

# DOWN TO EARTH

## City's Lacklustre Transport System

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka is fast developing as a metropolitan city. But many of the amenities that are normally associated with a metropolitan city are sadly lacking here. Take for instance the public transport system. In a modern city, the public transport system bears the brunt of the transport needs of its citizens. The city's population is increasing at a steady pace, but its transport system is rated to have failed completely in meeting the challenge.

The city's transport system has mainly the following segments: public buses, taxi cabs, auto-rickshaws and pedal rickshaws. In each of them, the existing state of affairs is far from being satisfactory with the result that it seriously detracts from Dhaka's image as a modern metropolitan city.

A ramshackle physical condition characterises the public buses, by and large. Mostly they are of the vintage class-reconditioned ones. Whatever shine they had at first, wore off quickly on account of excessive wear and tear and lack of proper maintenance and care. Their ramshackle look would have fitted them more for the scrapheap, but our automobile mechanics have such ingenuity that rundown vehicles manage to serve on the road, notwithstanding the attendant hazards.

The passenger service offered by these buses is also deplorable. The conductors have a propensity for picking up and dropping passengers at odd spots. Even if a vehicle is packed to capacity, there will be no let-up in the cries of these conductors inviting more passengers.

There are specific bus-stands with zebra crossings for pedestrians, far away from busy traffic points and road junctions. Yet it has been observed that the public buses do not normally stop at these bus-stands, but prefer the crowded spots very near the road junctions and busy traffic points, thereby adding to the possibility of road accidents, and the intensification of traffic jams.

As regards taxi cabs, they are much restricted in use, unlike in other big cities. In fact, they ply within the bounds of the VIP roads. They operate mainly from stands located near the posh hotels, the airport and at some selected city points. According to some observers, one reason for their restricted use is the absence of fare metres. This is unique in this city; in all big cities, taxi cabs have fare metres. The citizens are at a loss to understand what makes the traffic authorities hesitant to introduce fare metres in taxi cabs. They can at least make a beginning by insisting on installation of fare metres when new vehicles come up for registration before plying on the city roads.

There is no doubt if taxi cabs are fitted with fare metres, it will create a higher demand for them than at present. It is, however, felt by observers that the longer the traffic authorities defer decision on the matter, the greater will be the complications in future in streamlining the city's traffic infrastructure.

