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Traffic roundabouts

In Bangladesh, roundabouts are the accepted norm for traffic management and control across four-way road crossings. However, I came across different ideas, when I went through a professional traffic related journal in USA, a few years back! Their view was that a traffic roundabout was suitable for intermittent and low density traffic. Also the view around and across the traffic circle had to be totally clear for any vehicle driver approaching it from any direction and the traffic lights faultless! Needless to say, it was taken for granted that all the vehicle drivers were disciplined, trained, licensed and fully aware of traffic rules! The visibility circle all round the roundabout was considered critical and traffic stoppage line at any road leading to the roundabout had to be minimum twenty five yards from the nearest circumference of the roundabout.

Traffic lights had to be located at fairly high level, hung preferably along the centre line of the roundabout. Also in urban areas types of traffic had segregated lanes; with designated lanes for heavy and light vehicles; and totally and physically separate road lanes for goods vehicles and trailers. Furthermore, on spot penalties are given for any traffic violation; and as the traffic policemen are officially entitled to a certain percentage of the fines realised; traffic control is therefore



PHOTO: STAR

very strict, and no violation is tolerated!

No such thing, unfortunately, exists in Dhaka, or anywhere else in Bangladesh; though Dhaka has more traffic than many state capitals in USA.

About driver and driving discipline, the least said the better. Lane distribution for different types of traffic is non-existent! Visibility across cross roads and over the roundabout is curtailed, more often than not by commemorative pillars or statues or trees!

It all adds up to one word "MESS"! In that respect, we are fortunate, that despite all the "Hotch Potch" around road crossings, serious accidents are thankfully few and far between!

Engr. S. A. Mansoor, Dhaka

Tribute to Dr. Sirajur Rahman Khan

I am the proud son of a humble geologist. That geologist has written his name in the history of Bangladesh forever for his work on the maritime boundary conflict with Myanmar. Of course, there were a number of lawyers and ministers who fought for our rights, but the irrefutable data was provided by my father, Dr. Sirajur Rahman Khan, who worked and crafted the data that made our dispute simply indisputable. Although none of the newspapers carried all the names of the people who worked on this, I just want to thank everyone involved in this project, a first of its kind in the world. The significance of our victory may be lost for most, but I am proud of his achievement, because it has made our country stronger. An intellectual victory!

Asifur Rahman Khan
Circuit House Road, Ramna, Dhaka

Israeli designs against Iran

It is just a matter of time Israel starts attacking Iran. At least that's what the indications show. Recently, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said he told Chinese leaders that Iran poses the gravest danger to world peace and stability. Israel is afraid to see Iran with nuclear weapons. Lieberman said that Israel hopes negotiations and sanctions can resolve concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions. He blatantly said that Iran is the biggest threat not only to Israel, but to the entire world, including all of the Middle East. We really do not know how, all of a sudden, Iran became a threat to the world peace. It is Israel who is making all sorts of troubles with its neighbouring countries. Whatever it is, we think Israel is hell-bent on striking Iran any day soon.

Harmful side of HEVs

Every technology has its positive as well as negative impact on the users and the environment. Same is the case with Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs). HEVs are fuel efficient and apparently environment friendly. HEVs cover twice as many kilometers per gallon as conventional fuel vehicles. They produce less gas emissions than conventional cars.

Even so, HEVs have created a new threat to environment, for instance, plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) need charging of their batteries. So it requires a second fuel source. The power plants that supply the electrical grids for charging batteries are run by fossil-fuel. That again poses a threat to the environment.

Moreover, the batteries used in HEVs, such as, lead-acid, nickel-hydrate batteries contain toxic elements like lead, nickel which are very harmful to human health and environment.

It may be mentioned here that some battery-operated light vehicles (popularly called Tomtom) have been introduced in our country and in some areas the number of these vehicles has increased significantly. There is no charging point for these electric vehicles. Often they use electricity from unauthorised connections to charge batteries. The used batteries of these vehicles should be returned to the authorised shops for recycling. In advanced countries, electric car manufacturers offer incentives to the vehicle owners for returning their used batteries for recycling. This will help protect the environment from being polluted by the used electric car batteries.

In my opinion, the Bangladesh government may formulate necessary policy and law for safe disposal of lead, nickel, cadmium batteries used in various electrical and electronic gadgets. Some recycling plants for these used batteries may be set up under the government initiative.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Dean, Faculty of Agriculture
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Getting MRP in USA

We, the Bangladeshis in USA, are happy to know that Bangladesh embassy/consulate generals have started accepting applications for Machine Readable Passport (MRP), but I am very upset reading the procedures of how one can obtain the new passport. I believe most Bangladeshis in USA will agree with me on this issue. It is stated in the regulations that to obtain MRP one has to apply in person to embassy/consulate generals and also collect the MRP in person after 15 or 30 days. Therefore, one has to visit the embassy/consulate generals twice. Anyone living in USA knows how many embassy/consulate generals we have (1 embassy + 2 consulate generals). Now think of the hassle one has to take.

