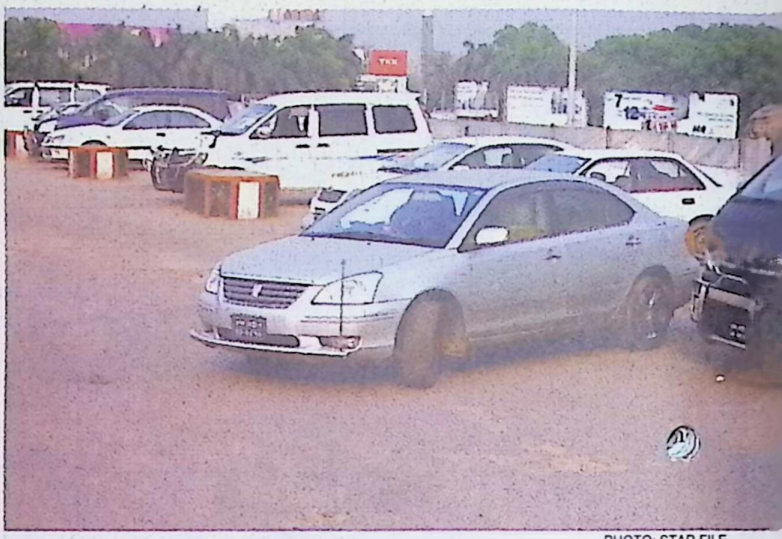


PHOTO: STAR FILE

Cars are perhaps among our most valuable possessions.

Auto Disaster Management 101

ANIKA HOSSAIN

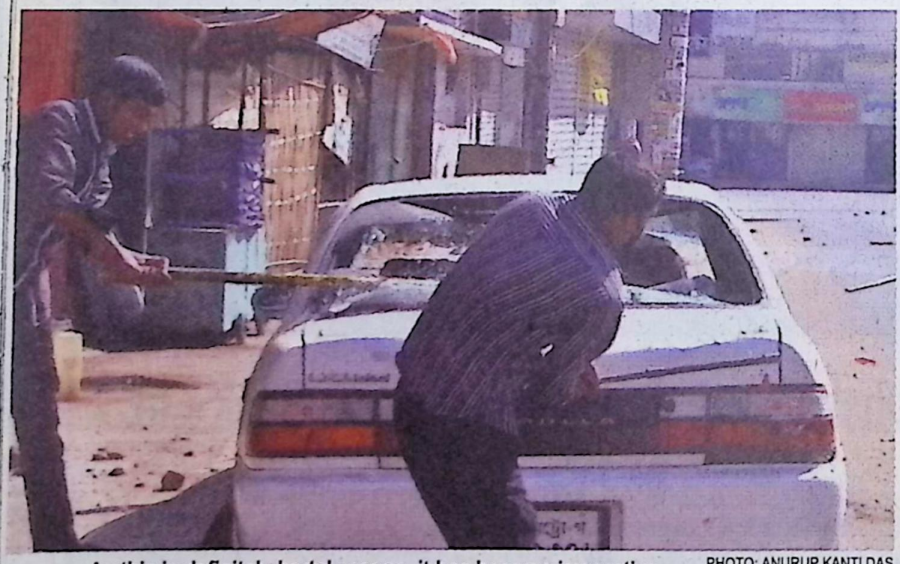


PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

As this is definitely hartal season, it has become imperative that we protect our vehicles and ourselves the best we can.

On March 1 2013, at about 12:30 at night, Chowdhury Mohammad Jalal (not his real name) was returning to his home in Dhanmondi with his wife and daughter after attending a family wedding. As he drove onto his street, he noticed he was having trouble seeing ahead. The dim street light that had been flickering piteously for days had finally given away to semi-darkness, the only light coming from apartment windows and the moon. Annoyed and a little worried he drove carefully to his own gate.

His six-year-old daughter had fallen asleep in the back-seat and his wife was already taking off her seat belt to turn around and wake her. The security guard of their apartment complex, was nowhere in sight which upset Jalal as he looked at the "Do Not Use Your Horn from 7pm -7am" sign on the front gate. He flashed his headlights hoping to attract the guard's attention but to no avail. Losing his patience and now slightly worried, he got out of his car and walked to the gate and knocked.

Suddenly, he heard a muffled cry from behind him. He turned, and to his horror saw four men, standing around his car, two of them holding guns and one with a knife. His wife was frantically trying to reach for their daughter but stopped as one of them pointed a gun at her and asked her to get out of the vehicle. Jalal begged his wife to do as she was asked, and willed himself not to scream. Terror gripped every fibre of his being as he watched his wife step out of the car, shaking uncontrollably. "Please don't hurt us, please don't hurt us," was all he could whisper as the assailants grabbed his little girl roughly and shoved her at them. The four then got into his car, a Toyota Corolla he bought just last year. The keys were in the ignition so they drove away at full speed. The family didn't start shouting for help