

# Alternative music scene - and heard!

Alternative music, often reflecting on the darker side of life, had to struggle for some time to get into the mainstream; but its arrival was finally welcomed in 1999 when underground bands like 'Migraine' and 'The Attempted Band' began to play in public

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The alternative music revolution started worldwide around the late 1970's with bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam and so on. In quite sometime this fusion, between rock and grunge music stole the hearts of many music-lovers and within no time it gained unthinkable popularity.

But, in Dhaka, alternative music had to struggle for a long time to get into the mainstream until recently. The main reason for its setback was primarily because it was not 'regular pop music'. The music was not upbeat, and furthermore, the lyrics were usually concerned with the darker side of human life. Yet the music had a small group of followers, which grew over time but they lacked promoters.

Around 1995, some underground bands were formed in Dhaka, but they were yet not

confident enough, to come into 'the limelight'. This trend changed later on, when underground alternative bands like 'Migraine' and 'The Attempted Band' started to play in public. Migraine performed in a number of concerts while The Attempted Band acquired rave reviews during their performances at 'The Hard Rock Café' and in other concerts.

Soon enough, in 1999, alternative concerts were being organized and promoted by a group known as MAFC (Metal Alternative Fan Club) and by 2000, the number of followers had increased tremendously, due to these concerts.

In 2002, the Dhaka alternative music scene received a big break when Ziyun arranged an open air concert. As a follow up to that on March 5, 'Tanim of altermetal.com' and 'Union Underground' organised the first ever, 'unplugged alternative concert'. Following the footsteps

of such concerts, concerts are being arranged in every two months. At the moment, the city has three groups who promote and supports alternative music. And these are 'altermetal.com', 'Union Underground' and MAFC (after a long break). Altermetal has a web site, www.altermetal.com where information about the alternative music scene of the city can be found.

A prominent alternative group, 'Black' was the first in Dhaka to acquire and release an album. Due to the high appreciation of the album, other alternative music bands are releasing their albums by the end of this year or next year.

"We have already received a record contract from G-series. We are eager to find out what our fans think of the album when it is finally released," said Yamen, the lead vocalist of Breach, a popular alternative band of the city.

Bands like Migraine, Nemesis,

Breach, Ajob & Kronic have already established themselves as popular alternative bands. Rising stars like Part of the Scenery, STS, Sellout and Phulbanu's Revenge are not lagging far behind either.

Like Breach, Nemesis, Kronic and Ajob have also received record deals. The former two would have their albums released under the 'G-series' label while Ajob would have theirs being released by 'Ektaar.'

"Thankfully, due to the growing popularity, we would be arranging more concerts this season. I hope that the music lovers of the city will actually support and help us to promote alternative music by attending them," said Tanim, of Union Underground and altermetal.com. Reportedly, MAFC would be arranging another concert, this July that is rumoured to become another milestone of a concert.



The alternative band, Breach, performing at the Unplugged Concert on 5 March, 2003.

## Give a smile to the friendly fuel buses

The new CNG service replaces some diesel buses which emit dangerous sulphur dioxide and suspended particulate matter which are a dominant source of air pollution



The new CNG bus service launched by a local firm: the Mega City Bus Company Ltd.

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

With the government still undecided on the Dhaka Clean Fuel Project funded by ADB, a local company, The Mega City Bus Company Ltd, has launched a CNG bus service for city commuters.

The new service is welcome by many with a sigh of relief in place of the relatively high density of diesel buses which emit ambient amounts of dangerous sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and suspended particulate matter (SPM) which are a dominant source of air and dust pollution in the city.

"After the withdrawal of two-stroke three-wheelers from the city, the main contributors to air pollution are particulate matters emitted by diesel engines," said Engineer AKM Enayetullah, convenor of the National Specialist Committee for Catalytic Converters and Diesel Particulate Filters, at a recent press conference in the city.

Even the government's decision to install Catalytic Converters (CC) and Diesel Particulate Filters (DPF) in old vehicles can not help contain air pollution, comments Dr Md Ehsan, a specialist on CC and DPF.

