

# Anarchy on the roads

## Save us from the chaotic situation

NOT a single day passes without news of deaths of pedestrians under the wheels of wayward vehicles or people killed due to head on collision between two buses. In a matter of 48 hours not only was a renowned journalist killed after being hit, while alighting, by the very bus he was traveling in, but two students in different parts of the country also became victims of reckless drivers who couldn't care less about the safety of others.

The police and the other related agencies have failed utterly to ensure the safety of passengers of public transports or for that matter the unsuspecting pedestrian or rickshaw passenger who hardly knows what hit him or her. If that were not the case then any agency with a sense of dignity and self respect would have moved much sooner to do something to correct the pathetic situation.

It is not only the reckless drivers, who find in the violation of traffic rules the only justification of their existence, who are to blame for the mayhem on the streets but also the police who get paid to overlook the violation of the rules. And when public representatives become not only owners of buses but, in some cases, also head the owners' association, there is bound to be conflict of interest. That is why we do not see the errant drivers brought to justice.

We implore the authorities, who seem to be in hibernation, to wake up and do something quickly to reverse the present situation.

# We mourn the doyen's death

## He remains the beacon in the art world

IN the passing away of Qayyum Chowdhury rendered poignant by the way he slipped into eternity on the dais of the Bengal Classical Music Festival, 2014 on Sunday night, the country has lost an iconic figure in fine arts. The versatility of his creative talents and the rich lore of works make you feel that whilst he has left a void that would be difficult to fill, he remains a reference point of inspiration for future generation of artists.

He belonged to a genre of painters mentored by maestro Zainul Abedin. Very significantly, Qayyum pursued this passion during the most exciting phases of the art movement.

His paintings like 7th March, 1971, Protest and Bangladesh 71 are standouts. The second piece of a work done around Liberation War shows countless oars held by clearly etched figures with the colours muted to enhance solemn expressions on the faces enframed. Tumult and turbulence captivated in Bangladesh 71 (oil on canvas, 1972) was an apt depiction of genocidal terror and destruction.

Wherever he traversed he left his stamp of originality—be it the publication field, association with journalism and designing book covers.

He had been the recipient of prestigious accolades, national and international. To crown these all, he was awarded Swadhinata Padak this year.

While paying our homage to his memory, we mourn his death profoundly and express our condolences to his

# Punish reckless drivers to set an example

RIDWAN QUAIUM

DESPITE the road safety awareness campaigns that are being conducted, the traffic situation in the capital is worsening. Hardly any day goes by when there is no severe road mishap in the capital. This situation is mainly due to reckless drivers, especially bus drivers, most of whom are unlicensed and have little to no knowledge about traffic rules and road safety.

Sometimes the authority conducts drive against unlicensed drivers and drivers with fake driving licenses. However, these drives last for only a few days, which is why they are ineffective. It is apparent that many of the bus drivers in Dhaka are unlicensed, which is why during the few days of the drive, there is an acute shortage of buses as most of the unlicensed drivers do not take out the busses.

Even after their rough driving and even after getting involved in accidents these drivers are hardly punished. Sometimes investigative committees are formed after bus accidents but the results of these investigations are most often not shared with the public. This is encouraging the bus drivers to continue their rough driving.

Getting more passengers and competing with other bus drivers seem to be their only goal; little do they care about safety of their passengers or of other road users. Their chaotic driving also causes traffic congestion because they stop diagonally on the road to load or unload passengers and to prevent their competitors from passing them, not caring that they are preventing other vehicles also from passing them.

The reckless driving of the buses is forcing many regular passengers to depend on inefficient mode of transport such as paratransit and personal vehicle, which is worsening the city's traffic congestion.

Although the highest punishments for reckless driving in many developed countries is more than ten years' imprisonment, the highest punishment for reckless driving in our country was imprisonment for only three years. What is more disturbing is that only five present of the culprits responsible for accidents were actually punished.

The High Court recently reinstated the highest punishment for reckless driving to seven years' imprisonment. To reduce reckless driving and most importantly to make the roads safer, it is time the authority sets an example by punishing some of the culprit drivers, especially bus drivers.

