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Let's plant trees



AM AHAD / DRINKNEWS

Bangladesh is fast acquiring desert conditions due to destruction of our trees. When we travel on the highways of Chittagong-Cox's Bazar the heaps of logs piled near timber depots remind us of how fast we are destroying the work of nature by cutting down trees. No one bothers to plant trees in replacement.

Trees play a vital role in controlling the climate. The disastrous effects of felling trees indiscriminately are well known. Trees, whether they are grown for timber in forests or shade and ornamental trees in highways and gardens, are our national asset.

Imagine a forest without trees. What would happen to the flora and fauna that live under the cover of the trees? We must remember that more than half of the population of the plants in Bangladesh will disappear forever from the face of the earth once their host trees are destroyed. In addition, we must also take every action to preserve the existing trees.

Bangladesh has undergone a drastic climatic change during the last few years. We have cleared the forests. Due to the indiscriminate felling of trees peri-

odic drought conditions are becoming more and more severe.

The elderly people of Bangladesh knew the value of trees and planted them by roadways and in forest reserves. This added to the natural beauty and the coolness of the environment. In those days it was considered a great sin to cut down any living tree and those who did so were severely criticized.

When trees are cut down, springs dry up, the soil is eroded and the air becomes less humid. Thus the entire balance of nature is upset. When we destroy forests, droughts, unfavourable climatic changes, soil erosion, lack of water resources and even disastrous floods are the results.

The younger generation must be made to realise the value and usefulness of trees. Drawing schoolchildren and teachers into the awareness programme is important, as schools are the most suitable institutions that could bring a change in the nation's attitude in conserving trees.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
A tourism professional

equal, and their ranking, if any, is only based on their piety, faith and character in life, and nothing else. Only the righteous among us, in words and deeds, rank high in His esteem for His creation!

I believe that the protocol that we are following, was created by the imperial British and other rulers, in days gone by, to imprint their superiority in the eyes of their subjects that they ruled! We with our ingrained slavish mentality have extended this idea even before our presence to the Almighty Allah in namaz (prayer)!

In any prayer jamat, be it on any occasion, the right to be in the first rank belongs to the musalli who comes first to the prayer jamat, and nothing else. Here paraphrasing the famous saying, the real format for the jamat should be: "Sceptre and crown must tumble down, and in the jamat, all be equal placed, with the poor and humble, all of whom, Allah alone has made". This is the fundamental principle of Islam, a democratic society created by divine instruction to mankind!

This so called 'status' concept has been made by ignorant mankind, who deem 'status' to demonstrate their worldly acquired symbols of wealth and power, that has no validity in the eyes of Allah, the Almighty, who sees and knows all! In fact, by moving up the ranks of jamat, they trample the fundamental principles of Islam, where all are equal in the eyes of Allah. Nothing else matters. Possibly the very idea of "protocol" is a non-Islamic concept created in pre-Islamic era, which should not be adopted in any congregation prayers!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Killing continues unabated

Almost every alternate day a poor Bangladeshi is killed by the BSF (Border Security Force) of India. Despite flag meetings, inter-ministerial

meetings, the killing continues unabated. As reported by the media most of these unfortunate people are either cattle traders or poor farmers, living far below poverty line. Bangladesh is all surrounded by India except for in the south. There is all probability that a Bangladeshi living in the border area may venture into India knowingly or unknowingly. In the event of such an incident the BSF can easily scare them off by firing blank shots into the air. Life is dear to everybody, I am sure no one would like to get killed in this manner.

Is there any statistics of how many Bangladeshis have so far been killed? Is it possible to know how many people have been killed from 1947 to 1971 and from 1971 to 2010? The apparent situation is such that Bangladesh has lost the moral to protest such incidents of killing.

It is a shame for the nation, whose citizens are getting killed on a regular basis by the neighbouring giant and the people keep on watching their movies, television channels, importing their goods and commodities and so on, as if rewarding them for their act of killing.

