

How long will Dhaka remain unliveable?

BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

Citizens have time and again voiced their concern about the way urbanisation was taking place, but the wheels of development defied reason and rational consideration.

THIS time Dhaka has ranked first in the list of the world's most polluted cities in a survey conducted over 140 cities by the London-based Economist Intelligence Unit. Dhaka scored 38.7 out of 100 based on political and social stability, crime rates, access to quality healthcare, education, transportation and natural environment. Over the last two decades, the country experienced phenomenal urban growth and has now become an epitome of squalor, poverty and environmental abyss. Despite the everyday trauma, rigours and exhaustion, people are endlessly attracted to the city for it seems to have livelihood and even prosperity on offer.

Conscious citizens have time and again voiced their concern about the way urbanisation was taking place, but the wheels of development defied reason and rational consideration. In absence of clear-cut policies and punitive action for such violations, commercial establishments have mushroomed in residential areas.

Citizens say that Dhaka defies conventional notions of urban planning, human behaviour, rationality and environmental awareness. It is now becoming an urban jungle where new waves of architecture and lifestyle -- not always pleasing to be sure -- are grotesquely on display.

Traffic is a nightmare of Dhaka, with collapsing infrastructure and the growing number of small vehicles causing enormous loss of work and business hours other than deaths and escalating health costs. It seems imperative for the government to restrict sale of smaller vehicles and introduce Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) to come out of this colossal economic loss.

As the capital city grows, population pressure increases and industries expand, its trash grows exponentially. Because of inability to reprocess waste, Dhaka city is running out of space to dump the growing mountains of garbage. Market places are filled with excreta, both human and animal, clogged drains give off foul odours, and rotting waste is piled up on pathways.



Decentralisation of the administration with financial power for development of the crucial areas like communication network and protection of environment should be the first and foremost prerequisite if we want to give Dhaka city a semblance of order. Recently, the government split Dhaka City Corporation into two for

better service. But city dwellers do not believe that it has yielded any benefit or alleviated their woes. With problems not solved and increasing by the day, Dhaka comes out as the most unliveable city in the world index year after year. This is an embarrassment for the nation. Our policy makers must decide how long we will have to bear this disgrace.

where unemployment rate is high and poverty is rampant, and most of the economic activities are capital-centred, there is no escaping the problem of population influx in the capital city. So devolution is the only remedy, but without government policies for increasing economic activities in the villages, it is not possible. That Dhaka came out as the worst polluted city in the world is a blot on the image of the country and it is possible to get rid of this disgrace by people who matter and the citizens who live in the city.

As population pressure increases, open spaces except Ramna Park and Chandrima Uddyan, are nowhere to be seen in the vast city. But parks or open spaces are like lungs for a city. How could this fact be ignored by the city corporation?

After the liberation, or even after the restoration of democracy in the '90s, our policy makers and city planners should have evolved a clear urban vision. Unfortunately, those at the helm did not show any ingenuity, competence and commitment. They were more imitative than creative. The Dickensian blight and haze that hang over the city are nothing but a fallout of foggy vision.

In absence of a vision, Dhaka has lapsed into beehive of filth, congestion and urban blight. With things going so awry, it boils down to the fact that most of the big cities, especially Dhaka, have suffered in the hands of the policy makers. The development of the city should not have been entirely left with either Rajuk or DCC.

There should have been a central monitoring committee invested with proper authority to investigate, coordinate, adjust and correct lapses and loopholes and check fraudulence, starting from plot allotment to erecting unauthorised buildings. With Dhaka being rated as the worst polluted city year after year, the prime minister might include city development activities in the short list of fast-track mega projects she has decided to oversee.

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Not safe in their homes

SHAHEEN ANAM

A few days ago Joya Pal, a housewife in Chittagong, was burnt alive by her husband. Afia Zaman Mita, a bride of only 3 months, was set on fire by her husband and in-laws. Unable to tolerate the torture any longer Akhtara Begum, along with 3 daughters, jumped into the Padma river. These stories go on and on.

