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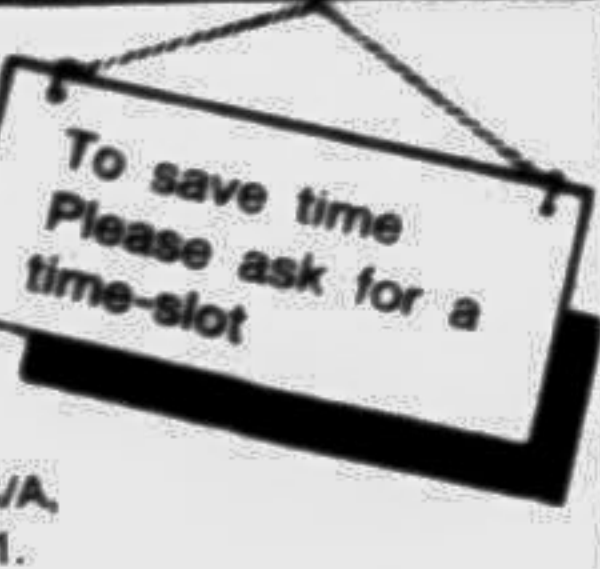
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DOWN TO EARTH City's Traffic Mess

By A S M Nurunnabi

Traffic anarchy in Dhaka city appears to have reached a horrendous state. The situation is so desperate that widespread pessimism prevails and nobody has the slightest idea when there will be light at the end of the tunnel. Over the years, instead of noticing any improvement in this sphere, we have been observing gradual deterioration affecting its multidimensional aspects.

One particular aspect which is a perennial eyesore is the constant traffic jams at important cross-roads. There are many factors causing this, the principal among them being the slow moving cycle-rickshaws. At any important traffic cross-road, you confront a jungle of vehicles where the unruly rickshaws dominate the scene. Particularly at busy hours, smooth flow of traffic is paralysed by their slow-paced movements, often creating a veritable pandemonium. At such moments you may get the sinking feeling that the city has been gorged with more rickshaws than even the widest avenues could accommodate.

