



Traffic Problems of Dhaka City

Deliberations at The Daily Star-Bangladesh Scouts Workshop held on 29 April 2000 at Scout Bhaban, Dhaka

Caught in the Crossroads of Confusion

by Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed

THE question is are our roads inadequate for the number of vehicles and pedestrians, or are we simply a nation of indisciplined road users? The latter is perhaps more the reason for the terrible mess that is the traffic in Dhaka City today. In our everyday bid to outsmart each other in reaching our destination quickly, we end up creating blockages that is devouring priceless working hours with a telling effect on our economy.

The general concern at the prevailing hapless situation was aptly demonstrated by the participation of almost all the liable parties, and several concerned citizens as individuals and watchdog organisations, at the workshop convened by The Daily Star and the Bangladesh Scouts on 29 April 2000 at the Scout Bhaban.

While it was apparent that we still suffer from our hereditary malady of not shouldering responsibility for any matter even directly under our care, it was encouraging to see some top executives including the non-sense DC (Traffic), the equally forthright RAJUK chairman and the very frank BRTC chairman rising to self-criticism.

Of paramount urgency at the moment is strengthening an empowering of the implementing agencies involved in managing the city traffic. No one

disagreed that the traffic police were hopelessly outnumbered and underpaid, though not many were willing allow that as an excuse for the lethargy and corruption that now rules the streets.

The idea of multi-storied car parking on khas land in commercial areas seemed a popular concept, as most speakers spoke of the horrendous problem of parking in busy areas. It was suggested that private entrepreneurs should be encouraged to turn the scheme into a profitable venture.

As a matter of fact, in any respect of development the private sector must be provided with equal opportunity if democracy is to survive. Perhaps a worse alternative would be to privatise without creating an efficient private sector.

It seems that the authorities are failing in intersection management for reasons as varied as overriding of electronic signals by the police, lack of will force to enforce legislation, dearth of effective manpower, non co-operation by local businessmen who encourage pressure groups, and poor driving in general.

The workshop was convinced that there would be no respite from the chock-a-block traffic in the City unless inter-district bus and truck terminal facilities are located beyond the

City limits. Though it is only a few years since Saidabad, Mohakhali and Gabtali were set up, apparently outside the city limits, the fast expanding City has swallowed all three.

The recently introduced one-way system in the city obviously came up for discussion and the house seemed divided on its effect. While the police mentioned pressure from various sources to revert to the original, some experts rebuked the authorities for hurriedly undertaking the scheme without forewarning and more planning that should have gone into it.

Mass transport system, above ground or under, is much talked about in any discussion on Dhaka's traffic. And, the workshop on April 29 was no different. A lot of time is wasted by almost everyone on the road everyday. It is simply poor economics in terms of man hours lost and fuel burnt without even considering the ill effect the alarming situation has on health.

Other ideas well received at the Daily Star-Bangladesh Scouts workshop included education of drivers, pedestrians, hawkers and the general public by using among others the electronic media, co-ordination between various stakeholders and the regulatory bodies, involvement of the community and community policing, and co-ordinated planning by the city's

development agencies.

It is now clear that some sort of co-ordinating cell, call it Mayor Hanif's City Governorship or not, was essential to harmonise the works of WASA, DESA, PDB, Titas Gas, T&T, RAJUK and the City Corporation. Otherwise the city roads will continue to be dug at some point or the other. What a shameful waste of national resources?

The workshop promises a lot as the participants vowed to follow up on the recommendations in a month's time. That would be a very noble way to utilise our human resources.



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Participants and Recommendations

RED team

1. Md. Azizul Haque Bhuiyan, Chairman, BRTA - Leader
2. Engr. Lutful Bari, President, Enterprise Bangladesh
3. Mesbah Uddin Bhuiyan, Deputy National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
4. Shamsul Haque, Baby Taxi driver
5. Engr. Mansurur Rahman
6. Mursheed Ali Khan, The Daily Star
7. AZM Anas Russel, Student, JU & College
8. Rover
9. Rover

Recommendations

1. Enforcement of traffic law and commitment of all major political parties in matter of national, social and city improvement.
- a) Upgrading of 1939 legislation.
- b) Strengthening of implementing agencies involved in city traffic.
- c) Formation of a central organisation for traffic policy planning, management and implementation.
- d) Increase awareness about traffic law and behaviour through
 - (i) Primary school curriculum
 - (ii) Education of drivers, pedestrians, hawkers and the general public.
- e) Changes in traffic movement to be informed in advance
2. Improvement of traffic and transport infrastructure by
 - a) Constructing link roads
 - b) Locating bus stops beyond an intersection
 - c) Upgrading and increasing traffic signalling
 - d) Establishing inter-district bus/truck terminal facilities beyond the City limits
 - e) Removing road obstructions such as shops, hawkers and construction materials
 - f) Constructing multi-storied car parking
 3. Removal of Karwan Bazaar.