The recent study by UNFPA and BBS, titled *Violence Against Women Survey 2011*, based on a random sample of 12,600 women from 7 divisions reveals a picture that is nothing short of WAR Against Women in Bangladesh. According to the study, 87% of married women suffer from domestic violence, one-third are regularly raped by their husbands. Girls as young as 14 are raped through early marriage or unsafe living conditions. About 126 interviewed respondents claimed they had a family member who committed suicide due to repeated violence at home. The situation may be likened to civil war or riot where citizens of the same country attack each other. Only in this case, one side is attacking, the other side silently tolerates it due to societal pressure or for lack of any other option.

These statistics are a shame to our national consciousness, a shame to our proud heritage of a freedom loving people who struggled and fought for independence in order to lead a life as per their choice. The word freedom is a mockery to the vast majority of women who spend their lives in indignity, insecurity and the threat of violence or even death.

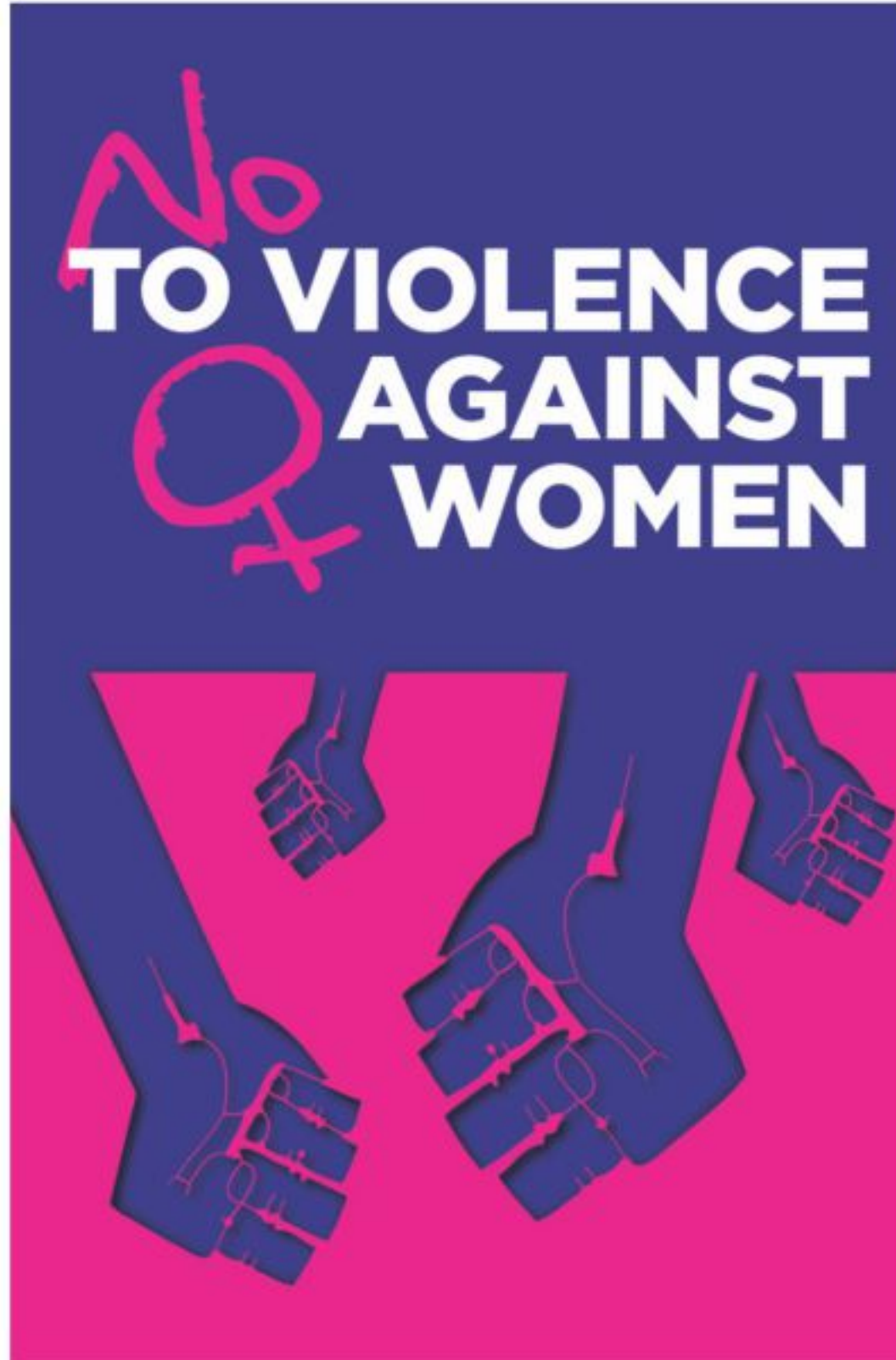
In spite of decades of active women's movement, enactment of laws and policies to protect women, and various initiatives by government and non-governmental organisations, women in Bangladesh live in fear. In fear of being beaten, raped, mutilated or even killed. The greatest tragedy is, women live in fear in their own homes. The home they have built with such loving care, the

