



PHOTO: DARSHAN CHAKMA

Surviving 6 hours of traffic

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Last Thursday, I got ready for yet another long drive and by a long drive I mean the regular commute to my bidirectional university, *Dokkhin Uttor*. As usual I had started at 8 in the morning from Dhanmondi to reach the godforsaken place. I feared I was going to miss my quiz but my Huber chauffeur assured me that he was nothing short of an F1 driver and asked me not to scream while he drives at the speed of light.

I prayed for a rainless day and hastily added "no VIPs on the road" to the wishlist. I settled back and plugged in earphones blaring Eye of the Tiger and sipped my coffee feeling invincible.

HOUR 1

My Huber driver was right. We whizzed through the roads like they portray in the movies. The car moved in a blur causing heads to turn, skirts to fly and loud curses to follow. Everything was going smoothly and then I realised something was wrong; something very vital was missing from the streets: there was no traffic. That was not impossible given the day of the week. I started panicking because a day without traffic is too good to be true - and then I WOKE UP IN COLD SWEAT.

HOUR 2

It took me a minute to decipher what was going on around me. I checked my watch and realised I had slept through one whole hour. We were stuck in Bijoy Sharani, the place where evil spawns. My driver was tapping away on his phone and the meter already showed a count of 300 Taka. A VIP was on his way from the airport and the roads were to be blocked

till he reached his destination.

I thought of my quiz, ducked out of view and cried a river.

HOUR 3

It seemed like the skies were lamenting about my loss too. It turned grey and started pouring its heart out. I posted an enquiry about the VIP dude's movement and the water clogged streets on a public social media group, Traffic Alarm and got



no productive replies whatsoever. I was just told to have *khichuri* with *dim bhaaji* at home and to buy a boat. Consequently, I got bombarded with a hundred friend requests from the likes of *Meghla Dupur*, *Shudhu Tomar* and other countless lonely hearts.

Meter count: 600 Taka

HOUR 4

I switched on to my metal playlist and tried to headbang out the aggression this

day was causing me. I even caught a glimpse of my Huber driver's head bobbing to the beat. I was under the impression that I had started our own little cult until it hit me that he was just dozing off. Heartbroken, I considered selling my soul to the Devil in exchange for a traffic-free road for the rest of my life but soon gave up on the idea when I heard my stomach growl with hunger.

I looked for walking vendors selling nuts or *aamra* to no avail. I even looked up *aamra* on the internet, curious about its scientific name. It's called *Spondias mombin*. Who knew? Hint: not me.

Meter count: 900 Taka

HOUR 5

The traffic had started to move at a snail's pace. It was so slow that it got romantic at one point. I started to appreciate the number of faces staring out of

the bus beside me. Each window held a different story. It didn't matter that some of them winked after I held a gaze with them, it didn't even matter that one almost puked. It was quixotic, like a song of life. It was soul soothing to watch the raindrops race down against my window glass. I think I even named and cheered for a few. The streets started submerging and I finally asked my Huber driver if he was craving *khichuri* too.

Meter count: 1200 Taka

HOUR 6

Why do I need to struggle to get an education? Just because I have to wait for hours so that a bigwig could pass by with ease? Why do we even need a city and civilisation? Everything will perish anyway. I started missing my family for this could be the end of everything.

I was about to accept a friend request from *Chena Manush* when the vehicles in front of me started to cruise forward with a faster speed like some sort of divine intervention. However, it no longer relieved me. The driver started laughing like a lunatic and I knew I had emerged a changed person. I finally reached my destination having to pay 1500 Taka and I thought to myself, what a wonderful world, in Louis Armstrong's melodic voice.

Iqra suffers from wanderlust, dreams of discovering the Loch Ness Monster and occasionally complains about Economics. Tell her to get a life at iqra.kashmir53@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/iqra.l.qamari