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PHOTO: NAYEEM JABAZ

"If you focus on what you left behind, then how can you see what lies ahead?" — *Gusteau, Ratatouille*

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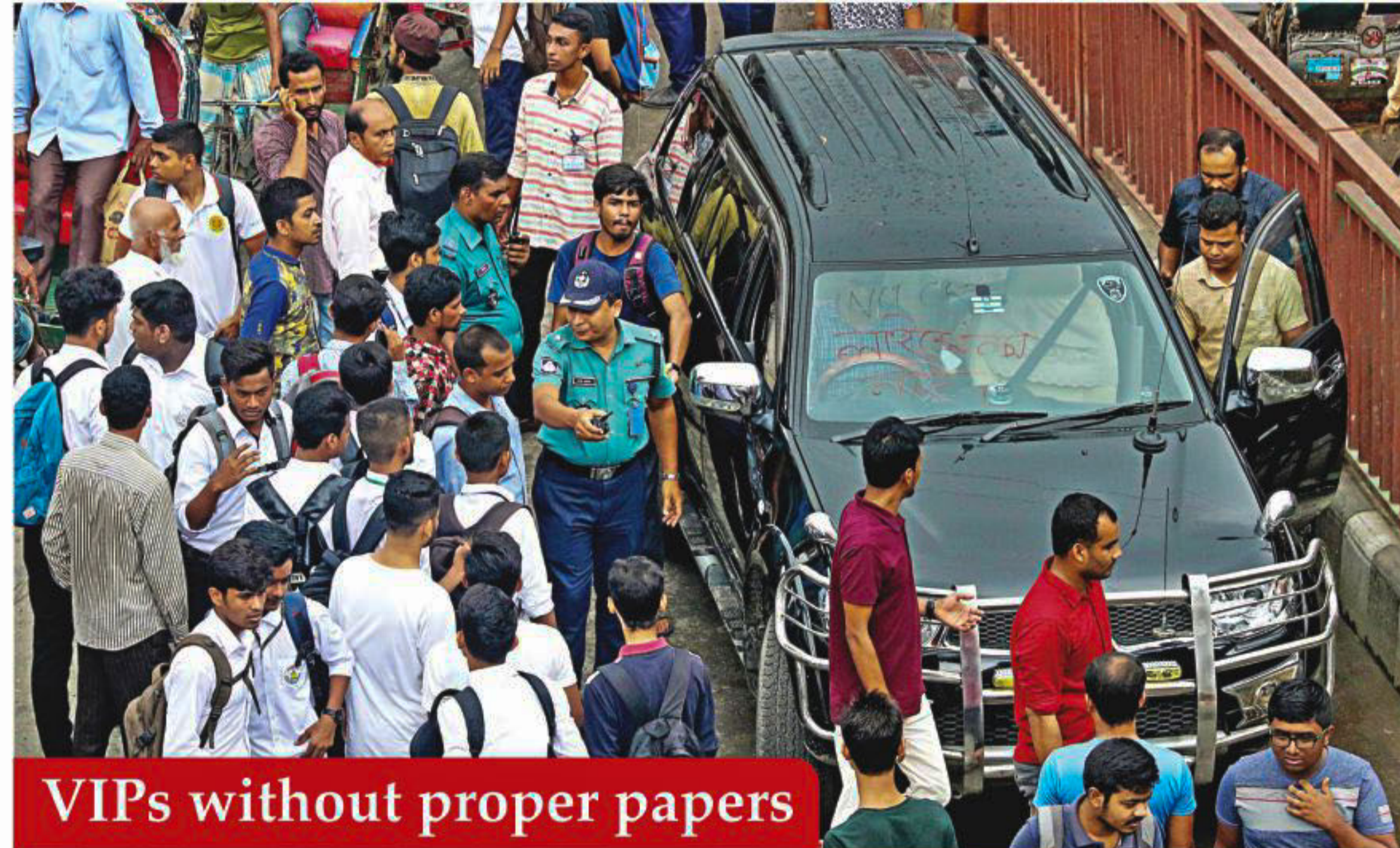
The kids are alright

The recent issue of *Star Weekend* was in most parts excellent as it brought different dynamics of the student protests to light.

However, the article titled "The Kids Are Alright" felt like the odd one out amongst all the good write-ups that this issue had. I could not grasp what the writers were trying to say. The gist of the overly dramatised article came down to: how unlivable Dhaka city is, where lives are very much disposable; how the kids came down to the streets after the tragic accident; how the protest invoked nostalgia amongst elders; how the protests got tarnished and misrepresented in the media; and somehow for these reasons, we failed the kids(?).

The article did bring forward issues which have plagued our society in recent times such as the extrajudicial killings, industrial murder and settler capitalism. However, it fails to connect these issues to the student protests. As if the students who came down to the streets risking their lives were not just a mere manifestation of aggrieved peers mourning their friends' death and demanding safer roads; the student protest was larger than that. By failing to make these connections, the authors reduced the gravity of the protest and thus nipped it in the bud.

