Saving Dhaka

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disrupt the lives

of millions, and

# A city dying

SELINA MOHSIN

OR over an hour, hundreds of → vehicles jammed the road. Dust particles blew all around and the smell of exhaust fumes permeated the air. An ambulance with a critically ill patient blew its siren to pass through but failed. A car attempting to move a little hit a rickshaw with a female passenger. The woman fell headlong, banging her head at the edge of a pot hole. Blood oozed out as she moaned in pain. People screamed, abusing the car driver and a fist fight ensued. Welcome to the city of Dhaka, the world's worst city to live in after wartorn Damascus. Bangladesh's capital has a core area

poses difficult of 325 sq km with a density of over and expensive 45,000 people per sq km. The larger metropolitan area comprises around political choices 2,161,17 sq km. Unplanned construction, land grabbing, waste dumping, waterlogging, traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and fast rising population has led to a crisis situation. In 2004, road and infrastructure damage cost around Tk. 7 to 8 billion annually.

Road comprises only 7 percent of the city instead of the 16 percent minimally required. In Paris and Chicago, the proportion is 25 percent and 40 percent, respectively (Michael Hollen).

Dhaka lacks planned network with adequate feeder roads to main roads and highways. With 650 major intersections and 60 main traffic lights, some often broken, it can take over an hour to cover 1 km. Traffic congestion delays are estimated to cost US\$ 3.8 billion annually. Inadequate transportation to the suburbs leaves no option but to crowd into the city, cooped up in high rises or slums.

A 2009 World Bank survey found 60 separate bus companies, each with their own routes and schedules. Links to political parties or powerful trade unions make it almost impossible to regularise them. Annually, over 37,000 additional vehicles ply the roads. A World Bank report found that 50 percent of the bus drivers and less than half of the CNG drivers have proper driving license. Moreover, the footpaths are occupied by temporary shops, forcing pedestrians to walk on crammed roads leading to accidents.

Dhaka's population increase by rural migration is 4.4 percent annually, the highest in the world. This has created

ET'S face it,

people think of doing

when they have some

how easy it is to access

programme is. If given

a choice, who's going

to choose attending a

training progamme

over hanging out with pals or watching a

Training is more than an event where free

lunch and refreshments are offered. It leads to

personal and organisational development. As

learning, training aims at the improvement of

administrative and managerial capacity which

is the scarcest resource in a developing coun-

development economist Michael Todaro says

in his book Economic Development in the Third

resources that ultimately determine the char-

Unfortunately, most organisations, either

acter and pace of its economic and social

public or private, have a fuzzy assumption

unskilled employee does not automatically

about training and development. An

come back as a changed, improved and

World, "not its capital nor its natural

development."

try. "It is the human resources of a nation,"

defined abilities related to work. It enhances

opposed to methods in the wider field of

favourite TV show? But they should.

