

Rickshaws: Prime traffic chokers in city

By Asiuzzaman

On a Saturday noon this week, hundreds of rickshaws choked a widestreet in Gullistan commercial area. Dozens of buses, mini-buses, trucks and cars, caught in the melee, were honking to get their way out of the peak-hour jam. The result is a cacophony that turned the area into hell for thousands of stranded commuters.

"This is a hazard we face every hour every day. These rickshaws are really a nuisance. We must do something about them," said a traffic policeman sweating to end the jam.

He said "by something, I mean, the number of rickshaws must be brought down to a tolerable level. They are responsible for most of the traffic jams in the city."

Most of city's 70 lakh people would agree with the traffic policeman. But, in reality, the number of rickshaws is increasing, most of them unauthorised.

Though the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the authority which takes care of rickshaws, has stopped issuing licences for rickshaws since 1987, scores of new rickshaws are invading the streets every day.

An official at the DCC estimated the number of rickshaws plying in the city at about 3 lakhs, nearly four times higher than the licensed ones. The number of rickshaws stood at 81,215 when the DCC renewed the licences this year.

Another source said that the number of valid rickshaw licences is not more than 30,000. The unauthorised duplication of licences by owners and rickshaw-pullers has expanded the number to more than 80,000.

Interestingly, the unauthorised rickshaws also bear the

yellow number plates, supposedly supplied by the DCC. Adding to the problem is the mushroom growth of unauthorised small-scale rickshaw-assembling houses. These are in addition to the hundreds of makeshift street-side rickshaw-repairing shops.

The Dhaka City Corporation has issued no licence to make rickshaws or sell rickshaw fittings," admitted a DCC source.

"Anarchy is prevailing in the administration of rickshaws," he said.

Police are responsible for management of rickshaws on

the streets. But they are unable to make any decision on their numbers until the DCC authorises them. The DCC lacks adequate manpower to control rickshaws.

In the past the police, in cooperation with the DCC, made several attempts to tame the unruly rickshaws. But their

called VIP streets were made off-limits for rickshaws to head off traffic jams. The rickshaw pullers still resent the move and sneak in to the banned areas whenever they get a chance.

The Traffic police, suffering a shortage of manpower, often find it difficult to tame the

rickshaw pullers in case they get for phasing out the tricycles.

"Here comes the question of political decision. We can manage the traffic side of the problem, but the political side of it must be looked after by the politicians," the official said.

The police and the DCC have identified 18 city points that are most vulnerable to traffic jam mainly because of rickshaws. These include Motijheel Commercial Area, Gullistan, Mouchak, Farmgate, Fakirapool, Tikatuli, Magbazar, Malibagh, Mahakhali and most parts of the old city.

A DCC official dealing with the rickshaw problem for many years has a number of suggestions to lessen traffic jams at these points during the peak hours. These are: The movement of rickshaws must be controlled to a tolerable number; people should be encouraged not to use rickshaws on short runs, flyovers should be built for commuters; constant watch by police to ensure that rickshaws follow their own lanes.

For the city as a whole his suggestions are: Development of a well-organised public transport system by introducing more buses, especially double-deckers, separation of the streets for motorised and non-motorised vehicles, compulsory parking lots for multi-storied commercial houses and shopping complexes and introduction of trams.

"Dhaka is already a jungle of rickshaws. We may have to live with rickshaws, but the authorities can at least restrict their growth and tame the pullers to abide by rules," said a businessman, who commutes by rickshaw from his house in Malibagh to his shop in New Market six days a week.



attempts failed mainly because of the resistance from rickshaw owners and pullers. According to a source, more than 6 lakh people, both owners and pullers are dependent on rickshaws.

During the rule of deposed president Ershad certain so-

rickshaws, which never ply through the lane of a street specified for them.

The city's 2,432-kilometre-long street has now 873 traffic beats, 585 of them unmanned most of the time for shortage of staff. There are 854 constables and 76 sergeants to con-

streets, migrating to the city straight from a paddy field?" a senior traffic police official complained.

The problem of rickshaws is linked to the socio-economic problem of the country. The authorities will have to think of alternative jobs for

control the city's burgeoning traffic, which according to a senior police official, is quite an uphill task, sources said.

