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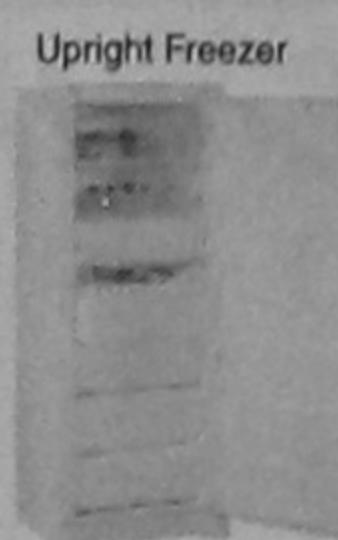
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Down to Earth

One-way no long-term Panacea for traffic ills

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka is known for stupendous traffic jam over all its other identities. Whatever the opinion of some sections city dwellers either in favour or critical of the one-way system of traffic control lately introduced in some of the city roads, there is at least an unanimity of opinion on one point: introduction of the new system has contributed to the diminution of traffic jams in some measure.

It is said that a modern city requires at least 25 per cent of road space out of its total area, whereas in our city there is only 7 per cent of road space available for use as roads. Parking space for vehicles is acutely scarce. City pavements are mostly under unauthorised occupation of hawkers. The city roads both in old and new parts of the rapidly burgeoning urban areas remain constantly under horrendous traffic tangles. In this scenario, the introduction of one-way traffic regulation may be regarded as a first step towards creating some measure of traffic discipline.

The important components of the newly introduced traffic discipline reportedly include the following: one-way passage for the stretch of the road running from Science Laboratory to Niltkot roads from Katabon via Hatirpool linking with Bangla Motor Road and Sonargaon Link Road.

Besides, decisions have been taken for construction of rickshaw lanes from Mohakhali to

the Kakrall Masjid road crossing. Rickshaw lanes are also planned for construction from Khamarbari to Mirpur No 10 Roundabout. It is not yet known when these rickshaw lanes will be taken up for construction.

It is understood that the city's traffic department has also other ideas for introducing one-way traffic on some more important roads of the city as soon as necessary manpower is available for the purpose.

There was a recent report that a total outlay of Tk 1,000 crore is fixed for implementing a co-ordinated project for easing the traffic medley in the metropolis. This project is to be implemented by the Dhaka City Corporation, RAJUK, Roads and Highways Department and seven other government agencies. The project was due for submission to the ECNEC for approval.

Whatever be the present stage of approval of that project, it seems worth-while to recall that the project covers a long time span beginning from 1998-99 to 2002-2009, incorporating both short-term and long-term plan components.

For obvious reasons, there is greater interest and concern in respect of the short-term plan objectives.

As to the obvious reasons, it may be stated that the population of the metropolis has been increasing at a galloping speed. In this context, it may be noted that the objectives of the short-

term plans, in their essentials, include the construction of two fly-overs, one at Mohakhali, and the other at Jatrabari; construction of 10 by-pass roads in the city to facilitate the movement of inter-district transports; improvement of 20 road junctions and provision of parking facilities in three important city areas. The most vital question at present seems to be whether these projected benefits will be available within the timeframe fixed in the short-term plans.

In the light of existing reali-

ties, there may be little scope for being optimistic about the short-term results. It is quite apparent that while the planned facilities will be under execution, the growth of the city population will continue apace with concomitant shortfalls in provisions of basic infrastruc-

tural needs.

The city dwellers are already experiencing nightmarish traffic congestions. The one-way traffic system on some city roads already introduced and more of such facilities to be in-

roduced, may provide some re-

lief by way of reducing traffic tangles, but some observers be-

lieve that these will be mere

palliatives for a very limited

time. To achieve more durable

results, it is widely felt that the

objectives of the co-ordinated

project, with its short-term and

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