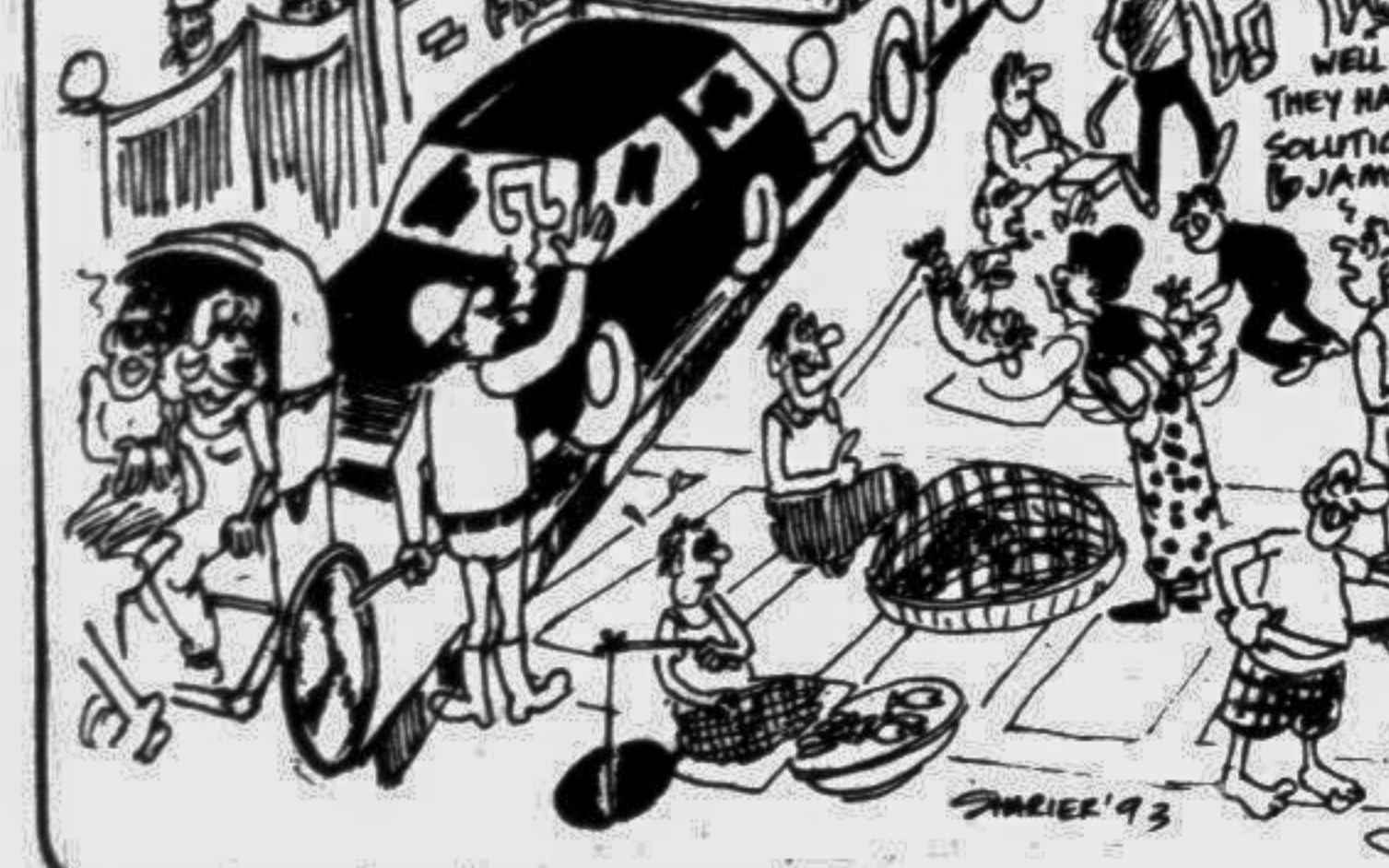
Among other factors contributing to traffic jams are the public buses. To a careful observer, the traffic jams can be traced substantially if the public buses in particular stop their practice of loading and off-loading their passengers at their will at any spot near cross-roads. There are specific bus stands with zebra crossings for pedestrians quite away from the road junctions. Yet it has been observed that the public buses in many cases do not stop at these stands, but prefer the crowded spots very near the road junctions, thereby adding to the risks of avoidable road accidents and to the intensification of traffic jams.

It is felt if the traffic police are firm in dealing with these irregularities and compel the public buses to use the stands provided for them, the problem of traffic jams at the cross-roads may be substantially eased.

The authorities should also regulate the mushrooming growth of shopping and housing complexes having little space for car parking. Breaches of traffic rules such as reckless driving, disregard for traffic signals, spewing of black smoke, etc call for strict enforcement of the law.

Another factor causing traffic mess is the holding of meetings and rallies on the roads. In some areas, particular thoroughfares have become favourite venues for the meetings. It appears that such favourite spots are those in front of the Press Club, the road north of the Baitul Mukarram, the Shapla Square and the Bangabandhu Avenue. It is not that major political parties alone take possession of these spots for their public meetings. More frequently, smaller political factions and professional groups which do not have necessary organisational capacity to hold large scale public meetings, choose these places for gatherings, sit-ins and other programmes. The organisers of these meetings seem to care very little about the extreme inconvenience caused to the public on account of traffic jams or blockages at these places.

The use of thoroughfares as venues of public meetings is perhaps unique in our country. Sometime ago, the government set up a committee to suggest suitable sites for public meetings. It is understood that the recommendations of the committee are at present under the consideration of the government.



G-7 Summit communique

From Page 1 Col 5

stubbornly than in the past. Much of the recent increase (in unemployment) is attributable to the present economic slowdown, but a significant part of the current level of unemployment is structural in nature," the declaration said.

The United States and Japan, who between them have a total 40 per cent of the global economy, pledged to trim troubling components of their economies.

The United States promised steady reductions in fiscal deficits over the medium term and Japan pledged to continue efforts to stimulate domestic demand and trim its surpluses.