The writer is a transportation engineer working in Thailand.

# Where is the Migration Law 2013?

TASNEEM SIDDIQUI

ON October 19, 171 Bangladeshi citizens were rescued by Thai authorities from deep within a jungle in Thailand. This raised concern nationally and internationally about irregular migration of poor Bangladeshis and people from Myanmar to Malaysia through Thailand along the maritime route of Bay of Bengal. A large number of Bangladeshis are living in inhuman condition in the jungles of Thailand, waiting to go to Malaysia. Many of them are in jail, many have lost their lives and whereabouts of some others are unknown.

The extent of this particular migration flow is unknown. Some reports from media have estimated that 15,000 to 20,000 people may have migrated during last year through this route. The UNHCR's Irregular Maritime Movements report (January to June 2014) claimed that since 2012 till June 2014, 87,000 people had migrated to Malaysia by maritime routes through Bay of Bengal, via Thailand. 53,000 migrants reached Malaysia in the last year alone, which is 61% higher than the previous year.

RMMRU conducted an initial investigation in seven upazilas of Sirajganj district. We were astonished by the number of cases that the victims' families and local representatives cited.

According to them, more than 4,000 young men embarked on similar journeys in an effort to reach Malaysia, and more than 400 of them are untraceable. Narration of the incidents by these families sounds like a modern-day fairy tale. Someone's husband, someone's son or someone's brother had gone to work in the morning. At the end of the day, their tiffin boxes returned but they did not. As if some magician had played a trick and made them disappear, or the Pied piper of Hamelin had taken them away. The trauma of the families did not end there. They received a phone call weeks after the disappearance, only to fall prey to the extortionists and ended up paying around Tk. 2,200,000 to save the lives of their beloved ones. The mobile-to-mobile money transfer system, which was developed to take remittance transfer service to the doorsteps of migrants, ended up as a new means for transforming these poor families into absolute paupers.

Due to calm ocean conditions, October to January is the prime season for irregular migration and trafficking. This is why the network of informal dalals as well as traffickers is desperately recruiting aspirant migrants from certain parts of Bangladesh. Names of origin districts received by the media show that only a few of those belong to traditional international labour migration pockets. Most of them are from low international migration producing districts: Jessore, Khulna, Raggur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Kurigram, Bagura, Sirajganj, Satkhira, Natore, etc. During 2011-2012, Narshingdi used to be one of the major source areas of migrants, though their number has decreased. However, some of them have become part of the network of informal dalals. An assessment of the areas shows that poverty level is higher in majority of these areas, social network of international migration is absent and, more importantly, the adverse affects of climate change are experienced more by some of these districts.

Illegal migration through this route had taken place earlier as well. However, the recent incidents revealed that an international network of criminal gangs; pirates of

Andaman, Thailand and Myanmar; and employers in Malaysia and Thailand, who want to employ workers with minimum or no salary, have developed a vested interest in such migration.

The government of Bangladesh enacted Overseas Employment and Migration Act in 2013. According to Article 34 of the law, the local police, TNO, elected local representatives, ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment and other related ministries, BMET and BAIRA were empowered to file cases against culprits. It is crucial that cases are filed under this law and that offenders be charged and face consequences. But it is unfortunate that till date no case has been filed under this law. Politicians, local level government representatives, administration, and law and security forces have conveniently shut their eyes and let such a heinous crime against humanity happen.

Representatives of civil society got together and expressed their concerns through organising a press conference, and came up with certain demands. They pledged to display black bands on International Migrants' Day (December 18) if the government did not act immediately in combating these issues. Furthermore, if the issues were not addressed, civil society bodies would rethink the observation of International Migrants' Day with the government.

