

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Dhaka deluged

Drastic action needed to save the capital

NO wonder Dhaka is one of the most unlivable cities in the world. Many would like to think that except the change in spelling of the name of the Capital, very little change has come about by way of adding to the comfort of the people living in the city. The chaos caused by waterlogging during the two days of rain, which was not anything very excessive, has wrought, testifies to that. And the problem is increasing every year where the opposite should have been the case.

The statistic of the facilities is miserable. As reported in this paper last week, only a third of the 360 sq km of the Wasa service area is covered by the drainage system. And even if there were better drainage coverage the way the runoff areas have been clogged up, the canals and rivers blocked, the drainage would be of no use at all. Added to that, the natural water holding areas have been filled up to make room for newer construction, and the exercise continues unabated. The Detailed Area Plan has been all but discarded to cater to the unscrupulous land grabbers. And this has put paid to any hopes of eliminating the problem of waterlogging.

We must stress that the problem is not for the two city corporations or the two mayors to resolve alone. The government must come in a big way to intervene in the matter. The catchment areas in particular must be freed and the encroachers, many of them with strong political links, must be made to clear the impediments and pay for the havoc they have wreaked on the Capital.

## Lakhs of college admission seekers get edgy

Online placements run into unforeseen glitch

IT is a shame that new academic sessions of colleges seem destined to be delayed, if not thrown off-gear altogether. The apprehensions arise from the fact that the software that the BUET team used may not have been 'appropriate' for maintaining a huge amount of data. Besides the magnitude of the task, the variety of students' choices made the process complicated demanding well-tested software. It appears that the challenging aspects of the undertaking were not properly thought through. In fact, the software was adopted without even a trial run, which, if it is true, reflects the height of professional irresponsibility.

Where it should have been problem-solving, it is being problem-generating. But going online means efficient, fail-safe and speedy delivery of services. It also helps curb corruption and malpractice. Such inherent strengths of digitalisation cannot be allowed to be frittered away through operational lapses.

The 1.1 million HSC passed students waiting with great anxiety to see the outcome of their applications have only been informed of revised timings for publication of the lists of successful applicants. The educational authority was struggling to place the 'first merit list' on the website at the time of writing this column but the academic sessions begin on July 1. Surely other merit lists are to follow, to say nothing of placing a large majority of students who couldn't make the high grades. Thus, the educational board and the BUET must unflinchingly coordinate to speed up the process of placements.

# Investing in human capital



FAHMIDA KHATUN

MACRO MIRROR  
When you ask private universities or research organisations, you will learn how frustrated they are as they cannot recruit and retain talented graduates as well as mid-level professionals.

Dearth of human capital is a huge problem in this populous country. Of course, the job market is very competitive and getting a job is difficult for a university graduate. But the competition has reached a low level equilibrium. A low quality graduate is competing with a worse quality graduate. One can only get frustrated to see the depth of knowledge on the subject they studied, their analytical ability, proficiency of language, particularly English and general awareness about day-to-day affairs, of the candidates in an interview board.

The search for a mid-level manager or researcher is even tougher. The better ones of the lot are already settled. Poaching of human resources from another company is a common practice worldwide. But in a setting like ours, where the supply of skilled resources is far below the critical

minimum, the void of a skilled worker is not easy to fill.

Our educational institutions are not producing human resources which can match the need of the job market. The quality of education starts eroding from the primary and secondary levels. Every year, the number of students obtaining golden GPA has been increasing overwhelmingly. But what do they do with these grades afterwards? Getting into a public university is beyond the intellectual ability of most of these students. So those who can afford to pay for private university education would go for it to chase their dreams.

Only a handful of them get to reach their goals. With due respect to some of the very talented and dedicated teachers, I can tell from firsthand experience that many are simply not cut out for teaching. In my organisation, we often cannot recruit a researcher with good grades from private universities due to very poor understanding of economics and low presentation skills. A few days or months later, the same applicant would call or come to seek blessings before joining the faculty of a private university. This is a vicious cycle. Low quality teachers produce poor quality human resource. When these products compete with each other in the job market, the standard remains low and weak. This leads to low productivity. If the current trend of quality deterioration continues, we will soon become a country full of under-qualified professionals delivering low quality services.

Thankfully, there are still a large

number of bright students who are contributing to maintaining the standards of our work. However, most of them, quite naturally dream of either going abroad for higher studies or working in foreign lands. And in most cases, once they leave, there is no return. Over the years, the problem has become more acute, particularly in developing and least developed countries.