WHITE team

1. M.A.M. Ziauddin (Secretary, Government of Bangladesh), Executive Director, Greater Dhaka Transport Planning and Co-ordination Board - Leader
2. Engr. M. Shahjahan Khadem, Chairman, Bangladesh 2000
3. AKM Mahbub-ul-Haque, former AIG, Police
4. Prof. Abdullah A. Haroon, President, Bangladesh Society for Conservation of Environment
5. Dr. Tanvir Hossain
6. Habibur Rahman, Minibus driver
7. Imdad Hossain Dilshad, Winner Transport
8. Abdul Bari Parag, Emergency Support Corps
9. Sq. Ldr. Naim, Air Region, Bangladesh Scouts
10. Rover Akmal Hossain, Senior Rover Mate
11. Rover Bushra Jabin

Recommendations

1. Proper and strict enforcement of traffic rules and regulations. Heavy penalty for violators.
2. Work on the Dhaka bypass road should be expedited, and more link and feeder roads should be constructed to ease congestion within the city.
3. Eliminate fake driving license, unlicensed and unfit vehicles, including rickshaws, from the road.
4. Restrict motorised vehicles emitting black smoke to prevent pollution.
5. Make main city roads rickshaw-free. Rickshaws should ply on small roads and lanes.
6. Separate rickshaw lanes to be made in some critical roads.
7. Rickshaw manufacturing in Dhaka City should be stopped.
8. Intersections and signals should be improved. Proper road marking and signs should be set in place.
9. More East-West roads should be constructed in the city.
10. Footpaths should be made free from vendors, unauthorised shops, construction materials.
11. Road-digging for construction works should be carried out only at night with the permission of the Dhaka City Corporation.
12. Separate parking facilities for buses, trucks, cars, rickshaws and other vehicles, including multi-storied car parks, should be constructed specially by encouraging private entrepreneurs.
13. More privately owned buses, motorised taxi cabs and 4-stroke three-wheeler baby taxis should be brought on the road by providing suitable tax exemption and other incentives.
14. Public awareness about road safety, pedestrian use and regulations should be created through the media, billboards and other means.
15. Bus bays at city bus stations should be provided.

