

# Oh, on a hartal day!

During a hartal in the city, although rickshaw pullers benefit the most, the entire business community gets angry. From small traders to big business houses, all condemn hartal.

MORSHED ALI KHAN

As soon as you leave your bed without remembering the hartal, you realize something has happened to Dhaka on the day. One of the noisiest cities, having decibel levels breaking world records, has suddenly gone quiet. Apart from the vendors shouting on the streets and few crows cawing around, the echo-friendly rickshaws pose no problem to the environment. The deafening horns are gone and the streets look clear of chaos as far as you eyes travel.

On the street children frolic with great delight, occasionally pausing their play to let a rickshaw or two pass. At places older children put in their hearts on a cricket match, played between two nearby localities. Amid closed shops and large shopping centers, beggars and destitute families peacefully rest on the stairs. The lottery ticket vendor on a rickshaw van plays a popular Bangla song on his loudspeaker

and passes by. VIP roads, off limits to all non-mechanised vehicles on a normal day, are automatically taken over by the toiling mass. Places like Farm Gate, Bangla Motor, Mahakhali and Shahabagh, where the government enforces bus services, rickshaws and buses create unnecessary jams. On-duty traffic policemen at these points gossip over a cup of tea at a roadside stall.

During the BNP rule, political activities of the hartal sponsor Awami League are restricted at mostly two places. Usually several hundred male and female activists gather amid heavy presence of aggressive and well-armed riot policemen in front of the Awami League office at Bangabandhu Avenue and also at Road-32, in front of Bangabandhu's residence. Police officials present at both sites show their brutalities on the noisy picketers depending on the instructions coming on the wireless sets.

On a hartal day during Awami League rule, the scenario is quite different. Handful number of male and female BNP activists

is strictly restricted within about 250 yards between Motijheel thana and Kakrail in Purana Paltan. Most parts of the city witness Awami League sponsored colorful anti-hartal processions neatly guarded by most obedient policemen.

While rickshaw pullers benefit most, hartal makes the entire business community angry. Small traders and big businesses both express frustration at the shutdown and complain of lack of good citizenship among leaders who sponsor it.

The thing that never changes on a hartal day is the BTV coverage of it. During BNP and Awami League for BTV there has never been any hartal at all. The newscaster reaffirms during both the rules that the people have rejected the hartal and went on with their daily jobs. BTV footage invariably shows Farm Gate, Shahabagh, Mahakhali and so on.

But for a city dweller, not bothered by any rule or politics, hartal nonetheless brings a coveted change.



Rickshaws reign the city's VIP roads during any hartal.

## Churches in cash crunch



An ancient catholic church in Tejgaon.

SYED TASHFIN

Some of the very old churches of Dhaka are in urgent need of renovation but without the help of the citizens, it's a near-impossible dream.

The city has over fifty churches between the age of hundred to two hundred even. The most recent ones are located around the centre of Dhaka like Assemblies of God church in Moghbazar, Holy Cross in Farmgate etc. These churches were founded in the 1950's fifties and have managed to raise maintenance cost with aid from charitable organisations and through providing education.

But the century old churches have found survival very tough in modern times. Most of these churches are in old Dhaka.

Recently, one of these, the Dhaka Baptist Church at Sadarghat celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> year. The Armenian Church on Armenian Street near Midford Hospital is believed to be the oldest of the lot at 200 years old.

After the Armenians left, the church has stopped its weekly services and is now in a dilapidated condition.

For the renovation and improvement of such the government has already offered a trust fund to the Christian community of the country worth over Tk. 2 crore, but it was not accepted.

"We are not entitled to accept such funds from the government or the state for the maintenance of the churches and other facilities," explained Asa Michael Kain, of the Assemblies of God Church at Moghbazar.

According to Christian laws, where the state and the religion is considered as two different entities, the church cannot accept such funds from the government. He further said that voluntary contributions from the people of the country is welcome and.

Apart from the churches, the Christian cemetery at Wari also requires renovation.

The preservation of such architectural and religious assets of the country can only be possible through more involvement, contributions and awareness of city dwellers.

## Air quality index in bureaucratic tangle

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Two months after an announcement, the Department of Environment (DoE) could not release the Dhaka city air quality index.

