

THE FAST AND THE FUTURISTIC

MATILDA

Dhaka, the world's most densely populated city, has over 18 million people squirming inside a 306.4 square kilometre space. As anyone who lives or has been in this city knows, moving from one place to another isn't easy, nor is it any fun. It isn't good for the state either; the time lost in commute is between 3.2 million work hours (according to World Bank estimates) to 5 million work hours (according to BUET's Accident Research Institute). Even more aggravating is the fact that it is faster to walk than take public transport in Dhaka. Why? Because the average speed of public transport is a mere 5 kilometre per hour.

However, the future doesn't need to be this way. The following vehicles are awe-inspiring and at times unbelievable, but some, at least for now, are mostly imaginary.

HYPERLOOP PIPES

The idea of the Hyperloop was first proposed by tech entrepreneur Elon Musk as a super-fast but cheap mode of transportation. Yes, there are criticisms against it but the idea

does make you wish it existed when you hear Elon Musk say, "You could live in San Francisco and work in Los Angeles." That's a distance of over 600 kilometres.

However, instead of public transport, imagine if we all had our own special network of hyperloop pipeline system that took us to places we frequently visit. This could be a particular restaurant or the house of a friend or relative. We could have several of these pipes in our house, and

so like in Howl's Moving Castle, different doors in one house could lead to many different places.

MOVING WALKWAYS IN TUNNEL-SHAPED GLASS STRUCTURES

I first learned about this idea when I read that the architecture firm NBBJ had ideas to turn London's underground into a moving walkway. The more I thought about it, the more amazing it seemed. However, instead of making them in tunnels, a moving walkway inside a glass container could be great for people who want to walk to a place or go for a run while still being able to see the sky and their surroundings without fearing for their safety. The temperature could be controlled to keep it at a desirable level, meaning a pleasant environment could still exist on hot and humid days while people may not have to trudge through dirty water on rainy ones.

This could be even more exciting for cyclists—the record for longest single line of moving bicycles down the Purbachal Highway in 2016 shows us that there is a fair number of cycling enthusiasts in the country.

Furthermore, it could also be an amazing invention that protects people from air pollution, a very serious problem in Dhaka that goes unnoticed.

LADY GAGA'S "VOLANTIS"

The Volantis mentioned here is not the first and oldest colony of Valyria—it is a flying dress. When I first saw Lady Gaga wear it on stage in front of a crowd, I almost forgot that behind the helmet and metal dress was a real person and not a robot. It seemed to float only a few inches above the ground, and that too rather slowly, but considering our flair for grandiosity and some of our desires to put on a display of opulence during weddings, I can see brides and grooms opting for this instead of the *palki* and horses when making their grand entrance to the stage. But of course, it can't be white and metallic like Lady Gaga's one, it would need a lot of modifications in terms of how it looks. Maybe a dress that's rickshaw-themed? Who knows?

JEAN-MARIE MASSAUD'S "MANNED CLOUD"

Yes, this is exactly as interesting as it sounds. Shaped like a giant white whale, this beautiful white vehicle looks like it really does belong in the sky. This isn't an ordinary vehicle. It can house 40 guests and 15 crew members.

Why do I think this "air hotel" is great for Dhaka city? There are restaurants and franchises spouting up everywhere because of their immense popularity on nearly every street in this city. As crazy food joints open up, we must ask, "Where's our restaurant in the sky?" Moreover, considering how much of a hassle it is to obtain

a travel visa, the Manned Cloud can at least give you the experience of air travel without all the hassle of booking flights, getting visas and carrying luggage around.

THE AIR CYCLE

Fun, clean, and pretty much a dream because this one is completely a figment of my imagination, the air cycle looks like any

other bicycle. There's a catch, though. When you pedal, it lifts you up into the air so you feel like you are floating in the sky. Now a lot of things could happen like electric wires hanging few feet above the roads could cause you to get entangled in them, or like Icarus you could start feeling invincible and pass out due to the intense heat you feel as you fly closer to the sun. And if you don't pass out, you may be unable to keep a hold on the bicycle as the metal body becomes too hot for you to touch, causing you to lose control and fall from the sky. But no activities are completely risk-free right? So might as well use this one if it exists.

A SELF-DRIVING CAR WITH A SPECIALLY DESIGNED SPACE

Last-minute studying, doodling out of boredom, and writing when inspiration strikes are all things I am unable to do while inside a car because it makes me, like many other people, sick. Dhaka is notorious for its traffic where a 20-minute journey can quickly (but actually painfully slowly) turn into a two-hour period of time spent sitting inside a car just waiting or staring down at your phone if you have charge and/or mobile data. This time that is getting wasted, and that too not by choice, can be used very effectively if we can create a space like that in our vehicle. IDEO's "Work on Wheels" is one such design that imagines the reverse of people going to offices—offices coming to people. However, in an already congested city like Dhaka, parking such pods would use up already scarce public spaces. Instead, the designs of the pod could be incorporated into the personal cars many people use. There could be options to easily customise and set up items such as chairs that can be folded or moved around the space behind the wheel but still attached to the floor and desks of different sizes that can be pulled out and lifted or lowered to a height suitable for the user.