home where they give birth and nurture their family. The very home where they should be safest. That very home is their hell house. Harsh as it may sound, neither the State nor family or society has been able to give women a shred of security. Women are insecure in their homes, work place and street, a reality so stark and brutal that it raises serious questions about the way we have collectively addressed the issue of Violence Against Women.

The recent report from BBS and UNFPA only confirms our worst fear that women continue to experience maximum violence in their homes. Even girl children are not spared as, according to the report, half of those experiencing sexual abuse are below the age of 14. As many as 64% girls are forced into early marriage, which is one of the highest in the world according to a study in 2011 by NIPORT and Unicef.

The scenario of other forms of violence including rape, gang rape, murder, sexual harassment is as horrific. In 2013, there were 713 reported cases of rape and gang rape according to BNWLA report. Added to this is the violence related to political turmoil. Recently, women from the minority community were raped to intimidate and force them to flee their homes. Violence against girls and women in the CHT continues in a bid to take over their land. In 2013 alone, 30 acts of rape and abduction had taken place in the CHT without anyone being convicted or punished for the crime. The point is, whatever may be the situation, in peace time or conflict, at home, in the street or work place, women are not safe.

Although there has been marked progress in women's political and economic empowerment, initiatives to combat violence against women are falling far short of expectations. We need to work collectively to identify what has worked and what has not and why. Multidimensional approaches and strategies are required given the complexity of the problem.



First and foremost, we have to make sure that laws and policies enacted to protect women are understood and made effective. Men do it because they know they can get away with it. There is a culture of impunity and acceptance associated with such crimes, especially domestic violence. It is now 3 years plus since the enactment of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2010. Several cases have been filed, but more effort has to be put into convincing law enforcers as well as those dispensing justice that domestic violence is indeed a crime.

We need to change society's attitude towards women from that of the common perception of being weak, dependent and burdens. We have to portray a positive image of women of today and highlight their contribution, both as home makers and income earners, not only for the family but also for the state. Two mainstays of our economy, the garment and the agriculture sectors, are dependent on the labour of women. This must be highlighted in a massive countrywide campaign in which the government, non-governmental and women's rights organisations should join. We must make sure that we take men along in our campaign.

A study by ICDDRDB in 2011, titled *Men's Attitude and Practices towards Gender Based Violence*, revealed that men believe sex is their entitlement, they rape for fun and feel no remorse for their act. A study by Naripokkho on perpetrators also shows men do it to show their superiority over women. This is because boys and men are made to feel superior and the preferred gender, they believe they have to be tough and forceful to get what they want. Therefore, masculinity needs to be redefined. A strong message should go out to parents and educational institutions to teach boys and men that it is a matter of shame and cowardice to assault a physically weaker person. Respecting women and highlighting their contribution should become an integral part of the education system from an early age.

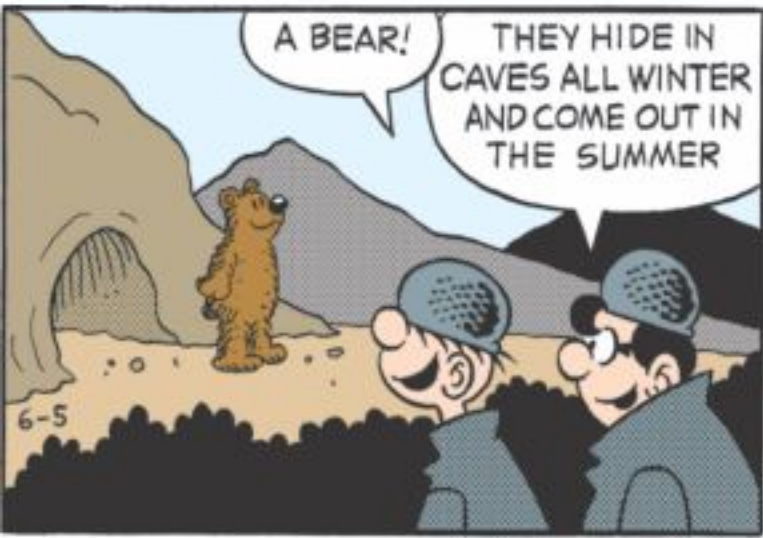
Finally, as I write, I am filled with shame, remorse and sadness for having failed to stop the deaths, the torture and humiliation of countless women who suffer every day of their lives at the hands of their husband or family members. The question is how much more women will have to endure before the conscience of the society is stirred enough to stop it.

