

A noisy nuisance

SHARIFUL ISLAM and RAFIUL ISLAM

Walking on Dhaka streets is no easy task. Let's say overcoming all the odds -- vendors, parked vehicles, waterlogged potholes, development works and vehicles stopping as per whims -- you are braving towards your destination.

But suddenly you hear a loud noise or siren, involuntarily causing you either to jump or cringe. Initially, you may think it's an ambulance or a vehicle belonging to law enforcers on emergency duty -- honking for people to step aside.

That apprehension soon turns to annoyance as the vehicle making a raucous belongs to some influential person being escorted by personal security guards. Worse yet, it could be a private car or motorbike using those hooters, in a breach of law.

The existing law only permits on-duty vehicles of police, fire service and patient-carrying ambulances to use special horns. Even a lawmaker or minister cannot use hooters in their vehicles.

The reality, however, is different. Hundreds of vehicles and many motorcycles are using hooters in the city. Installing these horns is not that

expensive either. They are either being imported as other electronic devices or improvised locally.

"In most cases, influential people, vehicles of different ministries and government offices, political leaders, businessmen and well-known national and international organisations are using hooters," said a traffic sergeant of Dhaka (south division).

"Taking any action against them if difficult," the official told this newspaper recently on condition of anonymity.

The traffic official said usually they take action against buses and trucks using hydraulic horns.

On an average, police filed 2,200 cases per month last year for using such horns. Around 3,000 case have been filed every month this year till August, according to DMP statistics.

According to Prof Mohammad Abdullah, an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist, sudden exposure to loud sound -- measuring above 90 decibels -- or continuous exposure to excessive noise can cause nerve damage in ears.

"Hooters and hydraulic horns create sound measuring over 100 decibels," said the expert, who recently retired as a professor.

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A BRTA mobile court, operating under the new Road Transport Act, instructs a bus driver to pull over for inspection. The photo was taken from Manik Mia Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Students and guests take a pledge to ensure clean toilets at the launch of the campaign at Police Staff College yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No more dirty toilets

School students vow on World Toilet Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an aim to ensure hygienic practice in schools across the country, a campaign was launched to distribute 14,000 packs of toilet-cleaning products in 200 schools.

The campaign, titled "No More Dirty Toilet", was inaugurated at Police Staff College in Dhaka yesterday.

Domex, a toilet-cleaning powder product of multinational corporation Unilever, is behind the initiative.

Speaking as chief guest, Md Tajul Islam, minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, said, "If students are taught the importance of good hygiene and sanitation, they will implement it at home and outside."

Chief Engineer of Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) Saifur Rahman said DPHE has made separate WASH [water,

sanitation and hygiene] blocks for male and female students in 34,000 primary schools so far, as part of their target to bring all schools under this coverage by 2025.

Addressing the programme, Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, acting country director of WaterAid Bangladesh, urged Unilever to step up efforts in waste management alongside sanitation.

Keder Lele, chief executive officer and managing director of Unilever Bangladesh Ltd said, "Bangladesh has created an exceptional example by ensuring access to toilets. But the problem is, toilets are not clean... Unilever wants to be a multi-stakeholder [to ensure hygienic toilets]."

Participants also took an oath to ensure cleanliness in all schools across the country. Water Aid, Volunteer For Bangladesh, Narail Foundation and over 100 schools

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DEMANDING KHALEDA'S RELEASE BNP calls nationwide rallies on Nov 23

UNB, Dhaka

BNP will hold rallies across the country on November 23, demanding the release of its ailing chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

Party senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced the programmes yesterday at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office in Dhaka.

He alleged that the government is still obstructing the bail process of Khaleda Zia, who has long been undergoing treatment at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"We would like to tell the prime minister that the chain of your misrule will fall apart and turn into dust if anything happens to our leader Khaleda Zia due to your reluctance," the BNP leader said.

Rizvi urged the PM to free Khaleda immediately instead of carrying out "false propaganda" against her. "Don't obstruct her bail. Give her the scope to get healthcare at a

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PRICE HIKE OF ESSENTIALS

Vested quarter plotting to destabilise country: Nasim

UNB, Dhaka

A vested quarter is trying to destabilise the country through hiking the prices of essential commodities, alleged senior Awami League leader Mohammed Nasim yesterday.

"There are examples of politicising hunger in our country, and a quarter with vested interest is out to make the country unstable through hiking the prices of essential products, including onion, through syndicates," Nasim said.

Nasim, also spokesperson of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance, was speaking at a regular meeting of the alliance at the ruling party's Bangabandhu Avenue central office.

The price of onion, which shot up to Tk 260 per kg at the retail market, is now coming down following the government's strict measures taken against those involved in manipulating the market, the AL leader said.

He also said this vested quarter must not be spared as it is plotting to jack up the price of rice.

Referring to BNP's letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina demanding disclosure of bilateral documents signed with India during her visit to the neighbouring country last month, he said, "The agreements are transparent."

"BNP doesn't talk about public sufferings. They only speak for their facilities while in parliament. They sent the letter to hit headlines in the media," Nasim alleged.

