

DOWN TO EARTH

Traffic tangles and garbage trucks

By ASM Nurunnabi



This city's public transport system at present is a shambles. Over the years, instead of our noticing any improvement in this sector we have been observing gradual deterioration afflicting its multidimensional aspects.

One particular aspect which is a constant eye sore is the constant traffic jams at important cross-roads. There are, of course, many factors causing them, the principal among them being the slow moving cycle rickshaws, but to a careful observer, it seems that jams at those places can be eased substantially if the public buses, in particular, stop their practice of loading and off-loading their passengers at their will at any spot near the cross-roads.

There are specific bus stands with zebra crossings for pedestrians, quite away from the busy road junctions. Yet it has been observed that the public buses in many cases do not stop at these bus stands, but prefer the crowded spots very near the road junctions, thereby adding to the risks of avoidable road accidents, and to the intensification of traffic jams.

Some specific instances may be cited of this hazardous practice. Although there is a bus stand near the Sishu Park well away from the busy cross-roads opposite the PG Hospital, the public buses have made it a practice of stopping near the gate of the Diabetic Hospital, where there is a heavy congestion of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. You will meet the same scenes at the Topkhana Road crossing across North-South Road, the road crossings at Nilkhet-Mirpur Road near the New

Market and also near Road No. 2 of Dhanmandi Residential Area.

It is felt that if the traffic police are firm in dealing with these irregularities and compel the public buses to use the specific bus stands provided for them, the problem of traffic jams at busy cross-roads may be substantially eased.

It is also observed that the vehicular traffic in the city is often reluctant to follow traffic lights at road junctions. The rickshaws are, in most cases, the worst offenders in this respect. We are often presented with a picture of free-for-all at such points. The worst sufferers in this situation are the pedestrians who want to cross the road from one side to another. There appears to be no or little respect for zebra crossings which are encroached upon often with impunity by the vehicles.

It is also observed when a green signal at a road junction is about to change into red, some of the late coming vehicles in their attempt to beat the red signal, hasten their movement at break-neck speed, thereby adding considerably to the risk of accidents in possible cross traffic.

The traffic police, in the interest of smooth movement of vehicular traffic and convenience of pedestrians wanting to move across, should be firm with those who violate traffic lights and encroach upon zebra crossings.

There is one particular irritating phenomenon which may turn the pit of your stomach. I refer to the obnoxious movements of municipal garbage trucks at peak traffic hours in

the morning through the city's road network. This is unthinkable in any modern city, which Dhaka is steadily growing into.

The City Corporation authority may kindly look into this nauseating long-standing practice and ensure that the work of collection and carrying of garbage from different points in the city is taken up and completed during small hours of the morning, as is the practice in many modern cities.

The need for more public toilets is also being increasingly felt in this rapidly expanding metropolis. There are, of course, some public toilets at isolated spots, but these hardly seem to meet the total needs. It, therefore, seems urgent that the municipal authorities should give their thought to the setting up of public toilets at more key points as a priority project over on the principle of 'pay as you use' basis.

Another distressing aspect of our city life is to view the abominable disfiguration of the city's walls and buildings with various slogans and graffiti painted on them. Attempts are made from time to time to cover them up, but those writings on the walls never cease to re-appear. From the sociological point of view, this may be the reflection of a propensity of a class of people low in standards of education, civic sense and public decency.

Since this has become a constant eye-sore to the city dwellers, it is felt that the municipal authorities should think of ways of tackling the situation with suitable rules and regulations.

No headway in govt-SKOP talks

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and Textile Workers and Employees Federation Thursday.

The government was ready to include representatives from the SKOP in the proposed wage commission which would submit its report within three months of its formation.

The government, however, agreed to let the SKOP leaders know about the minimum wage figure to be fixed within next two months.

Although the SKOP leaders unanimously showed an uncompromising attitude in the yesterday's meeting with the Labour and Manpower Minister, they differed substantially on the question of the proposed work stoppage in the changed situation.

SKOP has already announced a 48-hour country-wide work stoppage from tomorrow 6 am to press its 5-point charter of demands.

Some important components of the SKOP maintained that it should go ahead with the work stoppage programme in case the government did not completely concede the demands.

Samajtantrik Sramik Front, backed by Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), the labour front of Hasanul Hoq Inu's JSD and the Trade Union Federation hold this opinion.

Some components, however, argued that as the workers of jute and textile sectors had already withdrawn their road-and-railway barricade programme scheduled to begin at the same time, the SKOP should also go for signing an agreement with the government on the basis of the already agreed points. This faction felt that the SKOP programme would not be a complete success.

It apprehended non-cooperation from the workers of jute and textile sectors since their support would be regarded by the government as a breach of contract under the last agreements.

According to sources, among others, CPB-backed Trade Union Centre (TUC) held this opinion.

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