The writer is Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation.

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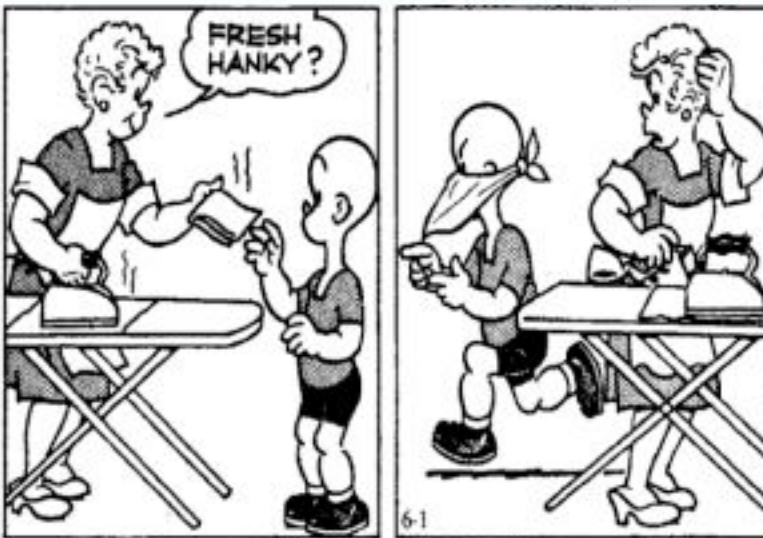
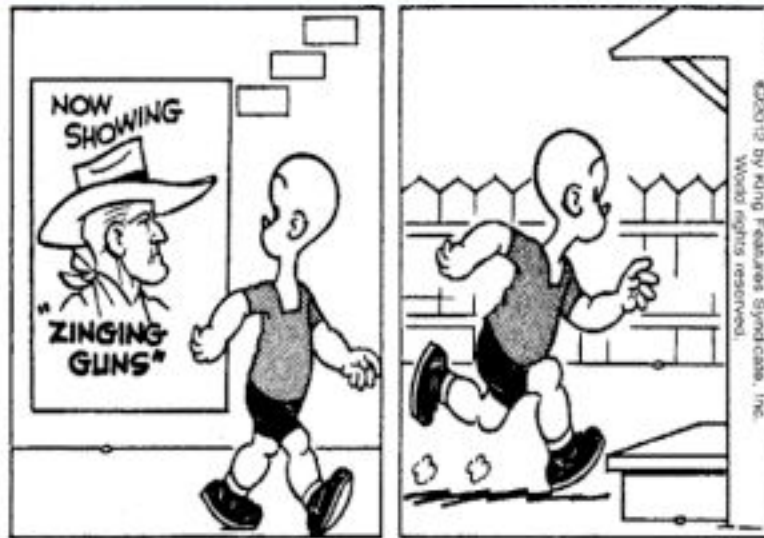
BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



