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Down to Earth

A tale of City's Maxis and Taxis

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately some hopes were raised in the minds of the city commuters that the transport sector might witness provision of a little better service and comfort with the introduction of a new kind of human haulers known as Maxis and also metered taxi cabs.

The Maxis started plying the city streets in mid-1997. Initially, the so-called Maxis were welcomed by city commuters as they offered the promise of a comfortable journey without the suffocating pressure of passengers in city buses, though at a higher fare.

But now, when the Maxis are operating on eight routes connecting some major points in the city, such promise of comfortable journey is actually far from being fulfilled.

Now reportedly 209 Maxis operate on the network of ten routes. In place of the erstwhile expectation of comfortable journey in less crowded environment, one may witness random overcrowding of such vehicles without paying heed to the requirement under the rules not to carry more than 10 passengers including the driver.

This blatant violation of rule with impunity goes to such an extent that most Maxis are now said to carry 14 passengers excluding driver and his assistant. The resultant congestion within the vehicle makes a mockery of the once promised comfortable cruise. The commuters are made to pay the same enhanced rates of fare, much to the frustration of travelling passengers.

The profiteering motive of the owners of the Maxis has led them to such over-use of their vehicles that within a span of two and a half years, such vehicles already wear a ramshackle look. Previously the Maxis used to operate at specific intervals with specific stops enroute.

Such regulation has been thrown to the winds with the Maxis helping pushing in as many passengers as possible in the interior without issuing any

ticket for the fare, as was previous practice. For women commuters, it is impossible to move in such congested situation with the men.

Some observers raise the question why the traffic police are indifferent in enforcing the regulation regarding the stipulated carrying capacity of the Maxis. A strictly followed timetable with efforts to make the Maxis present a better look with proper maintenance and re-painting may go a long way in ensuring a little better transport facility for the city dwellers.

The introduction of metered taxi cabs in the city since the last year was similarly looked upon with optimism by the city dwellers. They were already harried by the operation of metre-less autorickshaws with their two-stroke engines causing a great measure of air pollution and their drivers demanding such fares as their sweet will dictated.

The metered taxi cabs were therefore viewed as promising a comfortable car journey though at a higher fare duly metered. Every big city of the world has such taxi cab service and it behoves us that we have similar cab service befitting a modern city.

Such taxi cab service began with about 20 cabs initially. The yellow-coloured cabs started becoming a distinct feature of the city's transport network. The taxi cabs have since increased to constitute a fleet of nearly 100 vehicles.

But for even those who can afford the luxury of travel by taxi cabs find it hard to find them when required. Such cabs are mostly concentrated in the airport area and the city's five-star hotels.

There is surely a contact telephone number for obtaining services of such taxi cabs; but since most of them are committed for operation in the afore-said areas, there is hardly any assurance of getting a cab when

needed.

In such situations, it has been often found that persons who need to travel by car for specific reasons are compelled to take resort to rent-a-car service offered by private operators on their own terms. Such rent-a-car transports, mainly minibuses, assemble in large numbers along the Topkhana Road beside the Bangladesh Secretariat and BB Avenue waiting for hire.

One may wonder from the sight of such a large number of waiting minibuses whether the demand for their service is so heavy as to absorb all the waiting transports. On enquiry it is learnt that such rent-a-car transports are mainly used for long-distance journeys beyond the city limits.

On account of the paucity of metered taxi cabs in the city, the requiring persons have no alternative but to hire those rent-a-car minibuses at fares comparatively quite high.

From all accounts, it has appeared the number of yellow-coloured taxi cabs is very limited and as such quite inadequate to meet the normal demand for their services. To create a presentable picture of city's transport pattern, it is desirable that the mammoth growth of cycle rickshaws should be down-scaled to make room for a larger number of taxi cabs and pollution-free auto rickshaws. This may gradually obviate present-day horrendous traffic jams created by slow-moving cycle rickshaws and other non-mechanised vehicles.

The bottom lines are that the Maxis with their scant regard for following the prescribed regulations are in a mess, which the traffic authorities don't seem to be keen to bring them into line. On the city's taxi cab front, the inadequacy of their number is a major factor negating their playing a positive role by way of creating an impact on the city's overall traffic scene.



Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, flanked by Anwar Hossain Manju and Zinat Hussain, addressing the council session of Jatiya Party (Mizan-Manju) faction at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

Manju warns Ershad

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From now on, the Jatiya Party would play the due role of an opposition party, although one of its leaders was a minister of the present Awami League government.

