

Construction phase of metro rail

Alternative traffic arrangement needed

THE proposed elevated metro rail connecting the two ends of the capital is indeed a welcome move. This will greatly ease movement of commuters across the city as it will the traffic congestion. The government should be complimented for taking up the much needed alternative mode of travel within the city for the greater portion of the general public who are dependent on public transport. The project is expected to take between three and four years to be completed and we would like to express our concern regarding the attendant problem of such projects. The inevitable consequence of the construction is the disruption of traffic all along the route of the project. It has been our sorry experience that building of flyovers, over-bridges and loops in the capital were started without arranging alternative traffic plans, as is done in other countries. The Mouchak-Moghbaz flyover is a classic example of the level of distress public has to endure without a workable substitute provision for the movement of vehicles during the period of construction. With undue time overrun, the problem was even more compounded.

We would not like to see the public put through the same experience with people left to their own devices and the authorities hoping that the problem would take care of itself. The planners should be aware that this is not just another flyover. It covers a distance of 20 kilometres and goes over major conurbations. This being a multi billion dollar project, investing a fraction of it to ensure unrestricted movement of traffic along the length of the under construction metro rail will be worth the money.

Another death in custody

Police accountability in question

THE death of a young man in police custody in Mymensingh remains shrouded in mystery due to contradictory statements by the OC of Mymensingh Police Station and a doctor of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The former reportedly said that Pranto Chandra Dey, 21, was an addict and drug peddler who was detained with 15 yaba pills on Friday, suffered a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. The doctor told this newspaper that he was already dead when brought to the hospital.

Five people have died while in custody of law enforcement agencies in the first five months of this year, according to a rights organisation. Have the police launched any investigation to find the causes of these deaths? What happened to the autopsy reports? Why has the public outcry for accountability elicited nothing but an eerie silence from the law enforcement agencies? What does it say about the state of governance when the police evoke more fear in the minds of people than criminals? Without transparency, can trust be rebuilt?

We hold the police accountable not to throw mud at them but to impress upon them that it their duty to protect citizens, not put them in harm's way. The point is not to criticise them, but to help them become an accountable, efficient and well-reputed force. If democracy has to flourish, policing should be more pro-people. The police represent an established organisational culture with deep systemic roots in society and. Therefore, the only way to reorient the police force to be more conscious of human rights is to effect comprehensive reform in the criminal justice system of the country.

COMMENTS

"PM to inaugurate 2 four-lane highways on July 2"
(June 24, 2016)

Tasfiqur Rahman Arnab

At least, it will ease some pressure on the roads.

Viral Man

Development needs to be decentralised. Dhaka and the southern part of Bangladesh are developing rapidly. But the northern part of the country is still neglected.

Brexit: Rise of neo-nationalism and protectionism?



FAHMIDA KHATUN

WHILE European leaders dreamt of an intertwined economy across Europe 43 years ago, the British people desired something else. They wanted their country to be exclusively theirs and not be shared by outsiders. Brexit shows that conservatism prevails strongly deep in the hearts of people even in richer, more developed countries. They do not want others to share their privileges, their benefits and their rights. Hence, they gave their verdict to retain the sole possession of their country by choosing to exit Europe on June 23, 2016.

The wounds of Brexit will flow from Europe to North American to Asia. Though post-Brexit development is still evolving and will continue to do so in the coming days and months, the scale of impact on the British and world economy is still unclear. The impact of Brexit on the financial market was felt immediately, but the economic impact will be felt gradually in the medium and long term. Turbulence in the capital and investment market has also been felt strongly. The currency market plunged, as the British pound fell by 10 percent against the USD, which is at its lowest in 31 years. Low investment, slow job creation and lower growth is feared to follow in the medium term, thereby possibly reducing the size of the British economy. The impact of a depressed British economy will be felt one way or the other by each and every country having even the remotest connection with the UK.

The potential fallout of Brexit will be felt by Bangladesh in a number of areas including trade, investment, aid, remittances and migration. Bangladesh's economy is linked with that of the UK's in several ways. Bangladesh exports more than USD 3 billion to the UK, of which 90 percent constitute readymade garments. Thus, the UK is Bangladesh's third largest export destination, followed by the US and Germany. One of the reasons for increased exports to the UK is the duty-free quota-free (DFQF) market access of Bangladeshi exports to the EU market under the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative, which Bangladesh has been enjoying as a Least Developed Country since 1971. Even though the global tariff regime is being negotiated at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) towards deeper tariff cuts for higher global trade, Brexit may push countries to impose tariffs on imports, in order to protect their domestic industries in the face of pressure on their economy. The spirit of the WTO for trade liberalisation will thus be undermined, as countries could experience protectionism in its new facet.

