



# SAVE DHAKA

## Traffic & Transport : Part-6

### Discipline 'free-style'

By Nazmul Ashraf

The number of transports of every category in the city is rising, no doubt, but the problem does not lie as much in the number as in the chaotic and indiscipline manner the transports ply on the city roads.

According to an estimate, public transports such as buses, trucks, autorickshaws and tempos, comprise some 40 per cent of the vehicles plying on the city roads.

Besides, there is a large number of defective and unregistered motor vehicles operated by incompetent drivers having no licence. May untrained assistants or helpers are also contributing to a large extent to the risky travel by buses, mini-buses and other modes of public transports. It is alleged.

The city dwellers, especially those of the middle income group, are the worst victims of such a situation. The middle-class people sometimes can evade the troublesome trips but the low-income ones are compelled to go by the buses and minibuses no matter, whether sitting in a broken seat, standing inside holding an iron rod or clinging to the handle bar.

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) records, the DMP (Traffic) filed 2,31,497 cases against the owners of defective vehicles and realised Taka 1,86,76,155 from them as fine during 1994 and the first three months of the current year.

However, it is alleged that almost 50 per cent of the vehicles apprehended for violating the Motor Vehicles Act of 1983 are allowed to go without facing taking any action in this regard.

A recent study of the Department of Environment (DOE) reveals that 75 per cent of the city's 1,91,2500 motorised vehicles lack fitness. The number of vehicles operating in the city increase to over two lakh taking into account those coming from outside, the study says.

About 75 per cent of the unfit vehicles, the study says, are polluting the air by emitting black smoke.



Inter-district luxury buses plying on the southern routes have created their own roadside terminal in the city's busy Fakirpool area, causing serious inconvenience to normal traffic. — Star photo

Admitting the existence of a large number of faulty vehicles in the city, an official of the DMP (Traffic) said they are taking 'legal action against the substandard vehicles.' But, he added, the issuance of fitness certificates to the unfit ones by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) is preventing the elimination of such transports from the city streets.

The statistics available with the DMP shows that police registered 1294 cases relating to the road accidents in the capital in 1993 and some 300 persons were killed in these incidents.

As per the Motor Vehicles Act of 1983, a brand new motor vehicle needs no fitness certificate for the first five years of its operation but a re-conditioned car is given fitness certificate for one year and is subject to renewal every year.

On an average, some 14,000 new vehicles across the country are getting registered with the BRTA annually and almost half of the total new automobiles are adding to the existing fleet in the capital, BRTA officials said.

While traffic police officials blame the BRTA for 'indiscriminate issuance of fitness certificates and driving licences', BRTA sources made counter-accusations of 'negligence and malpractice by traffic police in enforcing traffic rules and checking the defective vehicles'.

Experts say the current system of detecting defective motor vehicles is inadequate since the inspectors are not equipped with modern instruments. A BRTA official admitted the lapses in inspection and attributed those to 'human errors'.

The BRTA authorities are implementing a project to improve the scrutiny of faulty motor vehicles. Under the project, five modern inspection centres would be set up — two in the capital and one each at Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. BRTA officials hope the examination of defective automobiles would largely improve with the completion of the Taka 39 crore ADB-funded project in fiscal 1997-98.

Experts also say that the penalty given for violation of traffic laws is not adequate. Meanwhile, two separate recommendations by the BRTA and the DMP (Traffic) for enhancing the maximum fine for vehicles emitting black smoke are now awaiting government approval. The BRTA has suggested that the fine limit be increased to Taka 3,000 while the DMP wants it to be Taka 5,000 instead of Taka 200 now.

# Sino-Bangla JEC meet begins

The eighth meeting of the Bangladesh-China Joint Economic Commission (JEC) began in the city yesterday stressing the need for further widening the existing bilateral economic and trade ties between the two countries, reports BSS.

inaugurating the meeting, ERD Secretary Lutfulahil Majid expressed the hope that JEC meeting would work out the details for further strengthening the bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

The visiting Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Madam Li Gouhua and Secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD), Lutfulahil Majid, led the respective sides at the plenary session of the JEC meeting held at the conference room of the NEC building at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

He lauded the government of the people's republic of China for extending economic cooperation in the socio-economic development endeavour of Bangladesh.

