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# Down to Earth

## Roads' Unbearable Burden

**By A S M Nurunnabi**

The burden on the city roads has been steadily on the rise. Obviously this growing phenomenon involves ominous implications not only for the present but also for the future. Because constraints are there in effecting expansion of city road network by way of constructing alternative routes or by-passes.

Questions have also been raised about the existing pattern of uses of the city roads and for whom the roads are actually meant. If one passes through Motijheel or the Elephant Road, these places would seem to be meant for parking of various types of motorised vehicles. On the other hand, if one looks at the picture of the roads leading from Mouchak to Rampura, the Outer Road or the roads in the old part of the Dhaka city, it would seem that these are venues for innumerable shops, all bedecked with various kinds of their merchandise.

It seems that for a long time a powerful racket has been operating in the city's streets, lanes and by-lanes through forcible occupation by raising structures thereon. The racketeers regularly realise money from the shopkeepers and portions of such illegal gains are divided among the interested parties.

Here are some instances how city streets in certain areas are being used. The busy street in the Dholaipara area has been turned into a parking zone for defective or old vehicles.

At a road junction at Nayabazar in old Dhaka, a big pile of sand has been kept in front of a shop located on a narrow street connecting Armanitola, Babubazar, Islampur,

## Khaleda: CHT conspiracy

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November 7, 1975 and resist it," she asserted. The former prime minister accused the government of trying to "pull out the rug" from under the CHT. "But it appeared in the press that all permanent and temporary army camps in Barkal have already been dismantled. In the guise of dismantling these camps, conspiracy to hand over CHT to India is on," she said.

Begum Zia alleged that those in power now were making money through corrupt practices and warned that each of them would have to face trial for making their fortune at the cost of national wealth. She also made allegations of wrongdoing in oil and gas extraction and said, "It is being heard that oil would be smuggled out to India through pipeline."

Turning to the ban on holding of street rallies in the city, she referred to a Youth Day programme when she said the Home Minister had himself attended a rally on city road. "Home Minister does not abide by his own law."

Begum Zia portrayed a dismal picture of the national economy. She claimed that industrial growth rate has come down to three per cent now from 10 per cent when her party ruled the country. There is virtually no business in the country and no money in the hands of peasants as well. Moreover, toll extortion has become rampant. "She added that Taka had been devalued 10 times and the government opened up borders giving a free entry to smuggled goods."

The BNP chief compared the present situation with that of 1971-75 period. "Government is failing to do anything about the situation as workers of the ruling party are involved."

Recalling the happenings of November 7, 1975, she said the patriotic people and sepoys had freed her husband General Ziaur Rahman and entrusted him with the responsibility of saving the country's independence and sovereignty.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and senior BNP leader Prof Badrud-ud Chowdhury also took part in the discussion. He highlighted the "significance of November 7 in the history of

## Business summit

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November 23 morning, will be accompanied by delegations of top businessmen and industrialists from their respective countries.

At the end of day-long conference, Gajral is scheduled to return to New Delhi the same evening.

Nawaz Sharif is expected to stay till November 25 to complete his bilateral visit programmes.

Dhaka, New Delhi and Islamabad are now negotiating a draft declaration to be announced at the end of the summit.

Hasina, in her bilateral talks with her Pakistani counterpart, is expected to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral relation as well as the regional and international issues of common concern.

The leaders of the two OIC countries are also likely to deal with matters concerning the unity and solidarity of the Muslim Ummah.

## Damal

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Mohammedans went on to play the second semifinal against Biman on Thursday. But in a surprise letter to the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan yesterday morning, Mohammedans informed that they would not play unless the fines were withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the news has certainly brought a big disappointment for Abahani Krira Chakra who whisked two Pakistani internationals Shahid Afridi and Muhammad Hussain yesterday for the final.

The CCMC coordinator told The Daily Star late last night over telephone that the game will be held tomorrow.

