

DOWN TO EARTH

City Bus Terminals and Odious Advertisements

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka city has four bus terminals at Saidabad, Mahakhali, Gabtali and Gullistan. The first three terminals are mainly for inter-district services, while from Gullistan buses operate on city routes and on some routes to nearby places like Gazipur, Dhamrai etc. The inter-district bus terminals have specific zones of operation. Saidabad terminal serves Chittagong Division, Mahakhali terminal north-eastern zones like Mymensingh and Tangail and the Gabtali terminal serves the northern and southern districts.

All these terminals together handle more than one lakh passengers a day. This huge number of passengers are, however, deprived of some elementary facilities at these terminals, which go to compound the tribulations of the passengers. For some time a chaotic situation has been prevailing at these terminals. Clashes over establishment of supremacy among different labour organisations, rivalries over collection of tolls, misdeeds of mastans, fighting at gambling and drinking dens at such places, loss of luggage of passengers, indecent treatment of female passengers are frequent features at these terminals.

Road transport has lately assumed importance in the communication system of the country. Several factors have contributed to this development. At present the condition of roads and highways in the country is much better than before. Moreover, construction of new roads and bridges has

played an important part in improving road communication. Since bus services are available on many routes at convenient intervals throughout the day, people are turning more and more to bus travels in preference to journeys by trains and launches. As a result, the volume of bus passenger traffic is increasing as fast as the number of road transports.

But this enormous growth of road transports seems to have acted also as a curse. Taking advantage of the high growth of bus passengers and transports, various anti-social elements have chosen the bus terminals as suitable centres for their nefarious activities. As a result, one incident or other takes place at these centres all the time. Toll collection is a serious bone of contention. There is no recognised agency for the collection of tolls. Consequently, the party which gets more powerful acquires a free hand in toll collection. Many a time it is observed that more than one party is engaged in toll collection. This often leads to frictions among the contending parties, resulting in injuries to many. Besides, constant feuds among the contending parties continue for an indefinite period. This causes inordinate suffering to the passengers. Such a state of affairs prevails at Gabtali and Saidabad terminals very often. Moreover, a class of bus owners has set up a mastan group to maintain their sway in the area. Nobody dares to raise any protest. Even the agencies responsible for maintaining law and order prefer to remain silent spectators.

The deficiencies in the basic facilities for passengers are at present too apparent at the terminals. The fast growing passenger volume makes it all the more urgent that the terminals function with a reasonable standard of efficiency and the existing deficiencies made good.

The concerned authorities should have paid attention to remedy the poor law and order situation long ago. Now the matter has assumed a compelling urgency.

..... We have come across a kind of advertisements on quack medicines in some newspapers and periodicals which are downright in bad taste and in some cases blatantly obscene in their contents. This is regrettable. The print media are relatively extensive in their reach and accordingly the potentialities for harmful influence such as objectionable advertisements carry are very wide-ranging. Whatever preventive laws there are in the matter, it is plain that such laws alone, if not backed by conscientious public opinion, may not carry us far.

It, therefore, behoves those connected with the print media to exercise self-censorship, whatever the financial sacrifice it entails in the matter of acceptance of advertisements in order to check any possible adverse impact on our society. Our life is already bedevilled with numerous ills without this kind of advertisements compounding the over-all harmful effects.



Banks shy to invest

From Page 1 Col 4 cause of wrong government policies and tariff anomalies. For example, he said, the assembling factories of the country are now facing a tough time because of the same tariff rates imposed on their products and the imported finished goods.

He said corruption in the administration is not as harmful as corruption in the policies. Many things need to be done with regard to the policies if the industrial sector is to be streamlined, he observed.

Termining the situation in the industrial sector 'volatile', another banker said the banks cannot run the risk of long-term financing in such a situation.

He said the longest term of deposit being received by the banks is three years, while the long-term loan is of ten years. The capital infusion needed for the banks to meet their narrow paid up capital is not taking place, which had made them reluctant to invest on a large scale, he said.