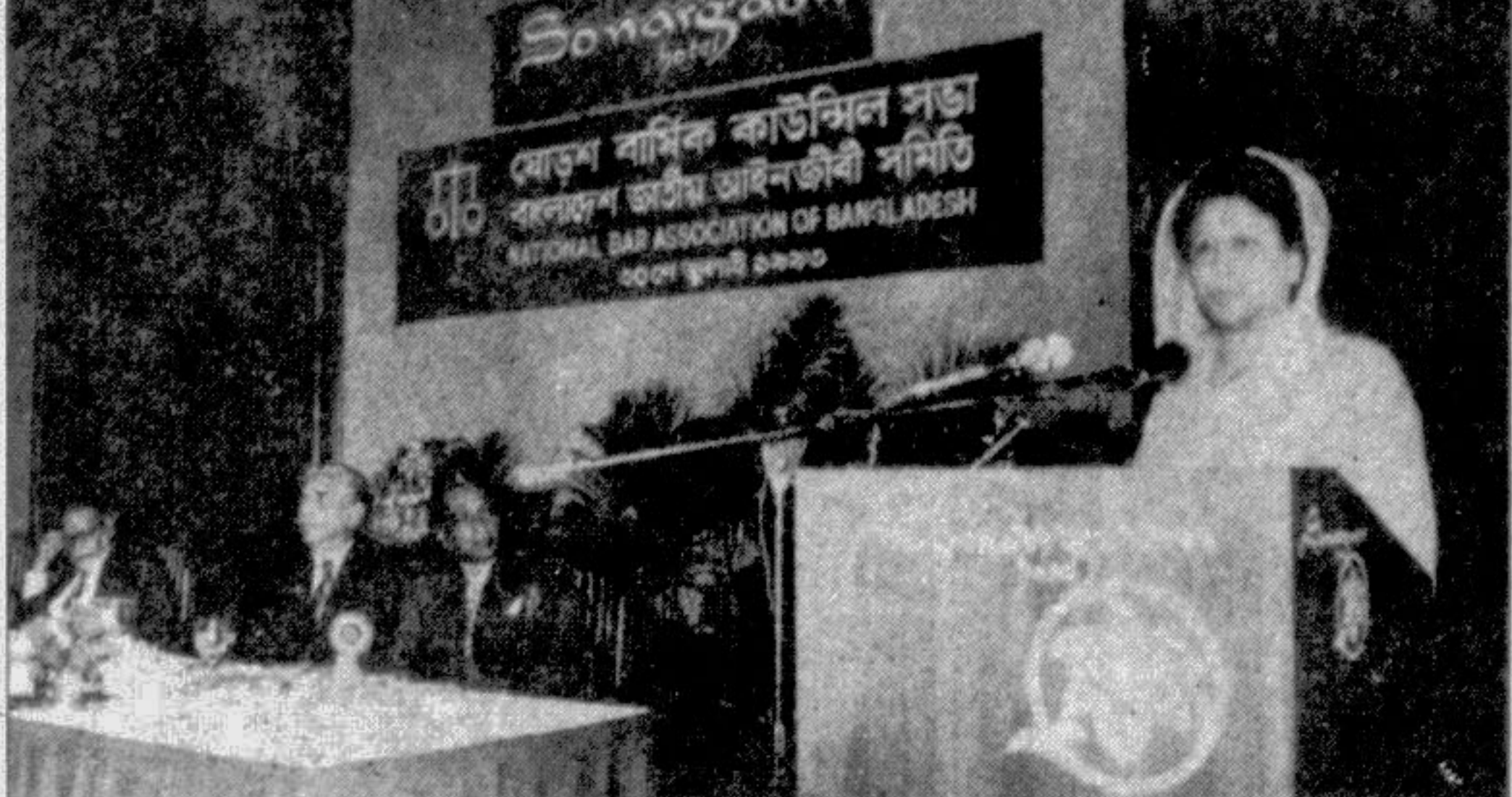
In the operation of auto-rickshaws in the city, the same unsatisfactory situation prevails. The majority of them wear worn-out appearance. They, however, shoulder the major burden of the relatively long-distance journeys of the people ready to pay more than for journeys in public buses or pedal rickshaws.

One aspect of their operation which is galling to their passengers is the absence of fare metres. In all our neighbouring countries where this conveyance operates, fare metre is a necessary adjunct of such vehicles, which obviates unnecessary haggling over fares. The reasons for the auto-rickshaws (also called baby taxis) plying without fare metres are not clear to the general public. Old timers may recall that before Liberation, baby taxis used to have fare metres. What factors are responsible for their abandonment ever since are mysterious. Some observers believe that if fare metre, due to its obvious advantage, is re-introduced, it will lead to a considerable expansion of the use of the baby taxis by the public. It may also play an important part in the gradual elimination of rickshaws from the city roads.

The role of the rickshaws in creating the present traffic anarchy in the city is too clear to everybody. The manner in which rickshaws are proliferating and worsening the city's traffic system, it would be too appalling a thought to envision what the city's traffic situation might be like in future. In a mega city which Dhaka is poised to be, it is inexorable that speedier transports will replace primitive vehicles like rickshaws. But the traffic authorities have not given out any idea as to how the change will be effected.

Lately, according to official sources, efforts are underway to find ways to modernise the transportation system of the city, covering all the aspects of the sector. A study in this regard entitled 'Greater Dhaka Metropolitan Area Integrated Transport Study' is being conducted by the government with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP has reportedly provided 2.3 million US dollars for a study which is conducted by the Planning Commission.

