

## **C-18: Some pop-camera problems faced by users**

M D Susil Weeraratna  
(NERD Centre, Ekala, Ja-Ela)

Photographic cameras of easy-to-operate, light-weight, and relatively-cheap nature showed increased sales, especially during the past few years. However, in Sri Lanka, this increase is too small when compared with figures from developed countries. In spite of the advantages given above, some pop-cameras cause various problems to the user. Unsatisfactory knowledge in the basics of science, poor reading habits, inadequate guidance by the importer/seller and other cultural aspects are behind this situation.

Box cameras of the earlier days, and relatively expensive SLR cameras seldom used by laymen are being replaced by pop-cameras of modern technologies, and brands new to Sri Lanka. These cameras are available in the open market at prices ranging from Rs.500 to several thousands. Most of these need only the film to be introduced into the camera and later removed subsequent to exposure by the user. Responsibility for forward winding, focusing, automatic electronic flashing, rewinding the film after the last exposure, has been taken by the camera itself, except for clicking the shutter at the moment the user needs. For all that, users need battery power, and good knowledge in use and maintenance of the camera.

The following are some of the common problems faced by users:

Forward winding or rewinding stops, almost always due to run-down batteries. By trying to recover the film in a darkroom, dark bag, or simply after opening the back door, delicate plastic wheels of the camera get damaged.

Unless the flash is fully charged, some cameras do not release the shutter.

Deterioration of foam rubber linings, used for light proofing, due to relatively higher values of UV doses and temperature/humidity fluctuations, and other possible environmental pollution.

Plastic lenses gaining wider use are prone to discoloration, unlike their optical-glass counterparts.

Light dose emitted by built-in flashes of certain cameras are not sufficient for good exposure of subjects, although they are within the distances recommended by the manufacturer.

Not knowing the consequences, some laymen touch the lens and continue to photograph with grease, fingerprints etc. on the lens surface.

Bangs, shocks and falls may lead to out-of focus pictures, photographer is not aware of repercussions of such events.

Prolonged stay of partly or almost exposed film in the camera may cause jamming/blocking of transport mechanism.

Leaving cells/batteries in the camera may lead to leakages of chemicals to camera.

Some cameras may not function on normal penlite cells, although the voltage label is correct. They may need heavy duty alkaline cells.

Label on certain cameras/flash units advice not to use Nickel-Cadmium (Ni-Cd) cells.

Photographs taken of fully/partly white-dressed persons in sunlight may show halo-effect surrounding white dresses. (e.g.) school children wearing such uniforms.

Rusted battery terminals may cause irregular or total non-functioning of camera.

Instructions for Use' booklets are often given to customers with camera. In certain rare cases it is not so. Reading habits, in general, of the public are poor. There are instances, when reading and understanding of the manuals are not attempted due to difficulties with technical jargon and language. The situation is aggravated by 'technophobia' of buyers of pop-cameras. Because of the communication gap of 'latest pop-camera technology' buyers of these face unexpected problems, and do not know whom to contact. Even though it may be time and money consuming to the local importer/distributor of pop-cameras it will be worthwhile to give 'Instructions for use' at least in summary form, translated to local languages.