

# A BOON AND A BANE

Ridesharing bikes bring relief to commuters but clog up streets with haphazard parking

|| MATHEWS CHIRAN ||

While two-wheeler ridesharing services have brought relief to commuters in the city, lack of regulation has introduced some challenges as well.

While more and more people are using ridesharing apps to move through dense traffic rather quickly on motorbikes and reach their destinations on time, the bikers are also clustering on a number of busy roads and intersections violating rules, resulting in increased traffic congestion.

At a number of points in the city, bikers stand in groups. Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Hatirjheel (Rampura section), different parts of Mirpur, Mohakhali and Shyamoli are some areas where they wait for passengers, mostly during office hours.

Although people from different walks of life acknowledge the ridesharing services' usefulness, they also express their dissatisfaction over the trouble they cause for pedestrians and vehicular movement.

"Bikers park their motorbikes blocking half of the way after office hours in front of Ekushey Television office at Karwan Bazar; it creates problems when a car wants to cross a traffic signal," said Rafiqul Islam, a communication officer of a private company, who commutes on the route daily.

"The footpaths are already occupied by hawkers; if the roadsides are occupied by bikers, it becomes impossible to walk," he said.

More than 75,000 motorcycles were registered with BRTA in 2017 in Dhaka, the year when different ride-sharing companies first introduced bike services in the megacity. A number of motorbikes and their riders have arrived from outside Dhaka to make a living from two-wheeler ridesharing, adding to the traffic load on city streets.

At the Rampura entrance of



**A biker waits for his next trip, parking his vehicle on the road. Many of his colleagues have left their motor-cycles -- along with helmets provided by ridesharing companies -- unattended.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Hatirjheel there are "no parking" signs, but bikers pay little heed to it. Security staffers drive them off, but they cluster again in the same spot shortly.

"We provide app-based ride service; we do not have any particular stand. So we park our bikes wherever there is scope to pick up passengers," said biker Md Jaman at Hatirjheel.

Traffic officials also say controlling motorbikes has become a problem.

Tejgaon Police Station Traffic Inspector Anwar Kabir said, "Karwan Bazar is one of the busiest areas where vehicles are already jam-packed during office hours. But the recent increase in the number of bikes and their scattered parking all over causes issues in vehicular movement."

"We try our best to stop bikers from parking on the roads, but they keep doing it," said the inspector, adding that bikers need a specific parking lot

or any other solution to discourage them from parking here and there.

There are also allegations from some passengers that riders do not use the app sometimes, and prefer to go on verbal agreement. At different points of the city, they call out to passengers.

Masum Hossain, who has been providing ridesharing services for the last six months, said: "Yes, it is true that some rides are not based on apps. But the number is minimal. As everyone has smartphone now, all passengers who use apps get various discounts."

"Such incident only happens when someone runs out of mobile internet or battery charge. Consequently, passengers themselves sometimes ask riders to go on verbal agreement," he added.

**REGULATION REMAINS AN ISSUE**  
In March last year, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority issued a gazette on Ridesharing Service Guideline-2017, to

bring app-based services under government monitoring.

However, none of the 16 ridesharing companies that have applied for registration have managed to fulfil the conditions.

Against this backdrop, BRTA in January this year, proposed to the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry to let it register the companies by giving them a deadline for fulfilling the conditions.

Meanwhile on January 15, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia -- at the inauguration of fortnight-long traffic discipline campaign in the city -- said that vehicles plying under app-based ridesharing services are contributing to traffic chaos in the capital, and the home minister and road transport minister are thinking of bringing those under control.

On January 27, the road transport and bridges ministry in a meeting decided that vehicles registered outside Dhaka would not be allowed to enlist with any ridesharing company operating in the city. Besides, BRTA was also directed to propose the highest ceiling for the number of vehicles to be enlisted with any particular ride-hailing company.

