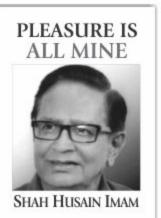
## Can Rajib's death be a tipping point?



UST how anarchic the transport sector has become is graphically illustrated by the following instances: In

the first place,

after having severed Rajib's hand, the beastly bus broke the spine of a housewife near New Market; and grievously wounded a girl's leg as if on a serial damaging spree. Secondly, last Tuesday morning, a collision between a bus and a lorry on Dhaka-Khulna highway, severed a transport worker's hand from his

The last variation in the art of destructive swipe came through the discourtesy of a bus driver, if you like! The traffic inspector trying to stop him from taking the opposite passage invited the wrath of the driver; he swerved one side of the bus on to his "tormentor"—the traffic officer's left foot was seriously njured.

The growing anarchy in the transport sector is ascribed to a certain vested interest allegedly linked to collusion among transport owners, transport workers and ruling party elements. This circle is said to be intent on not giving any quarter to the agenda for change and reform An expert wondered aloud over the justification of multiple brand names in the sector which makes it unwieldy for governance. By

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tour.



Rajib Hossain

contrast, most other cities in the world, are doing with fewer companies that are not only manageable but can also function as harmonious public service organisations.

All these concerns will have to be addressed with an open mind to come to grips with them in order to upgrade and modernise transport infrastructure in step with the digital age. The billions that are projected to go into the multimodal transport

system will be well-spent if we treat it as part of a broader spectrum governance issue.

In this context, targeted research, law reform and implementation of the right policy mix are indispensable for the uplift of the transport sector from a predilection to dull and even counterproductive status quo.

There is no confusion about how Rajib Hossain lost his hand and sustained a head injury—caught

between two speeding vehicles-eventually dying in heartbreaking circumstances. His death has shocked the nation as it exacted a palpable social cost. Not only has the life of an enterprising man with a deep sense of responsibility towards his family been cut short, the tragedy has also doubly orphaned a preexisting orphan family.

Two pressing priorities crop up in the wake of Rajib's death. And, these will have to be simultaneously

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addressed if we are to do justice to an invaluable loss: One, the compensation package that was under consideration of different quarters to rehabilitate Rajib on his discharge from hospital should be passed on to the members of his family. A High Court directive requiring an allocation of TK 1 crore for the treatment and rehabilitation of Rajib had been issued when he was under the care of the DMCH.

Nevertheless, the foremost public

interest is centred on an unwavering pursuit of the case leading to punishment of the culprit(s) and payment of compensation to the victim's family.

On the very day of Rajib's death, the accused drivers of the two vehicles entered a plea for bail which was promptly rejected by the court. Now the citizens await an expeditious completion of the legal process as they feel such road accidents are nothing but murders. An impunity culture that has seeped through the transport sector must be rectified through a deterrent strategy spearheaded by exemplary punishment meted out to the guilty.

Obviously, the traffic police personnel on duty, especially in the accident-vulnerable areas, can't escape responsibility for preventing reckless driving and break-neck races indulged in by mostly untrained drivers oblivious to the ramshackle condition of their vehicles. Of course, the police logistics need to be revamped along with an increase in their patrolling capacity.

To begin with, speed limits in the city will have to be freshly stipulated and enforced on pain of severe penalisation of the offenders.

To end on a piece of advice from the Greek poet, Epicharmus (530 BCE-440 BCE), which holds just as good today as when it was pronounced: "A wise man must be wise before, not after, the event."

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#### PROJECT **■** SYNDICATE

# Fifty Shades of Trump



was a most unusual one for President Donald Trump's administration. There was no high-level firing: the only dismissal of any

AST week

note was that of the White House aide in charge of homeland security, who was forced out at the behest of John Bolton, who had just taken over as Trump's third national security adviser in 15 months. Nonetheless, it may well have been the most turbulent week yet of Trump's presidency.

Bolton's appointment was enough to set much of Washington trembling with fear that he would reinforce Trump's most pugnacious views, for example, that the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement should be scrapped. Still, it has been widely speculated that Bolton, reportedly a bureaucratic whiz, was outmaneuvered by Defense Secretary James Mattis on the question of how far to take the military attack on Syria in retaliation for the latest use of chemical weapons by Bashar al-Assad's government against its own people. In the end, the attacks by the US, the United Kingdom, and France were restricted to targets believed to be chemical weapons and storage facilities.

