

Dhaka drivers ARE HEROES

|| JP MERZETTI ||

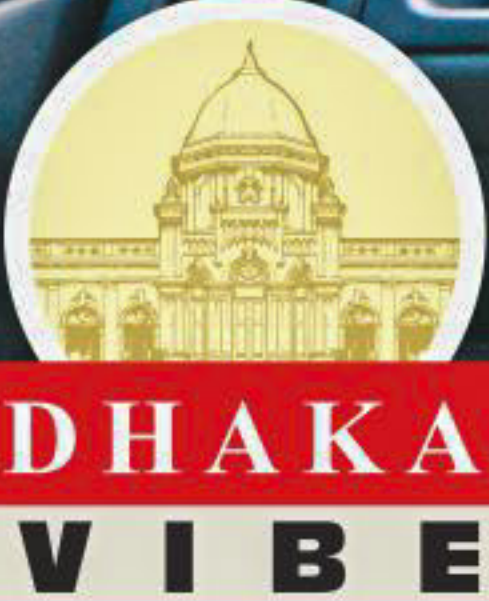


PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Dhaka drivers are heroes. What I mean by that is that they are heroes as drivers, and it is particularly their driving which is heroic. I hasten to say here, it is as a visitor to Dhaka that I was introduced to this fascinating fact. I did not drive in Dhaka. I would not, and probably could not drive in Dhaka. I do drive elsewhere, particularly in Canada, and most specifically, in my home city of Toronto. Do I feel heroic at all while driving in Toronto? Not a bit. Dhaka is a city that makes heroes out of its drivers, of that I am certain.

In North America, we think we know and understand the urban. Outside of New York City, and particularly Manhattan, we do not. What we do know is the suburban, the drivers' paradise we have meticulously and methodically created over the past seven decades, where close to three quarters of us now live. Dhaka is urban. Its urbanity is absolute and resolute, like a force of nature. And one of the more astonishing examples of this is its traffic.

Like many cities, Dhaka produces traffic jams, congestion, and mayhem on the roads, streets, highways and byways. But this is where the resemblance to North American cities ends. I believe if the experience of commuting around Dhaka were virtually and digitally transformed into a video game, that game would become a global bestseller overnight.

Thrills, chills and no end of excitement. Heart in the throat high drama and danger. Words can so easily fail to capture the reality of this. One must experience it to believe it. I did. I'm a believer.

On any typical busy day Dhaka is a city in constant motion. This motion pulses and throbs like a live thing, a thing inexorable and intense, a thing pounding like an African stampede, a tsunami of action and reaction, an unforgiving push and pull. Thronging together are pedestrians in great number, bicycles, motorcycles, rickshaws, three-wheelers, various types of trucks, immense buses, a rather small sampling of taxis, and an enormous number of cars. They all move about upon command, as if choreographed like a Russian ballet. I'm told collisions do happen. During a three-week visit I didn't see any. Not one -- the reason why Dhaka traffic became a constant source of fascination.

Canada is a strange country. It ranks number two in the world considering total land area, but has a minuscule population, considering its immense size. The vast majority of its people crowd themselves into a handful of cities, none of them anywhere near the size of Dhaka. Because Canada has so bountiful an amount of land, it doesn't need much of anything. This has produced a curious national identity. We're all determined to enjoy

at all times (except when crammed into mass transit vehicles during rush hour) our birthright of four square feet of personal space. This becomes intensely important for peace of mind and is especially necessary to our mental wellbeing while driving.

Which is why we tend to get nervous when any other vehicle or pedestrian comes too close. We can get downright upset about it. We often tend to overreact. Occasionally, we will give vent to vocal remonstrance, and even be guilty of raging profanity. Which of course, does our health not a bit of good. The best of us must readily admit that we also tend to drive too fast, sometimes recklessly, and with great impatience. This has all come about because of the design of our driving infrastructure, which has been almost religiously constructed with the holiness of the drive in mind.

