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## Traffic woes

Dhaka's traffic situation has taken nightmarish proportions. Dhaka's railway system is primarily designed to serve inter-city traffic. Why not use it by adding one or two extra lines to run fast track "intra-city" light metro rail, say every twenty minutes? This will be cheaper, faster, much greater in capacity, and much more environment friendly than any number of battered buses trying to do the same job. All we need is to create a few underpasses at the road intersections (or overhead railway bridges) to avoid rail-crossing jams.

If we look at Kolkata, San Francisco or similar major towns, they sought out the same solution. We just have to do it in our own cheaper "non-glamorous" way as surface rail.

If stuck in a traffic nightmare, the middle and lower income groups have no choice but to endure it. But the upper-middle and upper class would simply buy more private cars to overcome it, adding more to the woes. This group must be facilitated by having air-conditioned and efficient buses that would discourage them from using private cars every time therefore, 'Premium' and 'Nirapad' type buses that used to do a good job before, must be brought back. For the general mass, Dhaka's buses run on a system of "number of trips", which encourages speedy

reckless driving so that more trips can be made in a day. Based on traffic volume, say more during office hours and less during rest of the day, buses should be allowed fixed designated time windows to operate, so that twenty buses, for example, at one time won't clog up the street.

The left lane of every major artery must be clearly designated for buses, allowing absolutely no private cars or other slow moving vehicles in there, allowing buses to run in a continuous, unhindered stream, not having to fight their way through private cars. Similarly, buses should be kept off the middle or centre lanes of the road designated for private vehicles. Road and footpath encroachment must be dealt with an iron fist recovering every inch for transit. If Dhaka's main arteries are brought back to their maximum efficiency of operation by manning law enforcing agencies, and implementing these few strategies, it is my belief we would be able to achieve what the Dhaka Cantonment has achieved a long time ago an example we hardly pay any attention to and continuously refuse to learn from.

**Mujtaba Ahsan**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Architecture  
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WAHID AHMAN / DRINKERS

## Rules of the road

Recently the Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain announced that, fastening of seat belts, wearing helmets while riding a motorcycle, using the footbridge and underpass while crossing the road, would be made mandatory, and talking on the phone while driving would be banned. These new rules will take effect from November 1, 2010, and if these rules are not followed, drivers and commuters will be fined, and even jailed. Majority of the people don't follow these rules. If we change our bad habits, we can change the whole country.

I also urge the government to build safe roads, and the print and electronic media to make people aware of this issue.

**Ahnaaf Ahmad**  
The Aga Khan School  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Whither rule of law?

People are being killed in broad daylight, vehicles are being damaged, journalists are being beaten and their cameras taken away by the ruling party cadres, emboldened by the virtual immunity, while occasionally the natural phenomena like cyclones, tidal bores, floods are lashing the country, making life miserable for the vulnerable.

How long will we have to see blood, death, vandalism, lawlessness, corruption, poverty, and above all, the arrogant rule of the rich over the poor, instead of the Rule of Law?

**Tinku**  
Lalpur, Natore

## Quality education

There are too many holidays in the educational institutions in our country. We enjoy more holidays than the other SARC countries. In America, Muslim teachers are working even on the Eid days. In Bangladesh, a teacher's salary is very poor compared to a clerk's and even a day labourer's. The governments are indifferent to quality education. When we raise the issue of teachers' salary increase, the govt. rejects it showing fund crisis. We don't hear of any fund crisis while increasing the salary of the MPs and buying luxurious cars for them.

**M Sultana**  
Kazi Para  
Naogaon

## Bold step

It makes me laugh when I hear the government has taken a "BOLD STEP" to do something. The govt. had taken bold steps against the river encroachers. But till today they could not stop river encroachment.

In The Daily Star of October 3, 2010, a news report entitled, "Free footpath drive from November 1" drew my attention. Our Communications Minister said the govt. has taken a bold step to remove all makeshift shops from footpaths for proper utilisation of walkways in the city. The govt. should not spend money on removing the unauthorised buildings, makeshift shops, etc. It should only give orders and the responsible persons should do their duty accordingly. After the end of stipulated time, the govt. should take stern legal action.

**Nirmal Singha Chowdhury**  
One-mail

## New power bill

The Secretary General of BNP held a press conference on 6th October regarding the newly passed bill that allows awarding of power generation work without tender. He should have been more honest, people and ought to have

revealed why the enactment of the bill became an absolute necessity.