I fail to understand why the so-called human rights organisations do not come forward and protest these killings as extra-judicial killings and take necessary steps to stop such act of killing, whereas they are so vocal in protesting the cross-fire incidents of the peace keeping forces of the country as extra-judicial killings.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Banani & Gulshan lakes

It is unfortunate that for many years the nation's policy and decision makers were sitting idle and let Banani and Gulshan lakes to be slowly encroached and now the lakes' water has become dirty and polluted with garbage, water hyacinths and sewages.

BRTA's drive

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority launched a massive drive against 20 years old buses and 25 years old minibuses, trucks, vans etc. on 13 July. For unfit vehicles the deadline was 15 July. Everybody in Dhaka city hailed the drive. Nearly 1446 buses, 8125 trucks and 2365 minibuses were found totally unfit for plying on city roads.

But sorry to say, due to unforeseen hurdles BRTA's initiatives have gone in vain. The old buses have returned to city roads.

Commuters are indeed helpless.
Zaghlul Haider
English Department
Shanto Mariam
University of
Creative Technology
(SMUCT)
Dhaka



STAR

It is a shame for us that these two lakes cannot be taken care of by the concerned public authorities as well as the private societies.

It is also unbelievable that many of the highest decision makers are ignorant of the exact time of the year for removing the water hyacinths, application of proportionate quantity of liquefied limestone and setting different sizes of strainers on the exit point of all the lakeside drains.

Hopefully the present government would address this issue with a sense of urgency.

Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

High price

The price of iftar items is so high all over the country which is very unethical. Where

are the concerned authorities? They did not take any legal steps against the businessmen and the people involved in this. We hope that appropriate steps would be taken so that people can get rid of this situation.

Rowshan Ali
Astudent

Passports at wrong hands

Alarming enough, Myanmar nationals are obtaining Bangladeshi passports by concealing their real identity as well as address and going abroad. These people are endangering our labour market abroad and besmirching our national image indulging themselves in illegal activities over there. Proper investiga-

tion should be done to track down the culprits responsible for giving Bangladeshi passports to wrong hands. To the best of my knowledge passport authorities across the country issue passports on getting positive police report conducted by SB branch of police and No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the authorities concerned in case of government employees. May be bribe tampers the process of police investigation or NOC issuance. But by no way passport authorities can issue passports without such apposite investigation report or authentication reports. Anything contrary to the rules, if ever happens, should be meted with due punishment.

Anonymous
Lohagora, Norail

Traffic jam

Last week there was a spate of articles on Traffic Jams in The Daily Star. These articles contained many useful and practical solutions for managing traffic but unfortunately did not take the present situation of traffic, roads, controllers, commuters, flows, frequency and time into consideration. Without exception, they totally ignored and/or negated the role played by rickshaws and vans on Dhaka's roads today. This requires to be repeated once again.

About 3.5 lakh rickshaws/vans transport approx 50% of Dhakabashis and the same per cent of goods every day. Five-six lakh pullers support about 20-25 lakh rickshaw related people on the Tk.15-20 crores daily earned by them by hard grinding labour. This is a++ to GDP and an environmentally clean, cheap and fast form of transport, ideal for the short distance commuters in the narrow winding streets. They have never killed anyone but are the victims themselves most of the time. In sharp contrast the 4-5 lakh Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs) hog up to 70-75% of road space, carry only 3-5% Dhakabashis at astronomical

cost, polluting the air and damaging ear-drums by their infernal, incessant, raucous horns. They can cause gridlocks by just turning or parking (backside first) into narrow confines everywhere. They drain out valuable ForEx every time they turn on the ignition not to speak of their daily toll of killed and maimed.

If there is no comparison in utility between the two, why has only the tri-wheeler been banned on so-called VIP roads? Have the car-owners purchased these roads for their empty/half empty cars? Why are the majority of people rickshaw related and users -- deprived of their inherent constitutional right of free use of city roads paid for by the masses? Why have appropriate substitutes for the rickshaw/van not been introduced first before banning it? Is there any legal personality who can file a Writ? Is this not a Public Interest subject?