In Bangladesh, nowadays, mostly the children of big entrepreneurs return home to take over their parents' empire. This is a

responsibility does not end with the allocation of a few thousand crores for education and training. Strict monitoring of quality at all levels of education has to be complemented with higher expenditures. The private sector should also come forward to invest in human resource which, in turn, will benefit them as well.

We need to think of a sustainable solution. Mobility of workforce is unstoppable in a globalised world. There is no alternative to more investment on human development. The role of human capital in economic growth is appreciated by policymakers, as is reflected in national policies. But the

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welcome trend as we now have a highly qualified second generation business community with new ideas. For the rest, it is not only the children but also us, the parents, who prefer their children to stay safe and secure in a faraway country, even if they get a good job here.

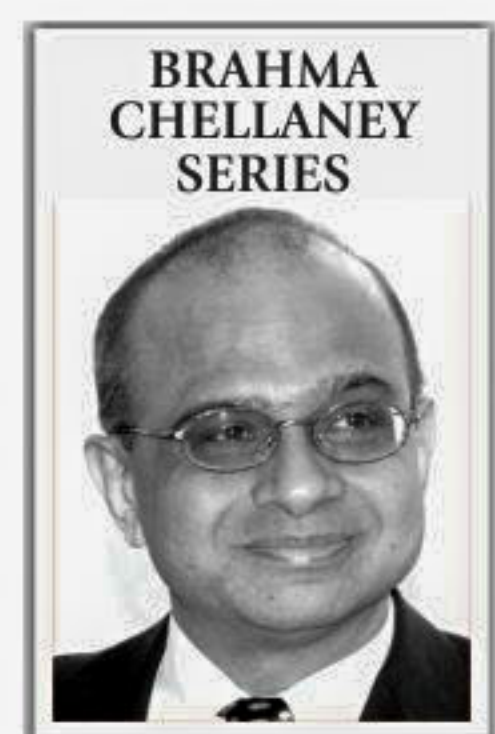
When people from developed countries take up jobs abroad, these countries do not face any problem as their pool of human resource is large and comes from all over the world. We are not ready to open up our job market

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The writer is Research Director at CPD, currently a Visiting Scholar at the Earth Institute, Columbia University, New York.

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# A healthy, climate-friendly diet



BRAHMA CHELLANEY SERIES

THIS December, world leaders will meet in Paris for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, where they will hammer out a comprehensive agreement to reduce carbon emissions and stem global warming. In the run-up to that meeting, governments worldwide should note one critical, but often overlooked, fact: the single biggest driver of environmental degradation

and resource stress today is our changing diet – a diet that is not particularly conducive to a healthy life, either. In recent decades, rising incomes have catalysed a major shift in people's eating habits, with meat, in particular, becoming an increasingly important feature of people's diets. Given that livestock require much more food, land, water, and energy to raise and transport than plants, increased demand for meat depletes natural resources, places pressure on food-production systems, damages ecosystems, and fuels climate change.

