

Dhaka vs Kolkata

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 that Dhaka has been becoming a less welcoming city to live in every year.
 Is it because we are overcrowded? Is it because of our constrained resource? Or is it because we Bangalees do not know how to keep our living space nice and liveable?
 If we look at Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal and perhaps the best case for comparison, we can clearly see it is neither population, nor resource constraint or cultural habits that contributed to the diminishing liveability of Dhaka.
 Ask any old timers of Dhaka—they would sigh and say that Dhaka used to be a beautiful green city even in the seventies. Back then Kolkata was filthy with garbage dumped everywhere on the streets. The air of Kolkata used to reek of garbage. There used to be frequent load shedding and traffic condition was horrendous.
 But look how the table has turned. Now Dhaka has all those, not Kolkata. According to a report based on a survey by a non-government organisation published in the Times of India June last year, Kolkata ranks the best among 21 selected Indian cities.
 Again you don't even need a survey to compare Kolkata to Dhaka in terms of liveability.
 Kolkata has a population of nearly 14 million people (metro population is 4.5 million) while Dhaka has 14 million (with metro population of 7 million). However the sprawl of urban Dhaka is much smaller than that of Kolkata at present.
 Kolkata has one basic advantage over Dhaka—it has many more times the streets, both in number and length. The bustling city also has a metro rail service (ours will be coming a few years later) that carries a great number of people around the city.
 If you have been to Kolkata, you will find the streets cleaner. They are adequately lighted. Many of the streets do have potholes—but its nothing compared to Dhaka streets.
 Kolkata has 48 government hospitals; whereas Dhaka has around 23 (17 of which are specialised). Many Bangladeshis go to Kolkata for better treatment all the time.
 The Kolkata government also runs

14 universities—compared to just four (including Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University) in Dhaka.
 The number of taxicabs in Kolkata is no less than 50,000 according to the Indian press—this number would be less than a thousand in Dhaka.
 Kolkata is no longer a city of traffic jams— Dhaka is. Kolkata now has dozens of flyovers to ease traffic congestions. Kolkata has complex "One way" street rule enforcement—many streets remain One Way in one direction in the morning and the opposite direction in the evening. The idea of One Way street in Dhaka is utopian at best.
 The traffic police in Kolkata have the power on the streets. Nobody fights with the police and commuters rarely disobey traffic rules. The result is visible—you will seldom see a maniacally driven public bus in Kolkata. No bus will stop in the middle of the road at an intersection. No bus will try to crush other vehicles.
 It's noteworthy that Kolkata is comparatively safe for women. You can see women on buses even after midnight.
 They also kept their famous Gorer Math neat, clean and green. Compared to that, how did we treat our Suhrawardi Udyan?
 If you compare the sculptures in the public places in Kolkata with those in Dhaka—you will see that we did not engage real artists to create public art.
 Recreation, street food, night life, large shopping malls, apartment lifestyle; on any account, Kolkata is way ahead of Dhaka. And yet Kolkata has the same number of Bangalees we have and we share the culture.
 So why do we have a city that appears to be dying? The answer is simple, and this goes with every aspect of the city. People, who do not love our city, plan and run our city. The policymakers are not concerned about the city because they must have disconnected themselves from the services this city provides. For health care they fly to Singapore. For their children's education, they rely on western countries. And when they buy homes, they buy it in Canada or Australia. Otherwise how can they leave this beautiful city rotting?



The domed roof of a shrine inside the compound of Islamia UP Government Primary School in Sutrapur. Teachers and members of the school managing committee allege that it was built with intent to grab the school land. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Old Dhaka schools

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 visited it yesterday.
 He also went to four other schools in Sutrapur and expressed disappointment over their poor condition.
 Established in 1950 by locals, the school was moved to this building six years later.
 The government nationalised it in 1973.
 The three-storey school building has 17 rooms -- five on the first floor and six each on the ground and top floors.
 The building has turned dilapidated for lack of renovation, and all the rooms on the ground and top floors have become unusable. On the first floor, four rooms are used as classrooms and the other as teachers' room.
 The teachers said many guardians took their children to other schools for the sorry state of the school.
 "There were 600 students at this school in 1990. When I joined this school in 2010, the number was below 100," said Shahnaz Parvin, head teacher of the school.

Teachers and members of the school managing committee (SMC) alleged that a major portion of the institution had long been occupied by local influential people until 2012. The grabbers held back renovation of the school with the motive for shutting it down.
 The head teacher told the minister that the grabbing began in 1980. At that time, the rooms on the ground floor and a part of the first floor were occupied.
 But things worsened in early 90s when a man named Belayet grabbed a portion of the school land, she said.
 In 2012, the then deputy commissioner of Dhaka evicted the grabbers from the school rooms, Shahnaz said.
 She informed the minister that the school now has four kathas of land in its possession while the remaining four kathas are occupied by Belayet's family.
 Nur Ahmed Mollah, president of the SMC, told the minister, "He [Belayet] used to live in one room he had built on the school land. He then started occupying school rooms."
 Belayet died in 1999. His family members buried him on the school

land and built a mazar (shrine) there, he alleged.
 "The mazar was constructed with intent to grab the land," he told the minister.
 The shrine carries a nameplate "Fakir Hazrat Belayet Shah Chisti".
 The Daily Star tried to talk to Belayet's family members, but they refused.
 After visiting the school, the minister wondered how the students could study in such situation. "The school does not have basic amenities."
 He said the government would do whatever necessary to renovate the school.
 Mostafizur said at least 12 schools in Old Dhaka are in such dismal condition and the government would help them improve their infrastructure.
 About the alleged grabbing of Islamia School's land, he said, "We will see the relevant documents and decide on it."
 The minister said there was no shrine there when the school was set up or even when it was nationalised.
 "We will look into the matter," he added.