In North America, strong actions, which have been long overdue in the United States and which we welcome, are being taken to ensure substantial and steady reductions in fiscal deficits over the medium term, higher level of domestic savings and investment, and lower long-term interest rates.

The Organisation of Eco-

"Japan will implement fiscal and monetary measures as necessary, to ensure sustained non-inflationary growth led by strong domestic demand, keeping in mind the need for long-term fiscal prudence".

The G-7 leaders also called for the successful conclusion of the troubled Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

"Successful and rapid conclusion of the Uruguay Round will also boost the confidence of investors and consumers, and thus will be an important contribution to recovery and growth," they said in the statement.

\$3 billion for Russia

G-7 leaders approved three billion dollars in privatisation money for Russia but said they want Russian President Boris Yeltsin to slash inflation.

"We urge Russia to intensify its efforts to reduce inflation and the budget deficit," they said.

The Organisation of Eco-

ment. Only the pressure of public opinion and firmness of the concerned authorities to enforce the use of the sites to be selected by the government for such purposes can save the city from the curse of traffic jams in some measure. Here also, major political parties will have a role in accepting the selected sites.

An inter-ministerial meeting held recently discussed at length Dhaka's traffic problems. The important point reportedly is that the meeting presided over by the Home Minister aimed at remodelling some of the existing traffic laws to enhance their effectiveness and also decided to adopt some supplementary measures with the same end in view.

Of the set of measures decided at that meeting, the most radical relates to the ban on manufacture of rickshaws and provision for training for rickshaw pullers. This, according to some, sounds too simplistic, without making in a perspective plan due provision for gradual absorption of the manpower engaged as rickshawpullers. In terms of the decisions of the meeting, parking of cars at places other than the parking lots or marked places will invite heavy penalties. Buses and mini-buses will be prohibited from picking up passengers at their will in the middle of the road or anywhere other than the bus stands. It was also decided to evict hawkers and kutchha bazzars from the roads in busy areas.

But the most important point is the implementation of the measures, and for that purpose, evolving a system that works. In the opinion of observers, to bring order in the traffic system, the authorities concerned need to be backed by socio-political considerations and supports.

I spoke in quite serious terms about the question of discrimination in trade," Yeltsin said after talks with G-7 leaders in the Japanese capital.

"The most dissatisfying aspect of the meeting for me was that, despite all my energetic appeals, the answer I received was: 'Yes, yes, we understand. It is hard, these problems must be solved,'" Yeltsin told a news conference.

Yeltsin said he wanted action to lift the restrictions. The Russian President argues that trade restrictions imposed in Soviet times, especially on the import of high technology, are hampering Russia's attempts to revive its economy.



AFTER THE FIRE: Dwellers of Ali's bustee (slum) at Islambagh, Lalbagh in the city trying to recover whatever they can from the rubble yesterday. — Star photo

Yeltsin welcomes package, unhappy for trade ban

TOKYO, July 9: President Boris Yeltsin said in Tokyo today he was dissatisfied with promises by the world's leading economic powers to consider lifting trade restrictions against Russia, reports Reuters.

But he welcomed a dollar 3 billion package offered by Group of Seven (G-7) leaders to help privatisation in Russia.

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But Yeltsin, seeking economic support for his market reforms at home, welcomed the announcement by G-7 leaders of the dollars 3 billion package to support the transfer of Russian industry to private ownership — a big step to ease the burden on Moscow's budget and speed transformation to a market economy.

He said he was also impressed by the manner in which he was treated by the leaders of G-7 countries.

Gonzalez wins vote of confidence

MADRID, July 9: Spain's socialist leader Felipe Gonzalez today won a parliamentary vote of confidence confirming him as Prime Minister for a fourth consecutive term, reports Reuters.

Gonzalez won the backing of the Congress (lower house) by an absolute majority of 181 votes to 165 with one abstention.

He is expected to announce his new cabinet early next week.

UN standoff with Iraq raises possibility of action: Clinton

TOKYO, July 9: US President Bill Clinton said today the United Nations stand-off with Iraq over weapons inspectors serious and raised the possibility of unilateral action against Baghdad, reports Reuters.

