

# Another attack on Shias

## Part of a greater conspiracy

THE site for the second attack on Shias, barely a month after the one in the capital city, has occurred in a mosque in Shibganj Upazila of Bogra district. Gunmen brazenly entered a mosque and shot dead one and injured three others. This sort of attack on a mosque, let alone Shiite, is unheard of in our country. It represents a major escalation in terrorist attacks in the country that has over the past month or so left several dead including some foreign nationals.

There is no history of sectarian violence among Muslim groups in Bangladesh. We are alarmed at the occurrence of such an incident in the spate of less than a month and the official explanation given is that members of the outlawed JMB unit are responsible for the latest incident. How low have we stooped that there are those amongst us who have no qualms about entering a mosque and shooting down devotees. A mosque is a very sacred place for any Muslim, Sunni or Shia, and those who commit such acts of violence have taken their hatred and their vindictiveness to new heights.

The actions of these men have brought nothing but shame to our land. They are not representative of the people of Bangladesh and they certainly do not speak for Islam. We demand a strong response from our law enforcers because the atrocity committed by a handful of criminals cannot be allowed to fuel hatred among our countrymen and tarnish the image of the country abroad.

# Centre for pavement dwellers

## Replicate this laudable initiative

WE applaud the initiative of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), Sajida Foundation, Concern Worldwide and Water Aid of opening a three-Pavement Dweller Center on DSCC land to provide temporary shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and other essential services for extreme poor and homeless people in the capital. The centre would also organise capacity building activities and offer special facilities for differently abled people. As the winter approaches, our already vulnerable homeless population will have to battle it out for survival on the cold, harsh streets, with nothing but a torn blanket, if that, to shield them. Support from the city corporation, if it is sustainable, can go a long way towards providing them some comfort.

Urban poverty and rising inequality is a sad reality in Dhaka and other major cities in Bangladesh. According to a survey conducted by Centre for Urban Strategies, about 44 percent of people living in the capital are deprived of any sort of housing facilities; of them, 8-9 percent are floating populations who live on roads, parks and rail and bus stations. Many of these people take refuge in the city having lost their lives and livelihoods in their villages because of climate change, natural disasters or shifting economic conditions; others come here dreaming of a better life, only to be trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. They are forced to live in inhumane, unhealthy hazardous conditions on the streets, lacking access to drinking water and toilets and exposed to a wide variety of diseases. Women and girls are exposed to high levels of violence on the streets.

The government must have a long-term vision for this vulnerable group, and the DCC, in collaboration with NGOs, should institute more such centres all around the capital where the homeless can seek sanctuary.

COMMENTS

*“It proves war criminals were Pakistan's men”*  
(November 25, 2015)

▼

**Jabed Hossain**  
There is no doubt about that.

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**Kiran**  
Pakistan always shows immense passion for the rajakars.

▼

**Opee**  
Pakistan should first take up the issue of capital punishment through unfair trials in their own country and of Pakistanis executed in Saudi Arabia instead of meddling in our domestic affairs and telling us what to do.

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**Lisa Akhter**  
Pakistani government has always shown a little too much affection for the rajakars.

*“Spend Tk 270cr, cut Tk 7,300cr loss”*  
(November 24, 2015)

▼

**Zarina Ferdousi**  
It's not a bad idea, is it?

▼

**Altaf Ahmed**  
A mega city like Dhaka needs more well-planned initiatives.

▼

**Rehana**  
The situation is getting out of hand. We have to come up with more pragmatic solutions.

▼

**Laila Muhammad**  
The government needs to recover all the grabbed canals as soon as possible.

# IT'S NO DEAL IN PARIS ON CLIMATE CHANGE without transport

TYRRELL DUNCAN

THIS December's climate change summit in Paris could at last see an ambitious, legally-binding deal. For the first time, this would encompass the bulk of global greenhouse gas emissions, since the biggest emitters—including the US, China, and India—are now closely engaged in the negotiation process.

Up to now, the focus of these and other countries in tackling climate change has mostly been on cutting emissions from power stations by replacing fossil fuels with renewables—rightly so. For according to the International Energy Agency, electricity and heat generation cause 42 percent of global emissions from fuel combustion. But of the remainder, transport—particularly road users—is the largest offender, producing 23 percent of global emissions.

So for any climate deal to succeed, it will need to broaden its focus from energy to address all the main sources of emissions. And the climate deal must provide the needed financial and technical backing for low-carbon transport. Otherwise, any climate deal in Paris is a no deal.