Ivy's death anniversary observed

PM attends milad

BSS, Dhaka

A milad and doa mahfil was held at the Gulshan residence of late Awami League leader Ivy Rahman yesterday afternoon on the occasion of her 11th death anniversary.
 Ivy was the women affairs secretary of AL and wife of late president Zillur Rahman.
 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the programme. Relatives, friends and well-wishers of the deceased as well as ministers, lawmakers, leaders of AL and its associated bodies were present.
 A special munajat was offered on the occasion, seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of Ivy Rahman, Zillur Rahman and other dead victims of the August 21 grenade attack.
 On this day in 2004, Ivy died from splinter injuries she sustained in the attack.



A bridge and its approach roads collapsed on Sunday due to onrush of floodwater in Nageshwari upazila of Kurigram, snapping road communication between 12 villages in the upazila and Hasnabad union.

PHOTO: STAR

Palmyra temple destroyed by IS

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 Palmyra, raised concerns for the rest of the Unesco World Heritage sites.
 It comes only days after ISIS beheaded the 82-year-old retired chief archaeologist of Palmyra, sparking widespread condemnation.
 "This destruction is a new war crime and an immense loss for the Syrian people and for humanity," said Irina Bokova, the head of the UN cultural watchdog Unesco, calling for the perpetrators to be held accountable.
 "Daesh (ISIS) is killing people and destroying sites, but cannot silence history and will ultimately fail to erase this great culture from the memory of the world," Bokova said in a statement.
 Syria's antiquities chief Maamoun Abdulkarim told AFP the temple was destroyed on Sunday.
 "Our worst fears are sadly being realised," Abdulkarim said.
 Famed for its well-preserved Greco-Roman ruins, Palmyra was seized from government forces in May, prompting concerns ISIS might destroy it as it has heritage sites in parts of Syria and Iraq under its control.
 Initially most of Palmyra's best-

known sites were left intact, though there were reports ISIS had mined them and the group reportedly destroyed a well-known statue of a lion outside the city's museum.
 "Daesh placed a large quantity of explosives in the temple of Baal Shamin today and then blew it up," Abdulkarim said on Sunday.
 "The cella (inner area of the temple) was destroyed and the columns around collapsed," he said.
 Prior to the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, more than 150,000 tourists visited Palmyra every year.
 ISIS mined the ancient site in June before destroying the Lion Statue of Athena outside the Palmyra museum.
 Most of the pieces in the museum were evacuated by antiquities staff before ISIS arrived, though the group has blown up several historic Muslim graves.
 ISIS' harsh version of Islam considers statues and grave markers to be idolatrous and the group has destroyed antiquities and heritage sites in territory under its control in Syria and Iraq.
 ISIS has also executed hundreds of

people in the city and surrounding area, many of them government employees, and infamously used children to shoot dead 25 Syrian government soldiers in Palmyra's ancient amphitheatre.
 Among those it has killed was Khaled al-Aasaad, Palmyra's antiquities chief for 50 years, who was beheaded last week after refusing to leave the city following the ISIS takeover.
 In neighbouring Iraq, the jihadist group has razed some relics of ancient Mesopotamia and looted others to sell on the black market.
 Syria's war, which began with anti-regime protests, has spiralled into a multi-front conflict that has killed more than 240,000 people.
 On Sunday, at least 31 people including eight children were killed in government air strikes on rebel-held Eastern Ghouta outside Damascus, the Observatory said.
 Rebels have fired barrages of rockets into Damascus from the region in recent days, with Syrian state media saying 13 had been injured by missile fire yesterday.

Stock rout spreads

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 there's panic," said Michael Woischneck who helps oversee the equivalent of \$7.1 billion at Lampe Asset Management GmbH in Dusseldorf, Germany. "There's no rational choice anymore, no rational reaction. The Americans will add to the European selling."
 Investors in American equities are selling their most-loved stocks, with Apple Inc. and Netflix Inc. losing more than 4 percent. In an unusual mid-quarter update on the business, Apple Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook said on CNBC Monday that the company is seeing "strong growth" in China through July and August.
 Some prominent money managers and forecasts have said the selling has gone too far, too fast. Jonathan Golub, chief market strategist at RBC Capital Markets, says the bloodbath in biotechnology and tech stocks is temporary, and investors should buy back the best performers of 2015.
 Laszlo Birinyi, the investor whose bullish calls have repeatedly come true since 2000, says that while the selloff lashing global equities is painful, its cause is no mystery -- and that's a reason for optimism.
 Doug Ramsey, the chief investment officer of Leuthold Weeden Capital Management LLC, whose quantitative research into market breadth, valuation and investor sentiment foreshadowed the drubbing in American stocks last week, says the

