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Earthquake preparedness

It is still impossible to predict where and when an earthquake will occur. It is a must that the general people of our country become aware of exactly what to do before and during an earthquake. Here are some of the things the experts had to say -

1. Before an earthquake: Repair any defective electrical wiring or leaky gas connections. Locate a safe cover such as a sturdy table, bed or

until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave. Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall.

3. If outdoors: Move away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires. Once in the open, stay there

sewage or water line damage. If gas lines are damaged, open the windows and doors or move away from the house. If the electric lines are also damaged, turn off the supply using the main fuse box. Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for the latest emergency information. Stay away from damaged areas and help injured or trapped persons but do not move seriously injured persons unless it is emer-



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRIVENEWS

cot where you can take shelter. Repair any deep cracks in ceiling or foundation. Store a battery-operated radio, a flashlight, some extra batteries, some matches, emergency food and water and some cash as 'on hand disaster supplies'. Educate young family members and other community members to get prepared.

2. During an earthquake, if indoors: Drop to the ground, take cover by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture, and hold on until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building. Stay inside

until the shaking stops.

4. If in a moving vehicle: Stay as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires. Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps.

5. If trapped under debris: Do not light a match. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or a piece of cloth. Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

6. After an earthquake: Check for gas leaks, electrical line damage or

agency. Call for help. Enquiry number of the Fire Brigade in Bangladesh is 199 and telephone number of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief is 7161595.

These instructions and more are published in the official website of Federal Emergency Management Agency and most of them are appropriate for all the countries of the world. We must prepare ourselves for this unpredictable natural disaster and believe in heart that Allah helps them who help themselves.

Shahriar Kabir
Eskaton Garden Govt. Officers' Quarters
Dhaka

Mymensingh people

The socio-economic health of greater Mymensingh, in my understanding, was not bad and I should say, it was fair 10/12 years back. As I have seen, during that time village people did not like to go out of village for their livelihood, rather they were satisfied staying in their villages. Personally, I know that some got jobs in the town but after some time they left the jobs and went back to the village and continued there with satisfaction. When people of other districts were seriously trying for jobs in the govt. or private sector in and outside the country, people of greater Mymensingh had been continuing to stay in village.

But with the passage of time, the total scene has been changed. It appears that the proportion of employment in govt. and private bodies occupied by greater Mymensingh people is remarkably less than that of other districts. In this way, I believe that people of greater Mymensingh are gradually going back and backwards and are being deprived of the due share of the total facilities.

Md. Delwar Hossain
East Rampura, Dhaka

Angelina Jolie

I am an ardent fan of Angelina Jolie, a renowned and award winning actress of Hollywood. Right from the Tomb Rider to the recently released Salt, I never missed any of her movies. What amazes me most is her humanitarian attitude. Wherever there is any natural calamity, disaster or man-made crisis; we could see her beside the victims. From Darfur in Africa to the recent flood victims of Pakistan, from Haitian earthquake to the Tsunami mishaps, Angelina Jolie's voice is always within earshot.

In her personal life, she has adopted six hapless children from around the world and rearing them with all the amenities a human being can dream of. An actress of these humanitarian stature deserves our thanks and gratitude.

Anika Tasnim
Shekerteek, Muhammadpur
Dhaka

Pakistani journalists

In present state of affairs, journalists are putting their lives on a palm to report news & events, especially TV journalists are working hard in Pakistan, they always rush to the sites, they perform their

duties risking their lives. So far many TV and camera journalists have been killed. So I am suggesting that the government of Pakistan declare their performance and profession as a special service to the nation.

Asad Khan Betini
General Secretary
Journalist Union of
Balochistan

Commercial capital

The commercial capital of Bangladesh is Chittagong. For various reasons Chittagong attracts all. Chittagong is surrounded by rivers, hill tracts, and the Bay.

Good planning is needed to make it a truly attractive place and a befitting commercial capital of the country.

