



SURVIVING DHAKA YOU CAN'T ESCAPE

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Every turn you take is a game of chance. You just may see the light of day or you may end up in a freshly dug out ditch full of potato-cracker wrappers. Sometimes, you will face a deranged, money hungry elephant pointing its snot-dripping snout at you. These are Dhaka roads. Every turn is an exercise in blood pressure elevation.

We complain, without benefit, of this network of connectivity that often leaves us completely and utterly disconnected. The roads are so bad, relatives living in distant areas are now considered mutually disowned. Every time we remember these once close relatives, the brain softly hums 'you're someone that I used to know'.

Yet, we have to travel, sometimes. Many areas are divided into blocks. Other areas are divided into numbers. And yet others are hyphenated with a combination of number, alphabets and hieroglyphics. Lalmatia doesn't follow the alphabet even though the blocks are supposedly arranged in sequence. Block A is everywhere and B is almost nowhere to be found. Blocks E and F are vast but G stays hidden under a tree. Cut that lone tree and Block G is gone. To confound matters even more, some of these blocks are

referred to by names of some men long past like Zakir Hossain Road. It is also a block but no one is sure which it is.

Dhanmondi loves to have old road numbers and new road numbers coexisting at the same point of time. Uttara is so massive and divided, last I checked, people needed VISAs for multiple entry. I have relatives living there I have not seen for years. I have friends living in Thailand and Malaysia I have met twice last year. At least GPS manages to pinpoint most of the roads although several times I have been shown a solid wall to be the mouth of an open road on the tiny screen. Don't follow GPS unless you want to have one of those Wiley Coyote moments where your walk into a wall with a picture of a road on it.

And then there is Old Town, the one part of Dhaka that is so full of alleys that even locals sometimes get lost. GPS is lost there. Alleys lead to more alleys that lead back to an alley you were lost in twenty minutes ago. I have been lost there many times. Each time I came out of the area, I felt like Tom Hanks in Cast Away silently stroking my beard that didn't exist before I entered the area.

We voice our complaints on Facebook often, every

day. The mayors have paid the same amount of attention that a cat pays to its owner. Battles are fought online and keyboards have been destroyed in vain. The roads are a chaotic mess to remain for eternity as we cycle through the first four stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining and depression. Time to give in to the final stage and accept some acceptance. You can't escape.

I found it often helps to track the movement of people where you need to be. Facebook has several groups and pages that offer relevant information. Traffic Alert has excellent moderation so people mostly post traffic updates instead of desperately seeking for a solution to a cat bite. Although you will be treated to the occasional BMW/Mercedes badge on steering wheel when all you really want to see is the traffic ahead. GO-Traffic is an app that shows you the road conditions of Bangladesh based on info sent by users most of whom are situated in those areas. Both of these and other similar apps rely on users' interaction to evaluate and present data. It is a good thing people are always angry about the traffic because anger is something we love to share and give away. The bad thing is, most roads always seem to be clogged up.

To avoid clogged up roads, plan ahead for multiple exits. You look far, far into the road ahead and if you see traffic, you make a turn and use roads less travelled. You will soon find out less travelled roads. Eventually you will realise it is a futile exercise. You are a mouse in a maze with no cheese in sight. You really cannot escape, unless you walk. But why walk when gas is cheap and chauffeurs are a dime a dozen? ■



MARKETING 'PEACE' THROUGH SPORTS

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

There should not be any doubt that people around the globe realize the most expensive commodity is 'Peace' in today's world. Hence it needs focused marketing effort to make it more mass and available across the globe. So, what can be an effective vehicle to market this hopelessly scarce product? Due to professional requirements I get opportunity to talk to some cricketers from different parts of the world to understand their point of view on various issues including global harmony. I was amazed to experience the humility and commitment of those cricketers to spread goodness across this wonderful earth. They embraced sports as a profession not just for the sake of meeting their livelihood, rather they have a great deal of passion to spread the joy of happiness and peace across nations, cast and creed. Hence sports can be a great tool to market peace amongst people around the world.

When we dig further we can find these sportsmen play a very important role in propagating rights of humanity by engaging people and leaders in sports activities. They reduce the gap of human capacity through the carnival of sports, fair etc. Therefore sports improves lifestyle and human interactivity hence it helps improves mutual respect and non-discrimination across borders.

Sports as a business contribute to creating employment opportunities and promoting peace, development, and respect beyond geographic territory. Sport therefore contributes not only to achieving economic and social progress, but also instills values of respect and tolerance. If used in the right way, it can help develop a generation and an environment underpinned by respect and

equality in human rights. It can be used as a vehicle to boost equal opportunities for education, health, gender and ethnic equality, and to protect the rights of persons with challenges and the environment, among others. If the nations nurtures right to play for its citizen and create such environment, there window of peace opens for greater audience. We get mesmerised when we see Sachin Tendulkar talks about the values of cricket, not for only India, across nations through a TV channels.

The cohesion and neutrality of the sporting movement are important factors for achieving the sports ideal and values. The Initiative "Sports for Peace" was invented during the preliminary stages of the Olympic games 2008 in response to the question whether sports or major sporting events could be obliged to common ideals. In sports for peace athletes from all over the world gain an important platform on which they can join their responsibility to promote the essential intrinsic values of sports: fair play, tolerance, freedom, inter cultural understanding etc

As a politically independent initiative, "sports for peace" offers a neutral basis to foster the spirit of fair play, the sense of community and elimination of prejudice.

Ken Doherty is an Irish professional snooker player and radio presenter. He is the one of only two players to have been world amateur and world professional champion. He was also World Under-21 champion in 1989. He said "There are five S's in sports. They are stamina, speed, strength, skill, and spirit; but the greatest of these is spirit." Let this spirit of sports be the essence of bringing peace in the lives across the world.

The writer is a communication professional.