The BNP-Jamaat combine stayed in power for five years and 'presented' the country of 164 million with a mere 75-megawatt power generation plant. The contract was awarded to a company which did not have the experience of setting up plants in a tropical country! Moreover, BNP cancelled all the 'finalised' power plant contracts, and failed to negotiate, finalise and start working on 1500 megawatt power generation plants during their long five years in office. They, reportedly, could not decide on 'percentage of commission.' BNP-Jamaat misrule has left the country and the people abandoned on the streets.

We advise BNP policymakers not to oppose for the sake of opposing only by doing that. Attend the parliament, do not behave like school boys who fight over front seats, talk on behalf of the people who voted for you and sent you to the Parliament, criticise the present government as and when necessary.

Produce electricity and mitigate sufferings of the people. We hope to see more

## Anthrax and Qurbani

Anthrax is a lethal disease and it affects both humans and animals. Most of our village people are not aware of this disease. Shouldn't we take steps to save them? We know DPH is trying to contain this disease. But is it possible to make the whole

country aware of this disease? We humbly request the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to prevent spread of this disease before Eid-ul-Adha.

**Pohil Hawree**  
One-mail



NOOR ALAMI / DRINKERS

power generation plants in the offing shortly. Only then Bangladesh will achieve economic emancipation, and happiness will prevail.

**Dr. SN Mamoon**  
One-mail

## World Teachers' Day

5th October 2010 was celebrated as World Teacher's Day around the world. Bangladesh also observed the day with the theme, 'Recovery begins with teachers'. Teachers' associations have undertaken a variety of programmes to commemorate the day along with the rest of the world.

It is often said that teachers are the builders of a nation. But they seem to be less respected with the passage of time. However, no true development is ever possible without enabling them practise the best policies in order to build the nation.

We, therefore, want to acknowledge the contributions of all the teachers of the planet in helping people grow.

**Shohag Mostafij**  
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## Gas reserves

One of the major indicators of development or industrialisation of a nation is the level of its per capita commercial energy use. The three most important commercial sources of energy today are natural gas, oil and coal. Natural gas is Bangladesh's only significant source of commercial energy, with 2002 production of 384.9 billion cubic feet (bcf). Production of natural gas in Bangladesh began in 1960 from the Chhatak field. There is much uncertainty and debate about the level of natural gas reserves in Bangladesh. Estimates from Petrobangla put the net proven reserves at 15.3 tcf as of mid-2004. The US Geological Survey has estimated that Bangladesh contains an additional 32.1 tcf in additional "undiscovered" reserves.

**Mohammad Mamun-ur-Rashid**  
Student, Department of Petroleum and Georesources Engg.  
SUST, Sylhet

## Azam Khan - in memoriam

Megasthenes memories of Azam Khan, published in your October 7th issue, was a moving account of a rare and noble person who was in Dhaka in the troubled 1960s. If there were another five persons like him in those days, the history of this part of the world could have been less violent and painful. Even the creation of Bangladesh would have been a peaceful political process, without the widespread killings and destruction, let loose by Tikka Khan (the antithesis of Azam Khan)!

He was an upright gentleman, simple and humble, and above all, a man of principle and character. Going through the article gave me an insight to a great human being, who has passed away, "un-wept, un-honoured and un-sung" by the people, who were always close to his heart, despite all the hate, cruelty and killings by the same Pakistan army, to which, unlike his colleagues, he also belonged, with simplicity, principles, dignity and honour!

## Positive attitude towards doctors



PHOTO: STAR

Sending a meritorious student to the medical profession is a huge investment for a nation like Bangladesh with its limited resources. It would be worthy and some consolation for us if doctors are provided with proper environment to thrive and serve the nation in a positive way.

After completion of MBBS at the age of 25+ years, doctors enter a chaotic and tumultuous situation, which is very difficult to cope with. There are not enough government jobs. For 200-300 posts, thousands of candidates compete through a complex exam system, which is neither helpful for the profession, nor is it suitable for that

valuable but tenuous period of their career. In the meantime some start non-pay honorary training, some start jobs in private clinics, some study for FCPS part-I entrance exam for PG. Don't get obsessed with the saying, "Doctors are made by spending money from public fund, but they are not serving the nation!" rather say, "As a nation we can't afford and wouldn't let the dogmatic system waste our valuable resources".

Medical education the world over starts with 5-8 years of basic graduation degree, but we have adopted a 5-years policy. The next step is basic post graduation, which takes 2-4 years,

and finally sub-specialisation needs another 3-5 years. On top of it, you need to keep up with updates by reviewing recent advances regularly. This is the British system which we are replicating. Although sub-specialisation is not needed for all, but at least basic post graduation is mandatory for standard health service delivery. Moreover, the irrelevant BCS exams take another 2-3 years.