Thousands of Bangladeshis live in various states of USA. There are one embassy and two consulate generals in Washington DC, New York, and Los Angeles. People living in other cities have to take at least two days off from work to submit the application and another two days for collecting the passport. Besides this, one has to make necessary arrangements for travelling.

So for a family of 4, how much one has to spend just for passports? To me it's a joke. Bangladeshi working people who travel to their homeland usually use the 3 weeks' vacation time in a year. Now one needs to spend almost one week and a good amount of money (for a family of four, US \$1500-\$2000 in addition to passport fee) just to obtain the MRP.

We, the Bangladeshis living in USA, will appreciate if our government takes necessary steps to ease the process of obtaining the MRP. It is worth mentioning here that subcontractors can be used in other states for collecting biometric information.

Shumon Alam
Texas, USA

Introduce gas meters



PHOTO: STAR

This is in reference to the letter of R.D Qureshi from Dhaka titled 'Price of gas and its wastage' published in The Daily Star on March 14, 2012. He rightly pointed out that increasing gas price will not stop the wastage. He mentioned that the Adviser to the Prime Minister, Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said that domestic users waste gas as they get it cheap, so the price is going up to stop the wastage, and for a double burner cooker, one will have to pay Tk 1000, in place of Tk 450 per month.

We are exasperated by this sort of declaration which has no logic in it. R.D. Qureshi said that people will get frustrated over this unwise and unsympathetic move of the government and may give up keeping watch on gas wastage. We think his observation is true to the point. To save gas, the government must install meters, otherwise gas will continue to be wasted.

The government has said that 3000 megawatt electricity has been added to the national grid, but we see no sign of it. Load shedding has already started though the weather is not very hot yet. We are afraid to think what is in store for us in the coming days. Never before have we suffered like this.

The supply of water, gas and electricity has come down, but the price has gone up, the price of essential commodities are also very high making it difficult for the people to make their ends meet. In addition to the worsening of law and order, people are not feeling safe anywhere. Should not the government give priority to these issues to make people's lives a bit easier?

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Hard working, but poorly paid, traffic police

Every time we hear the word 'traffic police' or 'sergeant', a very negative picture comes to our mind. The hard-working and skilled sergeants are only paid tk. 6,400 as basic pay which may increase with promotions. It is true that they are benefited with other allowances, but is 700 taka medical allowance and 55% house rent enough for them to survive?

Yes, there is corruption in this profession. People are often afraid of taking assistance from a police officer to avoid added harassment and humiliation unlike other countries where it is considered a matter of pride to be a part of the police force.

If the government pays them a standard salary to lead a decent life, probably their tendency to earn some illegal money would go.

Undoubtedly, these people work very hard to perform their duties, especially in a country where the rules are meant to be broken. If they know that they are being compensated in a just way, the corruption in police might fade away in no time.

Fariel Samiha Sadaf, Adiba Tahsin, Tanjila Tabassum
Students of Business Administration Department
East West University



PHOTO: STAR

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Arbitration with UN to continue"

Fida Likhon

India will never give anything to Bangladesh. Bilateral discussions will not be fruitful. Bangladesh should go to the UN court like it did in case of Myanmar.

Truth teller

It is alright to continue arbitration with UN. However, it is not a good idea to have bilateral negotiations with a country like India. Bangladesh did not gain much from India through such negotiations in the last forty years.

Md. Kamal Uddin

Mass people think that the government may have relaxed its views about winning against India because of obvious reasons. We are, in fact, worried about bilateral discussions with India because we have bad experiences in negotiations with India in the past.

Riaz Ahmed

Our foreign minister must ensure that these 'bilateral negotiations' are carried out on 'without prejudice' or non-binding basis.

Amdem, USA

Bilateral negotiation will not be a very good option for Bangladesh. Not having any negotiator in Bangladesh will result in losing a large sea area to India. Moreover, as we have seen before, there are many pro-Indian politicians who will be willing to give in to India to satisfy it.

Dr Zibhago

It will be suicidal to withdraw the arbitration against India concerning the maritime delimitation. The current position is that bilateral talk along with arbitration should continue concurrently. In the diplomatic sense, only bilateral talk will take the matter nowhere. Arbitration will act as a pressure mechanism on India if it really means to reach a friendly solution to the ongoing problem in the Bay of Bengal. Once the arbitration is withdrawn, everything will be withdrawn and again back to square one.

I would like to suggest the foreign minister to stand firm with arbitration unless anything good and satisfactory comes out of the so-called bilateral talks. This is no child play; India will play many colourful tricks as it had done over the decades about the Farakka and other dams that caused us so much harm.

Abdul M. Ismail

A bilateral negotiation on this issue is a total waste of time. Bangladesh needs to look at the past events involving such negotiations to find out the result. The ITLOS has already ruled in favour of Bangladesh against the claim of Myanmar which effectively gives us the best hand.

Sellma

I hope our foreign minister is not tricked by India and it will be best if we stick to UN arbi-