Other participants

1. M. Azizul Haque, Chairman, RAJUK
2. Md. Azmal Chowdhury, Chairman, BRTC
3. Mominul H. Khan, MD, Transnational Consultants
4. Zeeshan Saif, Sr. Executive, Mobil Jamuna Lubricants
5. Engr. Md. Hasan Reza
6. Engr. Kazi Md. Sheesh, Chief Engineer, WASA
7. Prof. Dr. Mazharul Haque, BUET
8. Dr. Moazzem, Hossain, BUET
9. Dr. Jobair bin Alam, BUET
10. Kazi Golam Hafiz, Planner, Director, RAJUK
11. Md. Sairur Rahman, Chief Engineer, RAJUK
12. Architect Munirul Haque
13. M Y Khan
14. Aynal Haq, Rickshaw puller
15. Rover Nazrul Islam, Service at workshop
16. Shamima Islam, Researcher
17. Md. Ali Ashraf, Service holder
18. Shankar Kumar Das, Volunteer, Emergency Support Corps
19. Md. Mamun, Volunteer, Emergency Support Corps
20. Abdul Bari Parvez, Volunteer, Emergency Support Corps
21. Md. Rafiqul Islam Khan, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
22. Shamsul Huq, Gulshan
23. Hafizur Rahman, Kalabagan
24. Md. Mosharrar Hossain, Srijoni Open Scout Group
25. Md. Kamrul Islam, Samatat Open Scout Group
26. Mominul H Khan, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
27. Dr. Mohammad Osman Gani, Exprom, Dhanmandi
28. A B M Shahidul Islam, Dhaka University
29. Saifur Rahman, East Rampura
30. Md. Abu Bakker Siddique, Dhaka University
31. Abul Basher Md. Selim, Dhaka University
32. Salman Haider, Sunder Jiban
33. Zahangir Kabir, Dhaka District Sea Scouts
34. Dr. Azharul Haq, WASA Bhaban
35. Md. Ferdous, Mohammadpur
36. Dr. Tanveer Hasan, BUET
37. Latifa Ahmed, Begum Badrunnessa College
38. G N R Abul Bshar, Secretary, Bangladesh Scouts Dhaka Region
39. Md. Majibur Rahman Mannan, Leader Trainer, Bangladesh Scouts
40. M. Mofazzal Hossain, Bangladesh Scouts Air Region
41. Zahidul Islam, Student, Kalyanpur
42. Ehsan-ul Fattah, Chief Estate Office, Dhaka City Corporation
43. Afzal Hossain, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
44. Dr. Abdus Satter Syed, Consultant, Environment
45. Gaus Mohammad, Tikatuly
46. Abdul Baten, Student, Narinda
47. Rover Nur Alam, Samatat Open Scout Group
48. Latifuddin Ahmed, AFC, Bangladesh Scouts Dhaka Region
49. Mansur ur Rahman, former Chief Engineer, DESA
50. Rover Md. Kepayat Hossain, Srijoni Open Scout Group
51. Rover Md. Sanawat Ali Khan, Nice Open Scout Group
52. Rover Mehdi, Samatat Open Scout Group
53. Saiful Islam Khan, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
54. Habibur Alam, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
55. Rover Md. Mansur Hillal, Dhaka College
56. Md. Faruque Hossain, Sociologist
57. Nazmul Haque Nazu, Deputy National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts

GREEN team

1. Md. Sirajul Islam, Deputy Police Commissioner (Traffic), Dhaka Metropolitan Police - Leader
2. Rezaur Rahman, Auto filter manufacturer
3. Advocate Quazi Arifur Rahman, Fellow, Academy of American and International Law
4. Md. Faruque Hossain
5. ABM Shahidul Islam
6. Delawar, Kalabagan Mini Bus Samity
7. Amimul Kawser, Emergency Support Corps (ESC) and Deputy National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts
8. Rover Masudul Amin, Senior Rover Mate
9. Rover Afroz Sarker

Recommendations

1. Zebra crossing with signal lighting should be provided by Dhaka City Corporation.
2. Signal system at traffic junction should be manually operated if necessary and law must be applied.
3. Entrepreneurs of large and double-decker buses in huge numbers should be given incentive.
4. Community traffic police may be introduced with the involvement of volunteers from the community.
5. The government, voluntary organisations and mass media must be come forward to help increase awareness among the road users.
6. Co-ordinated planning by the city's development agencies (WASA, Titas Gas, T&T and PDB) necessary.
7. Parking facilities in Old Town should be provided.
8. An overall change in attitude is necessary.

Moderator: Mahfuz Anam, The Daily Star

Joint Moderator: Dr. Nizamuddin Ahmed, BUET

The Reasons and Some Probable Solutions

by M Sirajul Islam

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic)
Dhaka Metropolitan Police

- Reasons:**
1. Narrow roads
 2. Inadequate roads
 3. Excess of rickshaws
 4. Excess of auto-rickshaws
 5. Vendors on the footpaths and roads
 6. Unplanned digging of roads
 7. Inadequate parking space
 8. Cumulative rise in the number of motorised and non-motorised vehicles
 9. Railway crossing inside the

10. Dearth of bus and truck terminals
11. Absence of by-pass roads
12. Shortage of traffic police and equipment
13. Tendency to violate traffic rules
14. Rally and demonstration on the roads
15. Limitation in law enforcement
16. Outdated traffic laws
17. Flawed signal system
18. Drivers with forged licence
19. Roads without signs and marking

Probable Solutions:

- A. Short-term**
1. Restriction on number of rickshaws and only allow these to ply on lanes and alleys instead of the main