The question is-- can the nation / the doctors afford so many years for studying only? Then when will they start giving their output?

**Dr. Ahammadul Kabir**  
Monipuripara  
Farmgate, Dhaka

## Strike of CNG owners

The owners' association of the CNG supply stations recently threatened the government with an indefinite strike from November 2010, if their demands were not met before the stated time. Presently we are not getting gas regularly in our area, and if we get it for sometime, its pressure is very low. The electricity supply is also inadequate and the water supply is erratic mostly because of irregular supply of electricity as electricity is also generated from gas. With this

backdrop, the shutting of the CNG stations for 6 hours daily is quite logical and proven to be realistic.

For the benefit of a few rich people, the poor and general mass cannot be held hostage in their hands. We would, humbly, request the government not to bow to the demands of a section of people, ignoring the sufferings of the general mass.

**Nabila Raisa**  
Muhammadpur  
Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

## Babri Mosque

The verdict of the Allahabad High Court has proved the old adage, "If you try to please everyone, you end up pleasing no one". The outcome is simply a short-term compromise that will entrench the dispute into further bad blood costing more innocent lives in future. The facts as opposed to fiction, myths, legends, superstitions and taboos are undisputable:

1. The Babri Masjid was built about 400 years ago. There is no evidence that there was a Ramjanmabhumi temple there at the time.

2. Since then dozens of sites have been claimed as the birthplace of Lord Ram, including seven different sites in Ayodhya itself. There is even a Ramjanmabhumi at Ayyuthia in Thailand and one in Bali, Indonesia, which also claims to be Ravan's homeland in addition to Sri Lanka.

3. Immediately after the British left, a deity was surreptitiously installed inside the Babri Mosque in 1949. Result - it has been locked-up and closed for Muslim prayers since. Cases were filed that still await decisions.

4. In the aftermath of L K Advani's Yatra in the late 1980's, pressure to 'capture' the mosque gained momentum culminating in its destruction in 1992 by Hindu zealots, while the Central and State Governments twiddled their thumbs. The inevitable probes and criminal cases filed against VPPs (Very Prominent Persons) still remain in the cold storage. Two thirds has now been allotted to the majority community and one-third to the minority. All eyes are now turned on the Supreme Court.

The vital question is: is free, secular India still following the old advice of the British in respect of the minority communities?

**Sikander Ahmed**  
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

## Low wages

In all the discussions on poverty, there seems to be an 'elephant in the room' i.e. something obvious that everyone ignores: namely, the low wages that so many employers pay.

Of course, this is not unique to this dear country but the extent to which it happens here is surely becoming more and more dangerous. Employers, landlords - and, indeed, anyone with anything to sell - feel under pressure to charge the maximum they can get, while at the same time those offering employment feel under pressure to pay the minimum wage. Many of the poor are those who are caught in this trap - and find that everyone's back is turned to them - with a shrug of the shoulders indicating that it is inevitable and that no one intends to do anything about it.

Not paying someone a living wage forces him or her into behaviour that is destructive of his or her well-being and makes them a liability and not an asset to their nation. All of us who employ people should feel

not merely the pressure of financial self-interest but the moral pressure to deal decently with people, rather than drift along with the tide of current practice. I am glad that the concept of a minimum wage is a gleam in the eye of government. But can they change people's mindset so that they get the point and DO IT? That will be another matter.

There also seems to be an assumption by some employers that a low wage guarantees their employees' dependency on them and therefore their good behaviour. Surely, if your employees are desperate for the jobs you provide and the little money they raise, they will be so anxious to keep your goodwill that their behaviour will be respectful. Thus low wages can become a way of keeping employees under control, keeping them 'tame', keeping them dependable.

The concept of 'investment' should not be limited to financial matters. The biggest investment one makes is in good relationships and the relationship between employer and employee, based on mutual

respect and a mutual agreement of the duties on both sides, has to be sorted out so that both behave responsibly.

I thought I paid my driver a decent wage until he told me recently that the one small room he rents in Tongi for himself, his wife and child (and he sleeps on the floor) costs him 3000 taka a month. I must raise his salary! (What about a Fair Rent Tribunal at the same time as a minimum wage?)

**Angela Robinson**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Mental health

I am so frustrated with the present healthcare system in Bangladesh, as I have learned from a news of DS on October 12 that in our country there are 1.4 crore mentally ill people who never get any proper treatment. WHO's study shows that 16 percent people in the world, aged between 18 and 26, are mentally ill.

The government should provide them better treatment.

**Mahmud Ali Kabir**  
Ex-journalist  
Gopalganj