

Voted above law!! Stop the bad practice immediately

THIS is possible only in a country like Bangladesh. And we have written on this issue umpteen times and will continue ad nauseam to do so until this brazen and rank bad practice of violating traffic rules in a brazen-faced manner is stopped completely.

It is not ministers only that violate rules of the road. It is anybody who is somebody and owning a large vehicle violates traffic rules with impunity. Thursday's issue of this paper carried several pictures showing government vehicles belonging to functionaries of various denominations and a university bus to boot going merrily along on the wrong side of the road without any regard for other vehicles. And in one instance seeing a minister's car bend the law, many private vehicles followed his suit.

It seems that the ministers and other functionaries are always in a hurry. And the police escort vehicle with similar disregard for not only to public convenience but also to public safety waving aside the oncoming vehicles traveling on their right side of the road to make room for the wayward ministers' cars.

We have often times read how the British Bobby had penalized members of the Royal family for not abiding by traffic rules. The heir to the British throne had to cough up money as fine for over speeding.

We have written several times in this column that if the ministers are in a hurry they should start for their appointment early and not behave like they own the roads to do as they like. Nobody is above the law and unless this despicably bad practice is stopped forthwith the shambolic traffic system will be in a greater shambles.

Road safety issues Recommendations go unheeded

THERE is no denying that serious problems and impediments to road safety both on the highways and the cities exist. We are informed that there are three separate committees involved in coming up with constructive steps which authorities need to implement to bring about an improvement in this area. Yet, year after year, nothing changes due to the fact that many of these committees fail to sit on a regular basis and their recommendations are simply ignored.

We are appalled at this lack of interest in implementing action plans that have been drawn up from 1997 to 2011 which deal with everything from road engineering, traffic legislation, traffic law enforcement, driver training and tests to education and publicity. That good decisions have been taken in the past is not in question. What is in question is the will to implement those decisions by agencies entrusted with the issue of safety on roads.

Although official statistics put road accident casualties at 3,000 per annum, unofficial figures published by the World Bank and the World Health Organisation put them anywhere from 12,000 to 18,000 per year. These are serious casualty rates which could certainly be reduced drastically if authorities put their mind to fixing some of the most obvious problems, like the already identified 144 accident prone spots around the country. There is hardly any excuse for non-performance on solving problems that are costing thousands of unnecessary deaths and loss of private property which could be drastically reduced.

Remembering the Professor

ABDUL MATIN

WHILE writing this obituary, I discovered that a glossary of adjectives is not enough to qualify Prof. Salahuddin Ahmed. I decided not to use any in the title. Just his name is enough. I first met him after my wedding in 1967 at Rajshahi. He was related to my in-laws. We used to call him Mowla Bhai. We met almost every time I visited Rajshahi while he was there. We saw each other more frequently after he had moved to Dhaka.

I hardly met a person so highly knowledgeable but yet so simple and amiable. He was a gentleman at heart and soul. He used to receive and treat his guests with an unforgettable smile and cordiality. He used to take personal care in treating his guests and always prepared the tea himself. He was a great admirer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. When Bangabandhu asked the historians of the country to write the history of the War of Liberation, Prof. Salahuddin Ahmed politely told him that the time to write history had not come. They could only collect the materials and the history would be written by future historians.

He came of a very respectable and educated family of Faridpur. His father Abu Ahmed Faizul Mohi and paternal grandfather Mouli Ahmed held important administrative positions under the British rule. His maternal grandfather Azizul Haque made major contributions to the development of the Henry Classification System of fingerprints. Prof. Salahuddin started his career with the Red Cross and served humanity during the partition of India. He remained a humanist all his life. He joined the Jagannath College (now University) as lecturer in 1948. He served as professor of history at the University of Dhaka, Rajshahi University and Jahangir Nagar University. He was also a National Professor. He was my colleague as a part-time teacher at the Independent University in early 1990s. He was director of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum till his death.

He was active till his death. He wrote several books and numerous articles on history, society, politics and other contemporary topics. He was married to Hamida Khanom, former principal of the Home Economics College, Dhaka. His wife was a highly educated and enlightened lady. It was indeed a marriage of two intellectuals. He practically lived alone after his wife's demise in 2011.

Prof. Salahuddin was kind enough to attend the launching ceremony of my first book, "A Passage to Freedom" in 2009 and delivered a very inspiring speech. He always encouraged me to write. He left thousands of students, friends, relatives and admirers to mourn his death. May Allah bless his soul.

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.

CROSS TALK

MOHAMMAD
BADRUL AHSEN

IF individuals take too long to appreciate something, we taunt them for being "tube lights." We compare thick-skinned people to rhinos, which supposedly react a long time after being tickled. These are but the lighter sides of what is known as delayed action mechanism, which works in cameras when shutters take time before being released, or explosive projectiles which detonate some time after striking targets. It also works in national life of which we're but an apt example. We don't wake up to our mistakes until the outcomes have hit us in the face.