The three-day meeting will, among other things, review the progress of the implementation of the decisions taken at the last meeting of the JEC held in Beijing in 1992 regarding bilateral cooperation in economic, trade, scientific and technological fields.

Majid proposed the signing of agreements on "elimination of double taxation" and the "encouragement and reciprocal protection of investment" between the two countries and narrowing down of the trade gap which is now in favour of China.

It will also consider Chinese assistance for future infrastructure projects, identify measures for promotion of balanced bilateral trade and discuss problems relating to implementation of the shipping and air link agreements for amicable settlement, officials said.

Reciprocating, Madam Li took note of the growing economic and trade ties between the two countries and called for further diversification of trade between Dhaka and Beijing.

She gave the assurance that steps would be taken for narrowing down the existing trade gap.

The volume of trade between Bangladesh and China in 1994 stood at 387 million US dollars.

# The Midnight File

## Israel, Syria reach understanding on security

WASHINGTON, May 24: Israel and Syria have reached a framework understanding on security arrangements and their military experts will hold talks on the issue in Washington before the end of June, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced today, reports Reuter.

## BGMEA to reopen talks

From Page 1 He informed that some 50,000 child workers had already been retrenched from the country's over 2,100 factories and the remaining 7,000 will be dismissed within the deadline.

Terminating employment of children in garment units as totally humanitarian, he said the importers are not buying products of those factories having child workers. An European buyer, C&A, cancelled order worth 15 million US dollar following a AFLFI campaign that Bangladesh uses child labour in its garment industry.

He also explained why the manufacturers in an extraordinary general meeting on May 17 voted out the drafted MOU. Majority of the BGMEA members rejected the draft as none of the parties involved in the negotiation could give assurance that the importers would buy garments after signing of the MOU.

Describing the campaign as 'malicious and highly motivated', he said they have chosen Bangladesh's garment industry for experiment to realise designs of certain vested quarters. The BGMEA President said he got indications that importers are not ready to accept Bangladesh's garments if produced with child labour irrespective of any agreement that the children would be provided with education.

T'm not blaming the American government, but a few groups with vested interest are doing this', the BGMEA chief said, declining to name any organisation or country.

Responding to a query, he said, the manufacturers are ready to extend support to any initiative by international organisations or the US Embassy in Dhaka for schooling and rehabilitation programme for the retrenched children.

But the owners cannot tolerate any interference by any non-governmental organisation. We cannot agree with their prescription because as an independent nation we have our own bodies,' he asserted.

## Govt welcomes

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prepare a composite programme for the overall welfare of those child workers to be retrenched from the industry. It also decided that BGMEA would continue discussions for an understanding on this issue with the US ambassador in Bangladesh, concerned agencies of the United Nations and other international organisations.

The organisations now engaged in propagating against the use of Bangladesh made garments have been requested to refrain from such activities. The meeting was attended by BGMEA president Redwan Ahmed MP, Labour and Manpower Secretary Dr. Harun-ur-Rashid, Social Welfare Secretary Md. Abdul Hannan, Women and Children Affairs Secretary Matiar Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chairman, Export Promotion Bureau.

# Confce on flood control begins in city today

By Staff Correspondent

A joint US-Bangladesh conference on 'Comparative Evaluation of Flood Control Approaches for Bangladesh and the Mississippi River Basin' begins in the city today, says a USIS press release.

Founded by the US National Science Foundation, the three-day conference will be organised by the Bangladesh Environmental and Flood Committee in America and the Institute of Flood Control and Drainage Research of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

One of the major proposals for flood alleviation in Bangladesh consists of a proposal to build embankments. The function of similar embankments in the Mississippi flood of 1993 has renewed thinking about the costs and benefits of such a structural approach, and according to the organisers, it will be worthwhile to see if these new ideas are relevant to Bangladesh.

# Entrepreneurs

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Korea, signed one on setting up of a cement factory. Two others are between Orbit Group of Bangladesh and Furuta Shoji Co. Ltd, Japan, on a textile mills, and between Unique Group of Companies, Bangladesh, and Taihung Paper Mfg. Ltd, South Korea, on a paper mill.

The follow up action of those two investment forums was revealed at a meeting of the ESCAP officials and the local entrepreneurs held at BCIC Bhaban yesterday. The Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) arranged the meeting.