This challenge is most urgent in developing countries, where emissions are growing fast. Already non-OECD countries account for more than half of global transport emissions. Some 19 percent comes from developing Asia alone. As incomes continue to rise, vehicle ownership in much of the region is growing at 8 percent or more annually. At that rate, Asia's vehicle fleet will double by 2024 and emissions will also more than double.

Historically, the cities in advanced countries grew slowly, while their transport systems were developed over the best part of a century. In the developing countries of Asia, meanwhile, villages and towns have mushroomed into megacities in just a few decades. For example, China now has 160 cities of more than 1 million and India has 47.

Unfortunately, in most cases, their transport systems have not kept pace with this expansion. The result is scenes

congestion in Asia knocks 2-5 percent off gross domestic product every year due to lost time and higher transport costs. In the Philippines where I am based, the estimated daily loss is more than \$52 million. Without intervention, the problem will only get worse.

Under pressure to produce immediate results, city mayors and officials often lack the technical know-how or finances to come up with lasting solutions.

To meet its transport needs, developing Asia needs to invest an

*Carbon emissions per passenger kilometre using Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) are about one quarter those using private motor vehicles. Wider deployment of BRT and other forms of public transport in developing countries between now and 2050 would eliminate 40 percent of global urban transport emissions.*

familiar across Asia—city streets clogged with vehicles and crowds choking on plummeting air quality as they pack onto crowded public transport. We've all seen this from Manila to Mandalay, Bangkok to Bangalore.

Such conditions carry a high human and economic toll, beyond the gloom of living in soot stained surroundings under an ever present grey pall. About 2.6 million deaths were linked to outdoor air pollution in Asia and Pacific in 2012, according to the World Health Organization. Meanwhile, road

estimated \$2.5 trillion during the present decade. This is much more than the financing available from governments, the private sector, and international development assistance combined.

This is where climate finance can play an instrumental role—helping countries and cities to bridge the financing gap while giving priority to investments in low-carbon transport.

Recent experience shows that city transport options do not always have to be costly metro systems. In some locations, highly effective low-carbon

transport can be set up relatively quickly and cheaply.

One such approach is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Such a system inaugurated during the summer in Yichang in Hubei Province, a Chinese city of 1.4 million urban residents, took just three years to develop and cost \$99 million—somewhere between a tenth and a fiftieth of the cost per kilometre of building a metro line.

Through simple measures such as dedicated lanes and off-board fare collection, some 300,000 passengers a day there now enjoy safe, clean, convenient travel along a 24-kilometre line comparable with any metro.

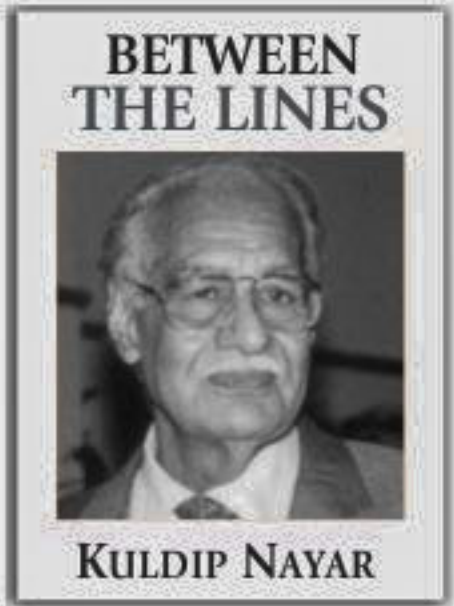
A 2014 Institute for Transportation and Development Policy and University of California study estimates that carbon emissions per passenger kilometre using BRT are about one quarter those using private motor vehicles. Wider deployment of BRT and other forms of public transport in developing countries between now and 2050 would eliminate 40 percent of global urban transport emissions.

Of course, BRTs are not the only remedy available to clogged cities—metros and conventional buses will continue to play a role, depending on local circumstances. But Yichang offers a low-cost model that could easily be replicated in many of Asia's crowded cities—if the required expertise and finance are provided.

It's time for low-carbon—and ideally low cost—transport to take its place alongside energy at the heart of the new climate debate in Paris.

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The writer is technical advisor for transport at the Asian Development Bank.

# Focus on Aamir Khan



KULDIP NAYYAR

I was present at the function where Aamir Khan, a leading actor, said that his wife had asked him whether they should move to some other country for healthy upbringing of their child. There was no rancour in his tone, only a bit of sadness. Still his remark shook me. Indeed, it shook the entire nation.

Never before had I realised that the things had come to such a pass that even a person like Aamir Khan would think of moving to some other country. Lesser persons from the minority communities must be terror stricken.