On July 17, the DoE at a workshop announced that the index would be released to the media soon to inform people about the level of air pollution and to create awareness among them to reduce hazardous emissions. "The index has been approved at an inter-ministerial meeting on September 11. Now we are ready to release it," said DoE Director General Dr Omar Faruque Khan.

"It is bureaucratic bottleneck which is obstructing its release. Now it will take a month more or so to release the index, as the DoE has to seek the minister's approval," said a DoE official on condition of anonymity.

The Air Quality Management Project (AQMP) is at present preparing the index internally. "We will be able to release the index whenever the forest and environment ministry asks us to do so," he said.

A continuous air monitoring station (CAMS), located at the Sangsad Bhaban, under the AQMP,

financed by the World Bank and the government, has been monitoring the Dhaka city air over the past one and a half years. The index will be based on the data obtained from the station.

"It will be prepared in a way that everybody can understand it and will be released to the media through the meteorological department on every second day of a week," said the DoE director general.

At present, many developed countries like the United States, France, Australia, Canada, the UK, Hong Kong and Malaysia prepare their indexes and regularly inform people about air quality through the media.

The air quality of Dhaka has improved about 30 per cent after the phasing-out of two-stroke three-wheelers from the streets this year.

The particulate matter in the smoke emitted from vehicles in winter is the major cause of air pollution.

However, city dwellers enjoy almost pollution-free days during monsoon as the level of pollution goes well below the mark prescribed by the United States Environment Protection Agency.



Dhaka's air is still considerably polluted due to black vehicular smokes.

## utilitytaxicab&citybusroute

### UTILITY

**Electricity**  
Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-5, 9560170-9  
Electricity Complex (DESA)- 8616737-43, 8617626  
DESCO- 8123138-40  
Complaints (Rural Electrification Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8

**Gas**  
Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)- 9563667-8  
Kawrnbar-8112135-42  
Mirpur- 8014132-3  
Mohammadpur- 9117215,9113903  
Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993  
Motijheel-9667612

**WASA**  
WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31  
Mirpur- 9000519  
Mohammadpur- 8120192  
Fakirapool-9115343  
Asad Gate- 8917492  
Uttara- 9559142,  
Segunbagicha- 7316348  
Pagla- 8113900-39

### Fire Services

Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667  
Mohammadpur- 9112078  
Khilgaon- 7218329  
Mirpur- 9001055  
Tongi- 9801070  
Demra-7400111  
Postagola- 7410771  
Sadarghat- 7119759  
Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055  
Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189

### DO YOU KNOW

Fire services provide cheap, fast and efficient ambulance service too?



### TAXI CAB

#### Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065  
Salida 9344477, 0171620881  
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191  
Cab One 7113282-3  
Nihon 8624741-2  
Orion 9347277  
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611  
Capital 9352847

#### Black Cab

Kool 0171826731  
Cab Ex 9358401  
Cabline 8321162  
JBS Cab 019364575  
Sajan 018126036  
Anudip - 8125285 and 8127611  
Cab One 7113282-3

### TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express	Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm
Mahanagar Prabhati	Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
Mahanagar Godhuli	Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm
Turna	Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm
Parabat Express	Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am
Joyantika Express	Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm
Upaban Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm
Tista Express	Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am
Ekata Express	Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm
Upakul Express	Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am
Padma Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

#### Palki 0171052500

Cab I 7113282  
Jatri 0171540074  
Nipun 9572277  
R-Cab 8914782  
Star Cab 9571919  
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675  
KGN 8620011

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 9:11 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am  
Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:55  
Reaches Noakhali at 1:35 pm  
Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm

### CITY BUS ROUTE

#### Bus No. Route

1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoil
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgaon-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile

#### Starts from

Golap Shah Mazar  
Phoolbaria bus station  
Phoolbaria bus station  
Shyampur  
Sayedabad  
Kamalapur  
Kamalapur  
Motijheel Shaplachatter  
Sadarghat  
Chittagong Road  
Demra Ranimahar  
Sadarghat  
Sayedabad  
Shanir Akhra  
Motijheel  
Signboard (Chittagong Road)  
Chittagong Road  
Gulistan