- The government of Bangladesh should immediately create an inter-ministerial and inter-agency committee (including the Bangladesh Border Guard, Navy and Coast Guard) to prepare and implement an action plan to reduce irregular maritime migration flow;

- Under this inter-ministerial committee, a taskforce should be formed with representation from security forces, local administration and representatives of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar district;
- Exemplary punishment should be ensured to those who are involved with processing of irregular migration. This should be done either under Overseas Employment and Migration Law 2013, or Women and Child Trafficking Law 2012;

- An interstate joint commission should be formed immediately to stop this irregular and risky migration. This body should facilitate sharing of information and promote coordination to address flows of irregular migration;

- Irregular migration through the Bay of Bengal should be considered as an urgent issue at the next meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (CFMD);

- Bangladesh and Malaysian governments should reevaluate the Government to Government (G2G) agreement and reestablish formal migration process within these two countries;

- Under labour law, the government of Thailand does not regulate fishing boats which have less than 15 workers. Bangladesh should take the help of international forums to exert pressure upon the Thai government to bring such fishing entrepreneurs under the labour law of that country so that they cannot get away by employing Bangladeshi workers to work in slave-like conditions.

- The government and society at large should come forward to provide assistance to those families who have lost their beloved ones, who were the income earners of their families.

The writer is at the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), University of Dhaka.

# Why taxation must go global



WOLFGANG SCHÄUBLE

THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY

WE are witnessing profound changes in the way that the world economy works. As a result of the growing pace and intensity of globalisation and digitisation, more and more economic processes have an international dimension. As a consequence, an increasing number of businesses are adapting their structures to domestic and foreign legal systems and taxation laws.

Thanks to technical advances in the digital economy, companies can serve markets without having to be physically present in them. At the same time, sources of income have become more mobile: There is an increasing focus on intangible assets and mobile investment income that can easily be "optimised" from a tax point of view and transferred abroad.

Tax legislation has not kept pace with these developments. Most of the tax-allocation principles that apply today date back to a time when doing business internationally primarily meant transporting goods across a border to a neighbouring country. But rules that were devised for this in the 1920s and 1930s are no longer suitable for today's international integration of economic processes and corporate structures. They need to be adapted to the economic reality of digital services.

In the absence of workable rules, states are losing revenue that they urgently need in order to fulfill their responsibilities. At the same time, the issue of fair taxation is becoming more and more pressing, because the number of taxpayers who make an adequate contribution to financing public goods and services is decreasing.

The resulting tensions between national fiscal sovereignty and the borderless scope of today's business activities can be resolved only through international dialogue and uniform global standards. Within the European Union, permitting groups of states to forge ahead with joint solutions to issues that can be addressed only multilaterally has worked well in the past. If such measures prove successful, other states follow.

This approach can also serve as a global governance model for resolving international problems. In today's world, even large states cannot establish and enforce international frameworks on their own. Groups of countries still can. This has been demonstrated in the context of financial-market regulation; it is starting to become clear with regard to the regulatory framework for the digital economy; and it is now being confirmed in the area of taxation.

The Seventh Meeting of the Global Forum on

Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes took place in Berlin this week, bringing together representatives from 122 countries and jurisdictions, as well as the EU. A joint agreement on the automatic exchange of information on financial accounts was signed on Wednesday.

The joint agreement was originally an initiative by Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Roughly 50 early-adopter countries and territories decided to take part, while other countries have indicated their willingness to join.

The agreement is based on the Common Reporting Standard, which was developed by the OECD. Under the CRS, tax authorities receive information from banks and other financial service providers and automatically share it with tax authorities in other countries. In the future, virtually all of the information connected to a bank account will be reported to the tax authorities of the account holder's country, including the account holder's name, balance, interest and dividend income, and capital gains.

Various measures are in place to ensure that banks can identify the beneficial owner and notify the relevant tax authorities accordingly. The CRS thus expands the scope of global, cross-border cooperation among national tax authorities. In this way, we can establish a regulatory framework for the age of globalisation.

The automatic exchange of information is a pragmatic and effective response to the perceived lack of global governance regarding international tax issues. By making taxation fairer, governments will have a positive impact on people's acceptance of their tax regimes.

This great success in the fight against international tax evasion would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. Now it is important to continue the efforts of the OECD and the G-20 in the area of corporate taxation. We need to make sure that creative tax planning in the form of profit-shifting and artificial profit reduction is no longer a lucrative business model.