"People do often blame us for traffic jams. But can you imagine managing a traffic that has thousands of untrained rickshawpullers who grab rickshaws and come out on the

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The Midnight File

Ghali formally takes over

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 2: Boutros Boutros Ghali formally took over as the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations today and pledged to create a new momentum for peace-making and above all defend human rights and democracy all over the world. Before conducting his first day of business Ghali of Egypt, the first Secretary-General from the African Continent, spent a few moments in the U N chapel meditating for strength and inspiration as his predecessors did before him, reports Reuter.

Pro-democracy march in Algiers

ALGIERS, Jan 2: At least 300,000 people marched through Algiers today to save democracy following an election victory by Muslim fundamentalists bent on creating an Islamic state, an AFP reporter said. A third of the marchers were women. There was no official confirmation of the 300,000 turnout, which was estimated by journalists present. The organizers said at least twice that number took part.

Wage hike

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comfortable balance of payments situation in 1990-91 largely on account of higher export.

The BCI leaders viewed that the worker's strikes, rise in wages with no relation to productivity, high interest rates on credits and restrictive role of the government towards industrial development were hampering the investment environment in the country.

Present law and order situation is discouraging for the entrepreneurs, the business leaders observed. They urged the government to take measures to arrest lawlessness in the country.

The president of BCI, AM Subid Ali said the local industries are hard hit by smuggling that has rendered them sick.

He also identified inadequacy of running capital, unrealistic steps to realise defaulted loans and "unsympathetic" attitude of the government towards the realisation of the loans as a barrier to industrialisation in the country.

"The business community is suffering from a sense of insecurity", he said, adding that this would also discourage foreign investment.

The businessmen said about 1600 units have become sick over the past years. They said over Taka 1600 crore has been invested in these industries. They urged the government to take necessary steps to revamp these units.

Sharif Afzal Hossain, the Senior Vice-President of BCI said that the government should monitor the implementation of the policies under taken by the government. He said the government should not agree on those terms of the donor agencies that might have any adverse effect on building a self-sustaining economy.

Morshed Khan, an industrialist, said any settlement on the wage issue should be made by the owners and not by the government. He said if the government takes whimsical steps on the industrial sector, the entrepreneurs would opt for other ventures instead of setting up industries.

He said there must be a consensus on the basic issues between all the sectors concerned for a healthy growth of industry.

Rashidul Haasan, another industrialist, said the country's economy can not be made hostage to the striking workers. He said this situation would discourage the local and foreign investors as well.

Golam Azam

From Page 1 Col 4

of Bangladesh were reserved for its citizens only. The Article 38 of the Constitution reads: 'Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions.'

'A man not bound to abide by the Constitution and laws of the country can not be a part of the country's political mechanism', argued Barrister Lutful, referring to the Article 21 of the Constitution he said, only the citizens of the country are bound to abide by the laws and the Constitution of the country, not the foreigner like Golam Azam. The Article 21 reads: 'It is the duty of every citizen to observe the Constitution and the laws, to maintain discipline, to perform public duties and to protect public property.'

The official sources have confirmed that Golam Azam had not yet been granted the citizenship of the country. Sources say an influential quarter of the government considers Professor Azam a foreigner.

According to a highly placed source, the Prime Minister has had informal deliberations with some of her cabinet colleagues who hail from legal profession on this issue on Wednesday last.

According to the source, some of these cabinet members argued that government could not grant citizenship to Golam Azam because of the fact that there was no dispute even today over his role in 1971.

The others however argued that as Professor Azam had been living in the country since 1978, he could be granted the citizenship. Prime Minister herself did not make any comment on this issue during the discussion, the source informed.

A constitutional expert who preferred anonymity told The Daily Star that under the Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provision) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1978, the government has no right to grant citizenship to a man who has allegiance to another state.

The ordinance of 1978 reads: 'A person shall not... qualify himself to be a citizen of Bangladesh if he—owes, affirms or acknowledges, expressly or by conduct, allegiance to a foreign state.'

'Golam Azam is not only the citizen of Pakistan, his allegiance to Bangladesh even after its independence was not unquestionable', said Barrister Amirul Islam. Golam Azam had consistently campaigned against Bangladesh in the Middle East even long after its independence, he added.

The Jamaat has clearly violated the Constitution of Bangladesh by giving Golam Azam its membership and appointing him as the chief of the party: the government should take legal actions against Jamaat, said Barrister Amirul Islam. Golam Azam had consistently campaigned against Bangladesh in the Middle East even long after its independence, he added.

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Shantibahini

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other in a similar ambush at Baghaichari upazila of Khagrachari hill district December 29.

