The Daily Star

DHAKA SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1994

DOWN TO EARTH

Continuing Travails of City Pedestrians

By A S M Nurunnabi

The suffering of city pedestrians continues unabated. With the fast rising city population and no early prospect of improvement in the city's road infrastructure and discipline, the outlook from the pedestrian point of view may seem depressing. The public transport situation in the city which is already a shambles forces some citizens to depend on their two legs to cover any distance, but their lot in this respect is far from easy, as they encounter varied adverse situations.

Ideally a pedestrian is supposed to have untrammeled freedom of movement. In the city, such freedom is hard to conceive except where are open spaces which are also gradually shrinking. But when one comes into the thick of a crowd which seems to be all pervasive nowadays in the city, his movements run into troubles.

On a very few roads in the city, there are footpaths. Therefore walking on other roads without footpaths is not free from hazards. Even where there are footpaths, they do not ensure easy passage for pedestrians because of large-scale encroachments on them. The footpaths are mostly cluttered with beggars, hawkers and a variety of petty shopkeepers. The problem of such encroachments is admittedly a difficult one. For the number of people seeking a living on them is always on the increase.

Lately the problem of encroachment has grown tremendously. The heart of the city centre presents a maddening spectacle of the steadily growing number of the encroachers. The Gulistan area once had a charm of its own. Nowadays the whole place looks unkempt and dirty. A few months before the last mayoral election, a large-scale drive was undertaken against the hawkers. Now they seem to have returned with a vengeance. On the footpaths opposite Gulistan cinema hall, the hawkers and other squatters now sit two rows deep on each of the footpath, leaving the pedestrians little space to walk through. The same density of hawkers afflicts the Baitul Mukarram area, the Motijheel Commercial Area and pavements on all four sides of the GPO building and along the Ramna Bhaban. Except the VIP Road, there are perhaps few places in the city which are free from their overwhelming presence. Such overcrowding forces the pedestrians out of the sidewalks on to the roads impeding free flow of vehicular traffic and creating possibilities of accidents.

The pedestrians also continue to suffer on account of our unabated predilection for holding meetings and rallies on the roads. The use of thoroughfares as venues for public meetings is perhaps unique in our country. In the recent past, we also set the unique example of allowing their use on hire for public meetings. In some areas, particular thoroughfares have become favourite venues for public meetings and rallies. It appears that such favourite spots are those in front of the Press Club, the road north of Baitul Mukarram and part of BB Avenue.

It is not merely the major political parties that take possession of these spots for their public meetings. More frequently smaller political factions and professional groups and in fact any group affected by any issue take to these places, particularly the spot in front of the Press Club to ventilate their views and demands. When in such a situation free movement of traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, is impeded, a chaotic condition prevails. When we stop to think that this is taking place day in and day out, we are overwhelmed with feelings of utter helplessness.

Sometime ago, government set up a committee to suggest suitable sites in the city for public meetings. The committee reportedly considered the suitability of some sites. But its recommendations and government's decision thereon are yet to be announced. The matter has already been much delayed, with no relief in sight for the pedestrians in the near future. Some pessimists, however, suggest that whatever the government decision may be regarding alternative sites for public meetings, the magnetism of the Press Club will continue to persist, making the choice of the site in front of the Press Club as irresistible as ever as venues for public meetings and rallies.

At certain places in the city, viz, near New Market, Court Building, Farm Gate and Zia International Airport, there are overbridges for the use of pedestrians. It has been observed that not many pedestrians are included to make use of these overbridges. They would face hazards by making a dash across the road rather than take the extra trouble of climbing the overbridge for moving across. These overbridges are also haunts of hawkers and beggars which somewhat discourage their use by pedestrians. It behoves the police to be more alert in keeping these overbridges clear of encroachments so that pedestrians may conveniently use them.

Observers feel that the number of existing overbridges was too inadequate in view of the fast growing pedestrian traffic at certain key points in the city and they suggest construction of some more overbridges to meet the increasing load of pedestrian traffic.

A pedestrian's steps are not also without hazards even when he tries to cross a road from one side to the other by using the so-called zebra crossings. It has been seen that such zebra crossings offer no guarantee of safety for the pedestrians using them. Many accidents are known to have taken place at these points. Many vehicles, either through ignorance or negligence, are seen to encroach with impunity on these supposedly safe zones for pedestrians.

