

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Binning the bins

Good idea poorly implemented

AS part of the Clean Dhaka campaign, both DNCC and DSCC mayors set up hundreds of bins in their respective areas for better garbage management in the city. However, photos of waste bins published in this newspaper yesterday paint a contradictory picture. While one photo is of a bunch of dustbins taken out of city streets carelessly dumped, the others depict a bin overflowing with garbage and a bin holder with a missing bin.

These photos expose the glaringly poor maintenance of installed dustbins which are part of a well-intentioned initiative. We fail to understand why the authorities deemed it fine to unload many of these dustbins in a public space. What message does this send out to city residents among whom there is a lack of awareness regarding cleanliness to begin with? Is it not antithetical to the very purpose of the Clean Dhaka campaign? Furthermore, it is incomprehensible, and almost comical, that installed bins should be stolen so easily from the middle of the streets. It seems that the planning of the installation of waste bins was not well-thought-out because of their fragile construction which allows for their easy removal from the base and the lack of awareness programmes prior to the launching of the initiative.

We hope that the authorities will take swift notice of this issue and reverse the prevalent attitude of indifference towards waste management. If the capital is to become a cleaner, more liveable city then the concerned authorities must lead by example. A public space strewn with garbage bins and the theft of waste bins designated for residents most definitely do not set the right tone among city dwellers when it comes to keeping the city clean.

Under-construction flyover without safety measures

Blatant disregard for public wellbeing

OUR concern is raised by a photo published in this paper on January 10 showing an under-construction flyover in Chittagong without adequate precautionary and preventive measures to avert a mishap. We find it appalling that the authorities should fail to put any safety measures in place even hours after an iron bar from the structure fell on a passing car.

The thoroughfare is one of the busiest in Chittagong, the country's commercial capital. Nothing short of a miracle prevents even more fatal accidents from occurring, and we find it hard to believe that such a huge infrastructural project is being implemented without addressing the crucial safety issues.

Authorities appear to be blissfully unconcerned, as it has not been long that a flyover collapsed in the very city, not far away from the current construction site, leading to the terrible loss of life and limb. In light of such accident-prone antecedents of flyover construction, any lapse with regard to public safety is inexcusable. This shows gross negligence on the part of the authorities and a complete disregard for minimum safety standards.

Public safety cannot be glossed over. There should be proper monitoring and dissemination of information regarding safety rules to prevent what appears to be an impending disaster. Such sites should be enclosed and made off-limits to vehicular movement after serving prior notice. We hope that the construction company would be penalised for their negligence and the vehicle owner of the Chittagong flyover incident compensated, and those government agencies responsible for ensuring public safety be held to account.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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For a clean, hygienic city

This letter refers to a fascinating picture published in TDS on December 31, 2016, which shows rickshaw puller Nissan spreading flower petals at a particular spot in an effort to stop people from using the area as a toilet. This is an eye opener for all of us, and we should be taking lessons from this incredible gesture. In Motijheel, some walls had Arabic writings and pictures of minars of mosques to discourage people from urinating there but to no avail. The city corporations should establish public toilets in prominent areas, which should be easy to access and use.

Shafkat Rahman
Class VII, BIAM Model School and College
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A risky tendency

A few days back a massive fire broke out at the DCC Market of Gulshan-1, leading to huge losses for shop owners, as it took four days for firefighters to tame the fire which gutted almost 600 shops. Only a few days later, another fire mishap was reported in Banani. While this was not as severe as the Gulshan-1 fire, it did lead to a sense of panic and alarm amongst the people who happened to be in the vicinity. Videos of people clamouring down the building which was engulfed in fire quickly made the news rounds. This tendency to spread panic and alarm can lead to huge casualties, and also indicates that people have no idea what to do in case of fire. It is also alarming to see that firefighters are failing to respond quickly to these incidents, as they lack state of the art fighting equipment. The government should take massive awareness programmes to educate the public in this regard.

Mohammad Zonaid Emran
Via email

"Victory for Democracy" indeed!

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
NDG, PSC (RETD)

THE two major parties celebrated January 5 this year in different ways, as they have been doing since 2014. But to start with, the BNP's

intention to observe the day as "democracy killing day" was snubbed when its request to use Suhrawardy Udyan to hold a rally and observe the day in whatever way it wanted was denied after a period of suspense. A few inveterate optimists had predicted that the permission might come at the twelfth hour, if at all, like in some previous occasions, so as to give as little reaction time to the BNP as possible to organise any meaningful programme, or that, conditions would be laid as in the past that would be quite impossible for the party to meet within the limit prescribed by the DMP.