**Editor : Mahfuz Anam**

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# Nov 7 observed

BNP and some other political parties yesterday observed the National Revolution and Solidarity Day, reports UNB.

In observance of the day, BNP, JSD, Jamaat-e-Islami, Janga and other socio-cultural organisations organised elaborate programmes, which included hoisting of party and national flags in their respective offices, visit to the mazar of Zia and offering فاتحه, Qurankhwan, milad mahfil, discussion meeting and cultural function.

JSD observed the day as "Se-poy-Janata Upsurge Day" while some pro-government organisations observed the day as "Se-poy killing day."

The main opposition BNP has also drawn up a 10-day programme and formed a National Revolution and Solidarity Day Observance Committee.

Authorities tightened security in the capital city. Huge contingents of riot and armed police were deployed at different points of the city. However, no untoward incident was reported.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia placed wreath and offered فاتحه at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the morning.

## 3 killed in Gopalganj bus plunge

**From Our Correspondent**

GOPALGANJ, Nov 7: Three persons, including a minor girl, were killed and 50 others injured, 15 of them seriously in a road accident near Galabaria bridge on Gopalganj-Kotalipara road today.

The accident occurred when a Gopalganj bound bus from Kotalipara, overturned and fell into a roadside ditch.

The dead were identified as Karim Sardar 15, son of Nawab, Shahabuddin Sheikh 70, son of late Fazlu Sheikh and Amena Khatun, daughter of Habib Mia of village Kathi under Gopalganj Sadar thana.

The injured were admitted to Gopalganj sadar hospital.

Police seized the bus and a case was filed with Gopalganj thana.

## 3 more EPZs

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sources, competitive wage level and its "geo-political location" are some of the comparative advantages of Bangladesh in setting up EPZ, Khan pointed out.

Khan said in the EPZs, 104 industries are in full operation and 93 industries are in different stages of construction or implementation. He said actual investment in EPZ so far is 285 million dollars and proposed investment is estimated at 781 million dollars.

Enterprises in EPZs now employ about 60 thousand workers. The number of employees will go up to 1.06 lakh when all units go into production. Export earning from EPZs during last fiscal year was 463 million dollars which was over 10.5 per cent of total national export. BEPZA estimated that current year's earning would reach 700 million dollars.

Khan told the session if the operation of the five EPZs could start in full swing, BEPZA will be able to contribute between 30 to 40 per cent of the national export when the investment will reach between 1200 to 1500 million US dollars.

BEPZA chief said Bangladesh has become a new field for foreign investors as many Asian countries have lost attractiveness because of rising wage rates and production cost.

He said EPZs in Bangladesh are excellent places for setting up labour intensive high-tech industries and relocation of industries from abroad. As a result of low wage bills and import cost, the cost of production in Bangladesh could be kept low in the competitive world market.

## Investors' confce concludes

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"We look upon Bangladesh as a country with potential for growth in which we continue to invest as a long-term commitment," said John Noal, the Chairman and Managing Director of Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd.

Kihak Sung, the Chairman of South Korean Youngone Corporation which has a large investment in Bangladesh, lend support to the chief executive of the British origin multinational company.

There are "huge potential in Bangladesh, with an abundance of well educated professionals and ample supply of willing workers," said Kihak, whose company is one of the major foreign investors in the country.

Dr Manucher Towhidi, the Managing Director of the Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company (KAFCO), which is seen as a flag-ship for the joint venture units, was equally enthusiastic about Bangladesh's support to foreigners.

"The government of Bangladesh continues to honour all promises despite doubts in local and foreign circles over the fairness of the KAFCO deal," he said. "KAFCO's success is a testimony to sacrifices made by the government and people of Bangladesh."

The conference, during its last day, also paid attention to the prospects of foreign investment in light of regional cooperation among the countries in South Asia which are gradually opening up to outside.

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**PHILIPS**



Ghatak Nirmul Committee brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding trial of the killers of four national leaders. — Star photo

## Governing Council of NAM Science, Tech Centre meets in city today

The 8th meeting of the Governing Council of Science and Technology Centre of the Non-Aligned Movement begins in Dhaka today, reports UNB.