Bipra Kanungo
Chittagong

Zakat to eliminate poverty

One of the five pillars of Islam is Zakat. This is a compulsory duty of each rich Muslim fixed by Almighty Allah and if a rich Muslim ignores it, he or she will not be considered a good Muslim.

This instruction was imposed to eliminate poverty from society.

M.S. Farazi
Jeddah
KSA

Promoting tourism

A few days ago I went to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The environment and the people of the hilly areas attracted me. Our neighbour India is branding their country as Incredible India to promote their tourism. But we have not seen any worthwhile initiative from our government in this respect. With the cricket world cup knocking at the door, it is high time for us to brand our country as something special to the visitors to promote our tourism. If we want to do so we should develop our infrastructure in the first place. As security is always an issue for the tourists, we have to make sure that no awkward incidents occur. It is a great pride for us that we will host the world cup matches and we need to make the best use of this opportunity for the greater interest of our economy.

Zubair Ahmed
Department of English
University of Chittagong

May Allah save us!

From September 10 to September 15, 2010, in the span of six days our country has been jolted four times by earthquakes. It is an ominous sign, experts are saying that these small tremors are the warnings of a major earthquake. According to a recent

survey, around 250,000 buildings in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet are extremely vulnerable to earthquake.

Our cities are crammed with buildings, we do not know how many of them are earthquake resistant, the close proximity with other buildings which are not earthquake resistant are likely to damage these also.

Experts said a severe earthquake might strike any time with full fury. As it is not possible to prevent it and redress all the destruction it will create, we must pray to Almighty Allah to save us from this calamity. We should reform ourselves, refrain from committing crimes, repent for our wrongdoings and ask for His forgiveness. Maybe, Allah, the Beneficial, the Most Merciful will spare us from this dreadful fate.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Silent slavery

As per our constitutional provision, public servants are supposed to work for the people of the republic. But alas! The brilliant officers who enter the service with high hopes and dedication find their long-cherished hopes shattered when they realise that public service has been put in a bizarre form of slavery by stupid bossism rather than given a pro-people shape. Vigour and commitment of young officers droop very fast when they see professional excellence is measured in terms of flattery and political colour. Moreover, subordinates are many times ill-treated if their actions go against the will and interest of their boss, no matter how good their actions are. An efficient, honest and a truly loyal officer if ever dares to show such courage will surely miss good assignments, better posting and dream promotion. It happens because there is an archaic and very subjective Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system for evaluation. This faulty ACR is the instrument that helps bosses to enslave their subordinates. I presume public servants do not pronounce the very name of Almighty as many times as they utter the word SIR. Most public servants pass the very first two hours of their office time in flattering their boss with such lofty words and in such a tone that the boss by no way deserves. But ironically, it has been an established culture in public offices.

To stop this kind of slavery at public offices 360 degree evaluation must kick out the ACR system of evaluation without delay.

Anonymous
Chattul
Boalmari, Faridpur

Reckless driving

Road accident has become a common thing in our country. The drivers are mostly responsible for this. They drive recklessly without being conscious about the lives of the passengers and the pedestrians. Sometimes they have a tendency to overtake other vehicles. Unfortunately, the passengers become the victims of their negligence. Because of these drivers, many people face premature death.

So, I would request the authorities concerned to take immediate steps in this regard.

Manik Kumar Barman
Department of English
Gaibandha Govt. College
Gaibandha

Criminal industrialists!

The statement by the DIG Police of Dhaka Range, to the members of the press, published in most dailies on September 16th, accused some garment manufacturers for criminal intent in not

clearing their workers' legitimate dues and festival bonus timely before Eid! This is a matter of shame and outright dishonesty of these criminal minded garment factory owners!

Thankfully, the police authorities made them pay the fair dues to these suffering garment workers. This proves that the factory owners too are responsible for the labour troubles in the garment sector.

In this connection, I would advise the BGMEA President, to please clarify if the police DIG's statement is also "misleading information" as per his lofty statement published in some dailies on September 4&5th. Quo Vadis BGMEA? I eagerly await the response from the President of BGMEA.