But even that didn't happen. It seems that the Udyan has become the exclusive preserve of the ruling party. And apparently to other parties, particularly the BNP, it is off limits. It would be unwise to think that the people cannot see through the DMP subterfuge to keep the BNP from using the Udyan. We wonder whether the AL ever seeks DMP's permission to use the spot, but not only that, look at the way some of the major roads of Dhaka are cordoned off from time to time because the AL, or some of its appendages, is holding some programme in the capital. And when

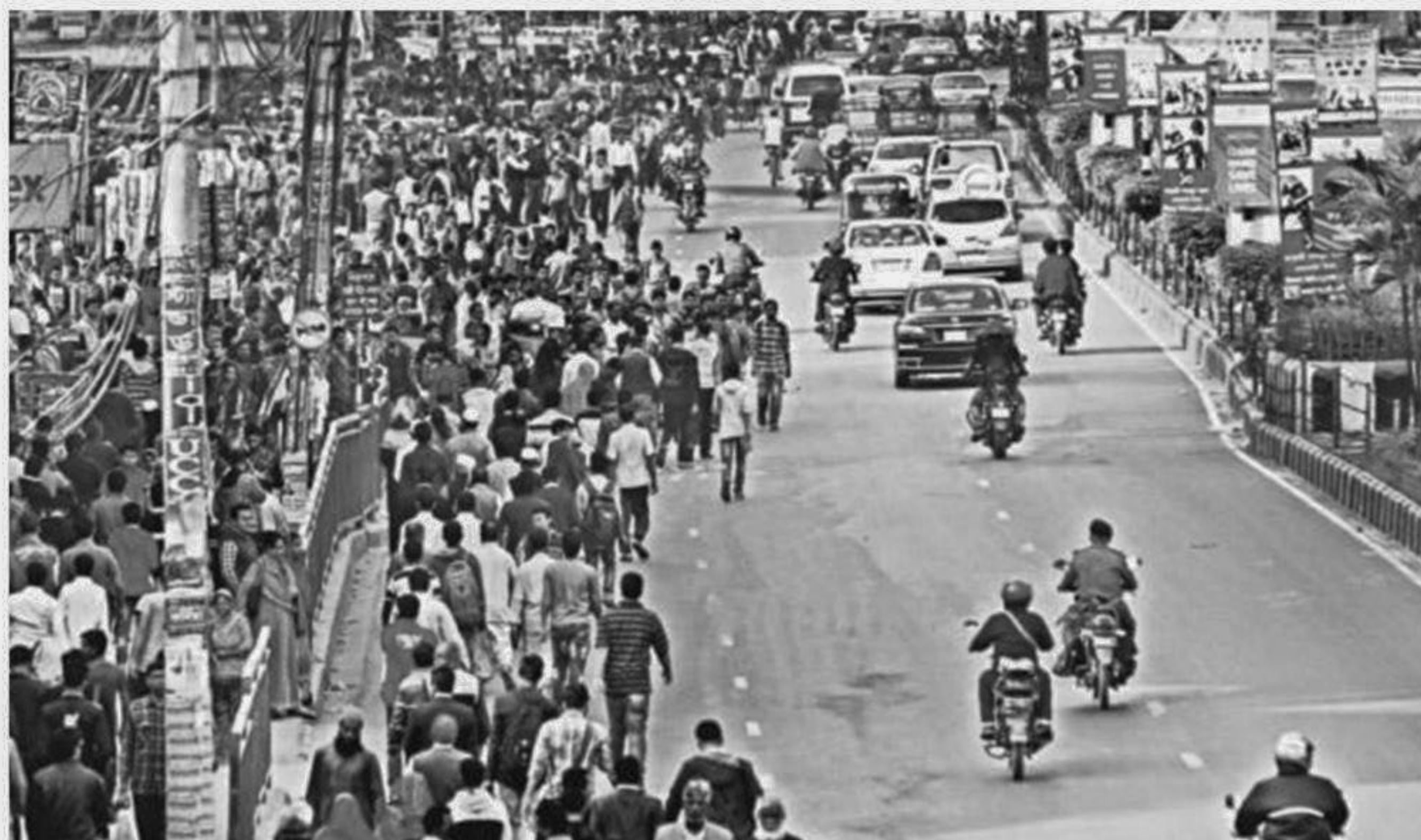
that happens, even those days meant for national celebration turn into days of public affliction.

However, the resolve of the BNP to hold a rally was matched by an open declaration by the AL that the BNP would be resisted if they attempted to create any mischief on January 7 in the name of observing the day. Even the BNP plan to hold a 'protest rally' the next day did not happen.

