

# Ensure survival of newborns



A newborn has the right to safe delivery, breathing, suitable temperature, breast milk, and to be free from infection.

We have learnt from different sources that though the mortality rate of newborn babies has reduced in the recent years, still 83,000 newborns die in our country each year. Moreover, Bangladesh is among the 10 countries with the greatest numbers of preterm births whereas it is a big threat to the survival of newborn babies. Awareness among people in this regard is very important for improvement of this situation. We have learnt that South India and Sri Lanka have lower infant mortality rate just because people are more aware there. But in our country just because of delayed arrival to the hospital, a number of children die of post-birth health complications.

However, health workers must be resourceful and sincere to make people aware, especially in the rural areas about dos and don'ts during taking care of newborn babies.

It is undeniable that there is a dramatic newborn survival gap between high and low income countries. A report says that half of the babies born at 24 weeks survive in high-income countries; but in the low-income settings, half the babies born at 32 weeks continue to die due to lack of inexpensive and affordable care. Even so, inexpensive solutions can give the newborn babies a second chance to survival, if problems are addressed properly and prevention strategy is strengthened. For instance, "Kangaroo Mother Care" where the infant is held skin-to-skin on the mother's chest to keep it warm and only breast feeding immediately after birth can reduce the death by half in these babies especially those having low birth weight.

**Mobarak Ali**  
RK Mission Road, Gopibagh, Dhaka

## Kenyans' civic sense

Mombasa in Kenya is a bustling city and as the premier port of all eastern Africa, expanding in all directions, humming with new constructions, commercial/industrial activities and a population bursting at the seams. This is my observation after a decade of visits here. It is Dhaka all over again. But there is a difference!

Traffic: Fleets of the latest cars, hundreds of Mutatus (passenger mini-buses), motor-cycles, diesel tuk-tuks (3-wheelers) and bicycles clog the roads, but everything keeps moving. Horns do not blast away, no curses from drivers, no cutting in, overtaking on wrong side or speeding. Everyone respects the right of way and allows others onwards with a smile. I have seen few traffic cops, people without seat-belts or using mobiles while driving. Above all, no traffic lights, pot-holes or pollution!!

Most residences and apartment complexes are modern, spick n span maintaining cleanliness and a belt of flowery greenery outside their boundary walls and trees abound everywhere (shame on our corepati landlords)!

The politeness of people and willingness to be of service is obvious whether it is the vegetable cart vendor, beach snack sellers, the plush mall staff, servicemen responding for LPGs (no extra money), plumber, electrician etc. Even the few mosquitoes quietly take your blood without singing to your ears or disturbing your sleep. Two weeks on, no load shedding, water shortage or car bashing. And they call this "Darkest Africa"!!!!

**Sikander Ahmed**  
U K Road, Mombasa, Kenya

## Corruption allegations and Padma bridge

The World Bank has cancelled the loan for the construction work of Padma bridge on allegation of corruption in Bangladesh. The party in power led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina refuses to accept such an allegation, saying it is baseless and unfounded.

Recently, China has built the world's longest bridge on sea spanning over 26 miles at a cost of 1.6 billion dollars. The construction cost of the Padma bridge was estimated at 2.9 billion dollars, which is not even 4 miles in length. If China has been able to construct a bridge on sea spanning over 26 miles at a cost of 1.6 billion dollars, then why would Bangladesh require 2.9 billion dollars to construct a bridge which is even less than 1/6 in length of the Chinese bridge?

The estimated cost of construction of the Padma bridge shows a significant difference of 1.3 billion dollars over the world's longest bridge ever built. Is this not a good enough proof of allegation of corruption by the World Bank against the party in power in Bangladesh? What does the party in power wants to prove by refuting the allegation of corruption by the World Bank?

Time and again, Bangladesh has been found to be the most corrupt nation in the world by Transparency International. The then government protested those findings, but what is the result? Bangladesh continues to be a corrupt nation even till now. Should not the people put in their best to remove this stigma of allegation of corruption or do they take pride in being branded as a corrupt nation?

