

The mother of all ironies is that if a patient does get a visa and does land in India, he/she will have to fill a police diary within 14 days of arrival. In contrast, a holidaymaker has to do no such thing. Where is the logic in that?

In spite of all this, I have hopes that the Indian High Commission is aware of these problems and is thinking of doing something about it.

Most Bangladeshis would love to visit our beautiful neighbouring country without such harassments.  
**Mr. Mominul Haq**  
Baridhara  
Dhaka

## Trial of war criminals

Now that the trial of the war criminals has started, justice will finally prevail. How could the people of Bangladesh turn against their own country to help Pakistan gain control? It was very ruthless indeed! In our country, the juries take a long time to reach a verdict, but our national pride is closely linked with the war crimes trial, therefore no time should be wasted while judging the cases.  
**Tanha Kashfia Kate**  
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

## Floods in Pakistan

The recent flash floods in Pakistan have been quite extraordinary given the magnitude of havoc and the plight of the common people. Ever since the horrible upshot of sudden flooding is unfolding gradually, the authorities are still in a sticky situation about how to respond to such type of disaster, which is why, it has called for international help. Though aid is coming slowly from the richer part of the world, a country like Bangladesh cannot sit idle to show its positive gesture towards the people of

Pakistan. We cannot but help the affected people, no matter what is the size of the assistance.  
**Md. Harisur Rahman**  
NOMA Regional Masters Program  
Journalism, Media and Communication  
University of Dhaka

## Social menace

Murder of human beings has become a day-to-day affair. No matter whether such incident occurs in the capital or in a remote place of the country, it is a violent criminal act and the offender of such crimes under the law of the land faces the capital punishment.

Both the ministries of education and information must undertake suitable programmes by which the citizens of the state may become aware of such social menace.  
**Golam Ashraf**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Fabio's comment

I had an opportunity to read through Fabio's column at "point and counter point" in DS which was published on 13 July 2010. In our country the rich are becoming richer day by

day and the poor are becoming landless and homeless. Nearly 20,000 to 30,000 people are affected on a yearly basis by infrastructure development projects, and nearly 100,000 people are being pauperised by river erosion.

In the name of industrialisation, the rich are grabbing everything. This must come to an end.

**Zaglut Haider**  
English Department  
Shanto Mariam University of Creative Technology  
Dhaka

## NIPA virus

It is scientific news that any kinds of fruits and juice pecked or eaten by birds or other animals are not hygienic for human body. Scientists have concentrated especially on bats. Bats are fond of pecking fruits, especially banana and drinking the juice of the date trees. Bats are carrier of NIPA virus that infects human body within a short time.

There is no good treatment for NIPA infected diseases. But heat can destroy NIPA.

Winter is drawing near. So the issue should be addressed.  
**Kbd M Alamgir Hossain**  
Chhatak



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## Bangladesh among 100 best countries

(August 25, 2010)

This is a popular and current topic for discussion in Bangladeshi community in California, I know of.

We have to improve our position.  
**Faqrul**

Bangladesh should be better than any other country in South

Asia.

**Kazi Firoz**

Are you kidding me...this is the funniest article of the year.

**Ronald**

Among 100 best countries...out of 203?

**SNH**

Yet we are far away from the standard. Let us work hard to earn respectability. Our political parties must understand this fact.  
**Reza Ali**

Well done, but what is the difference between being 100th and 88th?  
**Ghiasuddin**

Dhaka's traffic jam and electricity problem are sufficient to put Bangladesh at the 88th position.  
**Zerosopher**

Let's try to make it move within the top 50 by 2020!  
**Hasan M. Ch**

I have doubts about the people who made it.  
**Arnob**

It is good news to be among the best, but can't we try to be within top 10 instead of 100?  
**Parvez Babul**

Bangladesh ranked 88th amongst 100. What a disgrace! Even Sri Lanka is 66th!  
**Shah Golam Mostafa**

Let us sit in our traffic jams in the midst of total lawlessness and unbelievable nepotism and corruption and celebrate Newsweek's joke.  
**Gul Afroze**