Further, who is accountable for the hundreds of crores already spent on futile free-ways, signalling gimmicks, worthless rules, incapable administration and toadying controllers? And now we are being lulled comatose by the 'mother of all White Elephants', the 17,500 crore, 21 km behemoth that will wave away jams forever! How

naive can we get?
Sikander Ahmed
Niketan, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Trapped Chilean miners

I am deeply shocked by the news of 33 miners being trapped underground in northern Chile. Twenty-one days have passed and it is feared that it may take three to four months to free them.

I can easily imagine the mental state of the miners' near and dear ones. Knowing the trapped men are alive has made them happy, but at the same time they must be passing their days in anguish, feeling suffocated for not being able to rescue them immediately.

We pray for the trapped miners, may they survive the ordeal, may they never lose heart and wait patiently for the day they will be reunited with their families.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Jamat protocol?

I fully endorse the writer's views on the subject published in the columns of a daily on 26th August. There can be no protocol when we stand in any jamat to pray to Allah! For Allah all men and women are

Vision 2021

Rural people, especially the unemployed youth and women, should be considered assets in national development. The present government could decide as a policy priority to outsource functions such as digitisation of land records, data entry operations, collation of local data, and local resource mapping to the information kiosks run by self-help and community interest groups

with the support of civil society organisations. Upazila and Union Parishad institutions could use connectivity to provide accountable and transparent local governance.

Various government data of relevance to the public, including birth and death certificates, other registrations, and pension documents, could also be made online to facilitate usage. Outsourcing

from urban to rural Bangladesh would be a powerful method of bridging the rural-urban divide.

This would also help to bridge the gender divide, if women are enabled to manage the rural knowledge centres. Relevant social messages in health, education and governance related issues can be effectively disseminated through knowledge centres and information kiosks in rural areas. The government should outsource designing and developing e-governance content and services to civil society and professional organisations that can benefit wider communities. A number of expert organisations in agriculture, nutrition, livelihoods, animal husbandry, post-harvest technology, health and environmental issues should be identified to support e-governance programmes. A civil society group should be constituted to monitor the e-governance policies. Such a group can advise the government on appropriate methods of automating government processes and offering ICT-enabled ser-

vices and applications for rural communities. A low-interest rate lending to rural entrepreneurs, self-help groups, common interest groups and nominees of local government institutions to establish knowledge centres and information kiosks should be considered. Such loans can be issued via banking institutions to encourage rural entrepreneurship. A venture capital fund may also be established. The task of taking the benefits of the Internet and space age to 68000 villages may appear to be a formidable one. However, seemingly impossible tasks can be achieved by harnessing the power of partnership and by bringing about synergy between technology and public policy, as pledged by the ruling party by 2021 through Vision 2021 - Charter of Change. The initiative being launched by the ruling government with the help of our civil society today marks the beginning of a bright chapter in Bangladesh.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada



WAHID ADNAN / DRINKNEWS

ONLINE VOICES

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New int'l airport to cost Tk 50,000cr (August 28, 2010)

Do we really need another airport in our poor country at that cost? Can't we use that money on education, roads, power and industries, to name a few.
Ishtaq

It will be a great waste of time and money if we build this airport. If Brussels and other international airports can survive with houses beside them, why can't we? AL leaders are trying to sell the open space next to Zia International Airport to some party affiliated persons for petty gains. We can use that to expand the airport.
Hasan

A ridiculous idea. It will be waste of tax money to build another airport near Dhaka since we already have one. Upgrading the current one is quite

possible if you consider such major airport improvements such as Delhi, Atlanta, London, Doha etc. Instead, this money should be used to make a four lane national highway connecting most major cities in Bangladesh.
Maksood

This report does not say whether a parallel runway with the existing one in Shahjalal Airport is possible. Because Tk 50,000 crore is not a small amount or is the airport necessary for its given name? I think the name of Bangabandhu is in the hearts of all Bengalis.
Abul Kalam, P.Eng.