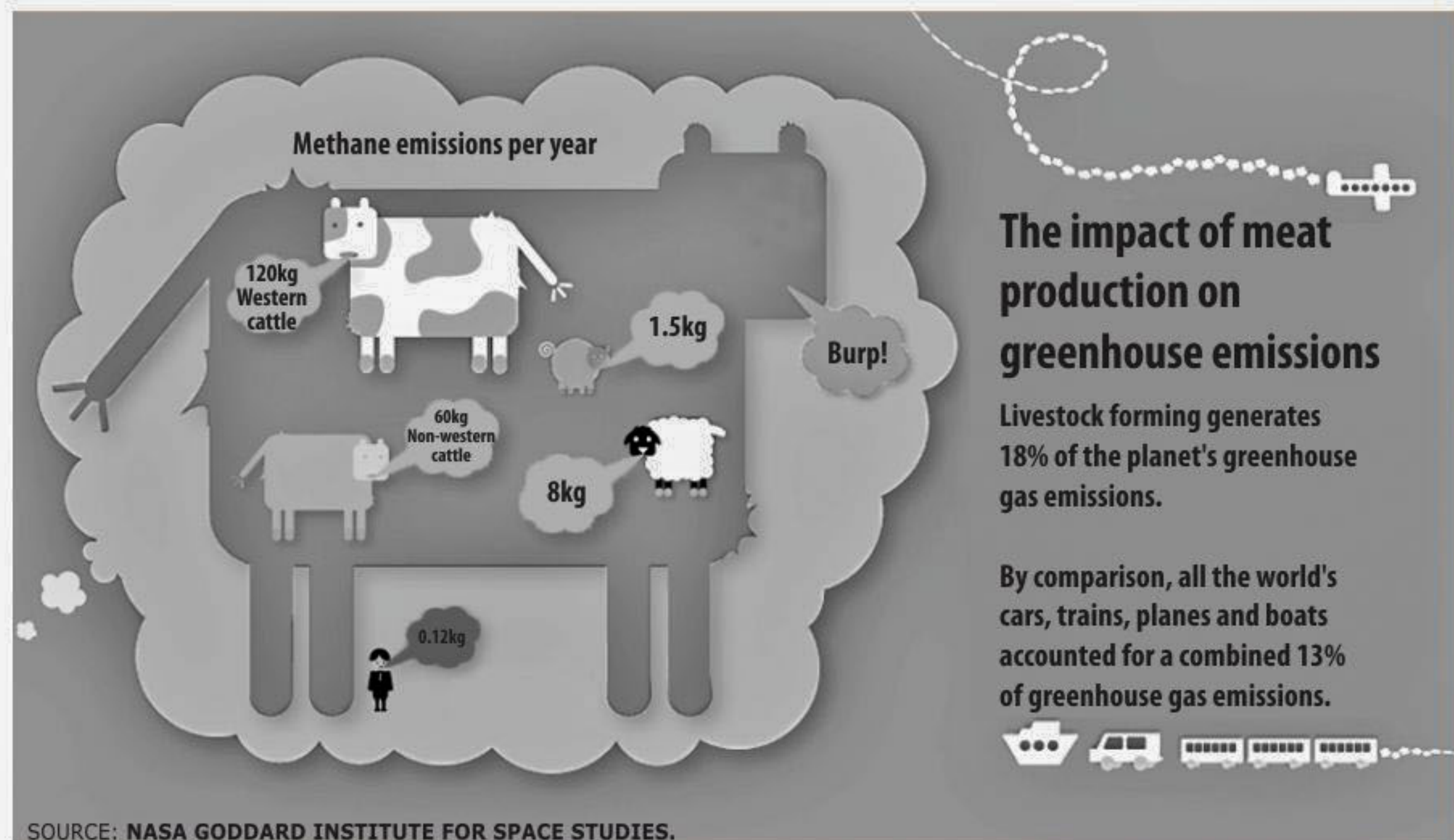
Meat production is about ten times more water-intensive than plant-based calories and proteins, with one kilogram of beef, for example, requiring 15,415 liters of water. It is also an inefficient way of generating food; up to 30 crop calories are needed to produce one meat calorie.

At any given time, the global livestock population amounts to more than 150 billion, compared to just 7.2 billion humans – meaning that livestock have a larger direct ecological footprint than we do. Livestock production causes almost 14.5 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions and contributes significantly to water pollution.

Moreover, livestock production consumes one-third of the total water resources used in agriculture (which accounts for 71 percent of the world's water consumption), as well as more than 40 percent of the global output of wheat, rye, oats, and corn. And livestock production uses 30 percent of the earth's land surface that once was home to wildlife, thereby playing a critical role in biodiversity loss and species extinction.

It took more than a century for the European diet to reach the point at which meat is consumed at every meal, including breakfast. But, in large parts of Asia, a similar shift has occurred in just one generation. Meaty diets have created a global obesity problem, including, of all places, in China, whose expanding international clout is accompanied by expanding waistlines at home.

Americans consume the most meat per capita, after Luxembourgers. Given the size of the US population, this is already a problem. If the rest of the world caught up to the United States – where meat consumption averages 125.4 kilograms per person annually, compared with a measly 3.2 kilograms in India – the



environmental consequences would be catastrophic.

Already, the signs are worrying. The demand for meat is projected to increase by 50 percent from 2013 to 2025, with overall consumption still rising in the West and soaring in the developing world, especially Asia.

In order to meet this demand, meat producers have had to adopt an extremely problematic approach to raising livestock. In order to ensure that their animals gain weight rapidly, meat producers feed them grain, rather than the grass that they would naturally consume – an approach that is a major source of pressure on grain production, natural resources, and the environment.

