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## Traffic rules

A news report published in The Daily Star on September 22nd caught my attention. The caption read, "Ban likely on mobile talk while driving." The decision of the government to make buckling seatbelts while driving and wearing helmets when riding motorbikes mandatory is certainly commendable. In any law-abiding country this is the norm. But here in Bangladesh violation of law is the norm! In this country enforcement and implementation of law is missing. There are strict laws for polluters of environment, but we see that trees are being felled regularly; rivers, lakes and canals are being grabbed illegally; buildings are being built violating building codes. And in most cases, the organisations responsible to oversee these has also become partners in crime. So, it remains to be seen whether actually all the drivers in the country buckle their seatbelts and motorbike riders wear helmets from November 1st. It is very likely that many will not pay any heed to the new law because they know that in this country anything is manageable. They know that in this country law is not implemented strictly. The report further states that "anyone crossing

the road instead of using a nearby footbridge or underpass would be taken to police custody for at least 24 hours." This initiative is also commendable though somewhat unrealistic for the traffic police to achieve with their given manpower and efficiency. While in our country law is not enforced, at the same time the citizens are also at fault for having developed a habit of breaking the law. Some citizens would dump waste on the streets instead of dumping it in a dustbin. And most people do not use the footbridge. People who have given their plots to real estate developers do not really care that roads and other materials flood the streets of their neighbourhood causing sufferings to general people of there area and so on.

What is required is a change in the mindset of the people. They must develop a habit of abiding by the law. At the same time, the persons responsible for enforcing the law must also implement their directives through actions and not by mere words. Even the great philosopher Socrates did not agree to defy the laws of the state.

Wasif Wahed  
One-mail



A. MAHAJID/DRINKNEWS

## SEC's role

Capital market in our country is passing through a crucial time, because right now over 10 million people are directly or indirectly related to or dependent on it. It provides scopes for jobless people to do something.

The activities of the Securities and Exchange Commission are questionable. Because they are controlling the market for some people's benefits.

Recently, they gave some decisions about PE ratio, loan margin, net asset value without analysing the market. Moreover, they haven't taken any step to implement their decisions. Sometimes after a few days they change their decisions. In this situation, small investors lose their capitals and big investors make extra profit.

The Honourable Finance Minister should consider this on a priority basis.

Pulak  
Student of ICMB

## Health advisor's statement

The recent statement made by the health adviser raised many

questions and is totally unacceptable. His comment is opposed to the RTI and violation of the constitution. Article 19 of our constitution states that "the state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens". This clearly means that the state shall not be biased in case of creating opportunities.

Shamsul Alam Jhony  
One-mail

## River pollution

All of us know the condition of Buriganga very well. Buriganga was the only source of water for all the Dhaka city dwellers once, but now the river is dying. The untreated sewage and the harmful chemicals from the industries have further aggravated the deplorable condition of the river. Almost half of the aquatic lives are extinct now and the rest are on the verge of extinction, as the condition of the river is deteriorating day by day. The solution is to set up a sewage treatment plant and stop disposal of chemicals directly into the river. This will save the aquatic lives and also the environment. By treating sewage we can get fertiliser, which can be used in the

agricultural fields. Methane gas is another by-product of sewage treatment process and this can easily solve gas crisis in the city.

Necessary steps should be taken in this regard as early as possible, otherwise it will be too late.

Md Mahbubur Rahman  
Dhaka

## Anti-Bangladesh propaganda

Since last 2-3 months a new wave of anti-Bangladesh international propaganda is being waged by a certain quarter of a country. During 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, that country and its all-powerful army surrendered unconditionally to Bangladesh (and Indian joint command). It seems that the false propaganda has been inked with 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War Crimes trials now ongoing in Dhaka. On the other hand, I have not seen any counter response from Bangladesh side and it appears that the Bangladesh is sleeping with closed eyes.

M. Emad  
Oxford, UK

## Political dissent

The news may not be very significant for people at home, but definitely a cause for concern to the Bangladeshis living in the United States. This has demonstrated the unruly character of our politics having little tolerance to opposition. Right to political disagreement is well recognised in the States, but that should be peaceful without creating any chaos and confusion in the minds of other people moving around.

The EC and the political parties must agree to set up a disciplined code of conduct to participate in the political rally or demonstration. At the JFK the city police might be more vigilant to prevent unruly "hugging" by the Bangladeshi political activists.

Would it not be fair to propose that our politics and power be decentralized to second and third levels of local governance? Creation of a viable second level consistent to our division for economic political viability with law making power for local governance, maintenance of law and order and supporting legal system should be considered. If adopted, this will be the most basic step to minimize traffic jam in Dhaka city because most of the central government role except higher judiciary, foreign, finance, defence and other things relevant to central administration will be transferred in a phased manner together with capacity building of the local organs. The most complicated subject would be resource building and management of the financial portfolio of the local organs especially the second tier. Their survival would depend on the success of the finance portfolio at the centre and local level. This is a long-term subject with short, medium and long term plan to be implemented in 10-15 years.