On the other hand, the AL observed what it termed "Victory of

the election has given the AL a free ride and the power to call the shots at every instance. That, and the most injudicious and harmful strategy of violence that the BNP adopted, by outsourcing to Jamaat the task of perpetrating violence, has created apprehensions in the mind of the common people, some of whom may not endorse AL's electoral politics and the coalition's definition of democracy, but are unwilling to trust BNP to organise any political programme, there

the opposition shrink every day betrays weakness in the ruling party which is palpably clear to any discerning observer. Putting a party office under siege does not indicate victory for democracy in any way. And that begs the question: Has democracy really triumphed? The state of democracy today requires a dispassionate look at the situation by both the major parties. Because, one feels, both are responsible for the character that so-called democracy has assumed in Bangladesh at the moment which gives little cause for



People head for their destinations on foot as the city saw an acute shortage of public transport due to massive gridlock centring an Awami League rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on January 10, 2017.

PHOTO: STAR

Free and fair election is one of the indices of a functioning democracy, although not the only one. And for that there should be an accord on an acceptable means and method of holding the next election.

Democracy" on January 5. The party announcement to do so was received with a great deal of trepidation given the misery that was inflicted on the people of Dhaka city the previous day when the student wing of the ruling party celebrated its 69th anniversary, and there could be a repetition of the same on account of celebrations for "Victory of Democracy."

The parliamentary elections of 2014 may have been legally impeccable but morally sullied. The carrot and stick policy and very effective arm twisting, have left a bad example in our electoral history. And the blunder that the BNP committed by not participating in

being a possibility of that degenerating into violence.

However, a redeeming feature is that the ruling coalition acknowledges, though not openly, that things must change, and the PM has articulated many times that the next election must be participatory and transparent. There is also, one feels, a reevaluation amongst the BNP leadership that boycott was a bad idea and that they must also share the blame for what is occurring today, and there is also a sense of culpability for the violence in January 2014. The BNP has also softened its stand on many issues.

However, making the political space of

exultation.

It seems that there is still an element of uncertainty in the minds of the AL, and despite the much vaunted development in the country it appears hesitant to leave it to the people to be the final arbiter. Free and fair election is one of the indices of a functioning democracy, although not the only one. And for that there should be an accord on an acceptable means and method of holding the next election. We cannot afford another election of the type we saw on January 5, 2014. In that case, it will be anything but "Victory for Democracy."

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

Climate compensation

Why developing a national mechanism on loss and damage is a must

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

THE issue of loss and damage from climate change has been a very politically contentious issue in the international negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since its beginning. The reason is that developed countries did not want to acknowledge 'loss and damage', as they feared it would lead to claims of liability and compensation. Thus, for a long time they blocked these discussions, which were initially raised by the small island developing states (SIDS) and then also supported by the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group, of which Bangladesh is a key member.

Finally, at the 19th annual conference of Parties (COP19) of the UNFCCC held in Warsaw, Poland in December 2013, an agreement was reached to set up the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage with a twenty-member executive committee (with ten members from developed and ten from developing countries).

The executive committee of the WIM were given a two-year work plan with nine action areas and presented their report at COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco, last November.

There was also a further discussion on Loss and Damage during the negotiations on the Paris Agreement during COP21 in Paris, France in December 2015, and after a hard fought battle, it was agreed that loss and damage would be included as a separate Article (Article 8) of the Paris Agreement, thus recognising loss and damage as a third and different category of action in addition to mitigation and adaptation.

The Bangladesh government and civil society groups have been amongst the most vocal on the issue at the international level, and shortly after COP21 in Paris, the government, with coordination of the Ministry of Disaster Management, set up an inter-ministerial committee to examine this issue in the context of Bangladesh. This committee then commissioned a scoping study by a national

expert group on what Bangladesh could do at the national level.

The expert group, which I had the privilege to be asked to chair, submitted its report to the government just before COP22, and we recommended that the government should consider setting up a national mechanism on loss and damage and develop a methodology to assess this issue from a climate change perspective, and also develop pilot scale methodologies to support those who are most likely to suffer from climate impacts in the future.

The Marrakech decision, which

the support and inputs of his research team to help with the scientific analysis.

His research team in Oxford University includes several members from Bangladesh, and their scientific inputs would be extremely valuable for the country if the government decides to go ahead with the setting up of a national mechanism dealing with this issue.

At Marrakech, a number of other research groups, including some working on insurance, offered their support to Bangladesh and many other



Protesters rally about climate change outside the White House in Washington, DC. PHOTO: AFP

endorsed a new five year work programme, also encouraged countries to consider developing national systems for dealing with loss and damage going forward.

Most recently, during the third annual research conference on climate change held at the Independent University, in his keynote speech, Professor Myles Allen from Oxford University, one of the world's leading experts in the science of attribution of climatic events to human induced climate change, lauded Bangladesh's steps to examine the setting up of a national mechanism on loss and damage, and offered

developing countries. Other LDCs in particular expressed interest to learn from Bangladesh on how to tackle loss and damage from climate change at the national level.

Thus, the government of Bangladesh, if it chooses to go ahead with setting up a national mechanism on loss and damage, has another opportunity to be a leader in learning, and then sharing its lessons with others.

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