It is hoped that implementation of the recommendations of the on-going study would bring discipline and order in the transport sector as well as ensure improved services for the people.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the sixteenth annual council meeting of the National Bar Association of Bangladesh at a local hotel in the city yesterday. Others in the picture (from left) Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, National Bar Association President Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Supreme Court Bar Association President Kazi Golam Mahbub. —PID photo

### PM: Rule of law

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Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Kazi Golam Mahbub, Advocate Shah Mohammad Khuruzaman and Advocate M A Khaleq.

A minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memories of those lawyers who died since the last annual council meeting of the association.

The Prime Minister recalled the contribution of the lawyers at each critical juncture of the nation's history and especially during the anti-autocracy movement.

She said the past autocratic regime, after usurping power, had attempted to destroy the institutional base of the judiciary. But the lawyers had built resistance against the evil forces, Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister reminded the lawyers that they could play a vital role in establishing the rule of law in the country and urged them to create public consciousness to make the common man more respectful and confident about the rule of law.

The Prime Minister urged the lawyers to be more active for speedy disposal of cases, saying "Justice delayed is justice denied." She also asked them to keep a vigil so that nobody could take the law in his own hands and no innocent person was repressed.

Begum Zia said her government had introduced a free-market economy whose success depended on the rule of law.

Referring to the government's support for enhancing the professional competence and standards of the lawyers, the Prime Minister said grants had been given to the Bar Council and the Atijibi Samity. Steps have been taken to give enhanced allocation for the libraries of the courts, she added.

The Prime Minister said several court buildings were being constructed and additional posts of judges at different levels had been created.

She said the government would actively consider the lawyers' demand for a piece of land and construction of a separate building and library for the National Bar Association of Bangladesh.

Mirza Golam Hafiz urged the lawyers to help maintain independence of the judiciary and rule of law. He said for establishing accountability in the judiciary, actions were being taken against judges found to be at fault.

## 37 more killed in Kashmir fighting

HANGALBAG (India), July 30: At least 37 people, most of them civilians, were killed in fighting between pro-independence Muslim rebels and government troops in a resurgence of violence across Jammu-Kashmir state, officials said Friday, reports AP.

Ten civilians were gunned down Friday when security forces fired upon a crowd of 300 villagers gathered in a field in Hangalbag, 60 kilometres (37 miles) south of capital Srinagar, witnesses said.

Police and defence officials, however, said seven civilians were killed and four others injured when militants hiding in the crowd hurled a grenade during the search operation.

Dozens of witnesses told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity that soldiers ordered them out of their houses after courting off the village.

They suddenly heard the sound of gun shots. As the crowd scattered, many people shouted pro-independence slogans. Soldiers then began to beat up men, women and children. Ten people were injured, they said.

According to a government statement, militants hiding in the area used the villagers as a cover to fire at the soldiers. Troops opened fire after a rebel shot at them with a pistol and another militant threw a grenade, it said.

A defence spokesman said the civilians were all killed in the grenade attack. There were no casualties among the soldiers, said the spokesman.



JU students, ordered to vacate their dormitories following Thursday's violent incident are seen leaving the campus yesterday. —Star photo

## JU files cases

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will not join work until a proper probe into the violence.

Armed police men were deployed on the campus and the gates of the eight residential halls were sealed immediately after the evacuation.

Expressing his reactions to this correspondent, the Vice-Chancellor of the university Professor Kazi Saleh Ahmed said that he was deeply shocked at the whole affair.

He confirmed that he had submitted his resignation letter to the Chancellor, President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Thursday night, adding that he was not sure whether it would be accepted or not.

"Things were completely out of control and there was no way that I could continue to work as Vice-Chancellor," Prof Saleh said.

He, however, declined to comment whether he would rejoin if his resignation was not accepted.

"Anyone with a semblance of conscience should be disturbed by the things that happened here," the VC, looking very upset and tired, said at his office Friday noon.