With the UK leaving the EU, exports from Bangladesh may be affected in a number of ways. First, Bangladeshi exporters will earn less as they will lose the DFQF facility, which saves 12.5 percent duty on Bangladeshi exports. This will erode the competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports. Second, as the European and British economies will

experience instability, there would be depressed demand among people. Full implementation of Brexit will take at least two years. So, there is no immediate concern about losing the DFQF privilege. This is a breathing space that should be utilised efficiently by Bangladesh to continue its DFQF status in the UK.

In case of remittance, there may be sluggishness in the short run, as Bangladeshi migrants will be discouraged to do so in the face of currency fall. Notably, a significant share of Bangladesh's remittance – over USD 1 billion – comes from the UK, where Bangladeshi migrants are working. Brexit is said to have been influenced mainly by the migration issue. The British people, particularly the older generation, felt threatened by the flow of migrants into their country and 'taking' a part of their jobs, health services and other facilities. Taking cues from this, the British immigration regime may become stricter resulting in less

efforts. It is also the destination of a large number of Bangladeshi students, many of whom receive scholarships from the UK. Brexit brings uncertainty on the continuation of such opportunities for aspirant Bangladeshi students.

Now, through Britain's separation from the EU, countries across the globe will have to face new realities in defining their economic and political relationship with the UK and the EU. But the journey ahead is surely not going to be a smooth one. Brexit has shown the way to others. Ramifications of Brexit is apprehended to lead towards the beginning of the end for Europe and conservatism in the US. France and Germany may follow suit, destroying the European integration to the fullest. Donald Trump could get a boost for his anti-immigration populist policy in his election campaign.

Obviously, benefits of a global economic system have



ILLUSTRATION: ROBERT G FRESSON

Bangladeshis getting immigration visa. If the size of the British economy does not expand enough, immigration may continue to be tougher. Bangladeshi job seekers will find it more difficult to get jobs in the UK.

The UK is among the six countries in the world which has fulfilled the commitments of providing 0.7 percent of its Gross National Income as overseas development assistance. In fact, even after the financial crisis of 2008, the UK increased its aid flow. The UK is Bangladesh's second highest bi-lateral donor. Any change in their aid policy will have an impact on Bangladesh's development

not been enjoyed equally by everyone. The global institutions were the only ones to determine the terms for the citizens of countries, sometimes against their will. This has created distrust and suspicion about globalisation and given rise to neo-nationalism. It is also a step towards protectionism that will separate the global economy instead of further integration. And global leaders will not be able to revert the trend with existing economic policies and political decisions in place.

The writer is Research Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Toward a more reflective planet

DAVID KEITH and GERNOT WAGNER

THE last time the atmosphere held as much carbon dioxide as it does today was about three million years ago – a time when sea levels were 10-30 meters higher than they are now. Climate models have long struggled to duplicate those large fluctuations in sea levels – until now. Indeed, for the first time, a high-quality model of Antarctic ice and climate has been able to simulate these large swings. That is smart science, but it brings devastating news.

The new model shows that melting in Antarctica alone could increase global sea levels by as much as one meter (3.2 feet) by the end of this century – well above prior estimates. Worse, it suggests that even extraordinary success at cutting emissions would not save the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, locking in eventual sea-level increases of more than five meters. As little as one meter could put at risk entire cities, from Miami to Mumbai, and cause enormous economic disruption.

We need to turn down the heat – and fast. To this end, albedo modification – a kind of geoengineering intended to cool the planet by increasing the reflectivity of the earth's atmosphere – holds tremendous promise.

Injecting synthetic aerosols that reflect sunlight into the stratosphere, for example, could help counter the warming caused by greenhouse gases. The mechanism is similar to wearing a white shirt in the summer: white reflects sunlight and cools what is underneath, whereas darker colors absorb sunlight and heat.

To be sure, even in the best-case scenario, solar geoengineering alone could not 'stabilise' the world's climate. For that, we must both stop pumping carbon pollution into the atmosphere and learn how to remove what is already there. That is why emissions cuts should

receive the lion's share of resources devoted to combating climate change.

