

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 150 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Preparing for disasters



PHOTO: STAR

Natural and anthropogenic disasters (e.g. earthquake, cyclone, fire, etc.) can occur any time and cause a national crisis in Bangladesh. A densely populated country as we are, such disasters may be catastrophic unless we are prepared. When we will have better preparations and trained citizens in place, we will be better off to deal with such situations and save millions of lives. Countrywide mass safety training and drills will help people to be well-prepared during any disaster. I request the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management to take the initiative of safety training country-wide. The training can be held once a year. During the training, people will stop working for an hour to participate in the training and evacuate workplaces, homes, hospitals, educational institutions and public places and gather at a pre-arranged safe place, conduct a head count and record the evacuation time. People will resume their works after the training.

The ministry can involve security forces including Bangladesh Police, Rapid Action Battalion, defense forces and other private security forces to coordinate the training. Such trainings will be useful to make people aware about emergency situations and reduce the disaster management costs significantly.

Md. Habibur Rahman
East Bashaboo
Dhaka

Ordeal of a Biman flight

On December 16, 2011, I was waiting to board Biman to fly from Dhaka to Chittagong. Flight BG 611 was to leave for Chittagong at 10:30 am. The ground staff got us on the bus at 10:25 am and then at 10:29 the Assistant Manager came and informed us that the air space had been closed for the Victory Day Air Show and the high officials' security. We accepted the fate of being stuck and were told that the flight would take off at 12:30 pm.

At around 1:15 pm there was still no announcement. We all went to the Manager's office. We were then told that our flight was cancelled, and now we were flying to Chittagong on the Hong Kong flight and there would be delay as the Kolkata passengers were not here yet. We asked where had the Kolkata passengers come from. They informed us that the transit passengers were to go to Hong Kong on Biman via Dhaka and they rerouted the flight via Chittagong for us. After a lot of arguments and confusion, we boarded the flight and the Hong Kong-bound passengers boarded the plane too.

When the Kolkata transit passengers boarded, it was already 2:40 pm! They then announced a delay of 30 more minutes for Kolkata passengers' luggage to be loaded. This was the flight that was to land in Chittagong from Muscat at 8 am. They rerouted it to Dhaka due to fog and since then all these passengers had been waiting for the flight without any food!

We finally took off at 3:17 pm.

The passengers of this flight ranged from social elites to the uneducated labourers who send remittance and keep our economy going. I wish our leaders would hear the cry of millions who they have taken for granted.

Saif Kamal
Chittagong

Hartal should be banned

Renowned teacher and columnist Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University has pointed out the ineffectiveness and immoral idea of hartal to achieve any goal or political advantage in his write-up in a national daily. He said that hartal cannot be a tool of any protest and none could achieve anything by calling hartal during the last two decades. So, our political parties should decide not to call any hartal in the future. He also proposed some alternative ways to get public support and political benefit rather than calling hartal. So we think hartal should be banned.

Mizanur Rahman
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

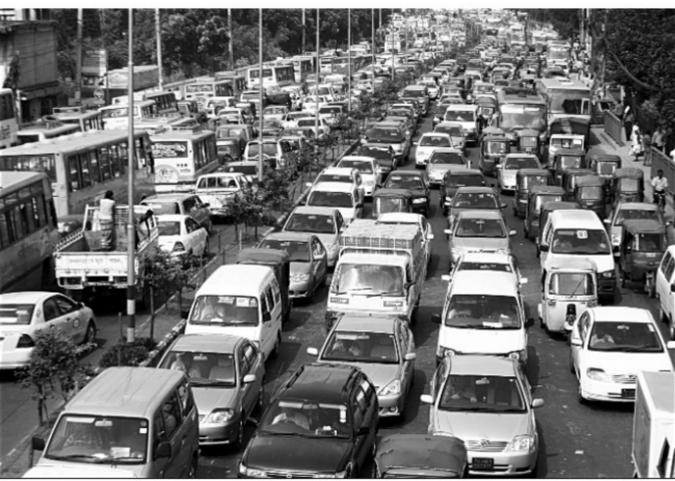
Unfair advantage

The Gas Guzzling private cars are enjoying many unfair advantages due to the incompetence of the authorities concerned. Those include:

1. The Gas Guzzling Cars (GGCs) occupy about 70% of road space but carry 2-3% passengers.
2. At least 50% GGCs seen on roads are empty (driver only) or half-empty (driver+1).
3. Many do not bother about registration or fitness.
4. How many GGCs are purchased with 'white' money is anybody's guess.
5. The worst jams are seen on GGC-clogged rickshaw-free VIP roads.
6. GGCs enjoy the freedom of parking on public roads and footpaths with impunity.
7. What effect has the small increase in Octane prices had on traffic jams?
8. Why do traffic police regularly salute some fancy GGCs and not others?

Since the difference in petrol prices between India and Bangladesh are over 60%, why not raise Octane prices to Tk. 200 + per litre for private cars to reduce traffic jams and oil deficits incurred by companies? Believe me, most GGC owners will not be bothered at all!

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka



PALASH KHAN / DREKNEWS

Thanks to the Harvard University

On Monday December 12, 2011 bdnews24.com published a news that Indian ex-minister and BJP President Professor Subramanian Swamy was expelled from Harvard University for his controversial article titled "How to wipe out Islamic terror."

The article was published on 16th July 2011 in the Daily News and Analysis(DNA) newspaper wherein he proposed to occupy Bangladesh territory. Some 450 students of the university objected to his views and submitted memorandum to the president of the university. An organisation named "Civil Liberties Group Foundation for Individual Rights in Education" called for an enquiry into the role of Mr. Subramanian, who used to take class on Quantitative Methods in Economics & Business and Economic Development of India. The news in the bdnews24.com did not mention any action or reaction from our government in this respect.

