

Reaching govt's service to the poor

The government has selected Jessore as the first digital district as part of the first step towards making all districts digital under Access to Information Programme. Good governance and its associated services simply do not reach many people, and where they do, the services offered are so corrupted, inefficient and disorganised that they fail to make any positive impact. There exists a vicious loop: the impact of poor governance is felt disproportionately by those who are poor, unorganised and do not have the means to access services from alternative channels, such as the private sector and the middle-men. In turn, this further diminishes the opportunities available to them to break the cycle of poverty, exploitation and marginalisation. Governance services such as maintaining the rule of law, primary education, primary health care, preserving equality and human rights, targeted government programmes and subsidies, can enhance welfare of people in any country. Yet large sections of people, especially in developing countries, remain poor, exploited and marginalised, and are not able to improve their lives as they are deprived of even the most fundamental benefits of good governance.

Above all, we need a reaffirmation of political commitment at the highest levels to reduce the dangers that arise both from existing nuclear weapons and from further proliferation. Business, labour and civil society organisations have skills and resources that are vital in helping to build a more robust global community. If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions for development.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada



Congrats! You win a Nobel!

Normally, the secretary of the Nobel Prize Committee dials the one who wins the prestigious Nobel Prize. It is amusing to know from a recent Arab News report entitled "Call of a lifetime: 'Congrats! You win a Nobel!'" that sometimes the recipient thinks that someone is cracking a joke with him!

Well, imagine if due to some technical faults the call goes to a wrong number, to a Bangladeshi newspapermen or just a common citizen like me, what would be their immediate reaction on receiving the call from the Nobel Prize Committee?

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

Blaming the drivers only!

Most of the time when road accidents take place, we only blame the drivers. It is not right to blame them alone. The BRTA authorities and the commuters are also responsible for this. Thousands of drivers, who hardly have any knowledge about driving and traffic rules, get licenses by bribing the officials of BRTA. And it has become a common practice that the commuters shout at the drivers to overtake other vehicles. It is our responsibility to curb road accidents.

Md. Ahsanul Kabir Palash
Department of Marketing
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Road crashes on the rise



In recent times, the number of road crashes in our country has increased alarmingly. Every day the electronic and print media are covering horrifying news of tragic road mishaps occurring on different roads and highways across the country, resulting in the loss of many invaluable lives and causing disability to a large number of people. The tragic accident at Mirsarai, Chittagong and the road crash in Manikganj in August this year that claimed the invaluable lives of Tareque Masud and Mishuk Munier, are but a few examples of the innumerable road accidents taking place every now and then.

There are many causes of frequent road crashes.. But the post-accident analysis reveals that most of the mishaps occur due to the reckless driving as well as the negligence of the drivers, many of whom are

uneducated and incompetent and have managed to procure the driving licenses without undergoing proper training through bribing the corrupt officials. Apart from this, some of the drivers are drug-addicts and sometimes they are found to be drunk during the trips. Moreover, the drivers of different vehicles are often seen talking on cell phones which lead to the inevitable consequences.

We want no more loss of lives on roads and highways. So, we urge the government to undertake appropriate and adequate measures in order to curb the menace of increasing road accidents and ensure safe roads for all of us.

M Anwaruzzaman
Shaheed Shamsul Haque Road
Jhawtala, Comilla

This is barbaric!

I am very shocked to know that Saudi Arabia beheaded eight Bangladeshi workers in public for murdering an Egyptian security guard in Riyadh in 2007 despite Bangladesh's repeated pleas for clemency.

So far we know, Bangladesh's foreign and expatriates' welfare ministries had repeatedly appealed to the Saudi authorities for clemency. We have learnt that even President Zillur Rahman solicited pardon for the convicted from the Saudi kiing.

But I have doubts whether the government and the embassy has put in enough efforts to protect those ill-fated Bangladeshis. Beheading in public is inhuman, barbaric and a crime against humanity. This is truly a violation of human rights and contrary to civilised norms.

I am traumatised to know that the families of the executed will not get a chance to see their loved ones' faces for the last time, as the Saudi authorities will not return the dead bodies to their families.

I condemn this heinous act and request our government to pressurize the Saudi authorities to hand over the dead bodies to Bangladesh government without any delay.

Md. Ashrafuzzaman
Zaman Kuthir
Shaikhpara, Chuadanga

Metro and air force

I am writing this letter in response to Syed Badrul Ahsan's article titled "Metro rail and the public interest." I am hoping that it will reach the editor and the writer. Though Mr. Badrul Ahsan wrote a big article on the issue, it looked as if he is not actually aware of what the air force's opinion is on this issue.

The writer time and again mentioned the "security" concerns of air force and army (I don't know from where he got the idea of the involvement of the army in it!) about this metro rail project.

Actually, it is not. It was always about the flight operational worthiness of an operational airport, not about the security of the said forces. If it was not important, then why was the air force asked?