Six other villagers were also killed by the Shantibahini in the same area June 29. About 4,000 people have been killed by the insurgents in the troubled Chittagong Hill Tracts since the mid-70s.

Sirimavo

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married outside her aristocratic circle to a favourite actor-turned-politician, Vijaya Kumaratunga, who was later assassinated by right-wing Sinhalese insurgents.

The Freedom Party was founded by Solomon Bandarnaike in 1951, three years after Britain granted independence to what was then called Ceylon. It was a middle-of-the-road alternative to the rightists of the United National Party and the Marxists.

Double murder

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Ramna Police that he, his wife and children were on an outing at Savar during the incident.

Our Dhaka Medical College Correspondent adds: the autopsy reports of the victims said that they were killed with sharp weapons.

A police team was sent to Shahjahan's village home at Madhupur in Tangail Thursday morning but it did not come back till the filing of this report late last night, according to the Ramna police.

Police said Shahjahan who was also accused of another murder at Madhupur, was in Tangail jail and was released on bail about two and a half months ago.

Shahjahan met Kazi Feroze Rashid at Tangail Jail when the former Minister was arrested last year and sent to Tangail jail, police said.

After the release on bail, Shahjahan, came to the former minister's house and was living there as a servant, said police.

Flag meeting

From Page 1 Col 8

Bangladesh has proposed in writing to hold the second flag meeting at Teknaf on January 7.

Meanwhile, three transit points on Bangladesh-Myanmar border at Teknaf were reopened today, which were closed down by Myanmar on December 22 last following the December 21 Lushan raid on Rezupara BDR camp killing one jawan, injuring seven others and looting arms and ammunition.

The reopened transit points are Nthila, Teknaf and Gundhoom.

According to latest reports 150 Myanmar nationals entered Bangladesh with short transit permission while a similar number of Bangladesh nationals entered Myanmar with transit pass.

Transit pass facilities have been available to the people of border areas according to the provisions of the 1980 Bangladesh-Myanmar border agreement.

Arakanese Muslims entering Bangladesh said that Myanmar authorities in Arakan had increased troops and weapons concentration along their border with Bangladesh and further intensified their atrocities on Arakanese Muslims.

Police at Teknaf and Ukha arrested five Myanmar nationals on suspicion of spying during the past two days.

Swoop on smuggled goods continues

By Staff Correspondent

Chudanga, Kushtia and Bagerhat towns.

The drive would resume Saturday, he said. Details of the drive and the recovery made were not immediately available.

When contacted, the chief of the task force and member of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) Shah Abdul Hannan said that operations were conducted in all the parts of the country.

Better control along the border areas was restored and security and surveillance at all the entrances to the country including the sea ports, border checkpoints and the Zia International Airport were strengthened, he said.

The task force chief said that screening against the contraband goods along the highways and the river ports was also intensified.

The NBR member hoped that the drive, with the concerted efforts of both the government and the people, would end smuggling in the country once and for all.

"It is very significant that the businessmen of the country have joined the government to eradicate smuggling that is crippling the national economy," he said.

Amendment to family laws demanded

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of relevant laws to ensure women's rights guaranteed in the constitution under the present democratic atmosphere. They also urged the concerned authorities to take the matter into consideration.

Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed proposed formation of a high-powered commission to recommend necessary amendments to the existing laws regarding women's rights. Such a commission with representation of legal experts and religious groups could help introduce new laws for the welfare of family life. In this connection, he referred to the reformation of Islamic laws in some of the Muslim countries.

Former Chief Justice Kamaluddin Hossain demanded withdrawal of conditions imposed by the Bangladesh government on the implementation of the UN-declared convention on women's rights.

Mr Hossain said the democratic government in the country would be compelled to fulfill the demand of the women community. He also pointed out that women were repressed at different times in the name of religion and called upon the people to be vocal against any misinterpretation of religion.

PM urges NGOs

From Page 1 Col 7

dressed by Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam, Dr Delwar Ali Khan, deputy representative of the UNICEF and Latifa Kibria, Chairman, Mohila Unnayan Samity, Chapainababganj.

The function, held at the Osmani Memorial Hall yesterday morning, was presided over by State Minister for Social Welfare and Women Affairs Begum Sarwar Rahman.

The Prime Minister said government has taken up various programmes to involve womenfolk in mainstream of national development for socio-economic development of women and to protect their interest.

Women development related policies are being considered with due importance in all developed and developing countries, she said adding equal rights of men and women in all national spheres have also been ensured in the constitution of the country.