Speaking at a news conference following the Tokyo Group of Seven Summit, Clinton ruled out unilateral action such as the United States took recently in retaliation for an alleged Iraqi assassination attempt against former President George Bush.

Campbell blasts US for not giving advance notice

TOKYO, July 9: New Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell, meeting US President Bill Clinton here for the first time today, reproached the United States for not giving Canada advance notice of its air strike against Baghdad last month, reports AFP.

Top priority

From Page 1 Col 5

The deal involved a market access package for goods and services between the United States, Japan, the European Community and Canada, the so-called quadrilateral group of major traders.

It helped restore the credibility of G-7 leaders, who made repeated calls for a Uruguay Round agreement-by-year-end at each of their previous three summits in Houston, London and Munich but lost face as their appeals went unheeded.

Quadrilateral officials, who were bargaining under pressure from the summit leaders themselves, came up with a preliminary accord setting ambitious goals for lowering tariff and non-tariff barriers for goods and services.

Sharif

From page 1 col 7

The last elections in 1990 were marred by charges of vote-rigging. The next are due in 1995.

Western diplomats warn that the personal hatred between Sharif and Bhutto — political rivals since he was elected as Prime Minister in 1988 — is so deep that reconciliation may now be impossible.

Several previous attempts at reconciliation, including talks last month, broke down in bitter disagreement.

Sharif is to meet Ishaq Khan on Saturday following their agreement on a seven-point peace formula hammered out by a group of fundamentalist Muslim clerics and politicians who have shuttled between the two leaders this week, an aide to the Prime Minister said.

Under the formula, both will try to rebuild confidence, consult each other and halt the flood of blistering counter-attacks issued by their aides.

The Midnight File

Bosnian presidency members to hold talks with mediators

ZAGREB, July 9: Eight members of Bosnia's presidency will hold talks with international mediators in Zagreb tomorrow, but Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic will not attend, Bosnian officials said today. Bosnian embassy officials said presidency members were on their way either directly to the Croatian capital or the Adriatic coastal town of Split on Friday ahead of the talks with Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, reports Reuters.

Floods kill 81 in China

BEIJING, July 9: Torrential rains and flooding in the southern Chinese provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi left 81 people dead and 1,156 injured from July 1-4, the Civil Affairs Ministry said today. From May 25 to July 4, flood waters in China's south and east have now left 297 dead, 47 missing and more than 1,600 injured, according to figures supplied by the ministry, reports AFP.

Goods train derails in Khulna

By Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 9: A goods train was derailed near the Mobarakganj Sugar Mills this morning.

According to railway sources, ten bogies of the Khulna-bound goods train derailed during shifting of tracks.

The derailed bogies blocked the main line which has not been cleared until the filing of this report at 7:30 pm Friday.

Several mail and express train services to and from Khulna remained suspended.

Two bodies recovered in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 9: Police recovered two bodies from village Putimari in Dumuria thana here yesterday.

The dead, identified as Rajen Shaha, 28, and Gaur Shaha, 27, of village Putimari were reportedly members of the outlawed Biplabi Communist Party (Barun).

Police suspect Rajen and Gaur were killed Wednesday by members of another outlawed party calling itself the Purba Bangla Communist Party (Nazrul).

According to police sources, some armed men of the outlawed party laydied the victims near Bulbulia Bazar in Dumuria thana at midnight Wednesday. The assailants took Rajen and Gaur to an embankment and slaughtered them with sharp weapons.

Police recovered along with the bodies a leaflet claiming responsibility for the killings by the so-called Purba Bangla Communist Party.

Rally: Bosnia

From Page 1 Col 8

territorial integrity and independence of the Muslim republic in the former Yugoslavia.

The rally, held after the Juma prayers, came three days ahead of the special OIC meeting in Islamabad which is expected to take some important decisions to end the ethnic conflicts.

Thousands of agitated people who attended the rally, shouted slogans decrying the United Nations, United States, Great Britain and France for what the speakers at the rally termed "their roles against the interests of the beleaguered Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

The speakers called for unity of the Muslim Ummah and also called for a separate Muslim United Nations.

