

## Dhaka Day by Day

### Rickshaws and Road Safety

by Lavina Ambreen Ahmed

If there is one thing that can easily compete with the city's ever-increasing population, it is the rickshaws. The number of these vehicles seem to multiply by geometric progression. Innumerable rickshaws can be seen plying down the streets of Dhaka, everyday from dawn till midnight. These vulnerable but adventurous objects roam freely in almost all the city roads and highways causing serious traffic jams and are often responsible for street accidents.

Millions using them as a necessary mode of transport know that these three-wheelers with

antries. For instance, a lady confides, "I was kept waiting for five minutes while the rickshawwalla went to talk to his 'deshi bhai' (village brother). When I told him to get back, he just said, 'Do not worry Apa, I will take you to your destination in a double-quick time.' While there are times too when your rickshaw goes at such a pace that you feel like you are actually riding a racing car. There is no use telling the rickshawpuller to slow down, as that might strangely enough only incite him to go faster. Then, these are those moments,



A rickshaw carrying passengers, seen at Dhaka. — Star photo

their attractive and colourful hoods, and flashy pictures of the local filmstars at the back, can be just as dangerous as the monstrous trucks.

If you have to travel by a rickshaw to go to your work place everyday, you are bound to know the feeling. For, the journey by a rickshaw is far from a pleasant experience. You will always have to be on your guard, never knowing whether or not your vehicle will get hit by a car from the back or the sides, or worse, whether you will be thrown off your seat. At times, the rickshaw-pullers show an absolute disregard for the traffic rules, such as, turning abruptly on the wrong side of the road. Also, in order to overtake all the other transports, they speed recklessly through the crowded streets, their vehicles often getting entangled with others in the process. Just as you are about to relax and enjoy the view, your rickshaw barely manages to avoid, say, a life-threatening truck. The deceptive words, "mayer doo" (mother's blessings) boldly glazing at you from its bumper, somehow intensifies your fear, rather than offering any comfort. The Dhakaites are surely brave. Think of how they face life's many challenges with an apparent casual indifference: one of them being hurrying to reach a point by the rickshaw. The city dwellers leave home in uncertainty and thank their lucky stars if they can return back safely.

To make things worse, you have to listen to the "rickshawwalla lingo". Any seasoned Dhakaites is acquainted with terms like "agey baro" (move forward), "tan de" (pull the vehicle) etc. along with a series of expletives, which they shout out at the top of their lungs. Often one is compelled to be a spectator of the heated polemics between two fellow pedal-pushers. Not that they only hurl abuses at one another, they also stop to chat and exchange pleas-

ures. For instance, a lady confides, "I was kept waiting for five minutes while the rickshawwalla went to talk to his 'deshi bhai' (village brother). When I told him to get back, he just said, 'Do not worry Apa, I will take you to your destination in a double-quick time.' While there are times too when your rickshaw goes at such a pace that you feel like you are actually riding a racing car. There is no use telling the rickshawpuller to slow down, as that might strangely enough only incite him to go faster. Then, these are those moments,

when the chain of your rickshaw invariably has to fall off at the most inconvenient time.

If you are a female passenger, you have to suffer more than your male counterpart. Yet should you complain? Is it not wonderful that the Dhaka streets are filled with those concerned young men, who seldom hesitate to warn you about, say, your dupatta getting caught in the rickshaw spokes? The ladies wonder, could they possibly get a "kick" out of embarrassing the poor victims in public? One of these days, they ought to give them a taste of their own medicine. Sometimes, the rickshawpuller pours out all his miseries on to the passenger. Just as the brakes hit the desired location, he sometimes puts on a pathetic face, and asks for a saree, or money to buy one. So that his poor and aging mother can offer her prayers. A gullible, kind-hearted individual, probably will not think twice before obliging him. Only to discover too late that he/she was deceived.

People from abroad are often spotted clicking away their cameras, capturing the rush-hour traffic from, say, an overbridge. On the other hand, the sight is very intimidating to us. One can hardly cross any road especially near the market places or educational institutions without bumping into them. The relentless bell ringings and calls "kol jaben?" (where will you go?) are enough to drive one berserk.

Rickshaws have been a part of our lives as long as any Bangladeshi would care to remember, and it is very unlikely that rickshaws will disappear in the near future. In Dhaka, one may not ask for abolishing them, but for limiting their numbers. As a consequence, road safety could be somewhat ensured in the future.



A milad mahfil was held at the premises of The Daily Star yesterday to mark the first death anniversary of the founder-editor of the newspaper S M Ali. A large number of colleagues, friends, relatives attended the milad mahfil. — Star photo

### Dhaka for comprehensive reform of UNSC

Bangladesh has called for a meaningful consensus for a much-needed comprehensive reform of the Security Council make it more representative, credible and legitimate, reports BSS.

Permanent representative to the United Nations Reaz Rahman, addressing a UN meeting on question of equitable representation and increase in membership of the Security Council, said the priority objective should be to strengthen the relations of the Security Council with other organs, especially the General Assembly, and improvement of its working methods and procedures so that it would be more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable.

A message received in Dhaka from New York said Rahman paid tributes to ambassador Insanally, the chairman of the open-ended working group on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council, and its two vice-chairmen — ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Chew Tai Soo of Singapore — for the painstaking efforts they have undertaken to accomplish their task.

"We welcome the recommendation that the open-ended working group continue its work, taking into account views expressed at the 49th session and submit a report to the General Assembly before the end of that session," Ambassador Rahman said.

Detailing Bangladesh's views on the issues concerned, he said there is a palpable recognition of the need for change in the Security Council to make it conform to a radically transformed world community and world situation. "The approach, in our opinion, must be holistic and comprehensive in nature, touching on both its membership and mandate."