Making matters worse, the livestock are injected with large amounts of hormones and antibiotics. In the US, 80 percent of all antibiotics sold are administered prophylactically to livestock. Yet this has been inadequate to stem the spread of disease; in fact, with many of the new and emerging infectious diseases affecting humans originating in animals, veterinarians, microbiologists, and epidemiologists have been trying to understand the "ecology of disease" (how nature, and humanity's impact on it, spreads disease).

Though the environmental and health costs of our changing diets have been widely documented, the message has gone largely unheard. With the world facing a serious water crisis, rapidly increasing global temperatures, staggering population growth, and growing health problems like coronary disease, this must change – and fast.

For starters, to ease some of the resource pressure, livestock producers should switch to water-saving technologies, including drip irrigation. At the same time, governments and civil-society groups should promote healthier diets that rely more on plant-based

proteins and calories.

According to recent research, if the world stopped producing crops for animal feed or diverting them to biofuels, it could not only end global hunger, but also feed four billion extra people – more than the number of projected arrivals before the global population stabilizes. Meat consumption actually leads to more greenhouse-gas emissions annually than the use of cars does.

This is not to say that everyone must become a vegetarian. But even a partial shift in meat-consumption habits – with consumers choosing options like chicken and seafood, instead of beef – could have a far-reaching impact. Indeed, beef production requires, on average, 28 times more land and 11 times more water than the other livestock categories, while producing five times more greenhouse-gas emissions and six times more reactive nitrogen.

Adopting a balanced, largely plant-based diet, with minimal consumption of red and processed meat, would help conserve natural resources, contribute to the fight against human-induced global warming, and reduce people's risk of diet-related chronic diseases and even cancer mortality. Just as governments have used laws, regulations, and other tools with great success to discourage smoking, so must they encourage citizens to eat a balanced diet – for the sake of their health and that of our planet.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin, is the author of nine books, including *Asian Juggernaut*; *Water: Asia's New Battleground*; and *Water, Peace, and War: Confronting the Global Water Crisis*.

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## COMMENTS

**"Pesticide in litchi kills kids, again"**  
(June 27, 2015)

Towkir Akhand

The sad fact is- these toxic litchis harm only the poor.

**"The privileges of a white terrorist"**  
(June 27, 2015)

Abu Elias Sarker

Confederate flag symbolises deep-rooted racism.

Aakash Usha

Perfect example of impartiality of the western media!

**"We can beat SA"**  
(June 27, 2015)

Mohammad Prem

Obviously we can beat South Africa!

Kamruzzaman Dinar

I agree with the captain on this. Yes, we have the ability to beat them. We are now playing quality cricket and we can say we will leave no stone unturned.

**"The country is thriving on the exploitation of the poor"**  
(June 23, 2015)

Wordsmith Khaleque

Yes certainly, the professor is right. But the problem is that we're in a powerful and vicious cycle that is pretty difficult to change overnight.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters@thedailystar.net

### Don't impose VAT on tuition fees

The budget for the fiscal year 2015-16 received huge flak from different quarters as there is a proposal of adding 10 percent VAT on the tuition fees of private universities. If the sole purpose of this is to collect as much revenue as possible to reduce the budget-deficit, then it is not a pragmatic step. The parents of the students studying at different private universities will have to bear the brunt of that whereas the tuition fees have already been a huge burden on them. We urge the government to reconsider its decision.

Samiul Raijil  
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### Of Geoffrey Boycott and BD cricket team

A recent remark by Geoffrey Boycott about the BD cricket team may have infuriated many fans of Bangladesh cricket. But we should not forget that he is a very senior and well respected personality in the cricketing world and hence his advice is valuable. Geoffrey emphasised that it is imperative for Bangladesh to play more matches abroad with New Zealand, Australia and South Africa rather than just winning matches at home. Bangladesh can surprise the cricketing world only after defeating England, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa in their respective countries, said the 74 years old.

Upon scrutinising Geoffrey's opinion, 2015 is already turning out to be a remarkable year for Bangladesh cricket. The year started off really well as the Tigers whitewashed Zimbabwe both in tests and ODIs followed by a successful World Cup performance. Tigers delivered the goods once again as they whitewashed Pakistan in ODIs, and most recently, the tigers were successful in clinching the ODI series from the much talked about, full-strength Indian squad. Geoffrey might have termed Bangladesh cricket's success as occasional winning, but it seems that Bangladesh is actually getting used to winning on a regular basis.

Muhammish Uddin Ahmed  
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