

The perils of climate alarmism

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Around 3 PM on August 19, 2019, the residents of São Paulo witnessed the sky go dark. This was not the Day of Judgement, as many of the city's devout Catholics feared. Rather, this was the result of black plumes of smoke from the Amazon Rainforest where approximately 10,000 forest fires were burning that day.

It is difficult to look at the apocalyptic images from Brazil or feel the blistering heat of Dhaka city and not find ourselves drowning in existential dread about climate change. But this begs the question – to what extent should we be worried, and is climate alarmism really the most productive way to go about it?

The fundamental problem with climate alarmism is that people have an aversion towards negativity. We dislike being perpetually consumed by pessimistic thoughts, especially those concerning the destruction of our species. Human beings also have a limited capacity to empathise and care about certain issues, being constantly told the world is ending only leads to overall desensitisation.

In the end, the likely result isn't awareness and increased climate action, it is mass apathy. This is why so many people, including the youth, prefer to disengage from the climate change conversation altogether, choosing to live in denial.

"Why bother recycling if the world is going to end no matter what?"

The opposite is also true where many people end up with debilitating anxiety surrounding climate doom.

Climate alarmism can cause further complacency because it sets up an unrealistically morbid expectation of climate change. When people are told the apocalypse is coming, they expect a scene out of a science fiction movie. However, the effects of climate change, while devastating, fall just short of outright dystopian. Thus, it often leads to people dismissing the threat of climate change altogether, perpetuating the cycle of devastating consequences and inaction.

A 2022 survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication provides evidence for these phenomena. According to the survey, around 10 percent of Americans feel anxious, 9 percent experience uncontrollable worry, and 7 percent report reduced interest and satisfaction in normal activities due to climate change. On the other hand, 27 percent say they avoid thinking about it believing it to be a hoax or a waste of time.

Therefore, it might be more productive to adopt a conservatively optimistic mind-set about climate change. That is to say, a healthy level of concern is definitely important but slipping into paranoia or apathy is unwise. Of course, this is easier said than done given our social media newsfeeds are perpetually plastered with terrifying statistics about rising sea levels and deadlines on when it may be too late to do anything about it.

However, we could mitigate the impact they have on us by minimising social media usage or unfollowing specific content that cause us distress. Moreover, taking personal initiatives like volunteering in environmental charities or recycling could also be ways to alleviate our stress by trying to be part of the solution. In the end, climate alarmism is a counter-productive mind-set that further exacerbates the climate change crisis.

References:

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Why we need more female public bus services

AZRA HUMAYRA

I set aside a particular sum of money each month for transportation since I'm a student who manages her money carefully. Despite being comfortable, a rickshaw is rather pricey, therefore I cannot afford to ride one every day to my university. Thus, I must use the bus to get around because it is convenient and inexpensive.

I've gotten used to Dhaka's public bus system and have become familiar with how most buses operate. Since private bus services prioritise profit over passenger comfort, and are aware that passengers are mostly compelled to board despite it already being filled to the brim, the buses are almost always completely filled. So, the passengers suffer, sweating profusely due to the combination of the heat, traffic, and over occupancy.

Standing on a bus with predominantly male passengers has been a nerve-wracking experience for me. I live in continual worry that I'll be inappropriately touched or bothered. Finding a coveted seat next to a man who will continually stare at me has also made its place in my list of worries. Not only that, it is a daunting task to board a bus without fearing for your safety in the later hours of the day. Many women must take the bus to get to work because they cannot afford to take a CNG or rickshaw.

The problems faced are thus further intensified when the passenger is a woman. The seats saved for women are often occupied by men who refuse to give up the pre-assigned seats, even when asked. Surprisingly enough, it seems most of these men are only concerned with concepts of equality when the time comes for them to give up these seats, thus, reason and logic automatically go out the window from these already crammed buses. And so women have to either, accept the conditions and keep travelling under such conditions, or

they have to succumb to more inaccessible and expensive modes of transportation.

It is, however, integral for the government to address particular safety and security issues that women frequently encounter when using public transportation. Further initiatives such as introducing female-only bus services where women can travel without worrying about being harassed, assaulted, or subjected to other sorts of abuse and unsafe conditions.

When using a bus service that prioritises their safety, female passengers, especially those who may be at risk due to their age, ethnicity, or other circumstances, may feel more confident and empowered. Thus, these services could be one of the first steps desperately needed to develop an egalitarian and secure transportation system for all users.

However, such strategies often fail due to complacency and fake images of efficacy. In 2014, the government-owned Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) introduced a similar female-only bus service with 17 buses, including seven double-deckers, and female conductors. The service operates between the hours of 7 AM and 5 PM during rush hour and covers 13 distinct routes throughout the city. Additionally, Savar, Gazipur, and Chittagong also began to offer the service. However, commuters frequently claim that the buses don't arrive on time, while men are occasionally observed riding the special buses. While the initial intentions were admirable, the establishment of female-only public services necessitates close monitoring to ensure regulatory compliance and effective utilisation by women.

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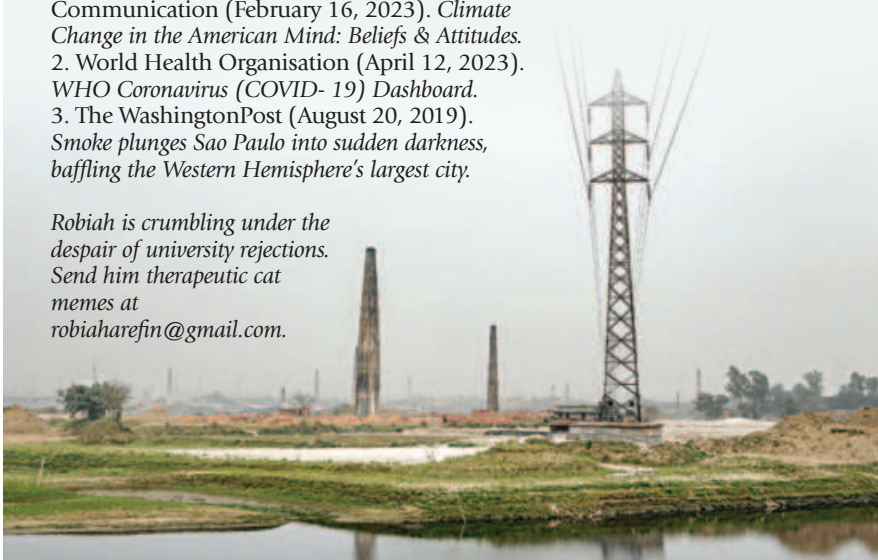


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