"We should avoid retrofitted CC and DPF in old vehicles because they require technical consideration for proper choice and fit with the engine concerned. Engine maintenance and fitness certificates would

save the government from draining foreign currency in importing CC and DPF," said Dr Md Ehsan, Department of Mechanical Engineering, BUET.

Dipon CNG Transport Services Ltd, the Mother Company of Mega City, have imported 15 buses for its Motijheel-Mohammadpur route via Science Laboratory and Zigatola. The demand for these buses is readily noticed as commuters travel even standing.

"We should utilise our gas and keep our environment free from pollution. We need more environment friendly CNG buses like this," said Mushfiq, a daily commuter from Motijheel to Mohammadpur.

"The demand for more CNG buses is higher in the city. But we are unable to import more buses due to the lack of CNG filling stations," said Rashid Mahmud, the Managing Director of Dipon CNG Transport Services Ltd.

According to an ADB report, CNG buses should have less operative costs than diesel buses. Diesel is sold at the pump Tk 20 a litre whereas CNG is sold at Tk 7.45, which is one third of the diesel price. If a bus runs 270 km per day with 324 operating days a year, a customer preference benefit would be Taka 548,937 for a bus in a year.

"We are financing the project with bank loan at 15 per cent interest and we hope to break even within 3 years", said Mahmud.

The Dhaka Clean Fuel project has reached a deadlock because of the reluctance of Bangladesh Road & Transport Corporation (BRTC) to get fund from Janata Bank at 12 per cent interest for 200 CNG buses as part of the gradual phase-out of diesel buses in the city.

The project includes construction of a 60-kilometer 20-inch natural gas transmission pipeline, two city gate stations at Ashulia and Savar, and construction of 97 km of 16-inch extended natural gas distribution pipelines in Dhaka. It also includes establishment of three major compressed natural gas (CNG) filling stations just outside Dhaka, three major filling stations along the Dhaka-Chittagong highway for buses and trucks, and 20 minor filling stations in Dhaka for cars and auto rickshaws.

The project's scheduled time was 2002 to 2006. Already one year have passed from the targeted schedule.

CNG buses would save foreign currency drained out for petrol, octane and diesel. In 2001/2 FY crude petroleum and petroleum products were imported for US\$ 723.6 million which is 8.47% of total import US\$ 8540.7 million. And the import of diesel in FY 2000/1 was 1846 metric tons, which was 54.15 % of total 3409 metric tons import.

## Water wasted washing cars

SHIMU RANI DAS

Severe water shortage is one of the major daily problems faced by the city dwellers. In spite of this many people seem oblivious to the excessive amounts of water wasted in washing vehicles.

Md. Maniruzzaman, of Dhanmondi, is a private car owner whose car is washed religiously every weekend. Both car owner and driver appear least bothered by the fact that this may be adding to the city's water

crisis. Salauddin Ahmed, a resident of Banani owns two cars and employs a separate water tank just for car washing with a capacity of about 1000 litres. Water shortage and water wastage are not issues in his household.

However, private car owners are not alone in wasting one of the city's most precious resources in this manner. Each day, around 4,500 vehicles are washed in at least 300 car-servicing centres throughout the capital. Workers at servicing centres in Mahakhali, Asad Gate and Shabagh, say they easily use 10-12 litres of water in washing a car or jeep and up to 25 litres for a microbus, bus or truck.

According to an employee of a servicing centre at Shabagh, on average they wash 15 vehicles a day. For this, they use 150-200 litres of water. Other servicing centres were found to expend similar amounts of water. In most servicing centres, the main source of water for vehicle washing is a pipeline from the over-burdened Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), though they could construct tanks to collect rain water as well as recycle much of the water that is currently used and simply allowed to drain away.

Mafuzur Rahman, the public relations officer of WASA, says, "We are trying to educate the public through advertising so they don't misuse or waste water. We think the public must be made aware in this context."

There is no exact amount of water for washing the car," says driver Mainuddin, matter-of-factly. "The car is washed with a hose-pipe and it takes about two hours. Generally 14-15 litres water are used for washing the car."