Presided over by Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, the rally was addressed among others, by Jamaat leader Moulana Abdus Sobhan, Pir Shahab Moulana Fazlul Karim, Moulana Azizul Huq, Editor of Bangladesh Times Mahbub Anam, former secretary ASM Yahya, Ershadul Bari of Dhaka University and Islamic thinkers Moulana Ruhul Amin Khan and Moulana Mohiuddin Khan. It was also addressed by the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Kazi Golam Mahbub and the khatib of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Moulana Obaidul Huq.

Uruguay Round

From Page 1 Col 5

certainly surrounding its Uruguay Round is making Bangladesh's economic future uncertain.

If the Uruguay Round is not completed soon, Bangladesh may find itself in a position where the only way in which she can maintain the current macro-economic stability is by reimposing trade restrictions and accepting slower growth in income.

Water-logging

From page 1 col 7

various quarters. The top-soil from the hills flows down and spreads over the roads causing siltation in the drainage system and blocking all outlets for the water during rainfall.

The water-logging issue cannot be resolved until the practice of removal of hills for soil procurement is stopped permanently in this city," a senior official of the Chittagong City Corporation told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, in a bid to provide some relief from water-logging the Chittagong City Corporation has taken up a few projects to be implemented in the new fiscal year (93-94). The works include re-excavation of the 5-kilometer long Mirza canal, the 1375-meter long Mirza Noakhali, the Nasir canal and construction of culverts at a cost of Taka 22 crore over Sheikh Mujib Road which could ease the water-logging by facilitating rapid flow of flood waters during monsoon. Corporation officials said.

WDB clarifies position

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), in a statement Thursday, said that the case concerning a dispute of Taka 1,48,77,462 between the Board and a contractor of the Meghna-Dhonagoda Irrigation Project now awaits verdict of the High Court.

Earlier, a report by the Auditor and Controller General revealed that the management of the Meghna-Dhonagoda project had failed to realise Taka 1,93,89,547 from a contractor who received the money as an advance and misused departmental machinery.

The BWDB said the contractor, Wahidun Nabi, was given the task of construction of the Kalipur Pump House under the Meghna-Dhonagoda project and completed it in 1988.

After paying the bill submitted by the said contractor as per terms of the contract, it was estimated that an amount of Taka 1,48,77,462 became due to BWDB from the contractor on account of rent of equipment, electric bills, etc, the statement said.

The Executive Engineer of the Meghna-Dhonagoda, O&M Division, repeatedly requested the contractor to refund this amount but the contractor did not do so.

On the contrary, the contractor claimed that a sum of Taka 1,42,72,266 had become due to him from the BWDB. He also asked the Water Board to go for an arbitration, which was rejected by the BWDB.

The contractor then filed an arbitration proceeding in the court of the 3rd Sub-Judge, Dhaka, but the court delivered its verdict in favour of the BWDB.

The contractor was then again asked to refund the money, but he preferred an appeal to the High Court against the judgement of the 3rd Sub-Judge.

The BWDB statement said the case is now pending before the High Court.

The above clarification was given with regard to an item, "Taka 20 crore foreign aid found misused under 9 ministries" published in The Daily Star on June 30.

Our report was based on the report of the Auditor and Comptroller General, Bangladesh placed before the Jatiya Sangsad early last month.

The report clearly mentioned that the management of the Meghna-Dhonagoda irrigation project had failed to realise Tk.1,93,89,547 from a contractor who received the money as an advance.

The Auditor General's report did not mention the matter was pending before the High Court.

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Yeltsin was to meet with G-7 leaders at the Akasaka Palace Friday afternoon.

G-7 leaders said they accepted an invitation by the 1994 President of G-7, Italian Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, to hold the summit next July in Naples, Italy.

Irrigation Secy's views

When contacted, Irrigation Secretary M Asafuddinwah brushed aside the allegations of "inadequate studies" for the FAP and said that its aim was to permanently mitigate the flood hazard.

Justifying the structural