As a result of having this special place for yourself inside your personal vehicle, you could reduce time wasted by doing something productive or even mitigate the detrimental effects of sitting for prolonged hours. Still worried about motion sickness? I'm holding out hope that scientists and engineers can come up with wearable technology like the SEETROËN that helps you read while on the move.

THE HEXENTANZ BUS

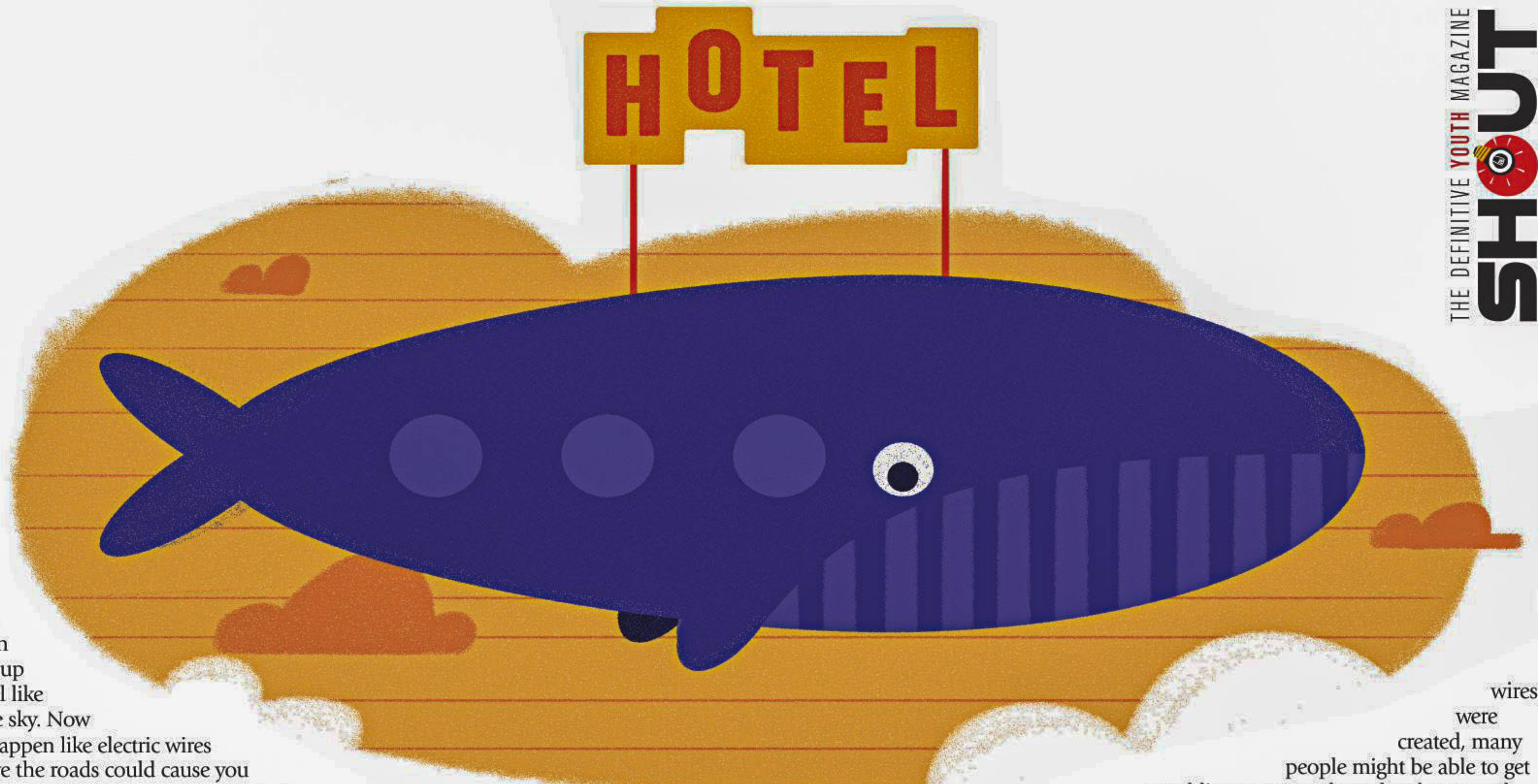
Similar to air cycles, this is also something I made up entirely in my head, but unlike them, it does take inspiration from things that actually exist in real life. I'm talking about German company Zierer's "Hexentanz".

This beast of a machine consists of a thick trunk-like vertical structure that has several arms jutting out from it. Each arm

in turn has seats for people who want to ride it, in some ways similar to the *nagordola*. This seemingly bizarre amusement park ride made me think of a kind of solution for one of the main disturbances of people in Dhaka city that has to do with transportation. Public transport in Dhaka has many problems, one of them being that it can often get very difficult to have a good amount of distance from other passengers. When people have to stand too close,

too, guaranteeing a decent view. We may not have these vehicles yet, but there's no saying whether or not we might have them in the future. Like Leonardo Da Vinci who, among many other wonderful creations, thought of the design for the helicopter, we may need to wait for 450 more years.

Matilda likes to pretend she is invisible and inconspicuous. Tell her that you can read right through her at matilda.tilda1234@gmail.com



their personal space gets invaded and undesirable incidents may arise from this lack of privacy.

However, if vehicles with a similar shape to the Hexentanz but high enough to not collide with other vehicles and low enough to not pull out low-hanging