Another MOU between Orbit Group of Bangladesh and Yamagata International Group of Japan regarding shoe manufacturing is expected to be signed next month, the meeting was informed.

During the meeting, BP Dhaka, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP, and K Hauhara, Expert on Investment Promotion, ESCAP, met with the participants of last year's investment forums.

Dhakal told the meeting that a two-day National Workshop on 'How to Attract Japanese Investment in Bangladesh' will be jointly organised by the ESCAP and JETRO in Dhaka sometime in November where Bangladesh prospective entrepreneurs and the existing Japanese investors in Bangladesh will participate.

KM Hara, JETRO representative, said there was a big communication gap between the two countries. 'If the gap is overcome, then Bangladesh could be targeted as an investment area by major Japanese companies,' he said.

The BCI, on its part, forwarded some suggestions to boost joint ventures between the countries concerned, including constituting a coordination committee comprising Ministry of Industries and the BCI.

# 4 killed, 50 hurt in road accident

PABNA, May 24: Four people were killed and 50 injured, 13 critically, after two coaches collided on the Pabna-Bogra highway and both skidded off the road tonight, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when the two Dhaka-bound buses — Royal Travel and Khaleq Trave — from Dinajpur dashed each other and fell into roadside ditch at Shalka in Bera thana at 10:30 pm.

Abdul Malek, 70, of Muradpur in Mithapukur thana of Rangpur died on the spot while Abu Taleb, 30, of Pirganj in Rangpur, Elahi Bux, 47, of Hakimpur, Dinajpur, and Shamsuddin Mia, 45 of Senpara in Rangpur died on way to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka, police said.

# Kuldip

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Barrister Kaiser Murshed of BISS termed the water problem in the Ganges basin as a problem of food.

'We are closely living with spectre of a famine. It is haunting the Ganges basin,' he said stressing the need for ensuring food security in Southeast Asia of which water is 'one of the main ingredients.'

World Bank expert Syed Rana pointed out that Bangladesh has no control over the availability and non-availability of water. He focused on various aspects of water management which can be handled within and outside the country. Speaking on the Farakka problem, water expert Amjad Hossain Khan blamed India for deviating from its agreement and neglecting the issue which is a 'life and death' question for the people of Bangladesh.

Noted 'journalist Sadeq Khan alleged that India is following a water policy which is detrimental to the environment linked with the river system of the region.

Khurshida Khandkar, environmentalist Dr Anwarul Karim, wild life specialist Dr Zakir Hossain and publisher of the book Habibur Rahman also highlighted the adverse effects of the Farakka Barrage on the environment of Bangladesh, particularly pisciculture, agriculture, forestry and wildlife.

The discussion followed the screening of a documentary on 'The Ganges: A Dying River,' inter-relating man and nature, by Nazreen Azim.

# Nazul

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gramme begins today at Darinrangpur where to poet spent his boyhood.

LGRD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar will inaugurate the programmes.

The inaugural function will be attended by Deputy Minister Serajul Haq and Whip Abdul Karim.

State Minister for Establishment, Barrister Ammul Haq will be chief guest at the inaugural function Friday.

Vice Chancellor of the Agricultural University, Dr Shah Mohammad Faruq will be the special guest.

The concluding function on May 27 will be attended by Jute Minister Brig Hannan Shah. State Minister for Industries Lutfur Rahman Khan and Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Nuruzaman will be special guests.

# Arson in Sylhet village

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 24: Four women were injured and valuables worth Taka two lakh burnt when a group of people set fire to three dwelling houses at village Mobarakpur under Balaganj thana this morning.

A mob numbering about fifty attacked the house of one Nasir Ali and set his home-stand on fire. They also beat up the female inmates.

# Extortionists fire shots

By Staff Correspondent

A group of gangsters yesterday fired shots at the Dhaka Medical College (DMCH) campus after being denied protection money by a contractor.

However, no injuries were reported.

# BDR-BSF flag meeting today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 24: A Commander level flag meeting between the Bangladesh Rifles and the BSF is expected to be held at 9 AM tomorrow at Jalia, a border village in Tripura, official sources said.

The flag meeting is aimed at defusing tension created by fresh deployment of about 200 border security force personnel in Tripura across the border with Khagrachhari hill district, sources added.