Alien creatures observing North America would no doubt, assume that the intelligent creature on earth (or at least this part of the world) is the private automobile. The humans are no more than its slaves and servants. But I digress.

This happens to be why the average Canadian driver would not survive one city block in Dhaka. The reason for that is what's so fascinating. We are babied and mollycoddled by our roads. Dhaka drivers

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INT'L DAY OF THE DISAPPEARED

AL will be accused of crimes against humanity: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that Awami League will be accused of "crimes against humanity" for "resorting to killing and abduction".

"According to UN charter, enforced disappearance is a crime against humanity. This government will be accused of crimes against humanity," he came up with the remark after meeting family members of missing BNP leader Ilias Ali at the latter's house in Dhaka.

Fakhrul said his party believes that trial will certainly take place some day for committing crimes against humanity.

"There is no democracy, no people's representative in the country. When a people's government will assume the office, trial of these crimes will certainly happen," he said.

Fakhrul went to Ilias Ali's house and talked to his wife Tahsina Rushdi Luna and their son.

The BNP leader said party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman suggested that senior leaders go to the homes of missing people to show support. "On International Day of the Disappeared, I myself visited four families and our leaders are also visiting homes of other missing people. We regularly keep in touch with families of the missing. We try to share their pain and sorrows," he said.

1,209 VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE IN 10 YEARS OF AL RULE: RIZVI

BNP yesterday claimed that around 1,209 people, including some senior leaders of the party, were victims of enforced disappearance in the last 10 years of Awami League's rule.

"Since Awami League-led grand alliance assumed power in 2009, around 1,209 people were victims of enforced disappearance. Of them, 781 people were disappeared by members of the law enforcement agencies," BNP Senior

Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi claimed.

While addressing a press conference at the party's Nayapalton central office in Dhaka on the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared, Rizvi warned that people responsible for the disappearances will be tried through proper investigation.

The International Day of the Disappeared, also known as the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, is observed on August 30 every year.

This day draws attention to the fate of individuals abducted or detained by agents of the state (or those acting with support of the state), and held in locations concealed from their relatives and legal representatives.

Claiming that the enforced disappearances violate fundamental human rights, Rizvi said that the ruling party has chosen the path of enforced disappearance to destroy the country's hard-earned democracy.

The trend of disappearance started from 1972-1975 with a political motive, said Rizvi, also spokesperson of BNP, during the press conference.

"With a farsighted agenda of eliminating opposition parties and establishing, prolonging an authoritarian state and one-party rule in the country, the culture of enforced disappearance was initiated at that time," Rizvi claimed.

The government is now making people disappear, so that they cannot be vocal against their misdeeds and repressive acts, the BNP leader alleged.

Holding the ruling Awami League responsible for the random disappearances and incidents of crossfire, Rizvi said such acts cannot happen without the direct involvement of the government.

Mass and social communication media are being flooded with the news of enforced disappearances and incidents of crossfire while the government is keeping mum in this regard, he added.

A guiding light for journalism in Bangladesh

Golam Sarwar remembered by eminent personalities



Distinguished personalities from different sectors attended a programme at Samakal office yesterday, marking the first death anniversary of the newspaper's previous editor Golam Sarwar.

PHOTO: COURTESY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The milestones renowned journalist Golam Sarwar achieved in his career -- through honesty, responsibility and wisdom -- will serve as a guiding light for Bangladeshi journalism in future, eminent citizens said yesterday.

Illustrious people never die, they remain alive through their accomplishments. And Sarwar, founding editor of the Bangla daily Samakal, remains present and will continue to do so, they added.

Speakers and attendees, in such manner, remembered one of the country's most notable journalists at a memorial programme organised on the occasion of his first death anniversary.

The event was held at Samakal office in the capital's Tejgaon.

Sarwar, also the president of Editors'

Council, breathed his last at a hospital in Singapore on August 13 last year after suffering from heart diseases and respiratory complications for a long time. He was 75.