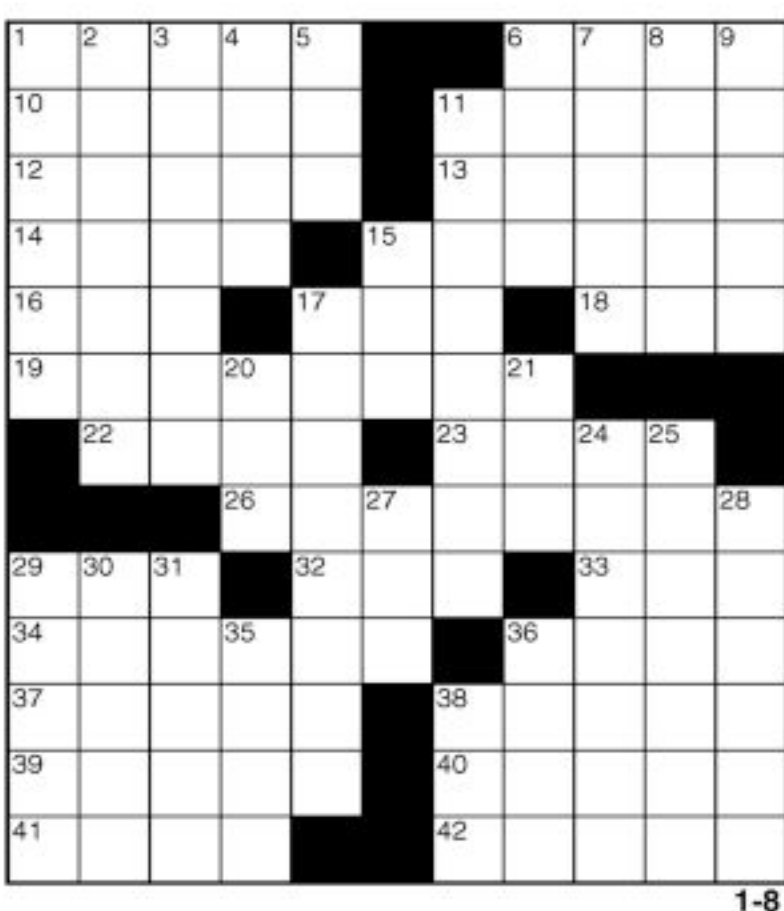
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Texas landmark
- 6 March time
- 10 Ran easily
- 11 Court event
- 12 Like Superman
- 13 Kitchen cooker
- 14 Med. sch. subject
- 15 Hang loosely
- 16 For each
- 17 Peas' place
- 18 Harden
- 19 Introduced, in a way
- 22 Mailbox feature
- 23 Wallet bills
- 26 Having a stupid expression
- 29 Pussy foot
- 32 North Pole worker
- 33 Director Spike
- 34 "It's my belief..."
- 36 Sylvester's trademark
- 37 Grain to grind
- 38 Join the big leagues
- 39 Some babies
- 40 Detail map
- 41 New Haven school
- 42 Must have

DOWN

- 1 Abner's creator
- 2 Cars from repair shops
- 3 Clothes
- 4 Come together
- 5 Eccentric
- 6 Qom's country
- 7 Little dents
- 8 Patriotic bird
- 9 Winter weather
- 11 Compromise
- 15 Clinic nickname
- 17 Clinic customers
- 20 Dandy
- 21 Genetic stuff
- 24 Astronomical event
- 25 Fumes
- 27 Caribou's cousin
- 28 Train stops
- 29 Oinker, to tots
- 30 Skyline lobbies
- 31 Spin
- 35 Land in the sea
- 36 Solitary
- 38 Collins base



Yesterday's answer



CRYPTOQUOTE

CFK XTT, JTFJLT, CFK' DT LTQZZC BQM Q AFUMTLGKZ VZGT. MFU'W CFK XTT ABQW Q RVXWQOT VW AFKZM ST WF IKXW WBLFA VW QAQC?

- HZQLFUHT WBT QUITZ ("VW'X Q AFUMTLGKZ VZGT")

Yesterday's Cryptoquote:
We elves try to stick to the four main good groups: candy, candy canes, candy corns and syrup.

- Buddy The Elf ("ELF")

A XYDLBAAX is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.



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TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. NSU/14-01

North South University is inviting sealed offer from the bonafide / reputed supplier for supplying the item as mentioned below:

Lot No.	Items	Quantity
01.	Computer	30 nos.
02.	Brand Computer without Monitor	10 nos.
03.	Photocopier Machine	06 nos.

Interested bidders may collect schedule of tender from the Finance & Accounts Department of the NSU from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Sunday through Thursday on all working days till **February 09, 2014** by paying non refundable taka 500.00(Five Hundred) only in cash for each schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of quoted price in the form of pay order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of North South University along with their offer. The bidders can bid for all or any of the Lot. The sealed offer must be submitted on **February 10, 2014 within 2.00 p.m.** at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:15 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.

Director (Logistics & Resources)

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QUOTABLE Quote

At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst.

Aristotle