**Saleh Mohammad Ayub**

# Haphazard parking causes traffic jam

One of the main reasons behind the traffic jams in Dhaka is the haphazard parking of vehicles. It has become quite common nowadays to see that cars, motorcycles and even trucks or lorries are being parked wherever the opportunity is available. These illegally parked vehicles block up several lanes on the street and ultimately cause traffic jams.

The traffic jams that so frequently occur in front of schools and colleges are due to the same reason. Cars waiting for the students obstruct the oncoming traffic and causes inconvenience for all, even for themselves. The traffic personnel's efforts go in vain as they focus on redirecting the traffic instead of eliminating the root cause of the problem.

Thus it is mandatory that there should be no disorderly parking in front of schools or other institutions. Rather, the vehicles maybe parked at a less congested space a short distance away, for instance, in an open field or at some other parking spot. That way the students and the guardians would have to walk only a little while the flow of traffic will not be obstructed.

**Shahriar Kabir**  
Ramna, Dhaka



## Risks of own funding for Padma bridge

After the cancellation of loan for building Padma bridge by the World Bank, Bangladesh government has decided to build it with our own funds. They are also going to open two bank accounts, one for local currency and the other one for foreign currency to raise funds for the bridge.

It sounds really good and the government has already received positive responses from people of all walks of life including Bangladeshi expatriates. But the question is whether the government has the ability to invest this huge fund in this project or not.

Even if Bangladesh government can fund this, what will be the implications? Experts say that other sectors especially education, health and different socio-economic development projects of the government may suffer severely. Some noted economists of our country have opined that the decision of own funding can hit the economy hard. So, the government should think prudently before taking decision. The decision taken on the spur of the moment may endanger the life of people and economy of a developing country like Bangladesh.

**Md. Musfikur Rahman Jony**  
Baneswar, Rajshahi

## Israel will attack Iran!

According to an international press report, Britain's intelligence service (M16) head has predicted that Israel will attack Iran before the latter could successfully acquire all the nuclear technologies for commissioning nuclear weapons by 2014.

If the above prediction comes true, then what would be the consequences? The world will lock into nuclear war and there would be a great catastrophe, birth of several Hiroshima and Nagasaki, total breakdown of the world economy and food security plus an environmental disaster and many more nightmares.

Would Israel and Iran turn our already suffering planet into a carcinogenic hell?

Instead of showcasing one another's nuclear strength, both the countries should follow the world body's suggestion and contribute effectively towards resolving crisis both the countries have created at their own ends.

**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Dean  
Faculty of Agriculture  
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 "Abul resigns, at last"*

**Freeman**  
Bangladesh will be one of the most developed nations in the world only if we can free our country from corruption. If journalists focus on every sector of the government in this way, I believe that corruption will be removed from every sector.

**Translucent**  
Better late than never. Government needs to make quick decisions now and move on. Convincing the WB is probably already underway. Let's hope for the best.

**Hafeejul Alam**  
The prime minister should accept his resignation right away, no matter if he is guilty or not. For Bangladesh, Padma bridge is much more important than a minister.

**Mohsin**  
Mr. Abul, we congratulate not only you but also the people who supported you in doing the long overdue job.

**Anonymous**  
It seems that the curtain has finally fallen. The ruling party's stubbornness, arrogance and complete denial of truth are the main reasons behind this delay. If WB reconsiders financing of this project, which I doubt, the government owes an apology to them. The tragedy is we get old too fast and wise too late.

**Manzoor Ashraf**  
What about the rest of the people who have been named in the WB report? What about the ACC which gave Abul a clean chit? When will this organisation be truly independent and perform thorough investigations that we can trust?

**Mr S A Chowdhury**  
I hope our prime minister and finance minister would think rationally next time rather than trying to hide the fact.

**Deep Purple Blue**  
It took him too long to realise that he should have resigned long ago in national interest, which evidently was not his priority. Now all the people involved in the alleged Padma bridge corruption should be investigated not by the same Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) which had cleared Abul earlier, but by credible probes involving international agencies as well.

Hopefully, Sheikh Hasina will not reject Abul's resignation like she did in Suranjit's case. Most importantly, those who had been protected ought to be investigated. These people have humiliated the people of Bangladesh like they were never humiliated before.

PHOTO: STAR