The most recent example of that ludicrous contradiction is the controversy brewing over the quality of our education. After the GPA-5ers performed poorly in admission test at Dhaka University, this nation has got a rude awakening. We cheered our children all these years as an increasing number of them made the top score. Now we shudder at the possibility that, all that time, these Don Quixotes may have fought the windmills, not the giants.

The education minister defended himself instead of showing his genuine concern. He said the admission test at Dhaka University was faulty, and blamed its authorities for ruining the future of students! When he should have taken a critical look at the nightmare of his own creation, the minister got busy finding scapegoats.

It's not the fault of those children that we feel deflated. A faulty system has inflated their merit. Many of us didn't know the government was working overtime to better the best in our children. It not only made the exams a walk in the park, but also made the grading system a piece of cheesecake!

A 19th-century English poet named Philip James Bailey cautioned that the first and worst of all frauds is to cheat one's own self. And that's exactly what this nation is doing to itself. It lowers the bar instead of raising the game, giving itself a pat in the back for instant success.

In medical science, delayed action is called the incubation period. It's the time between exposure and onset of disease. For example, it may take 20 to 30 years before smoking habit can develop lung cancer.

British journalist Martin Wolf has written a book that identifies this concept in economics. In *The Shifts and the Shocks*, he argues that the 2008-2009 financial crisis in the United States wasn't created by greedy bankers, incompe-

tent government regulators and naive home buyers. The culprit in his assessment was the massive trade imbalance that goes back a decade or two.

Wolf starts from the time when China, Germany and some oil-exporting countries ran big surpluses, and they couldn't spend all their export earnings. Those countries invested their surplus money in the United States, and this flood of cash reduced interest rates. Easy credit induced dubious lending, led by housing mortgages.

Inadvertent or purported mistakes repeatedly metastasised into serious conditions in this country. Political appointment of board members depleted the state-owned banks. The boycotted parliament is now haunted by unelected lawmakers and a subservient opposition. Partisan patronage lowered the standards of our professionals and public servants. At the micro level, indulgence given to an insane minister's mouth exploded last month in New York.

Famous illusionist and stunt performer Harry Houdini boasted that he made more money in Russia and Paris because the people of those countries were more willing to be entertained. Perhaps his followers in this country have all but joined politics, which is why our politicians are adept at performing tricks. They know our people are willing to be entertained and what they do in the name of running this country is sleight of hands.

In that sense, the politicians draw their strength from the weakness of people, everything else following as logical conclusion. And this phenomenon goes back in time in the reverse order of Wolf's hypothesis. If easy credit (in financial sense) started with easy money in the United States, easy money started with easy credit (in recognition or success sense) in this country. Easy freedom fighter's certificate led to easy licenses and permits which led to fake academic certificates, which eventually trivialised appointments, promotions, graduations, gradations, bank loans, electoral victories and acquittals from allegations. For 43 years we have allowed the termites to eat the timbers before lamenting over the crumbling house.

This country is a daisy chain of delayed actions as one fuse ignites another in a chain reaction. We either fail or choose not to see the consequences of our actions, which opened up the floodgate of frivolity that has categorically undermined hard work and devotion. Obsessed with instant gratification, we've erected a house on the sinkhole.

Students want a second chance at the admission test. Will this nation get the same opportunity if, as a whole, it comes to that critical stage?

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Partnerships for development: A shared responsibility

EVERY year on October 24, we celebrate UN Day, commemorating the founding of the United Nations. Since joining 40 years ago, Bangladesh has experienced significant gains in economic growth and human development. In 2000, world leaders met at the UN Headquarters in New York for the Millennium Summit, which introduced to the world the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals would guide development progress towards meeting basic needs and increasing quality of life for all. Bangladesh has become one of the best performing least developed countries (LDC) in MDG attainment, particularly for the goals on maternal mortality, child mortality, poverty reduction, and primary education. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done in the areas of gender empowerment and equality, nutrition, and environmental sustainability. This UN Day, the UN in Bangladesh shines the spotlight on MDG achievements and gaps through seven plays based on each of the human development goals of the MDGs, and performed in the seven divisions of Bangladesh. However, there is often one goal that is forgotten about -- MDG 8: A global partnership for development.

What does MDG 8 currently look like?

Around the world, MDG 8 has had mixed success. Targets selected covered official development assistance (ODA), a fairer trade system, evening the competition in agriculture among countries, debt relief and services, and access to medicine and technology. While MDG 8 aimed to "unite aid," development assistance is not immune from political realities, and can be influenced by shocks in a globalised economic system. Over



United Nations Day

the past years, ODA in Bangladesh has hovered around approximately \$1.8 billion per year. Due to Bangladesh's strong economy, this development assistance is declining as a percentage of the country's gross national income even as absolute numbers of this assistance have increased, highlighting that the country has the lead role in its own development, and is better positioned to define the scope of development cooperation.

