

# Mobile garden on auto-rickshaw roof

SHYKH SERAJ

In the capital city of traffic jam, the green auto-rickshaw called CNG (read CNG-run auto-rickshaw) is one of the most common transports for middle class people. There are at least 30 thousand CNGs for 20 million people of Dhaka, although only 15 thousand are approved. However, amidst thousands of CNGs, Tapan Bhowmik's CNG adds a new dimension. Above the little green auto, plants and flowers are waving in the wind. It is an amazing scene. The auto grabs everyone's attention as it passes by. In a way, it is the world's smallest rooftop garden, you could say. It is different because it doesn't stay still like others, it moves. It is a mobile roof garden.

Tapan Bhowmik is a local resident of Dhaka's Goran Harbhanga junction. He goes to his garage early in the morning where he keeps his CNG at night. It is not his own. He drives it on rent. Taking permission from the owner, he turned his auto-rickshaw even greener by turning it into a part of nature.

One morning, while looking for Tapan in Goran, I got to know that he is very different. He is very organised and fond of beauty. The other locals told me that Tapan has a different sense of beauty. Just like others have found something new in him, his younger brother Sushanta found him different since childhood. In boyhood, Tapan even organised his cycle in a way that it grabbed everyone's attention on the



Tapan Bhowmik's auto-rickshaw with greenery on its top, the first of its kind in Bangladesh

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

road, Sushanta says. He did the same thing to his CNG now.

Tapan's CNG is a treat to the eyes. Wherever the CNG stops, people gather around. Thus, I roamed around the quiet and secluded Hatirjheel area on his CNG. I talked to him while roaming around. I got to know the tale of making mobile roof garden.

Tapan told me he got inspired by watching Chhad Krishi (rooftop agriculture) presented on 'Hridoye Mati O Manush Daak' programme. He also wants his favourite city to be green as well. He wanted to contribute to green revolution. He wanted to make people aware. In his words, if anyone gets inspired to fill his balcony or rooftop with greenery seeing his initiative, it would be his greatest achievement.

I asked him how he made this mobile rooftop agriculture. He stopped the auto-rickshaw and showed me the roof. He described how he filled a steel tray with soil and placed it on the roof. He planted different trees full of flowers and leaves there. He aims to plant fruit and vegetable trees too.

Dear readers, to know how much scientific or what trees are suitable for four-inch-thick soil on the roof of a moving CNG, we talked to horticulturist Md Kamruzzaman. He said that this initiative is totally scientific. It is not impossible to grow bush fruits and gourd vegetables here. Nowadays, fruit producing plants are available in the nursery, which grow 7 to 8 inches of height. There are some red chilli which can also be grown along the rail on the

roof, says Dr Kamruzzaman. He also says, if you use coco peat instead of soil, the roof will be lighter. He stressed on putting a railing over the top.

Tapan Bhowmik is truly a different kind of person. He is not only creative, he is a man of great understanding. Thus, he turned this CNG into something else. He has turned it into a special transport having all kinds of facilities and services. There is plenty of arrangement inside. What do you expect as a passenger? There is everything. There are mirror, hairbrush, nail cutter, water tap, mineral water bottle, video monitor, fan, clock, mobile phone charging facility, tissue, pillows, fire extinguisher etc. He also keeps three daily newspapers. He even keeps books for the passengers to read. There is also Wi-Fi service. Moreover, he

doesn't ask for extra fare for any of these services. However, passengers often pay him extra 10 or 20 taka on their own. He is satisfied with that.

Life is not only about livelihood. The needs and desires of Tapan are different. While talking about it, becoming a little emotional, Tapan says that he used to be a goldsmith. However, later his eyesight got weaker and he no longer was able to do it. Then, he chose driving a CNG to make a living.