In some advanced countries like Japan, Italy, there are spacious promenades and malls in specified areas for the exclusive use of pedestrians, where no vehicular traffic of any kind is allowed. In the present context of traffic situation in the Dhaka city, such havens for pedestrians and beyond our dreams.

In the over-all picture, the main obstructions to pedestrian traffic are posed by encroachments on sidewalks and roadsides. This problem appears to be growing at an alarming rate. Since the encroachers constitute a vast number with their livelihood dependent on various trades and occupations, it is no easy job to find solution to the problem. While a steady policy of their rehabilitation may be vigorously pursued, vigilance and preventive action by appropriate authorities are required to keep the pavements free as far as possible. The current pavement situation presents just one aspect of the existing traffic anarchy.

A view of the city's Gabtali cattle market which yesterday spilled over onto the Mirpur Road, causing severe traffic jams on the vital Dhaka-Aricha highway. — Star photo

Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow

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and satisfaction of Allah, the Most Beneficent."

The Prime Minister wished continued peace, happiness and prosperity for the countrymen and the Muslim *ummah*.

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in her message underlying the importance of sacrifice said, Islam taught people the meaning of peace, friendship, sympathy, tolerance and welfare.

Hasina said, "Let us promise to free the society, which deprives millions of poor people from the joy of Eid, from exploitation."

Meanwhile, the sale of cattle and goats soared up in the 20 temporary cattle markets in various points of the capital. The supply of cattle had increased yesterday and their price also dropped a little, according to buyers. The price of smaller cows varied between Tk 5000 and Tk 6000 while medium size cattle were selling at around Tk 7500 to Tk 9000.

The sale of cattle is expected to pick up further today as it is the last day before the Eid.

The rush of home-bound people increased further yesterday. The launches, inter-district buses and trains were seen packed with passengers.

The government has chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the holy occasion.

The national flags will be hoisted atop all public and private buildings. The thoroughfares and road islands from Zia International Airport to Bangabhaban will be decorated with miniature flags and buntings inscribed with 'Eid Mubarak' both in Bangla and Arabic.

Radio and Television will put out special programmes while the national dailies will carry special write-ups.

Special diets will be served to the inmates in jails, orphanages, vagrant centres, destitute homes and hospitals.

Villagers gouge eyes of outlaw in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, May 20: Angry villagers gouged out the eyes of an outlawed Sarbahara partyman in retaliation for the murder of a rival activist.

A group of Sarbahara cadres hacked to death one Shahabuddin Master of a rival faction of the party at village Kadarpur under Babuganj, thana last night, police said, adding that Shahabuddin was a member of the Zia group.

When Sarbaharamen were leaving after the murder, the villagers chased them, caught one Dulal and gouged out his eyes. Police later rescued Dulal from the wrath of the mob and sent him to the medical college hospital.

Clinton

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puted Himalayan region of Kashmir. India is now battling a four-year separatist rebellion in Kashmir, its only Muslim-majority state. It suspects Pakistan of supporting the rebellion.

Rao, asked if India had engaged in human rights abuses in Kashmir, said simply: 'No.'

Clinton said he told Rao that he hoped India and Pakistan "would continue their constructive dialogue on ways to resolve their differences, including their differences over Kashmir."

The President said he and Rao pledged to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and a verifiable global ban on production of bomb-grade nuclear materials.

In regard to India's nuclear programme, Clinton said he wanted to find a way to enhance India's security so that it does not need the bomb.

"It would be wrong for the United States to tell your great nation or the smallest nation on the face of the earth that we recommend a course of action for them that would reduce security. We should be in the business of increasing security," Clinton said.

US officials said Clinton and Rao discussed nuclear non-proliferation but there was no real change in India's refusal to give up its programme.

"We agreed on goals, but differed on means," the official said.

Clinton said the United States was now India's largest bilateral trading partner and investor and that India's economic reform programme will be "the engine of growth in our relationship."

He said he was dispatching Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary to India in July for talks on energy conservation and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown in November for talks on expanding investment and trade.

Rao invited Clinton to visit India at his convenience and said that the President had accepted.

Jackie

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lossberg and John F Kennedy Jr, were at her side, along with her longtime companion, Maurice Tempelsman, and other family members.

"Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was a model of courage and dignity for all Americans and all the world," President Clinton said in a statement. "More than any other woman of her time, she captivated our nation and the world with her intelligence, elegance and grace.

"Even in the face of impossible tragedy, she carried the grief of her family and our entire nation with a calm power that somehow reassured all of us who mourned," he said.

After three days of treatment at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, she returned to her apartment Wednesday evening to die. She shunned medication in her final hours, said her friend and spokeswoman, Nancy Tuckerman.

"There was nothing more to do for her," Tuckerman said. Mrs Onassis had signed a living will requesting that no extraordinary measures be taken.

Two killed in city

By Staff Correspondent

Armed men killed a man and a woman in the city's Hazaribagh area late Thursday night.

Babul, 30, died on the spot around 10 pm while Shaheenur Akhter Lipi, 22, succumbed to her injuries yesterday morning at Mohakhali's Chest Diseases Hospital.

Even after 24 hours of the murders, Dhanmondi police failed to nab the killers.

Babul's father, Moslem Mia lodged a case with the Dhanmondi police, accusing a local bully Romel and his accomplices of committing the murders.

According to Dhanmondi police, Babul had a quarrel with Romel and his group. "We received a number of complaints against Babul," said a police officer last night.

During the attack on Babul, Lipi was hit by a bullet at her home at 33/1, Sanatan Road, Hazaribagh. Lipi was the wife of one Abul Hasem. Witnesses said Lipi was hit when she opened the door of her roadside house hearing a commotion.

CAAB employees

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cepted our main demand and agreed that election of the proposed welfare association would be held by November 30, 1992," A T M Abdul Hye, president of the Jote, told The Daily Star.

Hye, who has been charge-sheeted, showed a notice in support of his claim. But, he said, the authorities later deviated from their stand and the proposed union-like welfare association could not be formed.

"We know that our job is essential and our service rules do not permit trade unionism. So we want to form the welfare association to look after the interests of the employees," he said.

He alleged that the employees never resorted to any destructive action but the authorities took repressive measures against them.

The other suspended leaders of the employees are: Indrajit Kumar Ghose, executive president of the Jote, Abu Taher, additional secretary general, Syed Mostaq Hossain Ratan, advisor, Abdur Rab, publicity secretary and Md Shahabuddin, assistant organising secretary.

Meanwhile, at an extended meeting of the Jote last week, the employees decided to hold a 'grand rally' on June 8 to announce a fresh action programme.

Until 1985, the CAAB employees enjoyed trade union rights. The rights were then curtailed for smooth working, one source said.

"The situation may deteriorate if the authorities continue victimising the employees," a Jote leader said on condition of anonymity.

State Minister Abdul Mannan said the staff have been given canteen subsidy which will benefit all the employees financially. Overtime facilities have been restored and medical facilities increased, he added.

Some 50 flats for the CAAB employees have already been constructed and another 50 are under construction, the State Minister said.

He said the income of the CAAB is fixed. The employees do not have to render any extra service to raise the income, so they cannot claim any profit bonus. He also said none of the aviation authorities in the neighbouring countries give their employees any aviation allowance.

"Most of their demands have been met and we cannot accept the demand for trade union rights," Mannan said.

Tito defends Anis' expulsion from JP presidium

Jatiya Party Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Tito yesterday said Anisul Islam Mahmud was relieved of his position in the party presidium for his anti-organisational activities, including intra-party scheming, reports UNB.

Tito also said the party's Chittagong city unit and the Chittagong North and South district chapters had demanded that Anis be expelled from the party because of various charges against him.

In a press release, the JP Secretary General refuted Anis Mahmud's recent press statement and said the action taken against him by acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was completely constitutional.

He said Mizan Chowdhury was given the responsibility of running the party as acting chairman when Chairman Ershad was arrested on December 12, 1990. So, action regarding all organisational matters are being taken with the approval of Chowdhury, he asserted.

Tito further said the action against Anis would not weaken the free-Ershad campaign; rather, it will foil any move against it.

Budget : The soft option

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are starting to realise that Bangladesh has a lot of potential.

'Why is it then that the growth of the Bangladesh economy is yet to take off?' ask critics of the government's economic policy. If investment has increased, where are the new jobs? The critics argue that the government's reform programme has actually dampened the growth impetus in the economy and has raised unemployment and poverty.

