

Dhaka Day by Day

Side-Glances from Rickshaw

by Max Coward



Choosing to keep the rickshaw hood up or down isn't always based on the sun. For the decked up young men and women of the city, keeping the hood down is a sure way of being seen. "Check me out," the signal reads loud and clear.

Rickshaw flirtation gives fleeting pleasure to our twenty somethings who have very few arenas to show off their looks (or lack thereof). A cute stranger suddenly looks up. Your eyes meet. Eyelashes flutter. Hearts thump loudly. A silly half-smile quivers on your lips. The traffic lights change and he/she is gone forever — until another stranger looks up at the next traffic jam.

But challenge makes this game even more fun. When the hood is down, it's all too easy. When the hood is up, the adrenalin rushes at the thought of a test. A quick glance of hair being flicked, the glimpse of a beautiful neck, the sight of tight jeans, hands resting on the lap/knees, a pair of feet encased in leather, all fuel the stranger's curiosity. "I must see what he/she looks like."

Whereas the city woman tries to be subtle, the young men have no such compunctions. When a group of juveniles pass by what they think is a sexy woman, (judging by her feet), they will go to great lengths to draw attention to themselves. First, they will nudge each other with obvious elbow gestures. "Look, look. What do you think?" Then they will exchange comments just loud enough for the young lady to hear.

The young men then proceed to transform what could have been a discreet romantic exchange into a rubbernecking exercise. As the youth's rickshaw, motorcycle, car or baby taxi passes the young girl, he somehow manages to turn his neck and shoulders a full 180-degree. The young girl is greeted with the sight of a twisted torso hanging onto the side of the rickshaw or other vehicle, with undisguised desperation written all over the contorted figure.

Although the girl may be flattered at first, she is more likely to feel flustered and hope

that the guy would drop dead. Instead of dreading up Mills and Boon story lines, the woman conjures up Agatha Christie murder scenes in her head. How could she get rid of this harasser?

Scene one: The rubbernecking young man (or men) simply falls flat on his face, hopefully on some strategically placed cow dung.

Scene two: The young woman imagines picking up her sandals or extra sharp stiletto heels and slapping the man hard. Hal!

Scene three: She imagines sticking an umbrella into the spokes of the rickshaw or the motorcycle to make it (and the passenger) jump in the air (well, it works in the Hindi films).

Scene four: The motorcycle simply runs into a telephone pole. With some luck, the scoundrel will be too dumb to have a helmet on.

Scene five: The young woman stares back at the stranger with so much (fake) longing that the flustered young man goes all red, unable to think of what to do next. Warning: this plan may backfire. Some young men with inflated egos, may be encouraged to enter hot pursuit.

Scene six: As the rouge turns 180 degrees, suddenly his shoulder bone and spinal cord clicks loudly. His bones lock in place. He's given a heaven-sent opportunity to stare at the girl for as long as he likes. But somehow the rascal isn't too pleased. He panics, "I can't move! I can't turn back!" The young woman laughs cruelly. "Feed him to the dogs!" The Young man is removed from the rickshaw onto a hospital stretcher. Doctors are unable to de-click his shoulder. Papers splash stories of the rubber-necking that ended tragically.