Chairing the memorial meeting, National Professor Rafiqul Islam said that he felt proud to have such a bright and dynamic student like Sarwar.

He fondly recalled Sarwar's active role in Dhaka University's Department of Bengali in the 1960s. Professor Rafiqul Islam said, Sarwar's presence is felt in all spheres and it will remain that way.

Mustafiz Shafi, acting editor of Samakal, said Sarwar trained many journalists who are currently shining bright in their own fields.

He was deeply involved in the progress of Bangladeshi journalism, Shafi said.

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DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

The struggle of Kashmiri people and the role of India

Organiser: Bangladesh Lekhak Shibir

Venue: Jatiya Mukti Council, Tophkhana Road

Time: 5:30pm

SEMINAR

On Bangabandhu's speech at the UN

Venue: Bangladesh National Museum

Time: 3pm

TRAINING

Effective Social Media Campaign for Female Entrepreneurs

Venue: EMK Center

Time: 10am

CAMPAIGN

Road painting to create suicide awareness

Organiser: Dhaka University Research Society

Venue: TSC, University of Dhaka

Time: 9:30am

WORKSHOP

Institution Does Matter For Development

Organiser: SANEM

Venue: South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, Gulshan-2

Time: 9am

Efforts on to improve trade: Malaysian envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia wants to further improve bilateral relations with Bangladesh, through trade and tourism, as the Southeast Asian country strives to achieve high-income status and Bangladesh moves towards middle-income status.

"I must allude to the fact that there are many similarities we share in terms of food, weather and to a certain extent, culture," said Malaysia's Acting High Commissioner to Bangladesh Amir Farid bin Abu Hasan.

"We want to take forward the relations further," he said at a discussion with journalists organised by the Malaysian High Commission at its premises in the city yesterday, marking the 62nd independence

day of the country today (August 31).

Malaysia's total trade with Bangladesh was recorded at USD 2.37 billion last year, a rise by 35.6 percent compared to that of the previous year. Bangladesh's export to Malaysia, however, was only USD 260 million.

"There are a lot of activities going on to improve trade. In July this year, Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce organised an event in Malaysia titled, 'Showcase Bangladesh'. We will continue to find ways. Many Malaysian businesses are coming to Bangladesh," Amir Farid said.

According to Bangladesh Bank, Malaysia's foreign direct investment in 2018 was USD 92.74 million.

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No party in power fulfilled people's expectations

Speakers say on Ganosamhati Andolon's founding anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders from different political parties yesterday stressed finding a new pathway to politically guide the countrymen instead of blaming only the incumbent government.

They alleged that the parties assuming power in last 48 years had tarnished the spirit of the Liberation War by not fulfilling people's expectation.

They were speaking at a discussion on "The way forward amid existing political perspective" at Bangladesh Medical Association's auditorium in the capital. Left leaning party Ganosamhati Andolon organised the discussion marking its 17th founding anniversary.

Speaking there, Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna alleged that both Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) had failed to meet people's expectations.

"AL is now ruling the people in an autocratic way and

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SPOT THE WALL...Posters of aspirants in the Vigarunnisa Noon School and College Governing Body election have covered entire walls of areas surrounding the institution. The photos were taken recently in Baitiy Road and Siddheswari.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

High Court wants fresh charge sheet in yaba recovery case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has observed that the charge sheet in the 49,000 yaba pills recovery case in Naryanganj is flawed as Officer-in-Charge (OC) Quamrul Islam's name has not been included in it although two accused in their confessional statements mentioned his involvement.

The case was filed over recovering 49,000 yaba tablets and Tk 5 lakh from the rented residence of Suhrawardy Rubel, an assistant sub-inspector of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station, on March 7 last year.

The HC also ordered the police administration to conduct a further investigation into the case and submit the fresh charge sheet to the trial court concerned in two months.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman passed the order on Thursday during hearing of a bail petition filed by police constable Asaduzzaman, an accused in the case.

"Two accused of the case have given confessional

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