Looking at the CNG, you might feel an urge to plant a tree. That's why, wherever this CNG stands, people stare at it with astonishment. To have breakfast, I went to a restaurant at Moghbazar with Tapan. Soon, the place got crowded. Everyone was so eager to have a look at the CNG. Some were taking pictures. Some were touching it. Some were even taking 'selfies' while the other CNG drivers came with many questions to ask. I liked what CNG driver Shariful Islam said. He never saw Tapan's CNG before. However, he heard about it. Hearing about it, he decorated his CNG with plastic flowers. He also shared interest to plant trees on the roof soon. Some CNG drivers said that this initiative of Tapan is actually very effective for restraining the attack of muggers. Many of you know how muggers cut the roof of a CNG with a knife and take away stuff from passengers. Moreover, this CNG is also cooler than other CNGs. Thus, passengers as well as the driver can be comfortable. I also told them if they can place a small solar panel on the roof along with trees, then they can have necessary electricity for fan and light inside.

During the 80's, after inspiring promotion of rooftop agriculture on Bangladesh Television's Mati O Manush (Soil and People), this is the second series I am running which is being aired on Channel i. Meanwhile two years have passed with this second series of rooftop farming. Varieties of new initiatives of rooftop agriculture make me very hopeful. I feel glad to find such a different and creative nature lover like Tapan Bhowmik. It is truly exemplary for other drivers what he has done to keep his love above everything else. Everyone should come forward from their respective positions to make a green city.

## Fourth grader gang-raped

Another girl violated

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two minor girls have been raped in Lalmonirhat and Faridpur, report our correspondents.

A class five student was raped allegedly by her neighbour at Namuri Harati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The victim was admitted to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital.

Police arrested accused Shafiqul Islam, 33, son of Majibar Rahman.

During primary interrogation, Shafiqul admitted to raping the girl, said Mahfuz Alam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

A case was filed, accusing the arrestee, said the OC.

In Faridpur, a schoolgirl was violated allegedly by four men in Charbhadrasan upazila on Sunday.

Police said Md Chanchal, 24, Sanjay, 20, Md Pannu, 40, and Md Kudus, 40, of Khalashidangi village took the fourth grader to a field alluring her to give biscuits and raped her.

## Kali statue damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Criminals vandalised the statue of goddess Kali and took away its head from Sree Sree Shyama Kali Mandir (temple) at Fulgachh Bamontari village in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Caretaker of the temple Joytsna Bala, 78, widow of late Khitish Chandra Barmon, said she along with other devotees entered the temple for conducting regular prayer in the morning and found the head of the statue made of clay was missing.

## Principal beaten by stalkers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Principal of Nabiganj Degree College and two students were beaten by stalkers on the campus in Nabiganj's Nabiganj upazila on Tuesday.

Principal Golam Hossain Azad was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital while two others were taken to the upazila health complex.

The principal said Dipon Ahmed Munna along with his friends including Humayun Kabir has been stalking a female student of the college for the last four months.

Informed by the girl's family members, the principal on Tuesday asked Dipon and his friends not to disturb the girl further, which angered them.

At one stage, the stalkers beat the principal, the girl and another student. Hearing screams, other students rushed to the spot and caught Humayun and handed him over to police. However, Dipon and his other friends managed to flee the scene.

## Bagerhat road devoured by river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Thousands of people of Sadar and Fakirhat upazilas of the district have been suffering immensely since a large portion of the Bagerhat-Rupsa old road was devoured by the Bhairab river near Muchighat and Bhanganpar area.

Moreover, passenger buses and other heavy vehicles have stopped plying the 40-kilometre road, which developed a number of cracks at many points, since last Sunday.

People living in the adjacent areas, especially locals of eight to ten villages under Jatrapur union in Sadar upazila, feared that water may enter their villages overflowing the road and devour croplands and homesteads.

"We use the road to travel to the district town," Sarmistha Debnath of Rahimabad village said, adding that they are now facing serious difficulties as a portion of the road has gone into the river.

"The concrete road is our only way of communication to and from the district headquarters," said Mamun Ahmed of the village.