Rahman said.

The Bangladesh permanent representative said there also seems to be a universal convergence of views, that the membership of the Security Council be enlarged. However, he said differences still persist on the scope, composition and nature of such and expansion. "A central dilemma is in increasing permanent membership," Rahman observed.

"We are confronted with balancing conflicting principles touching on sovereign equality of member-states, democratisation of the United Nations and the non-aligned movements considered position opposed to the perpetuation of current inequalities through creation of new centres of privilege," he said. Indeed, Rahman continued, the NAM's position on the Council's decision-making process has been consistently directed at questioning the continued relevance of the veto, its possible abolition or, at least, imposing restriction on its use.

Bangladesh believes that the continued privileged states of the permanent members is a matter of concern and the objective would be to focus on limiting or removing this preserve overtime," Rahman said while taking into account that a clear consensus was yet to emerge in support of the expansion of the ranks of permanent members.

### Food reserve six lakh metric tons: Shawkat

Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali said yesterday the government has a food reserve of about six lakh metric tons, enough to meet the country's requirement for six months, reports UNB.

He said in consideration of the famine-hit situation in North Bengal, arrangements have also been made to import one lakh tons of wheat and 50,000 boiled rice locally.

The minister was addressing a seminar on "Freedom from Hunger", organised by Rotary International 3280 to mark the World Food Day.

### Tagore singer Kanika Banerjee now in city

The noted Tagore song exponent Kanika Banerjee is now visiting Bangladesh under the Bangladesh-India cultural and academic exchange programmes, says a press release.

Her performances are scheduled to be held at the Shilpakala Academy and National Museum between October 18 to 25.

Further information regarding date, time of her performances could be obtained from the Cultural Adviser, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, (Tel: 244417) and the director general, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (Tel: 865882).

### Probarona Purnima today

Probarona Purnima, one of the religious festivals of the Buddhists, will be observed today all over the country, reports UNB.

On this day, Lord Buddha directed his apostles to preach Buddhist religion.

The Bangladesh Buddhist Federation has taken up an elaborate programme to observe the day. The programmes include hoisting of national and religious flags at 6 am, breakfast of Vikku Sangha at 7 am, worship of Buddha and receiving sermons at 10 am, offering food to the Vikku Sangha at 11 am, discussion on the importance of Probarona and Humanity of Buddha at 4 pm, Prodig Puja and Worship of Buddha at 6:30 pm and cultural programme at 7:30 pm.

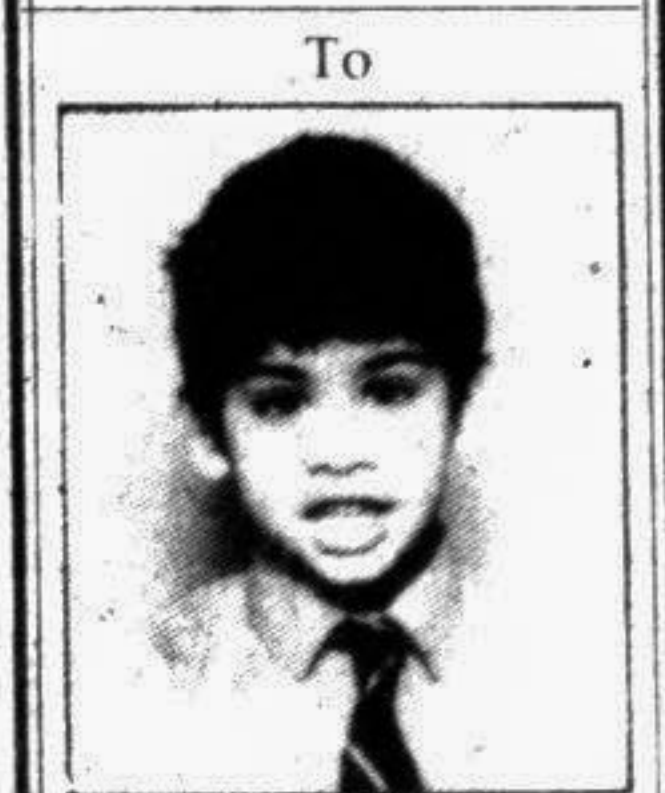
A religious congregation, presided over by Gnanashri Mahathero, Principal of the International Buddha Bihar, will be held on the occasion at IBB at Merul Badda in the city.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandoker Mosharraf Hossain will attend the congregation as chief guest while Major (Rtd) Kamrul Islam MP will be present as special guest.

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### 9,000 tonnes of wheat for N-region

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief on Sunday sanctioned 9,000 metric tons of wheat for the eight drought-hit northern districts, reports UNB.

An official handout said yesterday 5,000 metric tons of wheat were sanctioned under the test relief (TR) programme and 4,000 tons as gratuitous relief (GR). Besides, 3,200 tons of biscuits were allotted for the people of the drought-hit ar-

### Weather

#### No change in temperature

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country, reports UNB.

Met office said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The sun sets today at 5:30 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:58 am.

The maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some cities/towns yesterday were as follows:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	6 am	6 pm
Dhaka	33.4	20.3	54	67
Chittagong	33.0	23.8	80	82
Rajshahi	31.0	19.3	62	71
Rohma	32.5	22.0	72	83



Tuesday

- 4:30 Opening session
- 4:45 Children's programme: Esho Para Shikhi
- 5:10 News in Bangla
- 5:25 Drama series: The Miraculous
- 6:00 Debate competition
- 7:00 Open University
- 7:25 Musical programme: Sangeeta
- 8:00 News in Bangla
- 8:30 Drama series: Chhaya Shikari
- 10:00 News in English
- 10:30 Film show: Northern Exposure
- 11:30 Khobar /The News
- 11:40 Closing

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