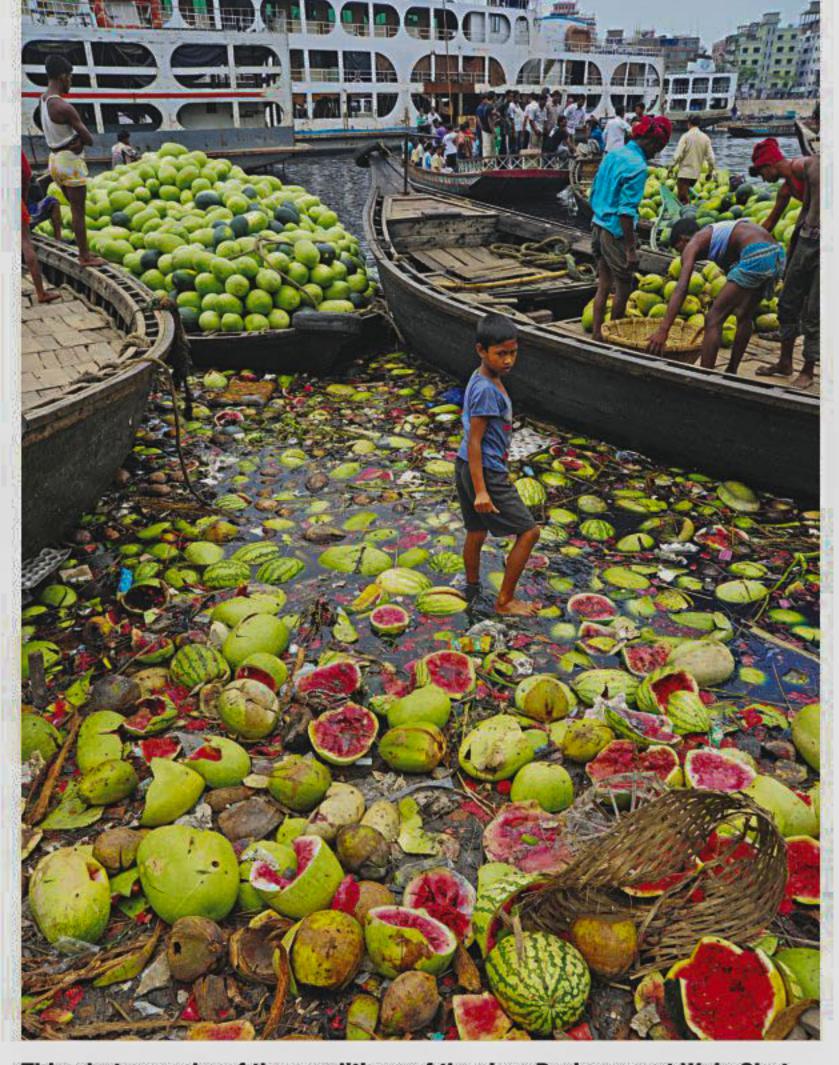
free time, no matter

or how brilliant the

training is not

unprecedented challenges for weak city authorities. Illegal infrastructure and blocked water courses abound. Residential areas are used for nonresidential purposes, and high rise buildings, too closely built, are results of uncontrolled market forces. 62 percent of residential/commercial areas have 25 percent planned and 37 percent unplanned infrastructure. Estate developers and powerful mastans have

Buriganga and the Turag river; b) Gulshan-Banani-Begunbari-Dhanmondi khal system, draining into the Balu river and; c) Dholai-Girani-Segunbagicha khal system draining into Buriganga and Balu rivers. But in the last 25 years, unplanned filling up of water bodies and illegal construction work have caused many khals to disappear and have clogged up existing ones. They were storm sewers; water



This photo speaks of the conditions of the river Buriganga at Wais Ghat near Ahsan Manzil in Old Dhaka. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

destroyed 80 percent of the capital's open spaces; water retention ponds and wetlands flood flow areas. The water table has gone down below 300 feet due to overuse. This can lead to subsidence.

In 1987, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) identified three major khal systems in greater Dhaka: a) Degun-Ibrahimpur-Kalyanpur khal system draining into the

retention areas; surface water bodies to check flood flows and allow water to percolate into the ground.

The Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) estimated that in September 2010, waterlogging caused a loss of Tk. 632 billion for the garment industry and flooding, leading to a loss of Tk. 12.8 billion (Khan 2010). Out of the 43 canals, 17 have completely disappeared

and 26 are in critical condition.

Stagnant water breeds water-borne diseases like typhoid, diarrhoea, dengue and hepatitis. Millions are victims every From 2010 to 2013, land developers

almost destroyed the main section of the Turag River by constructing on over 87 acres of the river bank. In the flood flow zone along Balu River, illegal encroachment turned 548 acres into housing plots in just four years. JICA estimates that approximately 683 acres of Mohammadpur water retention zones have been filled up. Vast river beds surrounding the capital have been illegally acquired, thereby destroying the drainage system and access to safe drinking water. Currently, the rivers Buriganga, Sitalakhya, Turag and Balu receive 2 million cubic metres of waste water every day from over 7,000 industrial units. The Buriganga, containing a high level of cadmium, chromium, mercury and solid waste is considered a dead river.

Pollution of all kinds is rampant: lead in dust and paint, pollution from leather and textile dyeing, industrial emissions, suspended particulates and excessive carbon monoxide from vehicles. Suspended dust from construction and factories are major sources of sulphur-dioxide, lead, mercury, manganese and other organic compounds. Ground level ozone and nitrogen oxide add to health hazards. .

Dry season air concentration of lead is 463 monograms, higher even than the 383 monograms in Mumbai, and causes respiratory diseases like asthma, apart from high blood pressure, heart diseases and even cancer. The World Health Organisation

(WHO) ranks Dhaka as the fourth worst city in the world for air quality. An estimated 15,000 premature deaths as well as around 5 million pulmonary, respiratory and neurological illnesses

were attributed to poor air quality as

early as 1999 (UNEP). Dearth of open spaces and

playgrounds impacts negatively on the quality of life and social ecology. The feeling of community disappears as new people and offices occupy high rise buildings in areas where everyone had their own homes and lived in social harmony. This loss of community bonds brings in the risk of insecurity, crimes, theft, fear and violence.