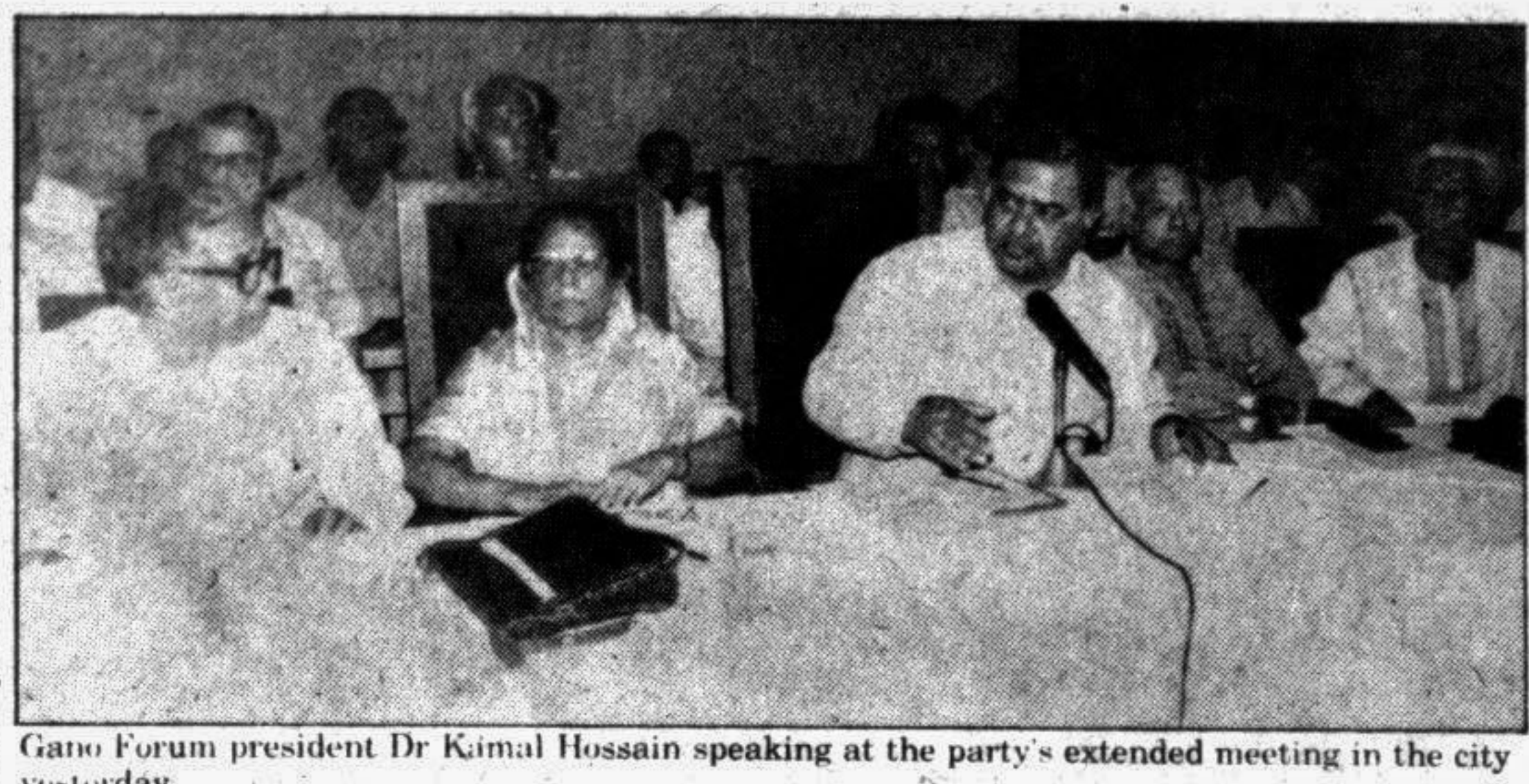
The young woman grins, with relish at the imaginary scenes. Serves him right, she thinks. As she wakes from her reverie, she catches a glimpse of cool shades and a George Michael stubble. "Hmm. Who is that? I must get a better look!" As her rickshaw passes the stranger her neck and shoulders swing around. Her bones snap loudly. "Click ..."

Call the stretcher someone, quick.

Queen Elizabeth's birthday observed

By Staff Correspondent
The Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation, Bangladesh yesterday observed the birthday of the Queen of England in a befitting manner. The Queen turned 69 on April 21.

The highlights of the day's programmes included distribution of educational implements to slum children, a poster exhibition on the Queen and the royal family, and a *milad mahfil* seeking divine blessings for the long life and health of Queen Elizabeth II.



Gano Forum president Dr Kimal Hossain speaking at the party's extended meeting in the city yesterday.

Essay contest

The Bangladesh-Japan Youth Friendship Association has arranged an essay competition for the school, college and university students, says a press release.

The subject matter of the essay is "Bangladesh-Japan as friendly Countries" which should be written in Bengali within 600 words by the school students and 1000 words by the college and university students.

The essay should reach Mahbubuddin Chowdhury, president of the association, 17, Hari Charan Roy Road, Faridabad, Dhaka-1204 by April 30. Prizes will be awarded to the best writers.

