

# The Daily Star

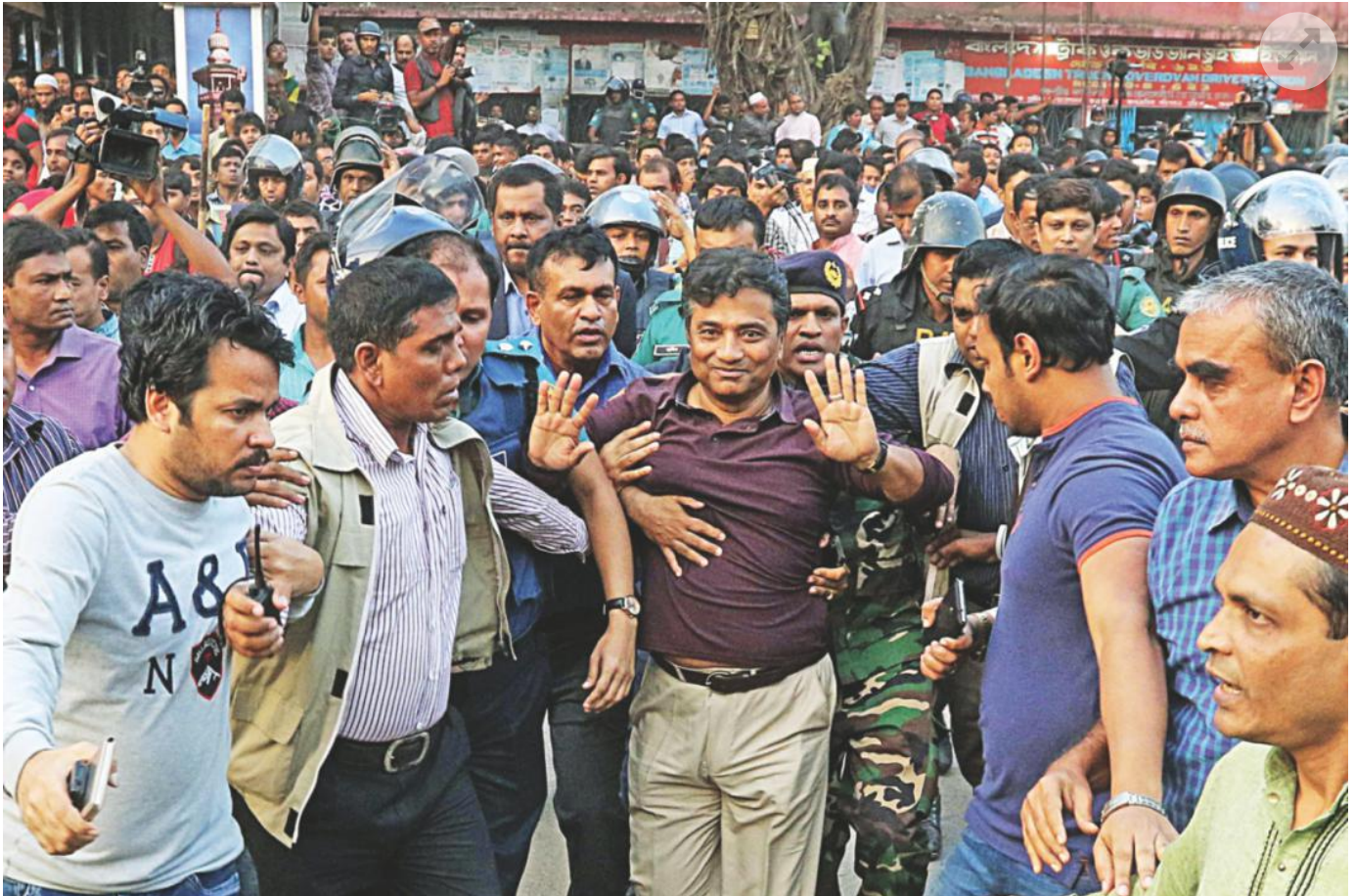
Tuesday, January 19, 2021

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## Opinion: Can the mayor kill the dragon?



After staying in the office of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Drivers Union for around three hours, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annisul Huq leaves the scene escorted by law enforcers at Tejgaon in the capital on November 29, 2015. Photo: Anisur Rahman

**Inam Ahmed**

Mayor Annisul Huq had his first bitter taste of what lies ahead if he really wants to go about his promises with sincerity. His mission virtually failed when he went to supervise the clearing of the Tejgaon road where trucks are parked illegally, blocking the important connecting pathway.

It also proved a lot of things – how rowdy and ill-disciplined our transport sector is, how political patronage can lead to creation of monsters, how weak our institutions have become because of politicization, how helpless the Dhaka city dwellers are and lot more.

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Annisul, who seems to be more energetic than any other mayors that we had, who sounds more affirmative and who seems to really want a change in Dhaka, looked overwhelmed by the muscle power of the transport workers.

In the end he came out of his confinement making some empty roars. We now wait to see if he can do what he took up as his task. This may well be his litmus taste because if he has to put Dhaka in order he may well have to face many more similar incidents.



Transport workers burn tyres to block a street near the Tejgaon Truck Terminal in the capital on November 29, 2015, protesting an eviction drive against illegal structures. Photo: Anisur Rahman

But we also have to ask why the transport sector has become this mighty that a mayor with the status of minister and a minister whose office owns the land that was supposed to be cleared off failed? It is because our political leaders have been using the transport workers and owners to meet their political ends. The politicians' interest has become entrenched with the workers' and owners' profit. When politicians use owners to stop plying of all transportation to foil an opposition programme to stop party workers from coming to Dhaka, when these owners provide trucks and buses for programmes of the party in power; when these workers fill up meeting grounds of the political parties and when the political leaders use these workers to collect tolls, the workers naturally become monsters. It is then we get a rowdy transport sector.

And then the institutions have become ineffective because of corruption and political influence. We can probably firmly say none of the trucks and buses that ply the Dhaka streets are good enough to pass the fitness test. Yet they operate freely because they pay bribes to the authorities concerned. So if you pay money then why should they expect any harassment by the same authorities? What moral standing does the traffic police have to catch them?

And all this have left us, the city dwellers, helpless. We become hostage to them. They can run us over and get away. They can illegally occupy roads as parking slot. They can stop any place on the road to pick passengers without bothering to know if they are blocking the whole road.

So, when the situation is like this, our mayor has a huge task in hand. We all wish him success. We don't know how he will kill this dragon, but he must kill it if we want a better Dhaka city. We will give him all the support.

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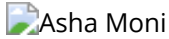
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