"No anti-people act or attempt of the government will go without protest, but that would be done in a democratic way, not destroying the economy or image of the country," he said, adding, "we are of course a opposition party."

The former premier, who steered the party while Ershad was in jail after his fall in 1990, alleged that the was acting like the monster of the Arabian

Nights who tried to kill his savior who rescued him from a sealed bottle and turned the party into a "private proprietorship company".

He said Jatiya Party could not be held responsible for the misdeeds of the Ershad regime, as it was "not actually a party government or civilian rule."

The Jatiya Party MPs who expressed their solidarity with the faction are: Advocate Fazle Rabbi, Tazul Islam Chowdhury, Sharfuddin Jhantu, Mostafizur Rahman, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Shahadat Hossain, Ahsan Ahmed, Noor Mohammad Mondol, Jainal Abedin Sarkar, Tasmina Hossain, Golam Faruq Obhi, Golam Hossain and Zinat Hussain.

Former minister Sheikh Shabid said political activists are not employees of any person and they work for an ideology to serve the country.

"The sycophancy and flattery in the past made Jatiya Party an inactive organisation," added Sardar Amjad Hossain, another minister of the Ershad government.

Party leader Monirul Haq Chowdhury said Ershad used to take unilateral decisions and frequent denials ignoring party leadership "as if JP was his paternal property."

BNP rallies

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be held at party's central office at 5 pm tomorrow. City convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka will chair the meeting.

City BNP joint convenors, presidents and general secretaries of thana committees BNP supported DCC ward commissioners and presidents and general secretaries of front organisations have been asked to attend the meeting.

Khaleda

From Page 1
now uniting against this government. They would not tolerate any more misdeeds.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also spoke at the meeting.

Khaleda criticised the government for remaining silent after the recent killing of six Bangladeshis nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

BNP vice-president Shamsul Islam said goods worth Tk 36,000 crore were smuggled into the country during the three year regime of this government due to "opening of the border."

Former army chief Mahabubur Rahman alleged that the government had politicised the Army, infiltrated relatives into it, in a bid to destroy the institution.

Army has been made inactive. Instead of weapons, whistles have been handed to Army for traffic control," he said.

BNP senior vice-president Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Dr Khondokar Mosharraf Hossain, Fazlur Rahman Patal, Sazu Kamal, Majibur Rahman, Shafi Bikrampurii, Ali Akkas Nadim, Ali Neaz and Mahi Badruddoza Chowdhury, son of B Chowdhury also addressed the meeting presided over by Gazi Shahidul Huq.

VGD helps the poor

From Page 1
either. "This is too early for a loan receiver to pay back," feels Asma.

In Bogra town, a local community-based organisation -- Tohurunnesa Mohila Sangsad -- imparts training to vulnerable women. Each year 50 women, under VGD programme, get trained in income-generating skills from the women's training centre of the Sangsad. Each of them gets 30 kilogram of wheat a month during the one-year training period.

Suravi, a trainee, tells The Daily Star that her family is one of the worst victims of river erosion and that her husband is unemployed. "I hope to buy a sewing machine and do tailoring jobs after getting training here," says the young girl in her late 20s.

Rawnak Mahal Dillruba Begum, secretary of the Tohurunnesa Mohila Sangsad, tells newsmen that the Sangsad can not provide credit to the women after training because of cash problem. Begum Dil Afroz, district women affairs officer of Bogra, instantly comes up with the proposal that the Ministry of Women Affairs can assist in the matter if approached by the Sangsad.

The countrywide, multi-donors assisted VGD programme covers more than five lakh hard-core poor women in the rural Bangladesh annually. The VGD programme strategy is based on a combination of three components -- food aid plus capacity building activities plus graduation of women to regular NGO development programmes

Murder

From Page 1
the road was blocked by a bamboo. As they got down and tried to remove the bamboo, a gang of about five men, armed with sharp weapons, fire arms and crackers, attacked them.

Khokon was shot in the head and stabbed indiscriminately. Tapan suffered bomb injuries when the killers blasted crackers before fleeing.

Fatally injured Khokon was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Tapan was admitted to a local hospital and later shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital.

Police said last night that they were suspecting involvement of Tapan in the murder.

After the incident, a group of local youths brought out a procession on BRK Mission Road protesting the killing, some of the processionists looted a jewellery shop, police said.

None was arrested in connection with the killing or looting till last night.

Motijheel police said they were preparing to file a murder case in connection with the incident.

Scholastica students ace University of London exams

By Staff Correspondent

Scholastica, a leading English medium school in the city achieved outstanding results in the O (Ordinary) and A (Advanced) Level examinations of 1998/99 under the London University, said a Scholastica School press release yesterday.