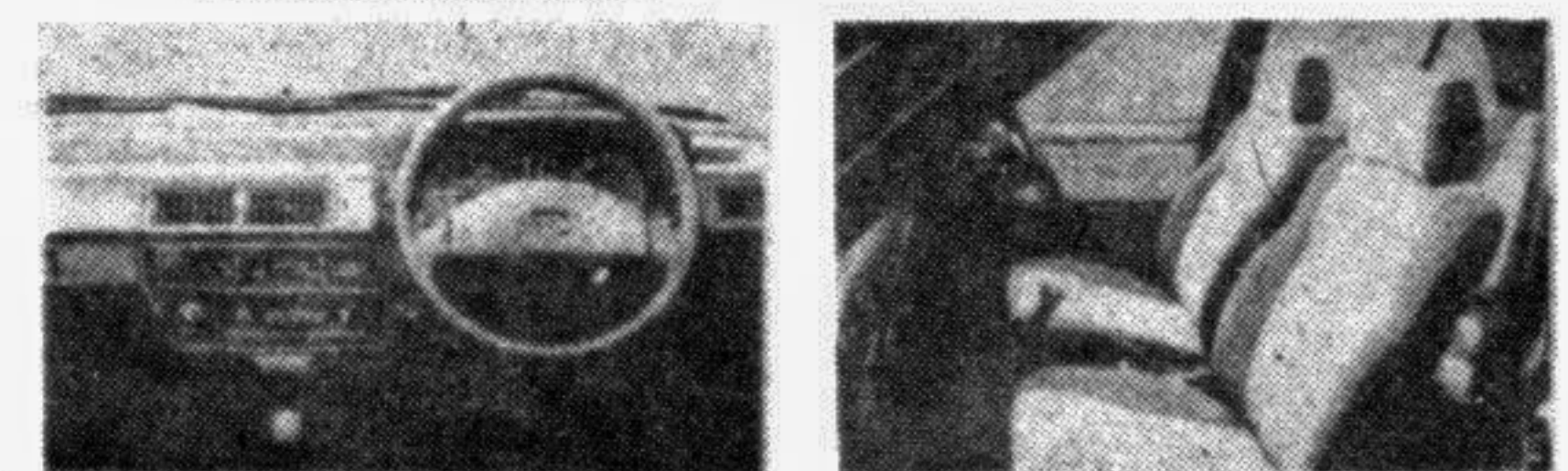


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What's on today . . .

Cultural function: The Institute of Architects Bangladesh has organised a cultural function. Venue: BUET auditorium. Time: 5:30 pm. Chief guest: Awami League president Sheikh Hasina.

Rotary Club of Dhanmondi: The regular weekly meeting of the club will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:50 pm. A discussion on the eradication of mosquito will be followed. DCC Mayor Mohammad Hanif will attend.

Lions Club of Dhaka Golden: The past president honour day of the club will be held. Venue: Thai Food Ltd, Ramna. Time: 7:00 pm.

Publication ceremony: Publication of the book 'Bipannya Dharani: Protibesh O Manush, a Bangla translation of the book 'Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit', written by US Vice President Al Gore will be held. Venue: Bangla Academy seminar room. Time 4:30 pm. Chief guest: Minister for Environment and Forest Akbar Hossain.

SAARC meeting of experts: Ministry of Science and Technology has organised a two-day SAARC experts meeting on operational system of rural electrification co-operatives of Bangladesh. Venue: BCSIR assembly hall. Time: 9 am. Chief guest: State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan.

Rainbow Film Society: The society's three-day film session will begin. Venue: German Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 6 pm. Today's film: Salam Bombay. Film-maker: Mira Nair.

Seminar on 'charland' study: A seminar on the 'charland study' organised jointly by the Environmental Study (FAP 16) and the Geographic Information Centre (FAP 19) will be held. Venue: Purbani Hotel. Time: 9 am. Chief guest: Md Nazrul Islam, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources.

Federation of Film Societies: As a part of the celebration of the centenary of the cinema Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies has organised five-day long Satyajit Ray Commemorative Film Session commencing today, the third death anniversary of the world renowned film maker Satyajit Ray. On inaugural day film 'The Distant Thunder' will be screened. Venue: Indian High Commission. Time: 5:30 pm.

Weather

Temperature may rise

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places in Chittagong division and over Dhaka, Mymensingh and Tangail districts during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office says weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere across the country.

Day temperature is likely to rise by one or two degrees Celsius.

Country's highest temperature 39.7 degrees Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest 21.2 degrees at Dinajpur. The sun sets today at 6:23 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:30 am.

Italian envoy meets Hannan Shah

Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Claudio Pacifico, met Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah at his office yesterday, reports UNB.

They exchanged views and discussed matters of mutual interest, said an official hand-out.



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