Sajid Ahmed
University of Toronto



VIPs without proper papers

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A few months ago, we had observed that traffic police were checking and tracing cars driving from the opposite direction on VIP road. Government high-ups and other VIPs were found to be responsible for violating traffic laws on a whim. The on-going traffic week is also intended to check whether vehicles have relevant papers. Driving licences, fitness papers and registration certificates of cars plying the streets are vital and should be mandatory. Agitated students, demonstrating on the roads for a couple of days to protest the killing of their fellow two students and for safe roads, also started voluntarily checking these papers. It was a matter of surprise when a police DIG's car was found without registration and his driver had no licence on him. Similarly, a BGB car and vehicles of certain influential people

couldn't produce their driving licences and registration certificates when the students stopped these to check.

Though the job is that of the traffic police and this was merely symbolic checking by the aggrieved students, now we can easily assume that a section of government high-ups and other VIPs are breaking traffic laws day after day, they are making the roads riskier, and creating chaos for our traffic system. When VIPs are violating laws whimsically, that the general public will try to do the same is a given. The traffic police can't function properly due to people throwing around their influence on the roads, so the government should strictly address this malpractice of high-profile cars plying the roads without proper papers.

Md ZillurRahaman
Lalmohan, Bhola

Can we deny our responsibility?

It is true that unlicensed vehicles and reckless driving are mainly responsible for road crashes in Bangladesh. We have already seen how students of schools across Dhaka have joined and protested this illegal practice of law breaking. A huge movement carried by school students got a massive response within and outside the country.

We, the masses, are somehow responsible for the accident, and we can't deny our responsibility on this serious issue. Seeing unlicensed or unfit vehicles, have we ever refused to get on it? What about informing this to the authorities concerned? Isn't that our duty as citizens? How many of us really care about the speed while driving?

Pedestrians frequently walk on the roads and cross unsafely in order to save time and also because footpaths are occupied by hawkers and small shopkeepers. Using foot over bridges and underpasses have never been monitored strictly. Using cellphones while driving—we all know the rules, but how many of us care to follow it?

How do we ride on a public bus, seeing that the driver is under 15 years of age? How do we let these public buses go overloaded without caring about road safety and risk to passengers?

How can many of us sometimes encourage drivers to drive fast in order to reach our destination early? Rifat Munir Eti
Muhammadpur, Dhaka

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

EDUCATION

School and college student protesters have returned to the classroom already but their hearts remain on the streets. Meanwhile, allegations have arisen that some institutions are penalising students for their participation in the student movement that sprung up spontaneously for safer roads.

Hossain, however, believes that the authorities' actions contributed to intimidating the protesting students. "It has come as a warning for the general students to stay away from protests," he says.

He also alleged that some teachers warned them by saying that students who had actively participated in the

when students were routinely boycotting classes to take to the streets.

Another student from DRMC says that they remain very scared about what will happen next. "I have taken down everything I had posted on Facebook. Everyone is telling me to delete all the messages I circulated among my friends. My friends are also doing the same," he says.

N Rahman, who is a student of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC), informs *Star Weekend* that her friends were on the frontlines of the

also formed a human chain. However, the principal of the institution refuted these reports to *Jugantor*, claiming that she had personally scrutinised the scripts.

That the teachers are under pressure from the government is also a fact. During a meeting with the heads of all the institutions at the International Mother Language Institute on August 5, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid had told them, "The chiefs of educational institutes will be held accountable for the movement of the students."

In addition to school and college students, university students have also been temporarily suspended, allegedly

ARE THE KIDS ACTUALLY ALRIGHT?

NILIMA JAHAN

Students who participated in the protests claim that they are facing hostility from the administrations of their respective institutions; a number of students also got handed a temporary transfer certificate (TC) for joining the movement.

N Hossain, a twelfth grader at Dhaka Residential Model College (DRMC), alleges that the authorities were on the verge of suspending students for going to the protests.

"Around 30-40 resident students were temporarily suspended from the DRMC halls for going outside during the protest. According to our prospectus, resident students cannot go outside without prior permission from the authorities, and if they do, the administration can suspend the student temporarily," says Hossain. "But later, the authorities took them back in, when the guardians came and pleaded with them."

Mohammed Omar Faruk, who is the hostel superintendent of DRMC, denies the allegation that residential students were temporarily suspended. "They sometimes go out to eat fast-food after their classes end, and if they return late, we inform their parents. This was something similar."

"Since the students had gone outside, I had to get a written statement about their whereabouts when they came back," he adds.



movement had been "marked" and that their information would be sent to the education ministry.

This claim is not unfounded. On August 5, Mohammed Sohrab Hossain, Secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Education Ministry, confirmed to journalists that the government has indeed directed all schools and colleges to report the names of absentee students. This directive was given during the peak of the protests

protest, but are now suffering for being vocal. "They are afraid to talk about it with anyone or reveal anything, because they have already been warned by teachers several times. They fear that if anything comes out now about our college, they will be the first suspects," says Rahman.

Media reports said that around 350 VNSC students had left the exam hall after writing the slogan #weWantJustice on their exam scripts, after which they

for posting and sharing indecent statuses on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister, and Bangladesh Chhatra League. Nine students from Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, one student from Patuakhali Science and Technology University, and one student from Kushtia Islamic University have been temporarily suspended and asked to show cause as to why they should not

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