Education Minister ASHK Sadique will inaugurate the two-day meeting to be attended by member countries of the governing council.

Delegations from countries likely to attend the meeting included Cuba, Egypt, India, DPRK (North Korea), Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Government delegations and scientists from most of the member countries have already arrived in the capital.

The Dhaka session of the centre is expected to adopt a specific proposal on the expansion of inter-country communication and patronisation of young and promising scientists.

## Demolition of illegal structures DCC drive comes to halt for lack of police force

**By Staff Correspondent**

The Dhaka City Corporation drive to dismantle unauthorised party offices from the city has come to a halt as the police department failed to provide the DCC team with a police force for the last five days. DCC officials claimed.

But police department officials told The Daily Star that they had provided the DCC with a police force almost every time they sent their vehicles to pick up forces for the ongoing drive.

"It's only on Thursday since the drive started that we had to turn back the DCC request because in the beginning of the month there is sometimes crisis of force," said Atiqul Islam, Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Islam said the police always gave DCC priority whenever they asked for a police force to conduct their operations in the city. "On Thursday also we asked the driver to ring us back later in the day to get the men to accompany them but there was no call from the DCC," he said.

DCC Estate Department sources claimed, everyday prior to going out for the day's operation, they send vehicles to pick up the police force.

A gang of armed dacoits swooped on a residence at Lal-matia in the city in the early hours of yesterday and looted cash, gold ornaments and other valuables, reports UNB.

Police said seven dacoits entered the house at Kazi Nazrul Islam Road by cutting window grill at about 3 am. The armed dacoits tied up the inmates of the house and decamped with the booties worth about Tk 2 lakh.

## Potato farmers

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Bangladesh Cold Storage Association Mozammel Huq said the government and the banks should take immediate measures to save the farmers and the cold storage owners.

He told The Daily Star yesterday if they got about Tk one crore draft receipt facility and Tk 100 per bag delivery order facilities for farmers to lift their sacks from the cold rooms, they might get a reprieve. Otherwise, they face a disaster.

Trouble arises as farmers, mostly in Munshiganj area, have a bumper harvest this season, raising the country's production to 22 lakh tonnes despite problems with fertiliser. Last year, production was 18 lakh tonnes.

A bag of 75-80 kg of potato was selling at Tk 200-240 yesterday at Dewan Cold Storage at Muktapur in Munshiganj. It cost the farmers Tk 510 to produce it. Mohammad Nurul Islam of Rampal, a farmer and trader, said yesterday.

He had kept 4,000 bags of potato at the local cold storage. Now he faces a net loss of Tk 260 per bag. "Last season, I sowed potato in 25 bighas of land. This season I am wondering whether I could go for even 10 bighas as the cost of production has gone up, including the price of fertiliser, going up by Tk 80 per bag."

Mozammel Huq says the reason behind slow sale of potato is "It was not being consumed fully by people. Potato smuggling is driving away Bangladeshi potato from the bordering areas."

He recalled that early in 1996, Sri Lanka had showed interest in importing potato from Bangladesh. But the project failed as the cost of transportation did not match their import price. Now the industry should come forward to use the huge surplus potato for production of starch, chips and to use it in other food products. "Export too should be considered," he added.

## Cyclonic storm

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cal cautionary signal number three. Mongla Port has been asked to keep hoisting distant warning signal number 2.

Low lying areas of the coastal districts of Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla, Barisal and Patuakhali and the off-shore islands and chars are likely to be inundated by storm surge of two to three feet above normal astronomical tide.

All fishing boats and trawlers in North Bay have been advised to remain in shelter, the Met office said.

## Road accidents

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tive. The BRTA now has 260 staff out of 291 sanctioned posts, he said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Police has circulated a Road Accident Report Form to all police stations across the country to monitor accidents and analyse the reasons.