Saifur Rahman has a difficult choice to make in deciding how to present his next budget. With talk of an election in the air, there will be a lot of pressure from his own party to pay more attention to possible criticisms from the Opposition. These criticisms relate mostly to tax rates, utility charges, protection to domestic industry, price of agricultural inputs and lending terms to the private sector.

If the Finance Minister feels compelled to accept the soft option on these matters, he will have to undo a number of the reform and structural adjustment measures put in place through his earlier budgets. This may mean a sacrifice in terms of growth in domestic savings. However, since the effect of slower domestic savings will not be felt in the immediate present, this sacrifice will be politically expedient.

Fortunately for Rahman, during the last three years he has successfully made more room for himself to have a giveaway budget for next year. His aggressive tax efforts have improved the government's revenue position considerably. At the same time revenue expenditures have been slashed down. Thus, the compulsion to raise increased amounts of revenue to run the government over the next year will be absent.

In fact, the comfortable resource position will probably be used to provide tariff cut on raw materials and machinery and to stimulate import of selected items. Part of the reserves may also be channeled towards parts of the private sector that have been hurt by lowering of tariff protection in the past.

Khmers to attend peace talks in North Korea

PHNOM PENH, May 20: Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan has confirmed he will attend peace talks with the government to be held in North Korea next week, a statement distributed by the royal palace on Friday said, reports AP.

King Norodom Sihanouk is arranging the talks, to begin on May 27 at his guest residence near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

"I am very happy to participate in the round-table talks," wrote Khieu Samphan in a Thursday message to Sihanouk which was given to reporters Friday.

A message Tuesday from the guerilla leader had indicated he had reservations about attending. He had said he backed the talks idea but wanted to ensure that terms were "right and proper." He apparently meant that he wished to have assurances that the government side would not dictate the agenda of the talks.

The government's co-premiers, Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, as well as national assembly chief Chea Sim are also slated to attend the talks, which come after several months of seesaw fighting in western Cambodia that has displaced tens of thousands of people.

The Khmer Rouge boycotted UN-supervised elections in May last year that brought the current government to power. The election was part of an accord meant to end Cambodia's civil war, but the Khmer Rouge kept fighting.

The talks will held without preconditions. The government had previously insisted on having a cease-fire before any negotiations

Referendum on future of N Ireland

LONDON, May 20: Britain is to hold a referendum in Northern Ireland over the future of the province, the British government said Thursday, in response to a nationalist challenge for clarifications to a peace initiative for the troubled region, reports AFP.

The move followed the presentation of a list of 20 questions by Sinn Fein — political wing of the outlawed Irish Republican Army (IRA) — to London on last December's joint Downing Street peace declaration on Northern Ireland, signed by Britain and the Irish Republic.

In a statement the Northern Ireland office said the wishes "of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland would be determined by a numerical majority of those validly voting in a poll fairly and explicitly organised for this purpose.

Warning against sale of 'Lajja' in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (India), May 20: Booksellers in this southern Indian city have been warned by Muslims not to stock the novel "Lajja" by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen, reports AFP.

Fearing damage to his shop, one of Hyderabad's leading booksellers, A A Hussain's, this week withdrew the English-language translation of the novel from sale.

The Midnight File

Ukraine suspends Crimea's constitution

KIEV, May 20: Ukrainian lawmakers suspended the constitution of independence-leaning Crimea, parliamentary sources said, after Crimean deputies earlier adopted a basic law which amounted to a declaration of independence from Kiev. In the closed-session vote Ukrainian deputies gave the pro-Russian Crimean Assembly 10 days to "conform with the laws and Constitution of Ukraine," reports AFP.

China objects to Dalai Lama's Russia tour

MOSCOW, May 20: The Chinese Embassy in Moscow formally expressed its concern over the Dalai Lama's visit to Russia, warning Friday that any official contacts with the Tibetan spiritual leader would jeopardize Russian-Chinese relations. Zhang Zhiming, the embassy's spokesman, said China was watching "attentively and with great concern" as the exiled Buddhist leader made a four-day visit beginning Wednesday, reports AP.