Trader Bappa said, "We have been facing serious difficulties since the road collapsed on Sunday."

Lucky Begum, mother of fourth grader Umme Habiba, 11, said her daughter sustained serious injuries and fell unconscious after falling into the river while crossing the area on Sunday.

Locals rescued her and took her to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital, from where she was later shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Bagerhat Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Md Jahurul Islam said they have already inspected the area and sought allocation of fund from the authorities concerned.

They will start the repair work of the embankment along the Bhairab river after getting fund, the engineer said, adding that the Road and Highways Department (RHD) is supposed to conduct the road repair work.

RHD Executive Engineer Anisuzzaman Masud said they will do the road repair work after repair of the collapsed embankment.



A section of Kuakata Zero Point in Patuakhali was eroded by tidal surge in the last few days *Inset*: Locals form a human chain on Kuakata sea beach demanding steps to protect the beach from erosion.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bangladeshi woman killed in Malaysia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Bangladeshi woman was killed allegedly by her husband in Malaysia on July 5 over dowry.

The victim was Sajeda-e-Bulbul, 29, daughter of Md Anisur Rahman of Adalatpara area in Patuakhali town.

Bulbul's husband Shahjada killed her on July 5 and cut the body into seven pieces. Then he packed the body in a suitcase and dumped it in a forest.

Police recovered the body and informed a relative of Bulbul in Malaysia, who identified the victim.

The relative then informed Bulbul's family in Patuakhali, said Bulbul's mother Momotaj Begum.

"I request Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to take steps to bring back the body of my daughter," she said.

Victim's sister Khadija Parvin Upama said Shahjada often tortured her sister for dowry. Bulbul filed a case in this regard with Shah Ali Police Station in Dhaka, she added.



Sajeda-e-Bulbul.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Save Kuakata beach from erosion

People from all walks of life demand prime minister's intervention for action at human chain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

People of Kuakata yesterday demanded intervention by the prime minister for immediate action to protect Kuakata beach from erosion by tidal surge.

They made the demand at a human chain at Kuakata Zero Point.

Kuakata Municipality Mayor Abdul Bareq Mollah and Kuakata Press Club President Mizanur Rahman Bullet, among others, spoke at the programme.

Several hundred people, including businessmen, journalists, public representatives and tourists, took part in the programme.

The mayor said at least 20 letters

were sent to the departments and ministries concerned demanding steps to protect the beach from erosion, but in vain.

The beach is becoming smaller as cyclones, storms and tidal surges damage it badly every year, he said.

A 10-foot section of the beach at Zero Point, including a paved road, was washed away into the Bay in recent tidal surges, the mayorsaid.

Kuakata Hotel-Motel Owners Association Secretary Motaleb Sharif said Kuakata, from where both sunrise and sunset can be seen, is under serious threat of being washed away.

Tourists become frustrated as there is no road for walking during high tide when the area becomes

flooded, he said. Many projects were undertaken, but there is no visible development, he said.

Shahjahan Akon, a resident of Paschim Kuakata area, said recent tidal surges badly damaged a vast area of the beach from Gongamati in the east to Majheebari area in the west, he said, adding that the dyke at Majheebari is about to collapse as most sandbags have been removed.

Md Mostafizur Rahman, owner of Hotel Kings on the beach, said he built the hotel about 30 years ago on 30 decimals of land when the sea was several hundred metres away. Till last year there were 14 decimals of land, but nine decimals were washed into the Bay this year, he said.

Md Belayet Hossain, a tourist from Barisal, said the beach used to be a very soothing spot with coconut garden, tamarisk garden, deep forest land and wide walk zone, but now it is bare.

Kalapara Circle Water Development Board Executive Engineer Abul Khayer said they have dumped about 800 sandbags on the beach to protect it from tidal surge. "We are trying to take up a project to build a protection dyke here," he said.

"We sent a special project proposal to the higher authorities seeking approval, but the planning ministry sent it back recently for another feasibility study," he added.