On Thursday JCD activists, under the banner of the 'General Students' Council,' went on a rampage damaging hundreds of rooms and injuring at least 12 teachers. Some 20 students were also hurt during the three-hour-long clash.

The JCD's attack was precipitated by a Syndicate decision expelling one of its leaders Hafizur Rahman.

Newly-elected Syndicate member Prof Enamul Haq Khan, while talking to The Daily Star, pointed out that it would take time to restore normalcy on the campus.

"We are considering whether it is possible to arrange the Masters Examinations shortly," he said. Most departments of the university have only one or two papers of their Masters examinations to be completed, campus sources said.

He, however, did not say when the Syndicate will meet again.

According to a JCD insider, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had a meeting with members of her party's student's front Friday evening at her Sugandha office. But the details of that meeting were not available.

The students against whom cases have been filed are: Masud Haqhan Talukder Lton, VP, JUCSU, Shamsul Tabriz Mithu, GS, JUCSU, Hafizur Rahman, Joint General Secretary JCD (JU Unit), Aminul Haq Alam, GS, JCD, Shariful Islam Salim, Sports Secretary JUCSU, Amrul Islam Chowdhury, Shahidul Islam, Asad, Syedur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam, Razak Mollah, Mahtabuddin Mithu, Zakir, Ali Haider, Ahsan Habib, Anwar Hossain, Khalidur Rahman, Mamun and Kamruzzaman Japan.

## The Midnight File

### Supporters of Gamsakhurdia seize Georgian town

TBILISI, July 30: Supporters of ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia have seized a west Georgian town in a bid to block government troops withdrawing from the breakaway region of Abkhazia under a peace agreement, government officials in Abkhazia said today. In Abkhazia itself, a ceasefire that was supposed to come into force on Wednesday was again broken today when separatists launched an offensive along the Gumista River and a mortar attack in the Ochamchira region, the government spokesman said, reports AFP.

### 9 killed in Andhra mine blast

HYDERABAD (India), July 30: Nine people including six hitch-hikers died today when their jeep ran into a landmine ambush by Maoist guerrillas in the southeastern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, police said today. Police in the state capital of Hyderabad identified three of those killed as government officials travelling from Kothangudem to raid illegal whiskey distilleries in the town of Narsapet in Warangal district, reports AFP.

### Dr. Kamal IFRC- BDRCS talks begin

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Pakistan

"Birth-right alone cannot ensure the nationality of a person. If it does, Jyoti Basu of India can also claim himself to be a Bangladeshi national", said Dr Kamal, a lawyer of international repute.

Turning to Golam Azam, he said, "Ask yourself about what you did in '71. Was it inhuman or not? If you have forgotten your misdeeds, go through the pages of the Sangram".

Referring to Thursday's violence on the Jahangirnagar University campus, Dr Kamal said recurrence of such incidents will destroy the future of the country.

Criticising the political parties, he said the problems of the country and the people could not be solved by them.

"Democracy means government by the people, but they (parties) forget the people when they go to power," he observed.

The Democratic Forum leader was also critical of the present bureaucratic system which could do very little to rejuvenate the country's economy.

Presided over by Advocate Rafiqul Hasan, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Barrister Amirul Islam and Shahjahan Siraj MP.

### Health projects

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cess, the source explained.

The ministry has also been facing some complications in appointing consultants for the construction works under the projects. According to another official source, many Project Directors are new and lack the requisite skills.

Among the 100 projects undertaken by the ministry, 74 are investment projects while the rest 26 are for providing technical assistance.

Among the development projects, work for implementation of at least five could not be begun during the year. One of these, the Human Research Development Project, is yet to be approved by the Planning Commission. Another project — the Maternal Child Health Training Institute, Azimpur — also remains unimplemented since the agreement with the donor concerned has not yet been signed.