By 2031, World Bank estimates that the population of Dhaka could exceed

25 million, while that of greater Dhaka could surpass 40 million. This has to be managed as has been done in Tokyo and Seoul. The government has taken up some projects for sustainable water and transport, but sporadic activities

will not be enough. Saving Dhaka will be hard. It poses difficult and expensive political choices and requires years of political commitment and good governance. It will also disrupt the lives of millions, and so citizens' participation must be vigorously canvassed to achieve a better

quality of life for all. Funding from multiple donors and IFIs has to be deployed with transparency and monitoring by external agencies. The government will need experts from abroad and home. One large donor or several donors may take up specific sectors, formulating plans in collaboration with other sectors to avoid replication and wastage.

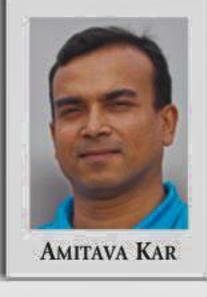
Dhaka needs to be decentralised, firstly by constructing efficient transportation such as metro-rails, overbridges and roads for quick connectivity with the city. Affordable townships for middle, lower middle and lower classes must be built outside greater Dhaka to house those currently living on illegal land and buildings, and for rural newcomers. At least 60 percent of the unplanned constructions and buildings on wetlands, river banks and other open spaces have to be demolished, irrespective of partisanship or powerful political lobby.

In addition, rivers and lakes must be cleared and restored. Polluting industries must upgrade their technology and move outside greater Dhaka or to other divisions, thereby enabling other areas to develop. New and existing commercial centres must be helped to grow outside the city and compete to reduce population pressure on Dhaka, for instance by relocating RMG factories, SMEs, private universities and essential government and medical services to other districts.

The situation is already desperate. Only when the government and all parties are totally committed to engage in expert planning and strong action will Dhaka have some chance of a sustainable future.

The writer is former High Commissioner of the Maldives, former dean of a private university and Head of Education and Human Resource Development Initiative, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK.

## Training: More than a free lunch



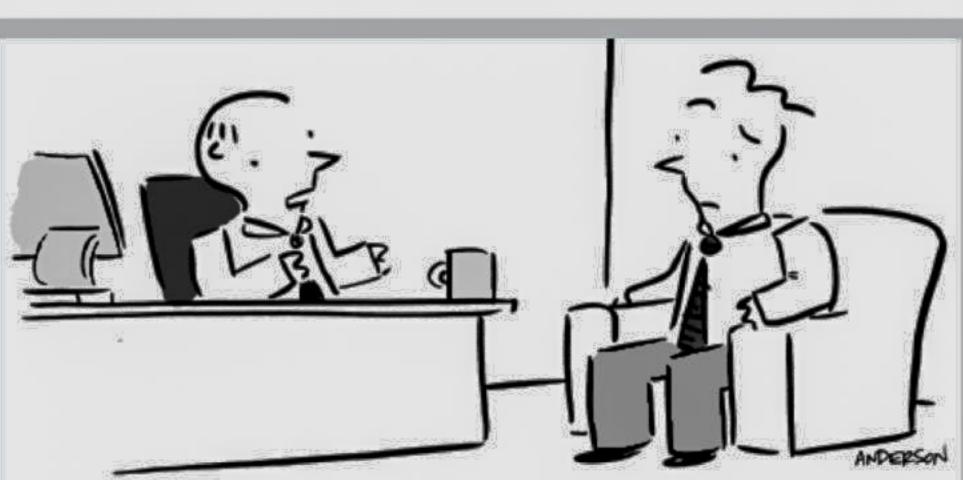
skilled worker if sent to training. What happens before and after a training session is just as important as the actual instruction itself. Companies invest a lot of time, energy and

money in training with little to show for it. For instance, US firms spent \$164.2 billion on employee learning in 2012, according latest data but more than 80 percent of the news skills were lost within a year. What goes wrong when it comes to training? "Ideally, organisations should allocate at

least 2 percent of their budget to training. In Bangladesh it is way less than that," Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, Chair Professor at Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), says. "Skills inventory must be done. Post training evaluation is very poor. A lot of public servants are sent for foreign training. But not even 1 percent of them get the opportunity to apply the skills as they are transferred frequently. The state of training in the private sector is even less satisfactory."