Questions are being raised in the Senate about the suitability of Mike Pompeo, a hardliner on Muslims and Russia, to succeed Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State. And with Bolton now ensconced in the West Wing, the consensus is that only Mattis stands

between Trump and military overreach. (Mattis supports the Iran deal.)

Trump's most peculiar recent personnel move-part of an evergrowing list of dismissals—was to fire David Shulkin as head of the Veterans Administration, a Leviathan of an agency, and nominate his personal physician for the job. The number of pending nominations for high-level positions ahead of November's midterm congressional elections is believed to be one reason for Trump's reluctance to fire his most controversial appointee, Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Pruitt's determination to reverse the EPA's achievements in reducing air and water pollution, especially regulations adopted during Barack Obama's presidency, bespeaks Trump's own resentment of Obama. In addition, major polluting industries are enthusiastic about Pruitt.

The problem is that in an administration filled with grifters and experts at indulging in first-class air travel and other comforts at taxpayers' expense, Pruitt is probably the champ. Trump blows hot and cold on Pruitt, and observers have learned not to predict what he might do with regard to any aspect of policy and personnel.

That is also true of the question creating the most tension: whether Trump will try to end the investigation into whether he or his campaign conspired with Russians to try to swing the 2016 election in his favour. The evidence of such collusion is mounting. Trump, according to many observers, has absorbed the idea that firing Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is leading the probe, wouldn't go down well at all. The supine

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congressional Republicans, terrified of Trump and his base of devoted supporters, are actually beginning to show some spine and are moving toward backing a resolution that would protect Mueller, who is supported by a large majority of the public.

But Trump and his closest congressional allies are still trying to undermine the investigation by smearing the FBI, which is implementing it, and Justice Department officials who are overseeing the FBI's work. Trump has hinted that he may fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who presides over the investigation. The president remains furious that Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who was Trump's sole Senate backer from early in the 2016 campaign, has recused himself from the investigation.

When Trump gets particularly angry he remains so, exhibiting his rage in unexpected ways. It seems that nothing has made him angrier than the FBI's extraordinary April 9 raid on the office, home, and hotel room of Michael Cohen, his principal personal attorney and fixer. Ostensibly, the FBI acted because Cohen had been involved in the most lurid aspects of Trump's public career. But Cohen might also have been involved in a 2016 conspiracy with Russia, and his own business affairs are under

investigation. Since early this year, it has seemed possible that Trump might be brought down not by his and his campaign's possible dealings with Russia, but by a pulchritudinous adult film star whose professional name is Stormy Daniels (her real name is Stephanie Clifford).

Daniels and her aggressive attorney are fearless toward Trump, on whose behalf Cohen arranged to pay her USD 130,000 shortly before the election to keep quiet about her one-time liaison with Trump, which occurred early in his marriage to Melania Trump and four months after the birth of his son, Barron.

One question raised by the deal is whether the USD 130,000, which Cohen says he paid out of his own pocket without Trump's knowledge, amounted to an illegal campaign contribution. Another mystery is why Trump, who has been less bothered by revelations of a longer affair at around the same time with a former Playboy model, seems particularly terrified of Daniels. Unusually for him, he has refused to comment or tweet about her.

At week's end, a memoir by former FBI director James Comey, whose firing by Trump led to Mueller's appointment, began to leak, also arousing Trump's ire. He called Comey a "weak and untruthful slime ball," and, as has happened before, his attack on the author of an unflattering book helped propel it to the top of the bestseller list before it was officially released. The attack on Syria seems to have distracted public attention from Trump's scandals only temporarily, given Comey's coming high-profile book tour. But there is a growing sense that what Mueller is in the process of getting on Cohen may present the greatest danger of all to the president.

Elizabeth Drew is a contributing editor to The New Republic and the author, most recently, of Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon's Downfall. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2018. www.project-syndicate.org

GREGY MOPUT WALKER

(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

### QUOTABLE Quote



CONFUCIUS (551 BC-479 BC) Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 1 Kid's book feature 6 Boxing ring border 11 Stand 12 Calendar entry 13 Frisco player 14 Magna --15 Mayo ingredient 16 More badtempered

18 Gloss target 19 Freud topic 20 Galena, for one 21 Elitist 23 Cargo spots 25 Modern 27 Me, to Michel 28 Director Varda 30 Bruins' sch. 33 Funny fellow 34 Ilder 36 Roofing supply 37 Amu Darya's 39 Say further 40 Man of steel 41 Elevator lifter

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4 Application

6 Place for play

7 Egg outline

8 Chem class

10 Look rudely

chart

9 Keys in

5 In itself

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