Cabinet Chief Secretary Yohei Kono (R) is congratulated by Prime Minister Kichi Miyazawa (C) and former Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe after Kono won the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photo

## Huda Kono elected new LDP president

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tended to split the party." Huda quickly added, "My presence in the JP presidium meet should make it clear that I never worked against the main ideology of the JP. People who thought my moves were prompted by other forces, or the ruling party, can now stand corrected from their erroneous impression."

The septuagenarian said, the members of the presidium have agreed to hold the next meet of the central body at the residence of Shah Moazzem Hossain. This meeting at Moazzem's house would be followed by a presidium meet at his residence," Huda said.

A leading member of the Jatiya Party told The Daily Star that Huda's move to call a meeting of some JP leaders at his residence was successfully averted because of the visit by a four-member delegation to his residence on July 29.

Led by former Vice-President Masud Ahmed, the other members of the team included Shah Moazzem, Hussain Rezauddin Ahmed, Bhola Miah and Khaledur Rahman Tito.

The JP, which also issued a press release yesterday — the last day of its presidium meeting — however, avoided mention of the Huda episode and expressed the party's concern about the flood victims.

The press release also reiterated the ruling party's claim that thousands of people including Jatiya Party members had joined the BNP.

"It is a travesty of truth that members of the JP would join any other party. The JP members are imbued with the spirit of Bangladeshi nationalism, Islamic ideology and the ideals of the Liberation War."

### DUCSU, JCD

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Haque Milon, General Secretary Nazimuddin Alam, JUCSU Vice-President Masud Hasan Talukdar Lton and General Secretary Shamsul Tabriz Mithu and Jahangirnagar University Chhatra Dal President Masud Hasan Lton and General Secretary Aminul Haque Alam in separate statements also stated the Thursday's incident at the Jahangirnagar University and demanded punishment of the offenders.

The Chhatra Dal President and General Secretary regretted that a group of outsiders and miscreants had attacked the teachers and ransacked different departments.

The Chhatra Dal leaders made it clear that no Chhatra Dal activist was involved in the incident while there was a conspiracy against the Chhatra Dal to tarnish its image by blaming it for such incident.

They urged the authority to open the university and create congenial atmosphere on the campus.

JUCSU leaders and Chhatra Dal JU unit leaders in their statements expressed concern at the suggestion to postpone the activities of the JUCSU and hall unions and urged the authority to withdraw this suggestion and help infuse dynamism in the activities of the JUCSU and hall unions in order to fulfil the demands of the general students.

### Flood relief

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Meghna was still flowing above the danger level.

According to the Flood Forecasting Centre in Dhaka, all the rivers in the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins are flowing below the red mark.

The Flood situation in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Pabna, Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur and Manikganj improved considerably on Friday.

The situation in Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Habiganj, and Sunamganj has also improved, but slowly, according to reports received in Dhaka.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong district reported: The overall flood situation in the greater Chittagong district has improved.

**Investment Corporation of Bangladesh**  
8, DIT Avenue, Dhaka

**Sub: Dividends on ICB Mutual Funds for the year 1992-93 & book closure.**

The Board of Directors of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh in its meeting held on 29th July, 1993 approved Dividends of ICB Mutual Funds for the year ended 30 June, 1993 as follows:

Sl No	Name of Fund	Rate of Dividend per certificate of Tk 100 each
1.	First ICB Mutual Fund	Tk 31.50
2.	Second ICB Mutual Fund	Tk 21.00
3.	Third ICB Mutual Fund	Tk 18.00
4.	Fourth ICB Mutual Fund	Tk 17.00
5.	Fifth ICB Mutual Fund	Tk 12.00

Dividends would be paid to the certificate holders whose names would appear in the Register of Certificate holders as on 21 August, 1993.

The Transfer books of all Mutual Funds will remain closed from 22 August, 1993 to 29 August, 1993 (both days inclusive).

By order of the Board  
**Md Abdur Rahman Khan**  
Secretary

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