A Bangladeshi  
California, USA

## Indo-Bangla joint venture

As reported in The Daily Star, dated 31.08.10, two national companies of Bangladesh and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for setting up two coal-fired power plants of 1320mw each in Chittagong and Khulna under joint venture. Under the MOU, a member board of directors will manage the joint venture with Bangladesh as its chairman and an NTPC representative as the managing director for the first eight years before switching over to three-year rotational system. The two countries will by rotation hold the post of chairman and managing director for a period of three years, said the MOU. Bangladesh and India will have an equal number of nominees—four each in the board. The power plants, to be set-up at a cost of Rs.13200 crore (2.78 billion US dollars) with 50:50 equity and 70:80 percent liquidity managed through debt financing, are likely to be operated by India. The NTPC will manage the plant while PDB or other government officials will participate in its operation. As per company rule, the shareholders according to the ratio of shares will manage the joint venture company and the directors representing each partner according to the

share shall constitute the board of directors. The company will follow the prevailing companies Act 1994 of Bangladesh and be registered with the Registrar of companies and firms, Bangladesh with its Memorandum of Association and Article of Association of the company elaborating the authority of the board of directors of the company and the character and jurisdiction of the activities of the company. Utmost care must be taken in making the Memorandum of Association and Article of Association of the company so that the interest of Bangladesh is safeguarded. As the share of partners is equal, it will not be possible to take decision where there is a difference of opinion creating stalemate in functioning of the company. As such it is suggested that as the power station being constructed in Bangladesh, BPDB should be given major share and it can be BPDB and NTPC share 60:40 for smooth functioning of the company. As Bangladeshis have been operating, maintaining and managing all the power plants in Bangladesh for many years, the matter of managing the plants by NTPC and likely to be operated by India should not be agreed upon. The joint venture company may also opt for O&M contract for certain period with LTSA (Long term service agreement) with renowned foreign company through international tender. The terms of financing, preparation of tender documents, tender evaluation methodology, and selection of consultants are of high importance to be looked into with utmost care by experts so that the interest of BPDB is safeguarded.

Md. Delwar  
Hossain  
Dhaka

## Climate change

Is "climate change" a rather belated recognition of what has been happening on earth since billions of years ago? This has been postulated by Nobel Prize (1998) winning Physicist Robert Laughlin. He states that over the vast span of geologic time, our planet Earth has adjusted itself, even after many glacial episodes, which tend to occur at fairly regular intervals, of every hundred thousand solar year of 365 days! This is a cycle of slow cooling followed by rapid (in geologic time scale) warming, like the gradual rise of temperature that we see today! However the human kingdom, including the animal race, was never a party to it. Our current efforts to reduce the use of geological fuel, and go for sustainable energy options in order to reduce our 'carbon footprint' and containing carbon dioxide gases being released to atmosphere will not affect it. Laughlin believes that all the carbon dioxide that we may produce, will dissolve in the ocean water and subsequently it will be deposited in rocks, forming carbonates. In the human time frame this may span an eternity, but in the geological scale of time it is equivalent to just a few seconds! Laughlin rather believes that the changes that we may cause to happen will be through the biological "extinction of animal species", which is irreversible,



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unlike 'climate change effects'. Many species of today which have lesser adaptability to nature's changing environment will gradually become extinct, like the dinosaurs. Meanwhile, new species, adaptable to thrive in the changing environment will continue to thrive!

To sum up, Laughlin believes that the effects of 'climate change',

and the 'carbon footprint', about which we are so worried today, is not a significant event considering the geological episodic cycle. The earth's temperature naturally will continue. However the evolution of life form will, continue over the span of time through natural adaptation.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

## Bank loan

Sitting away from home, we hear about many changes that are taking place in my native country. We also feel great hearing about expanding facilities for business openings and bank loan opportunities. Easy bank loans for business, house constructions, car loans, loans for buying household appliances and personal loans, which, only a few years back were unknown, are now at doorsteps of many. More than dozens of foreign and local public and private banks are functioning in Bangladesh. There is no such Ward in Dhaka where there are no bank branches. These banks offer easy credit facilities without collateral security. Some banks appointed special marketing officers to hunt the homes of the prospective customers, allure them with many unseen lucrative packages to extend loans. It is of course, encouraging news for expatriate Bangladeshis who want to return home and invest their savings in their home country. Whenever there is a gathering of Bangladeshis on special occasions, many enquire and want to know about the real investment situation, some even request the seniors to help collect such information. On request I contacted over phone a close friend, a businessman who gave me an account of his own experience of bank loan, interest and services. According to him, he took Take 10 lakh as personal loan from a bank two years back for 3 years' credit. The loan's interest rate was initially fixed @20.50 per cent. He paid instalments on regular basis without any single instalment missing. After two years of payment he decided to foreclose the account by paying up one