A high official of one nationalised commercial bank (NCB), while talking to The Daily Star, said that although most of the bad debt was caused by the public sector corporations and industries, yet the banks were not being able to take any drastic measures against them for recovery of loans, unlike their options against the private sector defaulters.

According to the official, bad debts amount to 10 per cent of the total advances made to the private sector, while it is about 20 per cent in case of the public sector.

He, however, felt that the situation would improve soon since the government has taken up special reform programmes for the sectors which, he hoped, would be able to repay all the loans after completion of the reforms.

He also said that although the overall contribution of the banks in boosting investment for industrialisation was not satisfactory, the NCBs —

Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali banks — were performing better than the private banks. The NCBs would be able to do more if a favourable atmosphere of investment could be restored.

An official of the Ministry of Finance said the government compensated the banks at various times for the bad debts of the public sectors. But, for the private sector, the legal system for recovery would have to be improved, he said.

The government would have to be the guarantor of bank credits by formulating appropriate laws, he added.

Three killed in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Two persons were killed, and another reportedly committed suicide in and outside the city yesterday.

One other person was seriously injured in a mishap.

A police constable Shah Alam, 30, was killed when his vehicle overturned at the Kataban area in the city at about 2 am yesterday. The victim died on the spot.

Alam and five other policemen were on patrol duty when a three-wheeler which Alam was driving met with the accident.

In another road accident, Asmatunnessa, 30, was killed and her daughter Jesmin 10, was injured when a speeding minibus knocked down their rickshaw at Fatulla in Narayanganj at about 2 pm Friday.

The victims were seriously injured and Asmatunnessa was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she died after admission. Jesmin was admitted to a local hospital.

A house wife, Rawshan Ara, 25, reportedly committed suicide by taking poison at her Kandapara residence in Dhamrai early yesterday.

All the bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

234 cardphone booths installed

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Telephone Shilpa Sangstha (TSS) has so far installed 234 cardphone booths across the country, of which 141 are in Dhaka, a TSS source said yesterday.

The number will reach 400 by December, the source said. The state-owned organisation has already earned Tk 4 crore revenue from the cardphones, he added.

On an average some 70 people use each of these new phones daily, meaning there are 14,770 daily users across the country.

The phones which provide, local, nationwide and overseas call facilities, have become popular among the people. Metallic cards of different value are used in the phone.

Currently 25, 50 and 100-unit cards are being sold in the post offices and different banks. The TSS plans to introduce 200-unit cards shortly. Each unit costs Tk two.

Gold smuggling

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"In the pre-dawn swoop, we recovered some important documents relating to the case from the houses we raided ... The other birds had already flown ... In one of the houses we saw the telephone line disconnected and the suspect had removed all his photographs", said the police source.

According to the list of suspects, another Biman staff and some 'businessmen' were engaged in the racket which on Wednesday attempted to smuggle in some 57 kilograms of gold. The source refused to divulge the names of the suspects.

The consignment, worth about Tk 3.13 crore, was brought from Muscat on a Gulf Air flight. A driver of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Abdul Majid Hawlader, was arrested for his alleged involvement in the attempt to smuggle the gold using a microbus inside the airport apron.

Selim Hossain is likely to be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate today.



Chang Chol, Vice Prime Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and members of his entourage visited the Sixth Asian Art Biennale-93 organised by the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Khaleda : Democracy

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The Prime Minister said as a part of the nation dependent, the party was taking up destructive measures one after another to hinder the development activities.

She said they always talked about the spirit of the War of Independence but never believed in it.

The party wanted to keep the people in darkness of ignorance by obstructing the development programmes of the democratic government. She said adding, but the people have already become conscious of the necessity of development and have discarded the politics of hartals and destruction.

Begum Zia called upon the students not to do politics for anybody's individual interest but for the welfare of the nation and the people.

The Prime Minister said terrorists could never be friends of anyone. Without naming the Awami League she criticised the party for giving shelters to identified terrorists who were expelled from BNP's front organisations.

Saifur's Japan visit

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continuing for over six months. Only recently, Mahmudul Haq replaced Tofael K Haider, the recalled Tofael.