She also observed that compared to men, country's women are lagging behind in education, sports, jobs, business etc and expressed concern over the backwardness of the womenfolk in the education sector.

In this connection she referred to the government's programmes of compulsory primary education and waiving of fees of the girls students outside municipal areas to increase women literacy rate.

Decision to fill up the posts of primary teachers by appointing 60 per cent women

PM urges NGOs

has already been taken, the Prime Minister added.

Pointing to various programmes taken up by the Women Affairs Ministry on technical training for women, credit facilities, adult literacy, day-care facilities for the oppressed women and legal aid for the aggrieved women, Khaleida Zia said the democratic government has geared up these programmes in a dynamic way.

Mentioning credit facility programme for rural women in alleviating their poverty, the Prime Minister said welfare of the people is the aim of the present democratic government.

Woman

From Page 1 Col 8

The weavers had arranged a rally in the area and put four Indian sarees to fire. It is not true that the women were stripped-off or they had hid themselves in their houses.

The news item published in this regard was totally false, motivated and confusing.

The government reiterates its determination to stop smuggling and at the same time feels that publication of such item would create hindrance in the drive against smuggling, the press note said.

The press note said, it is expected that all concerned quarters through publishing objective news would make effective contribution to the process of attaining economic development of the country and the nation.

AL: Golam Azam

From Page 1 Col 5

Expressing concern at the 'mysterious silence' of the ruling party over the issue, the AL working committee resolution said the Jamaat could show the 'audacity' of declaring Golam Azam as its chief only because of the 'appeasement policy' and patronisation of anti-liberation forces by the ruling party.

Indemnity bill

on its political aspect.

The Minister, who spelled out BNP's latest stand on the bill, said that the killing of Sheikh Mujib had lost its legal appeal since no FIR was lodged even 40 days after the assassination.

"The Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated by Khandker Mushaiaq Ahmed one month and 10 days after the killing of Sheikh Mujib. If they were sincere they could have filed lakhs of FIRs. How can they expect cooperation from us when they themselves were not sincere about it," the minister said.

He, however, said that the BNP believed in ending the politics of killings and coups. "We are prepared to cooperate with it (Awami League) if it wants to amend the Constitution against the recurrence of coups and political killings. There is no point in looking back, we want to look forward," he said.

Reshuffle

From Page 1 Col 8

Badruddoza Chowdhury into the cabinet may be finalised after his return from a private trip abroad, party sources said. He is expected to be back by the middle of this month.

Dr Chowdhury was Education Minister in the BNP cabinet but was dropped during the reshuffle in September last.

According to the sources, replacement of at least one minister and some State Ministers is being considered by the party leadership and some BNP stalwarts are engaged in lobbying for a place in the cabinet.

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Cold spell

From Page 1 Col 8

during the month under the influence of two westerly disturbances.

Mild to moderate cold waves may sweep the country, the Met Office also said.

The lowest temperature recorded Thursday in the country was 7 degrees Celsius in Rangpur. In the capital minimum temperature was recorded at 12 degrees Celsius.

Met office said that night temperature may fall by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Thursday.

UNB adds from Sirajganj: Ten more people fell prey to the cold wave: during the last 36 hours raising the death toll to 20 in the district, unofficial sources said.

Tarash is the worst affected upazila where five people were reportedly killed by the cold wave that gripped the district as elsewhere in the country since last Tuesday.

They are Jomul Abedin (50) of village Tarash, Toftina Khatun(30) and Liton(4) of village Kohit, Islamuddin(58) of Sogura and Buri Khatun (18), Hotoi Chala village.

Two old men of village Charamlahapara in Sadar Upazila died of the cold, family sources said.

10 killed

From Page 1 Col 5

The government drive against smugglers and smuggled goods continued Thursday in the capital as well as in almost all the districts of the country, officials said.

However, officials admitted that Thursday is drive, that included searches and seizures of illegal commodities in markets and shopping centres yielded poor results.

In Dhaka, a task force composed of Customs officials and members of the BDR and the police, raided the Century Arcade shopping centre in Magbazar. The team, however, returned empty handed, said one of its members.

Similar anti-smuggling operations were also conducted in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions, barring Khulna town, according to officials.

The search and seizure operations could not take place in Khulna Thursday because of a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town, said a district official.

The Additional Divisional Commissioner told The Daily Star by telephone that the members of the task force Wednesday recovered illegal goods worth Taka 36,523 from different shopping centres in Jessore, Khulna, Magura,

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