But, as the recent study shows, emissions cuts alone cannot save the West Antarctic Ice Sheet and prevent a drastic sea-level rise. If they are pursued in conjunction with moderate albedo modification, however, there is a chance of halting rising temperatures, helping to keep the world under 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the more ambitious target agreed at the Paris climate talks last December. (It should be noted that, given carbon-cycle feedbacks, such as the thawing of permafrost, there is a chance that the world would face a 1.5 degree Celsius rise, even if emissions were eliminated today.)

Most of the world's state-of-the-art climate models have explored albedo modification, and each of them has found that the process does have the potential to mitigate climate change. Beyond limiting total warming, it can help to check the rise in peak temperatures, decreasing the risk of destructive heat waves.

Most of the world's state-of-the-art climate models have explored albedo modification, and each of them has found that the process does have the potential to mitigate climate change. Beyond limiting total warming, it can help to check the rise in peak temperatures, decreasing the risk of destructive heat waves. And it seems to be particularly effective at reducing extreme rainfall, which holds profound implications for minimizing flood damage.

Albedo modification remains uncertain and risky, owing partly to a dearth of organized research into the subject. And, in fact, albedo modification would undoubtedly make some things

worse. But there is not a single climate model run that shows that a moderate intervention would make any region worse off overall. Moreover, the large potential upside, measured in trillions of dollars, contrasts with low direct costs – in the single-digit billions for full-scale deployment. In fact, albedo modification is so cheap that direct costs will not be the deciding issue. Instead, it is a risk-risk trade-off – one that will require more research to assess.

Given the lack of knowledge, no sensible person would push for deploying albedo modification today. But it would make no sense to ignore its potential. After all, no one would argue that we should

abandon research on a promising cancer drug because it is unproven.

The US National Academy of Sciences first called attention to what it then described as "climate modification" in a 1983 report. It recommended careful research in 1992 and again in 2015. Major environmental groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council support careful, small-scale research. Yet no such program exists.

One reason for this is concern about the diversion of resources from other approaches. And, of course, there are tradeoffs. But the US, for example, has an annual climate science budget of around \$3 billion. An exploratory solar

geoengineering program, costing only a few tens of millions of dollars per year, is entirely feasible.

A larger obstacle to progress is fear that more attention to geoengineering solutions would sap motivation to cut emissions. Maybe so, but it would be barking mad to take up smoking simply because an experimental cancer treatment showed some promise on a lab rat. And, in fact, it is conceivable that a concerted effort to advance research on albedo modification could spur action to cut emissions, much like a graphic look at the side effects of chemotherapy prompts some to stop smoking.

Whichever reaction prevails, the moral imperative to explore a technology that can protect the poorest and most vulnerable this century would seem to trump amorphous concerns that doing so could weaken the incentive to pursue solutions that would largely benefit future generations.

China has initiated a limited research program on albedo modification. The US has not. Given that albedo modification is the kind of technology that necessitates an open, transparent, and international research effort – precisely the kind of effort in which the US excels – this is a serious failing.

The US government should take the lead now in researching albedo modification. Even if the result was that albedo modification does not work, the dividends of such research would be enormous, owing to the added pressure to cut emissions. And if it turned out to be successful, the social, environmental, and economic returns would be tremendous.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Unethical practice of some private schools

I am writing this letter to express my concerns regarding an incident which took place with one of my friends who worked in an English Medium school in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. She comes from a respectable family and has taught in multiple schools. In the last school, the school authority all of a sudden sent her a text message stating that she has been terminated from her job. For what reason they terminated her employment was however, unknown to all. My friend tried to know the reason but the school authority didn't explain anything. They didn't even pay her the last month's salary. When she went to

the school to talk about this, she was refused entry by the guards as the principal of that school ordered so. She stood there for one hour under the scorching sun and finally left empty handed.

I have heard almost the same experience from many private kindergarten/English medium school teachers. I wonder what these schools teach their students as they themselves indulge in unethical practices of exploiting people.

Mrs Mizanur Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka

Penalty to stop indiscriminate dumping of waste

I live on the second floor of a rented house in Banasree in Dhaka. Our building is adjacent to another building. Very often, the residents of our neighbouring building throw garbage through their windows, which fall in the narrow space between the two buildings, sometimes making entry into our house. I have complained about this issue several times, but the owners of the flats of that building paid no heed and have been continuing with their disgusting actions.

Though there is a system of collecting garbage from households in the cities, many people still like to throw their garbage here and there. The authorities should introduce a provision of punishment for indiscriminate dumping of waste, thereby serving a caution to people who insist on doing this.

Last but not least, this city is ours and we need to be the ones to keep it clean.
Mohammad Zonaid Emran
Banasree, Rampura, Dhaka