Does the govt really consider the existing airport International-standard? If they do, then spending Tk 50,000 crore for another so-called international standard airport will be

a wastage of resources (land, labour & capital).

I would urge the govt officials to tour the airports of some foreign countries to get an idea of what international standard really is.
Zabi

Now I have an idea about the size of the new airport project. Can someone provide the net present value (NPV) and internal rate of return (IRR) of this project? I and everyone else would like to see the project float by its own merit. We simply cannot afford a white elephant built with public money.
Jumana Sarwar

Do we really need another international airport in Dhaka? Except a few areas in Dhaka, we don't even have a proper sewerage system in the whole country. And we all are aware of the electricity problem. Do these politicians really care about their country? I doubt!
MMC

We propose the name of the new international airport s be Sheikh Hasina International Airport. Presently, Sheikh Hasina is the only leader in Bangladesh.
Mobaidul Huq

Why do they need to spend so much money on an airport. Currently, we have one in the capital. If they want to spend money then they should build new roads and repair the existing

ones, build flyovers etc.
Md Farhan

We definitely need this airport. The first impression any foreign investor gets after arriving is by looking at your airport. The main reason we have so less FDI is the lack of infrastructure and dismal look of our cities and roads. All the money except the land will come from FDI which will not only inflate our foreign currency reserve but also bring new businesses through air transit and will become a regional air hub.
Rawshan Iajdani

The govt has changed Zia's name for no reason. Setting up a new airport surely will be wastage of money whereas we people do not enjoy the fundamental rights.
Nawshar

We have to ensure that the airport will be of international standard in design and functionality. Keep in mind 50 years from now.
Yasin

Have we done enough studies to understand the full economic impact of this project on the country? Would it not be more beneficial for us to develop our local infrastructure first?
Asad Uzzaman

Will Prime Minister Hasina pledge to the nation that this new airport would not be named after our father of the nation? Only then we the citizens will

know what the real motivation is.

Please use the money to build international standard highways/freeways to replace the totally outdated and down right dangerous existing undivided highways connecting the major population centres. Every year far too many people are dying due to head-on collisions.
Masud Alam

Present Dhaka international airport is not fully utilized. Only 40-50 % of its capacity is being utilized. Please do not go for projects like magnetic train anymore. We are not Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Dubai.
Ameen Sayeed

Building another airport without paying attention to basic necessities like power, health care, education and economic sustainability sounds ridiculous. People have a hard enough time getting to the existing one due to lack of proper planning. Wouldn't it make more sense to focus resources to fixing crippling traffic congestion first? Who will pay for this airport? What will be the benefit?
Shabbir Bashar

The present airport is now in city-centre creating nuisance (noise pollution) for the hospitals and educational institutions during daytime. Citizens of the capital cannot have peaceful sleep at night. If the groundbreaking for the airport starts today then 20 or 30 years will pass by for full fledged operation. You can imagine the pressure of increased passenger

traffic (8-9% per year).
Abdur Rauf

We desperately need the current airport to be moved out of the city centre. The new airport should be relocated, it doesn't need to be state of the art, it can be built in phases over the years starting with a basic structure. In order to be economically competitive with our neighbours, we need new infrastructure like an airport with public transport connections and wide roads. Both Bangkok and KL moved their airports out further out of the city for a good reason and now those airports are thriving.
Antara

We have to do everything which is needed for the development of our country. Now we should try to set up more and more power stations. We should remember that every sector is in ICU in our country. We have to be more alert.
Mamun

May we know in whose interest this mega-project has been conceived? How much of the budget would be going into the pocket of the entrepreneurs? This plan smells something fishy because a country like Bangladesh has proved callously inefficient in handling the jobs in HSJI (Dhaka) Airport. So the proposed airport must be managed and controlled by some agencies/agency on heavy commission basis.
S. Ali