South-South cooperation and the intersection of global, national, and private sector actors

In Bangladesh, the UN has supported several initiatives in

have included high level regional meets, a training curriculum for labour attachés of sending countries, agreed upon programmes and policies to ensure the safety and welfare of migrant workers, and implementation of recommendations at national level such as compliance of recruitment agencies in countries signatory to the Covenant of Ethical Conduct and Good Practices of Overseas Employment Service Providers.

In order to implement global agreements and protocols, it is also important to cast a wider net for development partners. An example of a multi-faceted partnership was Bangladesh's approach to the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, which set out to eliminate "ozone depleting substances" that contributed to global warming. The partnership approach had three dimensions: the first was a global multilateral fund that resourced the implementation of various initiatives to meet Montreal Protocol targets; the second was strong government regulation and enforcement, along with UN capacity building initiatives and institutional strengthening of the Department of Environment; and the third was proactive private sector partnerships and compliance to phase out the use of substances harmful to the environment in their production

methods. As a result, Bangladesh is phasing out the substances that contribute to ozone layer depletion, and it serves as an example of the efficacy of a partnership that involves a multitude of actors with the shared commitment to fulfill development objectives.

Partnerships for development: a national and global imperative

Although these are only two examples amongst many, they do illustrate that development is foremost a national

imperative as much as it is a global one. While important, partnerships are not limited to financing but to find solutions together to meet development aspirations. Bangladesh's performance in the MDGs has proven that political will, a strong local NGO community, civil society, and donors can work together effectively. This is apparent in the Local Consultative Group mechanism that brings together the different actors in the country's development landscape, providing the policy environment and platform for sustainable and effective development partnerships to flourish. Beyond indicators and targets, MDG 8 is essentially a goal about shared responsibility. The MDGs were created to address the most pressing development issues in the world at the time, and as a result the world has seen the poverty rate halve well before the 2015 deadline. This UN Day serves as a timely reminder that we are all partners in development, that there is still work left to do, and that it is crucial to ensure that we maintain MDG momentum through delivering on the commitments made across all sectors both at national and global levels.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

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Mysterious death at DMCH

The news of Asma's mysterious death at DMCH, published in TDS on 22.10.14, is highly worrying. The authorities claimed that she had died of renal failure, liver diseases and jaundice after she delivered a baby boy. But her close neighbours confirmed that she had no such ailments; rather she was in perfect shape even during the final stages of her pregnancy. We demand a thorough investigation into this mysterious death. Everyone concerned must be interrogated.

Sabrina Samreen

North South University, Dhaka

Repair Chittagong station road

The station road is a busy road of the port city. Every day I have to travel through the road. As I travel by bus, I experience a bumpy ride from the



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Kadamtali point to the old station area. For more than one year, the road has remained in a dilapidated state. It appears that no one cares about the condition of the road. As a result, passengers are suffering a lot during their travel along the road.

We urge the authorities to do something in order to relieve the sufferings of the commuters.

Zabed Wali
Chittagong

Tips for our batsmen to avoid being trapped

I would like to mention some guidelines for our cricketers to follow during the next series.

1. Bowlers sometimes intentionally bowl full tosses and bad balls in order to make the batsman play at it. This is done to set up the batsman and in many cases, the batsmen get out as they get carried away by trying to hit every ball to the boundary. Our players should not fall in this trap.

2. The opposition will change field settings to confuse the batsman. Our batsmen must be fully aware of every field placing before playing each ball. If the batsman hits the previous ball for a boundary, chances are that a fielder will be placed in that position to catch the next ball. So, be careful.

3. If the ball bounces above the waist or outside the off-stump, it would be better not to play it as it may take the edge and gets caught behind.

4. Many balls get fielded near the boundary. During this time there is ample time to take a second run.

5. Always watch the other batsman while running. Touch the white line with the bat instead of running through it because this way, another run could be taken.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Comments on news report, "Southwest may turn wasteland," published on October 21, 2014

New Generation

Bangladesh has long been getting very "warm reciprocation" from our friendly neighbouring country.

Dr. Miah Adel

Please read the book entitled "Farakka Barrage, the Symbol of Bluffing, Blackmailing, Bullying, and Cornering the Downstream for Upstream Water Piracy" now in press in the German Academic Publishing Company Lap Lambert, and other books and articles of this series authored by this responder to learn more about Indian water piracy tricks.

S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

How unfortunate for Bangladesh that it shares a border with a bully as a neighbour. It would be unfortunate if India were to carry out this project ignoring the well-being and opinions of others out of arrogance.

Mirza Md. Nasir Uddin

Building 16 barrages, one in every 100 kilometres of the Ganges would ultimately kill the river and the people of Bangladesh. We strongly protest this and urge the Indian government to reconsider their plan.

"UAE may reopen job market" (Oct. 18, 2014)

Sayed Rahman

Two years' restriction on recruiting workers from Bangladesh was not good for the economy. We know The United Arab Emirates is recruiting a lot of people from India, Philippines and other countries. We should take steps to convince them so that they take more workforces from Bangladesh.

Birbangali

Very good news! Thanks a lot to the Ministry of Overseas Employment and the government.