The composition of the delegation accompanying the Finance Minister also indicates the areas of importance placed on the visit.

The delegation includes Industries Secretary Hasnat A Hye, Energy Secretary Fatzur Razaq, Executive Director of the Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) Mohammad Ali, JMBA consultant Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury and the Additional Secretary of the External Relations Division (ERD).

During his stay in Tokyo the Finance Minister is expected to meet senior Japanese ministers, including Finance Minister Tautomu Hata, and the presidents of both the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

According to all available indications, Japan's participation in co-financing, along with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Jamuna Bridge Project is likely to be finalised and an announcement made during Saifur Rahman's visit.

Japan is expected to provide a 200 million US dollar loan for the 700-plus dollar Jamuna Bridge Project, along with similar financial backing from the World Bank and the ADB.

The presence of the local OECF Resident Representative, other relevant Japanese Embassy officials and World Bank Vice President Joseph Wood, who just concluded a visit to Bangladesh, in Tokyo during the Finance Minister's visit also suggests that the Japanese commitment to finance the Jamuna Bridge is likely to be firm up soon.

Minister Rahman is also likely to seek additional Japanese investment in the country's power and gas sectors. In the absence of the availability of World Bank financing in the sectors, The World Bank had stopped funding all projects in the sector because of the huge system-loss in the distribution and transmission system.

Earlier this year, Japan agreed to fund the construction of two new combined power plants in Sylhet and Haripur and to rehabilitate two barge-mounted power stations in Dhaka and Chittagong.

However, observers point out that Tokyo is reluctant to fund any more projects in the power sector until the system-loss is reduced.

The government is also seeking Japan's participation in developing the gas sector, espe-

specially in expanding the distribution network, which is likely to receive a favourable response.

In an earlier proposal, the government had also requested Japan to carry out a development survey for setting up a modern industrial estate in Chittagong. This proposal would also come up for discussion during the Finance Minister's visit, and indications are there that it would be given positive consideration by the Japanese.

Observers, however, point out that the Finance Minister is likely to face a more difficult situation in convincing Japanese investors to come to Bangladesh, especially after the KAFCO fiasco and the general image of Bangladesh being a "country of hartals and strikes."

The Exim Bank of Japan, OECF and two private companies, Marubeni and Chiyoda, have invested a total of 261 million dollars in the newly 450-million dollar Karnafuli Fertiliser Company Project, which was renegotiated by the present government over a disputed clause requiring government guarantee for the total project.

The reaction against the cancellation of the original KAFCO contract among the Japanese investors was sharply critical.

"The abrupt action of the Bangladesh government (to revoke the KAFCO contract) made the business sector (here) say that this was not the country to deal with," said Masao Sawaki, an advisor to the influential Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, during an interview with this correspondent in Tokyo in June last. A former ambassador to the Philippines, Sawaki is also a member of the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation.

Observers noted that the Japanese investors also hold a negative view about Bangladesh because of the frequent hartals, labour strife, bad labour-management relations, the deteriorating law and order situation and the general perception of political instability.

Bangladesh's largest single bilateral donor Japan, on several previous occasions, had complained about the country's slow pace of implementation of aided projects.

Another Chinese plane hijacked

TAIPEI, Nov 12: A physician and a civil servant hijacked a Chinese airliner to Taiwan Friday, brandishing surgical knives and a blood pressure gauge which they pretended was a bomb, officials said, reports AP.

It was the third hijacking from China to Taiwan in a week.

Kali Puja tonight

By Staff Correspondent

The Hindu religious festival Kali Puja begins tonight.

This puja is observed on the new moon night of the Bengali calendar month of Kartik. This year, the occasion coincided with tonight.

The festivities usually continue for three days.

One of the highlights of this religious occasion is 'dital' or the festival of lights which is celebrated with a lot of merry-making.

Another report adds: A delegation of the Bagerhat Press Club yesterday met Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office.

The members of the delegation congratulated her for carrying out different development programmes for emancipation of the teeming millions and ensuring freedom of press.

They discussed different problems including transportation problem and dredging problem at the Mongla Port.