2. Ban on registration of new auto-rickshaw and import of small parts for auto-rickshaw
3. Planned digging of roads
4. Parking space
5. Changes to railway schedule for peak hours and construction of over-bridge and elevated roads at the crossings.
6. Enhancement of traffic police department with human resources and logistics
7. Dissemination of traffic rules through electronic and print media
8. Ban on rally and demonstration on the roads
9. Steps to bring about attitudinal changes amongst bus

10. Development and renovation of key crossings in the city
 11. Demarcation of lanes on the basis of speed on some key roads
 12. Introduction of push-button and computer-controlled traffic signal system
 13. Steps against forged licences
 14. Arrangement to have necessary road signs and markings
- B. Long-term**
1. Construction of new roads
 2. Improvement of bus terminals and construction of truck terminals
 3. Construction of by-pass roads
 4. Construction of fly-over
 5. Construction of subway
 6. Increase punishment under Bangladesh Penal Code and Motor Vehicles Ordinance for traffic rules violations
 7. Introduction of Rickshaw Act

Working Plan for Private Traffic Police

by Md Hassnul Alam

Planner and Promoter of Private Traffic Police

1. It would be a service-oriented organisation
2. It would divide Dhaka city into ten or twenty traffic zones for smooth functioning of the Private Traffic Police.
3. It would sign MOU (memorandum of understanding) with all ward commissioners and the mayor of Dhaka City Corporation.
4. A civil advisory committee would act as advisory body of Private Traffic Police.
5. It would seek all help from law enforcing agencies.

6. It would seek help from socio-cultural associations for smooth implementation project.
7. It would seek help and working guideline from interested NGOs/donors of the countries.
8. It would introduce traffic week every fortnight to create awareness among people.
9. It would use radio/TV and newspapers to disseminate traffic rules to raise people's awareness.

10. It would sign MOU with transport owners/drivers associations, DCCI, FBCCI, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Industries.
11. It would train drivers about traffic rules.
12. It would sign MOU with BRTA.
13. It would employ Private Traffic Police with high salary.

14. It would fine law-breakers on the spot as per the law of the land.
15. 40 per cent revenue would be deposited to the government earned as Spot Fine.
16. It would arrange seminar and workshop to find out better ways to utilise Private Traffic Police.
17. It would help the government law enforcing agencies in its efforts to ensure smooth traffic system.
18. It would manage funds from WB, ADB, IMF or other sources.

Existing Problems and Some Suggested Solutions

by Dr Moazzem Hossain

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Department of Civil Engineering, BUET

- Problems**
1. Lack of required traffic management
 2. Indiscipline, chaos and confusion in the traffic even in the traffic police
 3. Improper right-of-way management at intersections
 4. Indisciplined/uneducated driver population
 5. Absence of proper mass transit system
 6. Unauthorised use of road/footpath space
 7. Indisciplined/illegal parking of both motorised and non-motorised vehicle
 8. Lack of adequate enforcement
 9. Lack of safety for different road users
 10. Lack of road structure maintenance/repair
 11. Lack of co-ordination among involving organisations

- Solutions**
1. A definite organisation to see/manage/rule the whole thing e.g. Dhaka Metropolitan Transport Authority (DMTA)
 2. The main manpower of the organisation could be educated traffic engineer/planner.
 3. The organisation will formulate/implement/monitor different management schemes.
 4. The traffic police will work under the directives of this organisation only for the enforcement of rules/regulations set by the organisation.

5. Mass people of the city badly need, in a real sense, a mass transit system such as bus lane/ways, light rail either at-grade/elevated, underground metro as the costliest option.
6. Rickshaws should only be allowed on those roads where their movement is bound to be economically justifiable.
7. A sense of reliability and confidence should be attained by the transport system.
8. Unauthorised use of road space/footpath has to be penalised.
9. A system of parking has to be developed e.g. roadside if space available, parking bay or multi-storied parking system.
10. Parking at prohibited plan should be penalised.
11. Any old/new facilities in the city should manage adequate parking facilities before giving permission to commission.
12. First clearly defined roadway system, then the system needs educated abiding drivers and road-users. After fixing the system, crash programme should be undertaken to educate drivers and road-users.
13. Preliminary issues/rules of road use and safety should be introduced in the textbooks to result overall awareness.
14. Dividing the whole city into sectors, the ground/field traffic engineer of DMTA should do round-the-clock in-field monitoring.