

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 cases 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

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.

DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

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

WORKSHOP

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

WORKSHOP

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

DEBATE

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

MUSIC

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

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.

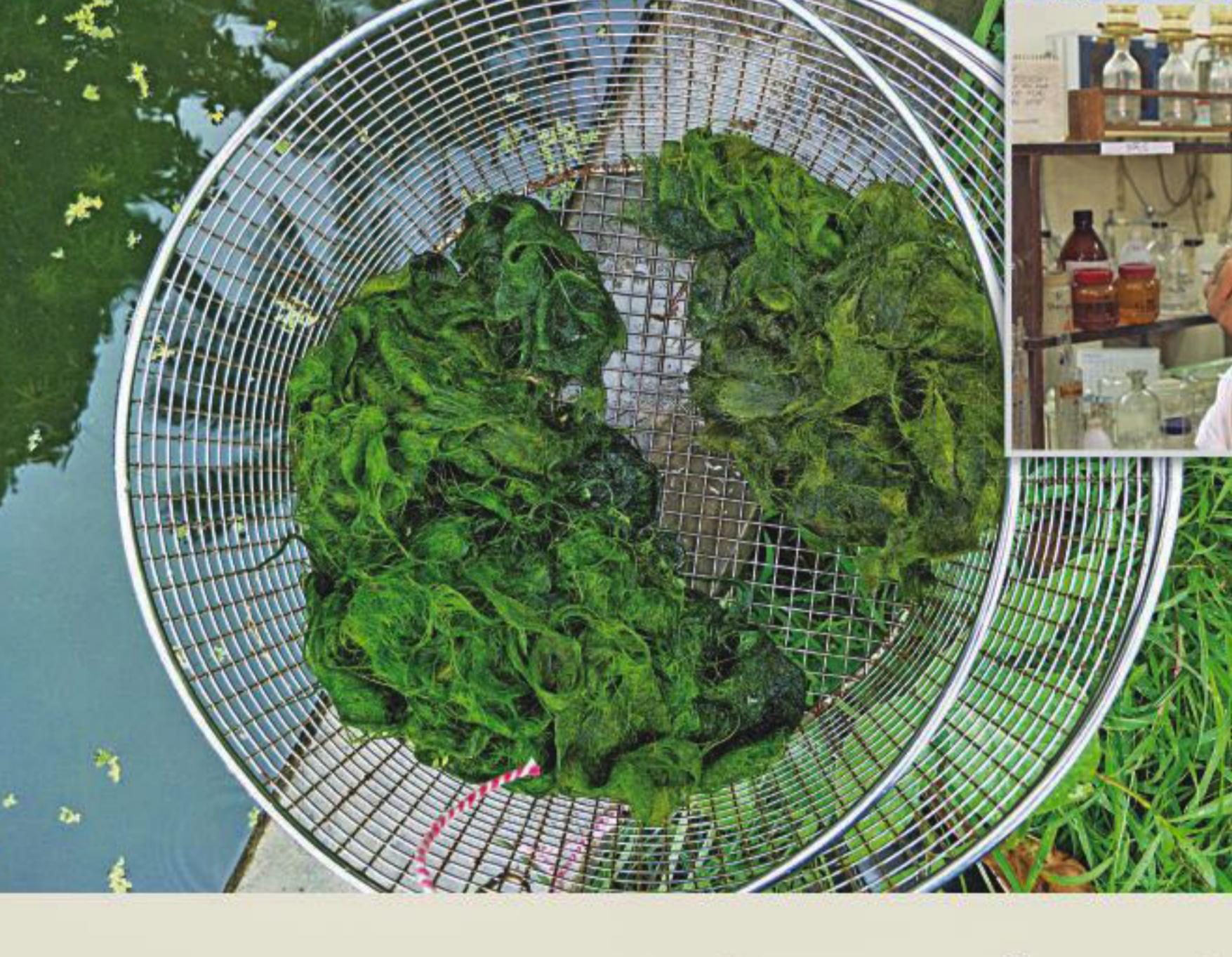
On October 31, the bench had issued the suomoto rule and ordered the government to immediately release children -- aged under 12 years -- who were convicted by mobile courts and kept in juvenile correction centres.

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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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 AYON

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 (UUI), headed by Albert Mihranyan, a senior lecturer of nanotechnology and functional materials.

Prof Md Almujaddade Alfasane of DU's botany

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In an article published on the UU website, Mihranyan 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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