The government could just have gone for the project through without asking it. Or did we just want to take its opinion in cognisance only if it was a 'yes, no objection' to the project! The writer must have known that Tejgaon Airport is not an air force facility, it's a civil aviation property and the air force uses a part of it only.

The writer seemed very frantic about the air force's stand, rather than caring about the JS complex. It is not expected from a learned brain to address a late president as a "slain general". To everyone's knowledge, he was a president, not a general, when he died.

However, I think the prime minister has made the right move to take the objections on the operability of Tejgaon Airport into cognisance.

Rayyan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Immoral business

Recently, the personnel of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) nabbed the culprits who were involved in medical question papers leakage. It has been reported in the newspapers that a good number of people from different professional backgrounds are involved in this immoral business. The arrestees include university teachers, doctors, bankers and students.

This sort of news is not uncommon in Bangladesh. Corruption has gripped almost every sector of our country. The fact that some of these people hold high positions has revealed a decaying side of our society.

We don't have a magic wand to suddenly eradicate all ills and corruption from the society. When the standard of justice vary with the chage of power and money, it provokes others to commit more crimes. We have to establish the rule of law in our society. Inclusion of moral studies in the school textbooks is also necessary.

Last but not the least, we have to raise social awareness against corruption and uphold our moral values against all the evil acts going on in the society.

Md. Hafizur Rahman
Mirpur, Dhaka

The Populist movement

The Populist movement started at the end of the first Gilded Age in the 1890s. The movement developed from farmers' alliances, formed in the 1880s, in reaction to falling crop prices and poor credit facilities. The leaders formed the People's Party (1892), also known as the Populist Party, which advocated a variety of measures to help farmers. Mass protests were staged by the unemployed workers, especially in the 1930s during the Great Depression. It took roughly four years to organise this. The first uprising started around 1933, and continued in 1934, '35, and '36.

The marches of unemployed people went into the street, in some cases actually occupied the factories, as we saw later with the Flint sit-down strike. So, there was massive unrest and disruption across the country, from both farmers and unemployed people. And what's interesting is, it was farmers who were in debt both in the 1890s and the 1930s. Today it is the students who are in debt, to a great extent, to large banks.

That energy was channeled into what we now know as the New Deal. Since the '30s, and especially starting in the '50s, '60s and '70s, the right actually claimed the label and mantra of populism, and they have successfully changed

the entire discourse and politics of this country under populist rhetoric. New research shows that household income has declined more in the two years after the recession officially ended than it did during the recession itself. Money needs to flow from the top down, not from the bottom up.

Ted Rudow III, MA
Encina Ave
Palo Alto, CA

DV lottery

The Bangladeshi nationals will not be able to apply for America's Diversity Visa (DV) lottery programme for the year 2013, according to an announcement made by Washington. The news shocked all the Bangladeshis who were eagerly waiting to apply for the DV lottery. Bangladeshis used to be at the top in winning the lottery throughout Asia. Why did the US government take this sudden decision? Our government should find out the probable reasons behind this.

Md. Arshad Ali
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Commentary War Crimes Trial

Khaleda's remark unfortunate (*October 13, 2011*)

A wonderful piece of commentary.
Brig Manzoor

This just shows the approach of BNP towards war crimes. To them it is not a big issue, as their prime supporter, Jamaat, is involved in war crimes.

Talat Islam

The huge crime against humanity during the Liberation War was conducted by the Pakistani army with the help of their local collaborators. But the crime committed by the Rakkh Bahini was sanctioned by our own government.

Anonymous

I think the remark of the Opposition leader is fair. The crimes that the Rakkh Bahini committed were not less atrocious than the war crimes.



Why give people false hope?

The economists predicted and suggested how to prevent the downward journey of the county's economy! It seems like it is becoming a national pastime: people coming on talk shows talking about how to improve the country's lot; people sitting at round-tables and talking about how to improve our economy. Of course, none of this will ever be implemented. I am just wondering if the people involved know this. And I couldn't believe that it would become the headline.

We all know that these are just empty suggestions. So why take up a huge space when there are more important things to publish? I would like to ask the newspaper authorities to stop publishing any news that gives hope, because frankly, there is no hope for this country. Why give people false hope?

Asifur Rahman Khan
Circuit House Road
Ramna, Dhaka

as emotion prevails over rationality, we as a nation have a little hope to succeed.

Jumana Sarwar

One has to reluctantly agree with the article's argument. Yet it has to be stressed that the victims of the Rakkh Bahini's savage and indiscriminate killings included ex-freedom fighters. The moment is here when the Awami League must also be made to confront its own killing fields.

Raihan Sharif

People of this country are now more concerned about price hike, the worsening situation of law and order, amendment of the constitution, electricity crisis, condition of roads and highways and so on. Please raise your voice against the misdeeds and massive corruption of the government.

Nasir Tarafder

I would request The Daily Star to come up with follow up analysis with political ramification of Khaleda's remark about the trail of war criminals. The AL must clean their own house and prepare a very well-designed and coordinated campaign and sharply highlight the issue of war criminals and the role of the BNP against the trail.