However, I on behalf of my country thank the Harvard University authorities for the step taken.

Md. Habib Mansur
Bangladesh

An inhuman act

I wonder how people can act so brutally. How was it possible to chop off one's hand just because she wanted to study? Is this what we learn from our parents or from our schools? Such barbaric incidents are taking place regularly in our country. But why is it so? Is there no solution to this problem? Where have our ethics gone? I urge the government to strengthen and implement the law and give severe punishment to the perpetrators of such barbarous crimes.

Safran Fazle Rahman
A-level student
Uttara, Dhaka

Tribute to Kabir Chowdhury

I am deeply shocked that our National Professor Kabir Chowdhury breathed his last on December 13. He was a true patriot and a man of strong principles. His contributions to our education and literature were unparalleled. I pay my tribute to Professor Kabir Chowdhury.

Victim of bullying



PHOTO: AFP

The action of the husband chopping off his wife's hand because she refused to stop studying is, indeed, shocking. However, it is the natural consequence of the way some parents bring up children. When wrong behaviour is not corrected but indulged, then their very sense of identity comes to depend on others submitting to their will.

When anyone prevents them from doing what they want to do or even questions it, they cannot bear it. Thus whoever stands in their way becomes, automatically, a 'Bad Person' whom they think are justified to be punished. Naturally, they never apologise as they cannot see what wrong they have committed.

I have recently heard of a senior official, when discussing nursing education, say that 'we could never have nurses who were well-trained, because then they would not comply with whatever the doctors might want them to do.' This is exactly the same mindset! Why is it unthinkable that people can work with someone who is capable of disagreeing on professional grounds? The truth is that mature people do not mind positive criticism as that leads to better practice!

Badly brought-up children, who think they can do no wrong and must always get their own way, are condemned to perpetual childishness which, in an adult, can lead to vicious as well as stupid behaviour. But, as always, underneath the badness is the sadness. They are truly pitiable.

Angela Robinson, Gulshan, Dhaka

Cell phone in service of agriculture

The other day I was going through a recent issue of USAID's weekly FRONTLINES wherein the USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah narrated how cell phones contributed to the agricultural development in northern India and Africa. According to him, "The wide reach of cell phones has given us one of the most powerful development platforms ever. In northern India, farmers can now get real time information on market prices and advice on agriculture-related issues. In Haiti, entrepreneurs can access safe and reliable mobile banking services. With cell phone technology becoming cheaper, we also saw improved governance, private-sector reforms, and economic growth in Africa."

Undoubtedly, cell phone has brought about a revolution in the field of dissemination of useful information among the common people. I think Bangladesh is also not lagging behind. Cell phones are now widely used by Bangladeshi farmers for collection and exchange of various agricultural information including prices of agricultural commodities.

Meanwhile, in the context of Bangladesh, credibility of agricultural information has to be ensured. At the same time, a sound transportation system is needed for smooth movement of agricultural commodities. For instance, due to traffic jam several trucks laden with vegetables can not reach the capital in time resulting in financial loss to the sellers as well as the buyers. A sharp fall in the supply of vegetables and other agricultural prod-



PHOTO: AFP

ucts in relation to demand causes high price hike. We need to set up an effective agricultural marketing network in the country.

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

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Concern takes over surprise".

Turja, Canada

Is this violence - destroying others' property, loss of lives, disrupting public life, etc. - a legitimate way of expressing anyone's political view?

A Choudhury

Finally, Khaleda Zia decided to create mayhem to stop the trial of war criminals by resorting to violence.

Manzoor Ashraf

Peaceful protests should be allowed to take place no matter who is in power, but there would be no need for these protests, if the elected leaders could express their views in JS which is not happening right now.

Jumana Sarwar

Isn't it surprising that most BNP leaders including the rank and file are not informed about the plan, but the DS has all the information?

Nasirullah Mridha, USA

The government failed to protect the public from lawlessness and BNP has lost the support of mass people who witnessed the mayhem.

Md Musa

Now the die-hard BNP supporters should realise what type of a leader Tarique Zia will be if he comes back and, God forbid, becomes the prime minister of the country. There are a lot of good and rational leaders in BNP, but an alliance of Tarique with Jamaat and Shibir? It will be an inevitable catastrophe which will eventually lead Bangladesh to become another Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Shameem

Both AL and BNP are corrupt; we need to change our political system.

Md. Mansur Rahman

We the general people are not that much stupid to believe the blame games of the political parties. We know that we have some incapable political leadership that is busy fulfilling self-interest at the cost of the nation. We look forward to a Bangladesh which is free from these people.

Md. Ismile

This blunder on Sunday will cost the BNP and its ally dearly. It has lost vital grounds and upset its supporters. The achievements of the road marches and successful rallies have now come down to zero.

Anonymous

Torture on 122 arrested people must be answered. They all are our people. Don't be rude to them only for political gain.

A reader

People should reject both AL and BNP in the next general elections. We gave them enough chance and time to prove themselves. They have proved themselves incompetent. They can not save people's lives, rather they make them suffer. They both resort to violence to win in the political race which results in the loss of lives in the end.

We need new political parties and new leadership who will practice democracy in the country and lead Bangladesh to be a prosperous nation in the world. It is the people who have the power in a democracy. So if people really want a change, they can make it happen. The people of Bangladesh proved it in the past.

Sujon

Is there any possibility that the AL was involved in this?

Anonymous

The decision to create anarchy was suicidal for