But if anything, Maniruzzaman could be considered frugal in his weekend car-washing habits. Many car owners in the city, some with two or more vehicles, feel the need to wash their cars at least every few days, complaining that the dust and pollution of the city is harmful to the surfaces and paint-work of their cars.

## event horizon & letter

### Dhaka fit for underground traffic

Speakers at a seminar in the city on Friday said that the land of Dhaka is fit for underground movement of traffic. The authority should look for the underground transportation to smooth traffic system.

The seminar organized jointly by Bangladesh Institute of Planners and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (URP) under Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology (BUET). Minister for Communication Nazmul Huada was present as chief guest while chairman of URP professor Golam Rahman chaired the seminar.

Professor Mir Maksud Ali of Illinois University of USA presented keynote paper while he said that considering the traffic jam situation in Dhaka subway system would be effective.

### How do food inspections help us?

I just read Sohail Islam's piece on adulterated foods in yesterday's paper (July 2). I was relieved to learn that food in Dhaka is actually subject to DCC inspection! Unfortunately, we consumers usually have no way of knowing which places to avoid, so these inspections ultimately don't help us. On reading about the test of samples from sweet shops, for instance, I would have loved to know which two sweet shops in the city came out "clean." Could Mr. Islam not have included that piece of information in the article just as he did the information about the sauce and jam-jelly test (or as Star City did the list of eight BSTI-recalled products on the following page)?

Let me share with you two examples from the States to give you a sense of what I have in mind: All restaurants in the city of Los Angeles are required to post a letter grade by their front door,

a grade given to each restaurant on the basis of cleanliness, etc. I know this is not going to be feasible in Dhaka right now. My other example is from Houston, where on a weekly spot in the local news, a man named Marvin Zindler 'names' restaurants that have done well on city inspections and those that have NOT. This I think is a very valuable public service and perhaps Star City could work out some arrangement with the inspectors over at DCC to share this information with us. Surely the dread of ending up on the infamous Daily Star blacklist would encourage food establishments and manufacturers to clean up their acts, literally. Given the famous Bengali sweet tooth, sweet shops strike me as a very good place to start.

Sincerely,  
Elora Shehabuddin  
Dhaka

## crisis telephone numbers

### HEALTH

#### Hospitals

Azimpur Mother & Child Health Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

#### Heart

National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59

#### Burn

Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6

#### Cancer

National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9

#### Diabetes

Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50

#### Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62

#### Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315  
National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807

#### Dental

Dental College -9002035

#### Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

#### General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6  
Holy Family Hospital- 8311731-25

#### Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital-

8612550-4, 8614545-9  
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,

#### Shamarita Hospital-

9131901  
Suhrawardy Hospital - 9130800, 9122560-69

#### Salimullah Medical College Hospital --

7310061-4, 7319002-6  
Cholera Research Hospital (ICDRB)- 8811751-60  
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

#### Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563  
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040  
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061, 7319022  
Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-9

#### Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040

#### Ambulance Service-

Fire Service & Civil Defence Ambulance 9555555, 9556666-7, 9567734, Fire Services Siddique Bazar (HQ) 9556667,

#### Mohammadpur 9112078, Khilgaon

7218329, Mirpur 9001055, Tongi

9801070, Demra 7400111,

Postagola 7410771, Narayanganj

9715644, Sadarghat 7119759,

Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269,

9001055, Mirpur TVG Complex

9001189, Narayanganj Port

9715365,

Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531,

Mondalpara (N. Ganj River)

9712015, N. Gan Bander 9712095,

Dhaka EPZ (Savar)

7701444, Markajul Al Islami

9127867, Holy Family Hospital

8311721-5.

#### Ambulances For

#### Dead Body

Anzuman Matfidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166,  
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

### LIBRARY & INFO

#### Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4,

Shishu Academy- 9564128

Shilpakala Academy- 8614673

Bangla Academy- 8619550

Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407

Nazrul Institute- 9114602

Ford Foundation- 8116133

Alliance Francaise- 8611557

British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7

Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604

Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6

Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096

The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314

Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412