At least 99.6 per cent of the total 82 Ordinary Level students appearing from Scholastica passed the examination this year while 85 per cent received Honours Grades. Nine students got an "A" in every subject and 30 others got Honours Grades i.e. an "A" or "B" in every subject, the press release said.

A total of 22 Scholastica students were sat for the Advanced Level Examination, 94 per cent of the students passed while 45 per cent received Honours Grades, told the press release.

More students appeared for the London based exams in 1998-99 than any other school in the country, the release added.

Attack on colonel: None arrested yet

By Staff Correspondent

Armed hoodlums who opened fire at a colonel at Gulbagh on Thursday night are threatening his relatives to withdraw the case filed against them.

Police are yet to arrest the criminals.

Sources said colonel SHM Nazrul Islam, director, administration of Bangladesh Ansar was shot at while he was driving in Gulbagh area.

Local people said that the incident took place in front of Benu Confectionery. A private car with five youths arrived at the confectionery where Islam stopped his car.

14 to vie for each DU Hons seat this yr

By DU Correspondent

At least 14 students are going to compete for each seat in the First Year Honours courses of the Dhaka University this year. The applicants to seats ratio is 13:1 in 'Ga' unit and 20:1 in 'Gha' unit.

The Dhaka University authorities have earned Tk. 1,10,37,200 by selling application forms for admission into first year honours of the 1998-99 session.

The admission tests will begin from April 30. The date fixed for the tests are 'Ka' unit on 21 May, 'Kha' unit on May 7, 'Ga' unit on April 30 and 'Gha' unit for the students willing to change groups, on May 14.

This year the pass mark has been fixed at 40. The admission tests will comprise of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) with a stipulated time of one hour. There will be separate question papers for each of the four units.

According to the data available in the university offices, a total of 55,186 forms were sold till the last date Thursday.

Around 19,106 students are expected to compete for the 1100 seats in 'Ka' unit (Science, Biological science and Pharmacy faculties), while 14,550 students will vie for 1700 seats under the 'Kha' unit (Humanities group). This means a 18:1 applicants to students ratio in the former and a 8:1 ratio in the latter unit.

A total of 9,357 forms were sold in the 'Ga' unit (Faculty of Business Administration) against 710 seats while 12,218

students are expected to compete for 600 seats under the 'Gha' unit (Combined group). The applicants to seats ratio is 13:1 in 'Ga' unit and 20:1 in 'Gha' unit.

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GSS crisis

From Page 1

of a female worker by Dr. Hassan.

All the offices of the GSS, one of the larger NGOs of the country, were closed *sine die* on April 15.

The executive committee of the GSS closed down the offices "in view of liquidity crises due to non-availability of funds..."

The Workers' Council, however, interpreted the said liquidity crisis as donors' dissatisfaction over the alleged irregularities in managing GSS funds by its management headed by Dr. Hassan. The workers' allegations also included transfer of GSS fund by the ED to a couple of private limited companies -- Mudrak Ltd and Media Centre Ltd -- which has a little to do with organisation's announced objectives.

The workers attributed the allegations to the findings of a special audit conducted by the donors concerned last year.

However, the GSS administration recently filed a case with the city's Mohamadpur thana against the leaders of the Workers Council.

Meantime, some of the GSS workers supporting Dr. Hassan issued a press statement claiming that "some workers" were trying to destabilise the organisation for their own interest, while "their ultimate goal is to destroy the GSS".

Defending Dr. Hassan, the press release said that the troublemakers were out to use a female worker who had once brought "allegations of harassment, not sexual harassment, against the executive director".

On the allegation of financial irregularities, the press release said that special audit indicated "weakness in financial management", not financial irregularities, was identified.

Meantime, the NGO bureau has reportedly decided to conduct an investigation into the allegations brought by the workers against the GSS management.

Khaleda condemns attack on Abdul Wahab MP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has condemned "Awami terrorists' attack" on party MP Abdul Wahab at a government function in his constituency and demanded exemplary punishment of the attackers.

In a statement yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said terrorists belonging to the ruling Awami League attacked Abdul Wahab at the inaugural function of a police camp at Hat Fazilpur under Shailkupa thana in Jhenidha in presence of the home minister and high police officials.

Begum Zia said the BNP MP attacked the function on invitation from the home minister but was assaulted in his presence. "The incident is not only condemnable but also unfortunate. It also proved the serious deterioration of law and order in the country."

This attack clearly showed that who were resorting to terrorism and who were patronising them, she added.