They also discussed problems faced by the Bagerhat Press Club.



Hindu goddess Kali

Meanwhile, the Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee has decided to observe a 9 am - 5 pm mass hunger strike at the Dhakeshwari temple premises today.

The programme has been taken up as part of the committee's nationwide agitation demanding reconstruction of the historic Ramna Kalibari Ashram and the 'Ma'a Anandamoyee Ashram', both ravaged by the Pakistani occupation forces during the 1971 Liberation War.

The committee will, however, celebrate the Shyama puja tonight.

Hartal

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Avenue in the city at four this. In a bid to drum up support for today's hartal, workers of the AL, the JP and the Janata Dal brought out separate processions in the city yesterday.

Meanwhile UNB adds, Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has appealed to the people from all walks of life to make today's half-day hartal a total success.

In a statement issued here on behalf of the AL chief, she said the 'failed' government has resorted to the course of force and political persecution to cling to power.

Hasina, who is now on a tour of China, said the BNP government had betrayed with the people.

"Mistrust of the government has disrupted public life. Democracy, life and property and values of the Liberation War are jeopardised at the hands of this regime."

"The government has lost the moral right to remain in power," said the Opposition leader.

Recalling the objectives of the anti-autocracy movement, Hasina said the people had waged a struggle expecting the country would be freed of terrorism and corruption, that an accountable and transparent government would be set up, the independence of the judiciary and rule of law ensured and a sovereign Parliament would be the focal point of state power.

But the way the ruling BNP's police force used batons and tear-gas against peaceful demonstrators on November 10, reminds all how the Ershad regime opened fire on the people, killing Noor Hossain on that day in 1987.

More than 100 leaders and workers of the Awami League were injured, over 100 others arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act and even the Awami League office was attacked by police, she alleged and demanded the release of the arrested people.

The Midnight File

US soldier kills Somali

MOGADISHU, Nov 12: An American soldier killed a Somali carrying a rocket-propelled grenade launcher near the UN headquarters compound, officials said Friday. The incident Thursday was the second time in two days that US sharpshooters wounded or killed men carrying heavy weapons, reports AP.

UN forces deployed around Sarajevo mental hospital

SARAJEVO (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Nov 12: UN peacekeepers were deployed around a mental hospital in a central Bosnian combat zone Friday to protect about 100 patients, including some near death. Norwegian and Swedish troops rushed to the hospital in Bakovici, a village 35 kilometres west of Sarajevo and helped evacuate staff members after heavy shelling nearby, reports AP.

Dutch govt may opt out

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donors including the Netherlands. The 150 million dollars first phase, projected to run from 1990 to 1995, would mainly consist of studies on the basis of which construction could begin after 1995.

Referring to the criticism aroused at home and abroad, the report makes it clear that a decision to implement extensive water works 'can only be taken against the background of adequate insight into effects on the environment and fisheries, into socio-economic and engineering factors.

"This level of insight is not yet available and will still be lacking in 1995," points out the report.

Therefore, the report proposes the carrying out of certain less controversial activities, like the construction of shelters for cyclone-prone areas and protection for urban areas.

Termining the subject of flood control in Bangladesh 'extremely complex', the study suggests an effective national water-management policy based on interdisciplinary analysis.

"It is important that the FAP studies be oriented in this direction," the report says.

Admitting that the construction of massive civil engineering works implies drastic and irreversible changes in the conditions of existence for millions and in the natural environment, the report says "such intervention has lasting consequences which cannot be mitigated sufficiently by compensating measures."

Moving on to the experience with implementation practices in flood control in Bangladesh, the report says, "(The experience) does not justify optimism regarding the quality of construction, operation and maintenance."

"The technical feasibility of the entire FAP concept is not demonstrated and projects involving large-scale embankments must be considered out of reach at this time," the report points out.

Without being quite clear as to what the net effects of the FAP will be on soil fertility, ground-water level, the loss of arable land and animal husbandry.

Projonmo '71 celebrates founding day

By Staff Correspondent

Projonmo '71, an organisation of the children of the Liberation War martyrs, celebrated its second founding anniversary yesterday.