The 14-party alliance spokesperson also claimed that the prime minister never did anything against the state and will not do so in the future.

Qatar Airways launches children's programme

CITY DESK

Qatar Airways has launched the "Oryx Kids Club On-Board Children's Programme", offering an enhanced experience for its youngest travellers by providing them with specially designed plush toys, activity packs, and special meal boxes featuring their favourite super heroes from Oryx Kids Club.

In March 2018, the airline revealed the new Oryx Kids Club heroes, which were designed to inspire and excite children when they fly. These new goodies will help make flying with Qatar Airways a seamless and fun-filled journey for every child, said a press release.

As part of the initiative, the Oryx Kids Loyalty Programme will also offer children aged between two and 11 the opportunity to enjoy value-added benefits while travelling with Qatar Airways as well as the ability to earn Qmiles, which can be redeemed for attractive awards.

The programme features a specially-designed secure section on the Privilege

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The pithophora micro-algae cultured at DU's botanical garden. Inset, Prof Almujaddade shows the prototype of the nano-filter made from it.

PHOTO: STAR

An aquatic solution to purifying water

Scientists make nano-filter using common algae

KHALID HUSSAIN AVON

Even in this day and age of technological advancement when many things that were unthinkable 10 years ago are now commonplace, the millennia-old problem of availing safe, clean water for everyone remains one of the biggest challenges for humanity.

But solutions to big problems are often simple -- hiding in plain sight, and a group of researchers from Bangladesh and Sweden seem to have come across one.

Scientists from Dhaka University and Uppsala University have joined hands to make a nano-filter that can keep out all kinds of bacteria and viruses, using a macro-algae (commonly known as 'sheola' in Bangla) named "pithophora", that grows abundantly in Bangladesh. They say it can save lives of almost 15 million people, who lack access to safe water in Bangladesh.

Algae grows in abundance at almost all natural waterbody in the country. To study this organism's untapped potential, Khondkar Siddique-e-Rabbani -- honorary professor of biomedical physics and technology department of Dhaka University (DU) -- co-ordinated a project with a team of scientists from Uppsala University, Sweden (UU), headed by Albert Mihrianyan, a senior lecturer of nanotechnology and functional materials.

Prof Md Almujaddade Alfassane of DU's botany

department, Prof Anwara Begum of DU's microbiology department, and Sharmin Zaman, a research scientist at the Centre for Advanced Research in Sciences, were part of the Bangladeshi research team. The latter two worked on the effectiveness of the filter.

Prof Almujaddade suggested using "pithophora" instead of "cladophora", which was the original algae used by Mihrianyan. This suggestion was made due to pithophora's rapid growth rate.

Prof Almujaddade mentioned, "The pithophora was collected from different habitats of Bangladesh and cultured in the botanical garden of DU. Then we processed and sent it to Sweden. This nano-filter is capable of removing all types of bacteria and viruses, which are pathogenic, from contaminated water."

Prof Anwara explained that some technical modifications are still required to make it affordable and available for public use.

In an article published on the UU website, Mihrianyan mentioned, "Pithophora algae have been largely overlooked in the past as a valuable raw material. It is with great satisfaction that we can now document excellent pathogen removal clearance for both water-borne bacteria and viruses with efficiency above 99.99 percent. It can purify even the smallest virus particles of 27-28 nanometres."

Prof Khondkar mentioned, "Access to clean water will contribute strongly to improving health, thus

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DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

Celebrating first anniversary of Shahidul Alam's release from prison
Venue: Drik Gallery, Panthapath
Time: 3pm

DEBATE

Celebrating World Philosophy Day
Organiser: Darshan Bitorko Dhara
Venue: TSC Auditorium, University of Dhaka
Time: 9am

WORKSHOP

Business Model Development and Pitching: Using the Right Tools
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 5:30pm

MUSIC

Sodium Batir Gaan
Venue: TSC Swimming Pool, University of Dhaka
Time: 4pm

WORKSHOP

Presentation and Public Speaking
Organiser: Future Icon
Venue: Bishwo Shahitto Kendro
Time: 5pm

SESSION

Global Entrepreneurship Bootcamp
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 10am



How many children released from correction centres?

HC to govt on mobile court conviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know how many children who were convicted by mobile courts at various times and kept in juvenile correction centres have been released, following its October 31 order.

It asked Deputy Attorney General Bipul Baghmar to provide the information before this court by November 26.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Md Mahmud Hassan Talukder passed the order while hearing a suomoto (voluntary) rule and also fixed the same date for passing further order on this issue.

On October 31, the bench had issued the suomoto rule and ordered the government to immediately release children -- aged under 12 years -- who were convicted by mobile courts and kept in juvenile correction centres.

The court said children [under 12 years] have no understanding of the consequence of offences, and therefore they cannot be convicted by mobile courts and kept in correction centres.

It also granted six months' bail to children -- aged between 12 and 18 -- who were convicted and kept in such centres. They will be released subject to the satisfaction of the children's court concerned, after finishing their bail bonds, the HC said.

On that day, the bench observed that mobile courts

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