First, organisations don't take the time to set the objectives which is a definition as well as a guide of what trainees will be able to do when they go back to workplace. Objectives must be defined in consultation with the trainees and supervisors so that individual and organisational needs are met.

Then comes analysing what the training needs are - figuring out who needs training and what kind. It is usually the first step taken to cause a positive change. Without a proper Training Needs Analysis, training



"Tom, we're letting you go, but we'd like you to stay on and train your replacement so they know what not to do."

programmes run the risk of turning into the proverbial "banking model" where trainees are treated as empty piggy banks to be filled with knowledge, an analogy popularised by Paulo Freire, the educator-philosopher and author of the famed Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Training creates expectations. But just attending a lecture given by a trainer will not improve anything. Design is the key. It's what you do before, during and after. How are you going to allow employees to practice? How are you going to provide feedback? What's going to be the

methodology? What kind of technology are you going to use? These may seem obvious questions, but few organisations actually pay attention to these details, research shows.

The next important element is posttraining evaluation: to find out how well employees have learned and to what extent objectives were met. Testing is paramount for recognising skills decay. Assessment should be done on a continuous basis. According to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), by the time employees go back to their jobs, they have lost 90 percent of what they have learned in training.

Managers should lead by example. Keith Ferrazzi, author of Who's Got Your Back (Broadway Books, 2009), writes in the Harvard Business Review (July 31, 2015), "If managers want employees to engage in learning and development, then they need to show that they are actively pursuing their own personal learning journeys as well."

Training demands commitment at the highest policy making level. Ibrahim Khaled says, "There is a National Training Council which is headed by the prime minister. I think the last time they sat together was 10 years ago. A guideline for a national training policy was issued. That's hardly enough."

Training improves performance. But it is not a panacea. Training will not be effective if a country is yet to establish transparency and accountability in the administration. In the absence of a consensus on national goals, aspirations and values which are the building blocks of a developed democratic society, it will be difficult to use the newly learned skills that are necessary for carrying out the ambitious development agenda. Training would contribute towards progress only when it takes place in a congenial environment where policies are formulated and executed to serve the long term interests of the nation and meet the rising aspirations of the common man.

The writer is a member of the Editorial Team at The Daily

### A WORD ADAY



**GERASCOPHOBIA** [jer-"as-cO-'fO-bE-a]

The fear of growing old

#### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

45 Lock

DOWN

1 Pillage

2 Threat words

3 Road section

6 We count in it

8 Street section

9 Pinter works

7 A long time

4 Corn unit

5 Easy runs

46 Depleted

**ACROSS** 

1 "Water Lilies" painter 6 Concert performers

11 Cheering loudly 12 Old market

13 Printer's proof 14 Flower part

15 Imitating 16 Bar order 18 Naval initials

19 Canine command 20 Run into 21 Lucy's husband 23 Liner parts

25 Chemical suffix 27 "There's -- in team"

28 Treasure guardian 30 Savvy about 33 Summer mo. 34 Vigor

36 Pink lady ingredient 37 Lima's founder 39 Last letter

40 Be penitent 41 Mary's friend 43 Harangues

44 Bar mixer

10 Witch trial town 17 Concealed 22 Groom's answer 24 Pigeon sound 26 Catherine the Great, e.g.

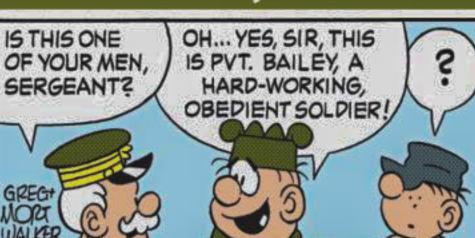
28 Rock instrument 29 Poetic "always" 31 Related 32 Short play 33 Set off 35 Harbor cities 38 Aardvark's lunch

42 Bound

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER HOPS SPACE APACHE LENTIL NEMO GOALLINE DEADLINE SLEETS PURRS PEEVE LAYMEN NECKLINE I F E L I N E RESIST IDOL DESK SAYS AGENTS NOTES

#### THE GENERAL SAYS HE JUDGES LEADERS BY THE QUALITY OF





by Mort Walker

#### **BABY BLUES** DAPPYL, YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THIS!



by Kirkman & Scott AND IF I DO GET CAUGHT, PLEASE

JUDGE.

I THINK THE SCHOOL HAD BETTER BEEF UP THEIR PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION.

GIVE ME A LENIENT