A colourful procession marched from the Aparajevo Bangla on the Dhaka University campus to the Public Library. A seminar was held on "The Liberation War of Bangladesh, Projonmo '71 and Today's Realities" at the library auditorium.

Earlier, the Projonmo '71 members gathered at the foot of the Aparajevo Bangla and observed a minute's silence in honour of the martyrs.

Rasheda Alam, widow of martyred Nurul Alam, attended the seminar as chief guest while Shyamol Chowdhury, widow of another martyr Dr Ailem Chowdhury, was the special guest.

Later, a short film "Nine Months to Freedom" was screened.

Inter-bank

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Excess liquidity still remained a big problem for the banks during the week, market sources said. They pointed to the somewhat depressed inter-bank call money rates and said demand for the Taka was sluggish. The interbank call money rates ranged between 2.5 per cent and four per cent. The bank rate remained at 5.5 per cent.

The interbank dollar rate ranged between Tk 39.7550 and Tk 39.77 for one US dollar.

The Deutsche mark was sold at between Tk 23.51 and 23.76 to the clients, the British poundsterling sold at between Tk 59.10 and 59.41 while the Japanese yen fetched between Tk 0.3693 and 0.3734 during the week.

Market sources said the clients were discouraged to take forward cover against their LCs because of a stronger Taka against its intervention currency — the US dollar.

bandry, the report underscores need for further study and indicates the urgency to postpone large-scale technical structures.

Referring to the fact that environmental aspects are taken up in the plan, however, the Dutch ministry has asked for more considerations in decision-making.

"Until these conditions are met it seems important to suspend all controversial interventions", the Netherlands Development Cooperation has warned.

Termining the anticipated economic returns of the 5,000 million dollars investment plan 'based on uncertain benefits', the report stresses the need for further study because 'so much is still unknown'.

"At present there is no adequate macro-economic analysis and no forum for macro-economic discussion", the report further observes.

"Popular participation in the FAP is limited." The report maintains: "It seems virtually impossible to gain the necessary knowledge before 1995 and to do justice to the interests of the people affected, the poorest in particular."

Moving on the institutional aspects, the study says that the FAP has ensured the necessary coordination of donors in the water sector.

However, it points out: "Perhaps donor influence leads to greater distance from the population. Then, too, donors do not always agree and may emphasise different points."

"There is much confusion about the precise nature of the FAP," the study says, and adds, "the controversy has become highly polarised."

Indicating the changes in the insights of the FAP, the report affirms that the process of changes has begun 'only recently and is far from completion'.

"It has not yet led to changes in the formal FAP objectives, nor are the changes embraced by all parties in the FAP," the report concludes.

Old scourges

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gion — India, Indonesia and Myanmar.

Yet, massive preventive measures has helped bring the figure down to 2.1 million in 1990 from 3.7 million in 1985. It has further been decreased by another 18.7 per cent in between 1990 and 1992, the report said.

In the South-East Asia Region the total number of leprosy cases was computed at 3,500,000 under multi-drug therapy (MDT). In 1991 and 1992 the total registered cases were 1,459,338 of which registered new cases were 517,000 and the cases on MDT were 742,988.

The health ministers of the SEAR countries, during their meeting on November 1-3, discussed elaborately the impact of these old scourges and opined that implementation of the new strategy prepared by the health experts can help eradicate malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy from the world as well as from the region by the end of the century.

"The past experiences have shown that behind every success of a programme there has been a strong political will," the report, discussed in the health ministers' meeting, said.

Health experts have modified the health infrastructure, information, education and communication (IEC), epidemiological approach, management information system (MIS), intersectoral collaboration and research and development (R&D) programme to check the diseases.

They also suggested that collaboration with the non-government organisations can help achieve the target by the year 2000.

Embarrassing

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one was missing. The caution letter, delivered to the victim late last month, said "the Information Minister was late in his arrival to the airport but you departed from Chittagong citing bad weather in Dhaka."

The Biman management had faced an embarrassing situation because of the incident, as a pilot of Biman he should not do such a thing in future, the letter added.