Papers, other materials gutted at KPM

RANGAMATI, Apr 23: A devastating fire at Karnafull Paper Mill (KPM) in Chhatraghona in the hill district gutted papers and other materials worth about Tk 7 lakh Thursday night, reports UNB.

Sources said, the fire originated from electric short circuit and engulfed the 'Rupantar' section of the mill at 11:15.

The workers of the industrial unit, police and firefighters in a joint operation brought the blaze under control after an hour.

Khagrachhari

From Page 1

Police, BDR and army personnel are patrolling the trouble spots of the town.

GOC of Chittagong Division Abu Kaiser Mohammad Fazlur Kabir today visited Khagrachhari town and held a meeting with high-level government officials.

The bodies of Putul Chakma, 19, and Suramonium Chakma, 21, the two activists of FGP were sent to their relatives after autopsy, police said.

Arif's brother

From Page 1

gadish Dass, Khokan Haider said.

Jagadish introduced my brother to almost all the senior leaders and even to some ministers and other high-ups in the party. My brother used to look after most of the activities including relief distribution in the area on behalf of the Ward Commissioner.

"Babul (the main aide of the MP) and Gopal took Arif to Chhatrak from my house in the name of some urgent programme in the early morning on March 15, the day when he was killed in the blast."

Khokan said that his brother was not involved in any terrorist activity. "But now it is being widely talked that, he was a terrorist. If it is so, all responsibilities should be shouldered by Manik since he used my brother for his political gain".

Khokan said "Arif went to the MP's house to invite him to attend his marriage ceremony which was scheduled to be held on March 25, he added.

"I want punitive measures against those who are responsible for my brother's death. We are waiting for the CID report. If needed, I may file a case soon," Khokan said.

Rajuk

From Page 1

law, whenever a construction irregularity is detected, Rajuk has to serve a notice on the offender. Then it has to go through the lengthy process of cancelling the plan and give the offender an opportunity to appeal, within a month, to Rajuk's Appellate Authority comprising, the Chairman and two Members.

"By the time we have completed the formalities to book the person, the construction work is completed and we become helpless," said the official.

The Rajuk proposal, he said, recommended that as soon it serves the notice, a police officer "not below the rank of Sub-inspector" should be able to arrest the offender and book him for violating construction law.

Other Rajuk sources said it was also trying to convince the works ministry to go for amending clause 25 of the Building Construction Rules. Besides, it has recommended that all residential buildings in the city should be, at the most, six storied and commercial building, 10 storied at the maximum.

Rajuk has also proposed that prior to taking up of any construction beyond four stories, the developer must produce soil test report and structural design. At present these are needed only for construction of buildings beyond seven stories. The structural design must be done by a graduate engineer and the site supervisor should also be a graduate engineer, the official said.

Meanwhile, works ministry sources said that none of these proposals were now getting any attention from the authorities. "We know these changes must come for our own good. But as far as I know, nothing has been done to expedite the process," one source said.

উনুজ প্রদর্শনী
বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ (সাইন্স ল্যাবরেটরী), ঢাকা
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সি-৩১৫

ওয়াসা

ওয়াসার লাইনে অবৈধ পাম্প অথবা চাপকল অপসারণ প্রসঙ্গে বিশেষ মনোযোগ আকর্ষণ

অবৈধ পাম্প অথবা চাপকল অবিলম্বে অপসারণ করুন !!

ঢাকা ওয়াসা গভীর উদ্বেগের সাথে লক্ষ্য করছে যে, মহানগরীতে কোন কোন এলাকায় কিছু অসাধু গ্রাহক ওয়াসার লাইনে সরাসরি পাম্প অথবা চাপকল অবৈধভাবে স্থাপনের মাধ্যমে পানি সংগ্রহ করছে। বিশেষতঃ বহুতল ভবন ও বড় বড় ভবনে এরূপ অবৈধভাবে পানি নেয়ার ফলে সম্মানিত গ্রাহকগণ পরিমিত পরিমাণে পানি পাচ্ছেন না। এমতাবস্থায় ঢাকা ওয়াসার পানির লাইনে অবৈধভাবে স্থাপিত পাম্প অথবা চাপকল অবিলম্বে অপসারণের জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে। অন্যথায় আইনগত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের মাধ্যমে ঢাকা ওয়াসা এসব অবৈধ পাম্প ও চাপকল অপসারণ করবে।

আপনার সেবায় নিয়োজিত ঢাকা ওয়াসা

ওয়াসা/জরতঃ/১০৪/৯৯