

Dhaka Day by Day

Target is Car

by Neil Ray



Dhaka city has for some time been witnessing spree after spree of car smashing by demonstrating and disgruntled political, student and other organisations and even by disparate individuals collected together on some purpose or not. The demonstrators certainly want to drive home a message and still more, perhaps, they are after drawing attention to all that they do. Most of the time the agitation's are against the government which is both amorphous and manifestly extant. Going after something amorphous is to waste one's time and energy. It is always paying to go after the real but the problem is that you do not often master enough strength to take on what represent the government because there you are up against the state power.

Yet demonstrate you must. After all Bangladesh have all through considered movements as a second nature to them. Political agitation also needs to change with time. No wonder that the film influences on demonstrations have been substantial. Otherwise, how can one justify the new-found militancy in our new breed of demonstrators? Even school students in their early teens unhesitatingly stop drivers and remorselessly damage the cars. Why? Because the question bank has been withdrawn or uncommon questions have been set for examinations. Spectators of a football match go on a smashing spree because they feel cheated — because the organisers have not the guts to say that due to unplayable conditions of the ground the match has to be postponed. Instead they stage a farce by

holding an exhibition match without properly informing the spectators and agreeing to return their ticket money.

Now who will have to pay the cost for all these indiscretions? Who else but the carwallas, of course. They are the offenders of not knowing that a group or groups of agitators are redirecting their anger from their real targets to the streets where cars are vulnerable to such attacks. Yes, the unsuspecting shop-keepers and car owners have to bear the brunt of political or sports developments which may not have the remotest connection with them. It appears that agitators derive a kind of sadistic pleasure from breaking or damaging cars. In the process however the validity of the issue contested comes to question. But who cares?

So cars with dented bodies and broken front and rear glasses and in worst cases charred chassis are what is left to testify to the heroic feat by the angry young generation taking cue from the *Dhallywood*, *Bollywood* and Rambo films. The cruelty so far has gone no further than throwing petrol bombs on a public bus. A frenzied crowd or mob cannot be satisfied with repeating the same act of smashing cars. They surely will look for new addition to the fun — although death to others — and both the drivers and passengers might count on worse days ahead. Undisciplined demonstrations have shown a face of a monster already. It could be a pestilence all around when the street frenzy gets expression through cruder and more sadistic versions of demonstration.

Envoy to Belarus presents letter of credence

The first Bangladesh Ambassador to Belarus, Mostafa Faruque Mohammad, presented his letter of credence to the President of Belarus, Alyaksandr G Lukashenka, at the presidential palace in Minsk on September 19, according to a message received in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Accepting the letter, President Lukashenka conveyed his greetings to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and recalled the support of the government and people of Belarus during the war of independence of Bangladesh.

Nat'l Solidarity Day programme

Col Taher Sangsad has chalked out an elaborate programme to mark the National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7 this year, reports UNB.

The day's programme will include a mass rally in front of the National Press Club, a discussion meeting, presentation of plays and mass-songs, publishing of a commemorative souvenir and distribution of posters-leaflets.

The programme was taken up at a working committee meeting of the Sangsad at Dhaka University Teachers' Association office yesterday with Sangsad President Prof Mamtazuddin Ahmed in the chair.

The meeting also selected noted leftist politician and intellectual of the country, Haider Akbar Khan Rono as main speaker for 'Taher Memorial Lecture' on the day.

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Study report says Road accidents claim 3000 each year

Nearly 3000 people die in road accidents annually in Bangladesh, a study report said yesterday, reports BSS.

Road accidents cost Tk 1000 crore each year, it said adding that road safety situation in Bangladesh is horrifying, which demands immediate attention.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), under the Ministry of Communications, has taken different steps to improve the country's road safety situation as well as to reduce the road-accident rates.

BRTA organises a seminar on "The role of NGOs in traffic safety" at a city hotel tomorrow. Communications Minister Anwar Hossain, who is also chairman of the National Road Safety Council, will inaugurate the seminar as the chief guest.

Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif will be present as special guest.

The study report said Bangladesh had a fatality rate of 55 persons per 10,000 vehicles in 1995, which is nearly 30 times more than any developed country and eight times higher than that of Thailand.

According to a recent analysis conducted for Dhaka under different studies, in all, 682 accidents occurred, resulting in 215 deaths and 232 injuries, from June 95 to June 96.

Of the victims and injured, pedestrians were involved in over 50 per cent of all accidents and 67 per cent of all road accident fatalities.

Mini buses, trucks, buses, auto rickshaws and rickshaws are mostly involved in road accidents. Pedestrians are the most vulnerable group of victims followed by people travelling in auto-rickshaws and rickshaws.

The study suggested that engineering measures, enforcement measures and road safety education and information measures should be taken in unison under a strong organisational framework to check road accidents.

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BDFP executive body meet held

An emergency meeting of the central executive committee of Bangladesh Free Democratic Party (BDFP) was held in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Presided over by the party chairman Abdullah Al-Mahmud Jahangir, the meeting expressed satisfaction on the activities of the present government and congratulated the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a press release said.

Soon after assuming power, the Awami League government made a clarion call for national consensus, restoration of law and order and establishment of a corruption-free society in the country, which is highly laudable, it said.

The meeting further opined that a concerted effort to consolidate pro-liberation forces, democratic system, peace and stability, should be made to materialise Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's programme to work for the economic salvation of the common people to ward off poverty from society.

Besides, the party chief, other leaders who spoke in the meeting were Parimal Roy, Syed Mizanur Rahman Mahabub Khandaker and Mohiuddin Ahmed.

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