Since withholding due payments and statutory bonus is an illegal act, I would request the Director of Labour, and the inspector of factories to get the particulars from the DIG Police, Dhaka Range and take action against the factory owners, who as reported by the DIG, had to be kept confined to the police station, and released only after police made sure that these 'criminal minded' owners had cleared the legitimate dues of the workers. They should be legally prosecuted in the court of law, as well as the Labour Court for these offences.

If the BGMEA really wants the garment industries to flourish, they better put their house in order, stop blaming non-existent 'vested quarters' and 'misguided importers'. Hopefully now he does not need glasses to see 'the writing on the wall', written by his colleagues, out to sabotage the garment factories. I wonder if he knows about these factory owners who had to be kept in the police station to ensure that workers are not cheated out of their legitimate dues and bonus! What is he going to do about it?

Take proper action to ensure this never happens again.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Solar energy

Energy shortage has become a chronic problem in Bangladesh nowadays. At present, load shedding has become an hour-to-hour phenomenon in many busy cities of Bangladesh. However, it must not be said that the govt. is not trying to solve the present power crisis. But we need to search for more potential sources. As sunlight is a renewable energy resource, it is very feasible to replenish the depleted energy resource with this. In Bangladesh, a company named Grameen Shakti is providing the facility of establishing solar plant mostly in the rural areas. It will be successful if the government shows the attitude to patronise this sector!

Khondoker Rezwan Tanvir
Dept. of Business
Administration
SUST, Sylhet

Blacklisted firm

The news carried by The Daily Star and many dailies in Dhaka under similar captions on 16 September 2010 was not a surprise. The people of Bangladesh are used to this type of news in their media. The people of Bangladesh also know it very well that the faces of the godfathers who awarded the contract or preparing for awarding the contract to a blacklisted firm will never be unveiled in public.

In the countryside of Bangladesh there is a popular identity "Gom-Chor", meaning thief who steals wheat. This identity is mostly held by the UP chairmen and members. But no one knows who are the godfathers. I did not verify the truth of a story told by a chairman known to me.



PHOTO: STAR

Street crimes

Street crimes in the capital and elsewhere have been on the rise. This has been the subject of a report published this week by a local NGO. The report highlights the growing number of street children involved in this activity. There has been a significant rise in the number of street children, particularly in Dhaka, says the report, adding that the reasons for children running away from their homes include domestic violence, sexual abuse and corporal punishment in schools, especially in madrasas. This is an issue that has to be dealt in a proactive manner. It may be noted that street children end up joining gangs which offer them protection in return for working on the streets. The gangs force the children into prostitution and crime. Incidents of petty crime have also risen as children are forced to beg, steal and borrow to retain their gang membership.

Rowshan Ali
One-mail

He narrated how and why he was bound to sell major portion of receipt of wheat granted for "food-for-work" programme in his jurisdiction. According to him, when the chairman gets an allotment for such wheat he is supposed to get the wheat allotment cleared right from his TNO to Ministries of Relief & Rehabilitation, Food etc. He starts running right from his TNO to the

Secretariat in Dhaka. He needs to visit Dhaka several times to get the final allotment and clearance of delivery from the government silo. By the time the allotted wheat reaches his office, more than half the wheat is eaten up by his superior offices, bribes and table feedings.

Now, what does he do after receiving the wheat? he sells out a quantity to get back his expenses and rest, may be 50% or less, he distributes among his members and labourers who "work for food". He earns the title of "Gom-Chor" because he sells that portion at dark but the people who have eaten up more than 50% remain clean forever.