Regarding the bikers' and ridesharing app companies' responsibility, founder and Managing Director of ridesharing venture Shohoz, Maliha M Quadir said, "The bikers who are using ridesharing app professionally are independent micro-entrepreneurs. They are not employed by the companies. However, we give feedback to drivers, and if any incongruity happens we un-register them."

"At the end of the day, bikers have to remember they have a lot of responsibility as well," she added.

## High Court seeks report on fire safety measures in high-rises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing a rule for compensating the families of Chawkbazar and FR Tower fire victims, the High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to submit a detailed report on fire safety measures at high-rises in Dhaka.

The mayors of Dhaka north and south city corporations, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) chairman and director general (DG) of Fire Service and Civil Defence have been asked to collectively prepare and submit the report to the HC in four months.

In response to a writ petition, the court also ordered the DG of Fire Service and Civil Defence to submit a separate report on the manpower, equipment, attire, vehicles and resources for preventing and dousing fire in the city before it in a month.

Besides, the court issued a rule asking the respondents to explain in two weeks why they should not be directed to give adequate compensation to the family members of the victims who lost their lives in the fire incidents at Churihatta in Chawkbazar area in February this year and at FR Tower in Banani on March 28.

In the rule, it asked them to show cause why construction of the buildings without sufficient fire safety measures and in violation of the Bangladesh National Building Code 2012 and Fire Protection and Extinguishment Act, 2003 should not be declared illegal.

The court in the rule ordered the respondents to explain why they should not be directed to take necessary measures to protect the residents of Dhaka from fire hazards caused by violation of laws and why the education ministry should not be directed to include fire safety awareness in the national curriculum.

Concerned government high-ups, including secretaries to the ministries of home, housing and public works, disaster management and relief, education; mayors of Dhaka north and south city corporations; Rajuk chairman; and DG of Fire Service and Civil Defence have been made respondents to the rule.

In the rule, the HC also asked the DNCC mayor and Rajuk chairman to explain why they should not be directed to set up a fire station in Gulshan.

It also asked the respondents concerned to show cause why they should not be directed to provide sufficient and modern equipment, attire, vehicles and resources to the fire fighters working in Dhaka city.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Gulshan Society Secretary General Barrister Sarwat Siraj Shukla, challenging legality of constructing buildings in Dhaka without sufficient fire safety measures.

The writ petitioner herself moved the petition before the HC yesterday.

## HC questions legality of newspaper ads to congratulate ministers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of government officials' extending greetings to ministers through publishing advertisements in newspapers, spending public money.

It issued a rule asking authorities concerned of the government to explain in two weeks why publishing such advertisements should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil came up with the rule, following a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

HRPB submitted the petition to the HC on Sunday, annexing advertisements published in Bangla dailies Kaler Kantho, Bangladesh Pratidin and Jugantor on January 9 where chiefs of Directorate General of Health Services and Directorate General of Family Planning expressed greetings to Health Minister Zahid Malik and State Minister for Health Md Murad Hasan.

During hearing on the petition yesterday, Advocate Manzill Murshid told the HC that the government officials' duty is to save public money, as per the constitution.

The two director generals published advertisements in the newspapers at the cost of public money, which is illegal, he said.

The lawyer also argued that the government officials could extend their greetings to the ministers by meeting them at their offices.

## PHOTO OF THE DAY

ANISUR RAHMAN



Sunday's nor'wester uprooted quite a few trees in the capital. A little boy sits on the trunk of a fallen tree in Suhrawardy Udyan, looking to sell some flowers. The photo was taken yesterday.

## MP-elect Mokabbir to take oath today

UNB, Dhaka

Gono Forum's MP-elect Mokabbir Khan (Sylhet-2) is going to be sworn in today, following the footsteps of Sultan Mohammad Mansur.

In response to a letter sent by Mokabbir to Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday, an arrangement has been made for him to take oath at 12 noon today at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Gono Forum Central Executive Committee Member Maj (ret'd) Afsary Ameen Ahmed carried the letter to parliament around 4:40pm.