The return of awards by some 500 artists and intellectuals in the country is understandable. It is their way of expressing agony. Those who have not gone to that extent share the feeling of helplessness.

Aamir Khan's remarks should make the communalists sit up and ponder over what has driven the minorities to the wall. And even the most talented and sophisticated among them, like Aamir Khan, feel unsafe.

Instead the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has pounced upon him and literally abused him. That India has made him and he is ungrateful are some of the remarks. He has made himself through hard work. India has appreciated him for his acting.

I concede that nothing new has happened to deserve such a remark. But this is how Aamir Khan feels. I respect his feelings. We should all introspect why a person like Aamir Khan, who is loved and admired throughout the country, should say such a thing. He must have thought about the effect it would have. He must have felt that the intolerant mood that is deepening in the country makes even a person like him redundant. His secular credentials are beyond reproach and his whole life is an open book.

Unfortunately, the debate on his statement has not been healthy. Instead of making people sit up and seek possible reasons for the observation Aamir Khan has made, there has been furore over why he dared to make the remark. Once again the perennial question of Hindu-Muslim relations has come to the fore. The tendency to sweep everything under the carpet does not help. It has been done in the past. The nation must discuss the question in its entirety. The minorities should consider themselves safe. It is what they say that counts, not what the majority says.

The reference point still remains the division. The partition is a reality. The formula was accepted by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, who were then leading the independence movement. True, both were reluctant to accept the partition. But when they felt that there was no option to end British rule, they agreed to the vivisection of India.

Mahatama Gandhi walked out of Governor General Mountbatten's room when he broached the partition

formula. He did not want to have anything to do with it. But when the then British Prime Minister Attlee said that they would quit, with or without any settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League, Nehru and Patel faced the facts and agreed to the partition, with pain and sorrow however.

True, the line drawn on the basis of religion has been a disaster because it has left the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, at loggerheads. But this was apparently the price people had to pay to make the British quit.

Sadly, the fallout of partition has been injurious. The disconcerting part is that the two states, India and Pakistan after British rule, have become sworn enemies. Politicians on both sides are to blame because they,

leaders of peace and amity, left their homes to seek shelter in a country of their own community. Never before in history had there been such a bloodbath. Some 10 million from both communities were killed and many times more driven from their homes.

Till today the wounds have not healed. On the contrary, the two countries have fought three inconclusive wars. And there is no prospect of durable peace. Muslims have lost importance in India although there are more than 15 crore of them. And Hindus in Pakistan constitute less than two percent of the population.

After independence, Pakistan declared it would be an Islamic state and adopted the constitution accordingly. India chose to be a secular state. Despite



particularly the ones in Pakistan, have continued the same discourse of divisions and differences.

The Congress, leading the independence movement, should have explained to the people why there was no alternative to partition after Muslims were generally guided by the two-nation theory. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, argued that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations. He made religion the basis of nationality. It has had detrimental consequences but he was able to rally the support of Muslims at that time.

The transfer of power was peaceful only in name. People on both sides, despite the assurances by

making up 80 percent of the population, Hindus preferred to be ruled by a constitution which put secularism in the preamble itself. There is equality before the law and no Indian is inferior to another on the basis of religion. However, Muslims count for very little in the affairs of the state.

The fact that there is a joint electorate, unlike before the partition, helps the community. But it is only up to the polls. Once the elections end, other factors take over and Muslims are ignored. The hiatus between Hindus and Muslims reappears as it was before the polls. And this is the situation India still faces.

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The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Career development in private banks

Nowadays many graduates are taking up banking jobs for attractive remuneration packages as well career development opportunities. But some banks, particularly the private ones, do not have a well-defined system to help temporarily appointed trainee officers get their job permanent.

A few days ago, I was going through an appointment letter of a reputed private bank issued to one of our graduates. I was surprised to learn

that most of the clauses of the agreement letter were directed towards the protection of the bank's interest but none of them addressed when the temporary appointee would be made permanent. In fact, there is no probationary period. Only a consolidated salary is offered, which is less than the starting salary in the government sector. Even deductions like income tax, etc. are made from this meagre salary. These temporary

officers work even on weekly holidays and beyond normal office hours without any incentive.

I think private banks should offer better salary packages and career development opportunities to newly recruited officers. This will encourage talented, young graduates to take up the banking profession.

**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
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## Pakistan's reaction

- There is no doubt that the reaction of Pakistan regarding the execution of two war criminals has crossed the line of diplomatic norms. It was simply outrageous. The audacity that Pakistan showed by meddling in our domestic affairs is beyond belief. It has no business saying anything regarding our dealings with the war criminals.
- **Anami**  
Dhaka