A "beggar-thy-neighbor" taxation policy, by which one country pursues tax policies at the expense of others, is just as dangerous as beggar-thy-neighbor monetary policies based on competitive currency devaluation. It leads to misallocations -- and will ultimately reduce prosperity around the world.

That is why we need to agree on uniform international standards in order to achieve fair international tax competition. The progress achieved in Berlin on the automatic exchange of tax information shows that, by working together, we can realise this goal.

The writer is Germany's Federal Minister of Finance.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Apathy towards a Freedom Fighter's memory

Sheer indifference of the authorities of Nilphamari Pourasabha and Nilphamari Zila Parishad towards a hero of our Liberation War has stunned the freedom-loving people of the district. The concrete pillar engraving the road name, 'Shaheed Bashar Road' got damaged long ago. The road was named after BA 6966 Captain R.A.M. Khairul Bashar, ASC, a national hero of Bangladesh independence war in 1971. But the irony is that local pourasabha authorities who are supposed to reconstruct the concrete pillar are not at all bothered about the task. The important road runs between new poura market intersection at Sabuj Para and PTI (Primary Training Institute) intersection at Ukil Para in Nilphamari town.

Meanwhile, Shaheed Captain Bashar Gate which was built by Nilphamari Zila Parishad at the main entrance of Nilphamari town in 2004, is lying uncared for. Even the official plaque which was engraved on the wall of the gate is now totally hidden under the posters.

The memorial gate is not only a tribute to Shaheed Captain Bashar, but it has also become the ultimate symbol of sacrifice made by the martyrs during the Liberation War in 1971. The authorities concerned should take immediate measures for proper maintenance of the magnificent gate and its surrounding area.

A few days ahead of March 25 night crackdown by Pakistani forces, Pakistani military junta wanted to recapture the SSD (Captain Bashar's Tigers' Den) from the command of the Bengali army officer. The forces of Baluch Regiment of Pakistan attacked the Tigers' Den. But Captain Bashar and his forces successfully repulsed the attack and compelled the forces of Baluch Regiment to retreat. Captain Bashar fell a martyr on May 29, 1971.

**Khairuzzaman Topu**  
Brother of Captain Bashar

## Mark zebra crossings first

We, the Dhaka dwellers are happy to see that police are making an effort to stop pedestrians from jaywalking. Everywhere in the world pedestrians use zebra crossings to cross the roads. My humble request to the city corporation: mark zebra crossings on all important roads and then make pedestrians to use them, if they do not comply, then fine them. It really doesn't take that much of an effort to mark zebra crossings. This is the ultimate solution to the problem.

**Khandaker Zia Hasan**  
Communication Trainer & Journalist

## Curbing judicial corruption

This refers to the report, "Govt. alone can't fight corruption" (Nov. 23). What about judicial corruption which is not much talked about? The big hurdle in fighting judicial corruption is contempt laws. The United Nations Convention on Corruption mandates a helpline to report on judicial corruption. This should be implemented. How many nations have implemented this? Sting operations are needed to expose judicial corruption.

Corruption affects every section of society. Only rhetoric is not enough; what is needed is action on the ground. Why should litigants suffer?

**Deendayal M. Lulla**  
On e-mail

## Comments on news report, "Mamata's tribute to Mujib," published on November 28, 2014

M. Emad

Most biographers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ignore the important Calcutta period (1942-1947) of his life.

OpeeMonir

Those are biographers who are paid to write, I suppose. There are plenty of them.

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## "Beware, tigers!" (Nov. 28, 2014)

Enayet Mowla

I know nothing about making of such a film but what I do know is unless there is something new and enjoyable in a film, nobody will go to watch it.

There is a saying in Bengali: a cow can climb a tree in a story. We all know a cow cannot climb but if we see that in a movie, we will laugh, and that is the main thing.

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## "Modi's assurances on LBA, Teesta water deal" (Nov. 28, 2014)

Javed Helali

We have a Farakka Treaty. Do we get the water as per the treaty? We get much less than the agreed amount every year! Will our present government be able to ensure the fair share of Teesta water?