In the letter, the MP-elect said that with his party's consent, he has decided to take oath either on April 2 or 3.

Replying to a question, he also said Dr Kamal gave him green signal to take oath. "Besides, the people of my constituency also requested me to be sworn in."

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## DHAKA TODAY

**EXHIBITION**  
I Was Colourblind  
By Zaid Islam  
**Venue:** Kala Kendra, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur  
**Time:** 6:30pm

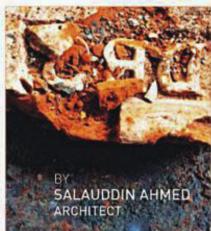
**THEATRE**  
Trial of Shurjo Sen  
**Venue:** National Theatre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
**Time:** 7pm

**THEATRE**  
Tamshik  
**Venue:** Studio Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
**Time:** 6pm

**FAIR**  
Boishakhi Fair - 2019  
**Venue:** Drik Gallery, Dhankundi  
**Time:** 11am

**RALLY**  
12th World Autism Awareness Day 2019  
**Organiser:** Society for Rehabilitation of Autistic Children (SRAC)  
**Venue:** 1/3 Block C, Lalmatia  
**Time:** 4pm

**EXHIBITION**  
Mind Over Matter: An Architectural Exhibition  
By Salauddin Ahmed  
**Venue:** Café Mango  
**Time:** 6pm



## Ducusu leaders evict outsiders, non-students from SM Hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

In the face of student protests, leaders of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) on Sunday vacated 132 seats at Salimullah Muslim hall of DU which were occupied by outsiders and non-students.

A section of residential students of the hall started demonstrating at 10pm Sunday, demanding that outsiders and non-students leave the hall. Witnesses said, books and other valuables of the students who live in the hall's balcony were damaged by the rain and storm on Sunday evening.

Agitated after the incident, students gathered at the TV room of the hall and started their demonstration. They also demanded allotment of legal seats.

On information, Ducusu vice president Nurul Haque Nur, general secretary Golam Rabbani, hall provost Prof Mahbul Alam Joarder, hall union VP and GS went to the spot.

Amid the protest, hall authorities asked outsiders to vacate their seats by night and former students were asked to leave the dormitory within three days.

The vacated seats will be allotted among

those living in the veranda on the basis of seniority soon. At least 450 students, mostly freshmen and sophomores, are now living there.

"The major problem of SM hall is residential crisis. Students have to stay in the veranda even during rain and cold weather. Following the first meeting of hall union, we issued a notice asking non-students to leave within 15 days. But now they must vacate the hall at this moment if the students want," hall provost said addressing the aggrieved students.

He also made commitment to build a separate tin-shed building for the students living in the balcony.

Ducusu VP Nurul Haq Nur said, "Outsiders and non-residents should be identified immediately. Because of the seat crisis, six students can stay in a room instead of four, if necessary. But hall authorities should ensure that no one has to live in the balconies."

On February 2016, Hafijur Mollah, a first-year student of Marketing department, died of pneumonia contracted during his stay in the hall's veranda, where he was "forced" to sleep.



**Apollo Hospitals Dhaka welcomes Dr. Fahmida Zabeen**  
MBBS, MD (Paediatrics)  
Consultant- Paediatrics with special interest in Endocrinology



- Dr. Fahmida Zabeen has about 20 years experience in the field of Paediatrics & Neonatology.
- She obtained her post graduation degree MD in General Paediatrics from Dhaka Shishu Hospital.
- Dr. Zabeen did her subspecialty training in Paediatric Endocrinology from BIRDEM, the largest diabetic, metabolic and endocrine hospital in the country.
- She has hands-on experience in managing outdoor, indoor and emergency paediatric patients in Apollo Hospitals Dhaka and other reputed hospitals in the city. She is also an expert in managing emergency and critically ill neonates.
- Dr. Fahmida has been an active study physician in major projects under The World Health Organization (WHO).

Apollo Hospitals Dhaka is delighted to have Dr. Fahmida Zabeen on board.  
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