Govt refutes Mizan's concern for Ershad

The government yesterday termed as "misleading" the statement of acting Jatiya Party Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury regarding the imprisoned former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad, recently published in a section of the press, reports BSS.

An official handout issued here last night said that the attention of the government was drawn to a statement of the acting JP chairman published in a section of the press on May 16 last.

The handout sought to inform all concerned that Ershad is enjoying the best facilities in jail. He has been given a big room with three large windows, a door, ventilators and four wall fans. All windows and the door are kept open round-the-clock.

The handout also denied allegations of raising the height of the walls as well as the statements made by Mizan, regarding the food served to Ershad on the last Eid day.

Ershad met his children as usual and was served the food and fruits given by relatives and friends on the day, the handout said.

It added that so far Ershad had been supplied with 251 books published in the country and abroad and 755 periodicals. Two dailies and 11 weeklies are also being regularly supplied to him.

The books and reading materials which are often supplied by the relatives are also given to Ershad, the government claimed.

The jail authority provides necessary pen and paper to him on demand for writing applications and letter to different authorities.

Ershad's wife and children can meet him every 15 days. His brothers, sisters, brothers in-law and sisters in-law and other relatives have met him several times, the handout said.

His lawyers have been meeting him in the jail and in courts whenever needed in connection with the cases filed against him.

The jail authority has provided him a full-time attendant and two companions (first class detenues) who stay next to his room.

Besides, a barber and a cook have also been posted for his service.

Three assistant civil surgeons are on constant duty for Ershad's health care. The civil surgeon and medical expert regularly check his health and on their recommendations necessary treatment is provided by the concerned professors and consultants of the PG Hospital.

Ershad is completely physically fit and the government thanks that no quarter need be concerned about the state of his health.

The handout said that whereas a first class prisoner is sanctioned only Tk 68.18 for his daily meal, Ershad is getting Tk 200.45 a day.

The handout hoped all misgivings in this regard would now be removed.

7 die in Indonesian train mishap

JAKARTA, May 20: Seven Indonesians were killed and nearly 125 injured when two passenger trains collided early today morning at Cirebon, 200 km (125 miles) east of Jakarta, the official Antara news agency said, reports Reuter.

The injured, 55 of them seriously hurt during the impact which crushed both locomotives and sent seats flying out the windows were rushed to two hospitals in Cirebon town.

"One of the locomotive's engineers has admitted he was sleepy," Transport Minister Haryanto Danutirto, who visited the scene, said.

Hasina

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education system has totally been disrupted during the present regime and instead of education, violence and terrorism are dominating campuses.

Hasina said Awami League firmly believes that teachers are the backbone of educational system and recalled the initiative of the Sheikh Mujib government to introduce universal scientific education system.

She assured the delegation of her party's cooperation in realising the demands of teachers.

Draft law

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draft law, the authorities would have the power to call for information or explanation of any information from any organisation. The authorities would also have the power to investigate into any activities of the organisation or penalise those who come up with false information on their organisation.

Some 20,000 social welfare organisations — ranging from service clubs to community development organisation — are working in the country with registration from the Social Welfare Ministry.

Of the total, 696 are registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau.

PM: Hajj

From Page 1 Col 7

crowd, as they climbed the mount in burning sun with temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

Security forces, ambulances and thousands of state employees were posted along the pilgrims' route from Mina, 10 kilometers (six miles) north of Makkah, to Mount Arafat.

"The pilgrims' climb of Mount Arafat went off in record time despite their large numbers and there were no reported incidents," said Makkah Governor Prince Majed Bin-Abdel Aziz.

Saudi security chief General Ahmad Bilal said the "security plan had been executed with great success" and there had been no signs of any public disorder.

Out of the two million pilgrims, 995,116 were from abroad.

At sunset the pilgrims were due to descend to the Muzadalifa valley to celebrate tomorrow the feat of Al-Azh, marking the end of the pilgrimage.

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Bangladesh Shipping Corporation
BSC FEEDER SERVICE

Our vessel MV "BANGLAR ROBI" voyage No. 32/East sailed 20-05-94 for Singapore with 424 Nos. 20' loaded containers utilizing her full capacity. The vessel is also fully booked from Singapore to Bangladesh in her return voyage No. 32/West. We are grateful to our valued customers for their regular support.
Assuring you of our best services at all times.

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