The para-military forces have been deployed along a 13-kilometer stretch in the Asaklong sector of Khagrachhari district.

The BSF had proposed a flag meeting on Monday when some Indian farmers ploughing near the Fenichhara river catchment were driven back by Bangladeshis people, official sources said.

They seized a bullock and ploughs from the Indian farmers who encroached into the disputed land breaching the status quo.

# Southeast Bank

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mistakes in the banking sector which have earned banks a bad name. Quashem said hinting at loan defaulters. 'We will start with small investments, consumer credit system and new schemes such as clearing utility bills on behalf of our clients, if they wish.'

'Our prime objective is promoting industrialisation and creating employment opportunities,' he said.

# CUFL resumes production

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 24: Production in the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory Limited (CUFL) resumed last night after a nine-day suspension.

Official sources said the production was in full swing.

The CUFL suspended production on May 15 due to abnormal increase in the salinity rate of the Karnaphuli river water due to the recent high tide whipped up by a storm in the Bay of Bengal.

# Registration of voters

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The Election Commission is determined to prepare a correct and flawless voter list,' he asserted. The CEC said that in the past electoral rolls were prepared without registering each and every voter, giving rise to many questions from many quarters about the correctness of those rolls.

Many had raised questions even about the voter lists on the basis of which the historic 1991 elections — the fairest in the country's history — were held.

The EC, he said, had thoroughly examined the nature and the reasons for errors in the previous lists to ensure that a correct and fool-proof list could be used for the next elections, he said.

In light of previous experience and extensive examination, the EC has resolved that each voter needs to be registered independently. Therefore, an act was framed on December 13 last in this respect, he said.

Justice Sadeque said enumerators, with three separate forms, would collect information from each voter.

On June 1, their supervisors will knock at every door to collate and verify the information gathered. The final list will be published on August 31, the CEC said.

A 4,06,760-strong workforce has been deployed to accomplish the gigantic task. Justice Sadeque said the EC had undertaken some special measures to ensure the preparation of a correct list within the stipulated time.

Detailing the steps, he said a person would be enlisted as a voter for one time for a single voting area. Anyone who gives false and incorrect information during the registration process will be punished with six months' jail or a fine of Tk 1,000.

In each union in the rural areas and every ward in the municipal areas, one Assistant Registration Officer has been appointed. Besides, one data collector and identification officer has been appointed for every 200 voters and a supervisor appointed for every four data collectors and identification officers.

# AL candidate wins KCC by-election

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KHULNA, May 24: Awami League candidate Tasmilmuddin Khan Babul has been elected commissioner of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) from Ward No 15 defeating his rival Abdur Rahman of BNP in the by-election held today.

The seat fell vacant following the killing of Moslemuddin Khan by unknown assailants on February 25 last.

The deceased was the elder brother of Tasmilmuddin Khan. Khan has polled 3503 votes and his rival 1254 votes.

The BNP candidate has suffered defeat for the second time from the same ward.

# Paksey bridge

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Under the programme, each student will get 15 kg of wheat every month subject to maximum of 20 kg wheat per family. A total of 2.08 metric tons of wheat will be required for the programme this year.

The meeting also approved two poverty alleviation-cum-self-employment projects for rural youths and poor women at a cost of Taka 125 crore. The family-wise self-employment project to be undertaken by the Youth Ministry aimed at providing credit to three lakh youths of 60,000 families of 50 thanas at a cost of Taka 95 crore.

Taka 25 crore credit will be disbursed under the programme this year which is scheduled to be completed by February 1999.

The integrated rural women development project to be undertaken by the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) is aimed at providing credit to the tune of Taka 2000-5000 to one lakh women of 100 selected thanas at a cost of Taka 30 crore. The credit programme is expected to be completed by the year 2000.

The ECNEC also approved the construction of the remaining works of the eight stadiums at Munshiganj, Noakhali, Brahmanbaria, Sherpur, Pirojpur, Sirajganj, Netrokona and Narshingdi districts at a cost of Taka 20 crore. The meeting also approved Narayanganj stadiums construction special project at a cost of Taka 20 crore.

The meeting also gave a go ahead signal to set up four nuclear medicine centre at Comilla, Faridpur, Bogra and Salimullah Medical College at a cost of Taka 29 crore including foreign exchange component of Taka 19 crore.