I think, before cancelling the contract and call for a retender the government should investigate who were the people selecting a blacklisted firm to award contract for such an important national asset.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Obnoxious approach

Eve-teasing has taken a new form. We now have youths stalking women through cell-phones. Fortunately, some service providers have introduced call-block options. I think them for understanding our plight. However, there is still something to worry about youths are actually indulging in unproductive activities! I don't know whom to blame exactly the movies which promote lewd acts as a way

(and a "brave" one) of winning a girl's heart; the educational institutions which fail to address these issues as they are "not a part of syllabus"; the ever-pampering guardians who are completely unaware of what mischief their children are brewing or the "true friends" who distribute the numbers? I dare not blame the government high-ups for these unabated crimes as they are busy building a "Digital Bangladesh." On behalf of all women, I wish to give a clear message to these youths, although I wonder if they would leave their cell-phones even for a second to read the newspaper. It's not "cool" to approach a woman that way and when we say we are not interested, we really mean it unlike what movies have indoctrinated you (that being persistent will "melt" us). We will be impressed if you, being a real man, utilize your education, time and energy into doing something for the welfare of the country and its citizens. Do you really have time for this when the nation is gripped with the fear of being hit by a catastrophic earthquake? On a lighter note, please give some respite to that poor little device. It may break down owing to your abuse.

Monica Islam
Dhaka

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Monica Islam
Dhaka

To Mr. Hawking

There are still many things in this world which religion as well as firm belief (common sense) can explain well but science cannot. There is no doubt science has progressed a lot, but sometimes it misguides us by its absurd and illogical explanations. For example, the recent theory of Mr. Hawking, a great scientist.

The whole world has been surprised by his concept of giving no credit to God as the creator of the universe (published in The Daily Star on 3rd September). According to him and another physicist Leonard Mlodinow, this universe was created by itself spontaneously due to the inevitable (!) law of gravity without the hand of God unlike the concept of another eminent physicist Sir Isaac Newton who admitted the universe as the creation of God. However, I think one need not to be a scientist to prove the creation of universe by Allah. Is there anything which is created by itself automatically without the hand of the Creator? It's really impossible. Moreover, how is it possible to create such a huge universe including the world, the sun, the solar system etc. by only a great collision (which is the main theory of Big Bang)? It's really an attack on the believers of different religions, at least being a Muslim I don't and will not accept such absurd logic.

Therefore, I and all the followers of Islam surely have the faith that Allah is the Creator of the universe and there is no doubt about it. **Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque**
English department
International Islamic
University Ctg.

Traffic jam

This letter is prompted by the news in DS, 16 Sept where a parliamentary committee has "asked DCC, DMP, BRTA, RAJUK and others" to present their plan to curb traffic jams. I can only gape in amazement at the naivety of the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

For three years and in 77 letters, I have explicitly detailed how a privileged few have brought forth on this blighted city, their fleets of Gas Guzzling Monstrosities (GGMs) that have been allowed free access to park and ply (often empty) on the potholed, narrow and scarce roads, streets and lanes of Dhaka with impunity by these same organisations. Let us refresh ourselves by the measures they have taken in recent years with the expenditure of hundreds of

crores of public money and all in vain.

1. Made some roads one-way and banned rickshaws here.
2. Made some 'white elephant' freeways and banned rickshaws there.
3. Installed CCTV cameras at intersections to nab rickshaws hither.
4. Installed automatic traffic lights and banned rickshaws thither.
5. Divided Dhaka into zones with different holidays with no rickshaws.
6. Changed timings, so small children had to go to school in the dark but not on rickshaws mostly.
7. Changed business timings and banned rickshaws everywhere.
8. Painted fancy lanes on roads for all motorised vehicles but no rickshaws.
9. Now solar panels are required

for traffic lights that have still not made their way to Dholai Khal, but none for rickshaws.

Therefore, the mindset of the toadying traffic controllers is apparent. They will not rest until they achieve their ultimate goal of stuffing 200 kgs of cement into a 50 kg bag. (i.e. getting a million GGMs on the roads of Dhaka that have a capacity of just 200-250,000). I am mentally preparing myself for their "plan" which on the basis of the experience of the past week, will surely include the proposal to declare every working day as an "Eid Holiday" at the very top. Before that it should be jam, jelly and marmalade as usual from Sunday next!!
Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka



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