years balance principal at he go and get rid of his loan. He went to the bank to find out his outstanding amount to settle the account one year before of closing date. On check he found to his utter surprise that his outstanding loan is still more than half of what he took. While he insisted to give him detailed explanation, the bank officer disclosed the criterion they followed in the recovery process. What the bank did, it calculated the total interest to be payable in 3 years and adjusted the total in 2 years keeping the principal amount unpaid. Now, even if he forecloses the account he will have to pay the same amount which he could pay in next one year in equal instalments. He also found that in practical terms the interest rate charges came to more than 25-30% inclusive of services charges, closing charges. He surprisingly found that even a postage charge of a letter was debited from the customer's account. The bank interest in Bangladesh is highest in the world. In the USA car loan interest is only 0.95%, house loans and other loans is within 4%. In India no financial institution is allowed to charge more than 8% interest, in Pakistan the highest interest rate is 9%, whereas, Bangladesh banks charges 14 to 20% interest even on long-term industrial loans. The banks' interests double and

triple in five years. There is no such business in the world, which can make such profits, as do the banks in Bangladesh. Despite highest numbers of loan defaulters the banks in Bangladesh growing faster than any business house. There is no regulator to regulate the activities the banks there. In the above situation, if an expatriate invests his hard earned savings in Bangladesh in cooperation with a bank there, I am sure, in 4/5 years he will lose all his savings and return to US to join his odd job again. In these circumstances, should I advise my friends to go back and invest? Shafiqul Islam, NY

## Gift not needed!

Nowadays it has become a fashion that some people ask the guests not to bring any gift for the bride or groom in their wedding function. What they need is 'dua' or blessings. But the point is, dua or blessing is also a gift, and readers will agree that it is the greatest gift. Meanwhile, I think instead of spending so much money in entertaining the guests, families who are not willing to accept gifts should contribute their money to an orphanage or spend it in some philanthropic work.

Professor M Zahidul Haque  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University  
Dhaka



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## Let's plant trees

Trees are called the lungs of the planet, for good reason at that. They play a vital role in helping control air pollution by taking in carbon dioxide, storing the carbon and releasing oxygen during photosynthesis. In addition, the leaves remove from the atmosphere harmful substances such as nitrogen oxides, airborne ammonia, some sulphur dioxide and ozone. At the same time, they're cooling the air by releasing water vapour through their leaves in a process known as transpiration. Trees also serve as collection sites for dust and harmful manmade particulates so that they can be washed to the ground. And all too often, I think, we take the functionality of trees for granted. If we really care about our planet earth, we need to cut down less trees and plant more trees. We need to make others aware about the benefits of planting trees. A lot of trees in Sundarbans are being cut illegally. The government must do something to stop it.

Let's all make a difference and plant more trees!  
Nayla Mehjabeen Lamisa  
Dhaka

cannot accept any criticism levelled against them even on some valid grounds. Tax-free cars for MPs and tax-free remuneration allowances were known to all. The politicians who come to play in the field must be ready to be tarnished for their behaviour and actions. If they cannot accept that, they should not come to the field. Media has the right to elicit and publish information about the activities of the politicians.

Anonymous

The debate against the media by our lawmakers as a whole shows their intolerance.

In the absence of opposition it was one sided and we could not hear the other side of the story.

Dr. Islam

The independence of journalism was questioned. We, the common people are observing all the matters. The fault of newspapers is that they published the truth. We are with the media.

Obak Path

In our opinion media is reporting only a portion of the irregularities.

The media has got the right to analyse and question the behaviour of lawmakers.

Selim

I think the reality is quite opposite. We are grateful to the media. One has to behave to earn respect.

Elihan

The criticism against the media by the parliamentarians is astonishing. I read the Prothom Alo and find their reporting against the practices in parliament constructive, factual (as it appears even in pro-government media) and useful for the government.

Haq

People will reject any party trying to control the free press. Try to fix your issues, all MPs are not transparent. We expected something better from the Speaker.

Hasan

There should be a fixed limited time to discuss important things in parliament for people who voted MPs to serve them. Our journalists are working in a very harsh environment to keep the country on track. We need more press freedom.

Dr. Rahman

Looks like we are going towards a regime that does not like criticism or transparency. We highly appreciate the brave work of our journalists. Please continue the hard work. We are with you all the time.

Rahman



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

## Media bashed at Sangsad (September 22, 2010)

In India, Sonia Gandhi and Pranab Mukherjee made a strict point to their ministers and MPs to practise austerity. They all have to fly economy class. Also, the Congress does not criticize the media for reporting against it. It rather tackles media criticism through very good spokespersons.

Learn to be tolerant. Harsh, and even baseless, criticism is an integral right in a democracy.

UC  
Bangabandhu used to work with all eminent citizens and civil society. That's how he brought independence. Now that most of the party leaders don't

understand Bangabandhu's liberal and inclusive philosophy.

Azaan

We criticised because we lost trust in you and it is nothing new. The LGRD minister failed to empower the local elected bodies that are also directly elected through democratic process. But for the sake of mere selfishness in the name of party politics, MPs are more integrated in the handling of development funds, which we are not in very favour of.

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

It is unfortunate that the politicians