selling will worsen.
 All of the shares in the Stoxx Europe 600 Index retreated Monday, driving the gauge down 6.5 percent. Germany's DAX Index retreated 5.5 percent, taking the decline from its peak in April to more than 20 percent.
 Investors withdrew \$1.9 billion from US exchange-traded funds that invest in emerging-market stocks and bonds last week, the most since March.
 In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index slid 8.5 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index fell 5.8 percent, tumbling further into a bear market. The measure is about 25 percent below an April high, with a gauge of price momentum dropping to the lowest since the October 1987 stock-market crash.
 "This is a real disaster and it seems nothing can stop it," said Chen Gang, Shanghai-based chief investment officer at Heqitongyi Asset Management Co.
 Greater China equities plummeted, with Taiwan's benchmark gauge dropping as much as 7.5 percent. More than \$4 trillion was wiped from the value of Chinese equities from June 12 through Friday.
 The Bloomberg Commodity Index fell 2.7 percent, heading for the lowest closing level since August 1999.
 Brent and West Texas Intermediate crudes both traded at six-year lows of \$43.65 and \$38.76 a barrel, respectively. Gold, a haven for investors

during volatile trading, was little changed at \$1,161.41 an ounce, erasing earlier losses, while copper slipped 3.1 percent.
 Currencies of basic resource-producing countries led declines, with the ruble tumbling 2.5 percent to 70.86 per dollar and Malaysia's ringgit sliding 1.8 percent to a fresh 17-year low. South Africa's rand dropped 2.1 percent and New Zealand's currency weakened 1.8 percent.
 Turkey's lira retreated 1.2 percent. A deadline for a coalition government passed, putting the country on course for its second parliamentary election this year.
 The yen advanced with the euro as Treasuries rallied amid speculation the global selloff will forestall the Federal Reserve's first interest-rate increase since 2006.
 Japan's currency jumped 1.8 percent to 119.95 per dollar, the strongest since May 19 and the euro climbed for a fourth day against the dollar, strengthening to \$1.15 for the first time since February.
 Fed funds futures now show a probability of a December rate increase at 51 percent versus 61 percent on Friday. Bets on the first increase in rates in almost a decade in September fell to 28 percent, down from 34 percent. The calculation is based on the assumption that the effective fed funds rate will average 0.375 percent after the first increase.

Quorum crisis hits crucial JS body meet

RASHIDUL HASAN

A meeting of the parliamentary committee on public undertakings could not be held yesterday at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban as there was no quorum.
 Only two of its 10 members were in attendance, one short of a quorum. The two present were committee chief Col (ret) Shawkat Ali and Abdul Rouf MP.
 The situation of the state-owned Sonali, Agrani, Janata and Rupali banks, specially their huge default loans, was set to be discussed at the 18th meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings at 3:00pm.
 Talking to The Daily Star, Shawkat said he was forced to cancel the meeting in presence of officials concerned of the Parliament Secretariat, ministries and departments as the quorum was not met.
 The lawmaker waited for about half an hour in the meeting room on the first floor of the parliament building.
 Shawkat, also a former deputy speaker of parliament, said the

Parliament Secretariat informed the committee members about the meeting at least 15 days ago. Besides, they were sent SMS messages a day before the meeting.
 The committee is composed of 10 Awami League lawmakers. Eight other members of the committee are Abdul Quddus, Majibur Rahman Fakir, Muhibur Rahman Manik, Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, Habibir Rahman, Nurul Islam Shujan, Abdul Wadud and Navana Akhter.
 According to the rules of procedure of parliament, the quorum to constitute a sitting of a committee shall be, as near as may be, one-third of the total number of members of the committee.
 Every parliamentary committee has an obligation to sit at least once in 30 days.
 Contacted, Habibur Rahman, Abdul Quddus and Navana Akhter said they could not join the meeting as they were busy with programmes in their constituencies to mark the 40th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

IS using toy cars to launch bomb attacks: Report

PTI, London

Islamic State terrorists are using computer game inspired remote-controlled toy cars for launching bomb attacks on front lines, according to a media report.
 Kurdish soldiers fighting the dreaded terror group in Syria and Iraq came across one of the cars, inspired by computer game Call Of Duty, after it failed to detonate, The Mirror reported.
 However, several others have exploded, killing and injuring enemy forces.
 The small vehicles are reportedly being imported by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) from Turkey.
 Jihadists load the monster truck-style vehicles with explosives and then, using remote controls, send them to the front line to face their enemies, the report said.
 The scheme has chilling echoes of the Call Of Duty computer game in which players use remote-controlled cars to kill opponents in a virtual war zone.
 It follows reports that ISIS is flying drones over enemy positions to identify vulnerable areas.