

Dhaka city roads: All woes for commuters

MD. ASADULLAH KHAN
PRECISELY true, wide and long roads or the vehicles that conveniently move on them herald economic growth. Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy thought: "It's not wealth that built our roads but the roads that built the wealth". Bangladeshi leaders thought the other way round, judging from the dilapidated state of the roads in Dhaka city as well as lanes and by lanes connecting the city roads.

A drive from one corner to another of the city say from Kamalapur to Mirpur or from Sayedabad to Fulbaria or Maghbazur will give one the painful experience of his life. Roads with innumerable potholes, a cloud of dust and smoke blowing over the commuters' face as vehicles pass by are features symbolic of the squalid state of the city. There seems to be no let up in 'development' work on the city roads. If WASA has finished laying down pipes, then comes DESA and when DESA finishes the cable line work comes T & T for installing telephone cables and then DCC for putting road barriers. What is most shocking, none of these organisations has any co-ordination in their plans. After the works have taken a kick-start and only when some work has progressed, it suddenly stops with no explanation whatsoever. The desperate residents might come to know later through these organisational sources that works couldn't be completed for non-availability of funds. But as per norms prevalent in any outside organization wants to take up any work on DCC road it has to take prior permission from DCC with prior payment for the damage to be caused and repair to be done. So the plea that work can't be implemented for paucity of funds has to be taken with a grain of salt. Pot-holed roads with unremitting digging thereupon always in the busy hours of the day with primitive tools has rendered pedestrian and or traffic movement impossible at places and has only added to citizen's woes. Look at the VIP road, that is kept so clean, carpeted all the time. If the government can work so hard for the comfort of the VIPs, ministers and high officials who move on these roads, why can't they do the same for the people moving and living along the other roads of the city and paying city corporation taxes, gas and electric bills most regularly. Many of the supposed VIPs it is reported, often default in clearing utility services dues.

The explanation may be that government or city corporation or any other agency entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining utility

lines is running short of funds. Rather than investing millions of taka in ultimately loss-making industries and grandiose plans the government must ensure that this appalling state of affairs changed. It hardly needs any emphasis that it is the business of the government to invest in development and it is never the business of the government to

lines and their ilk. Many of them live in VIP areas, in VIP houses, and drive VIP cars down the roads that are cleared for VIP traffic. At a time when we speak about economic liberalisation we hardly think about the basic amenities like motorable roads, sewerage lines and garbage disposal arrangement so that our urban spaces looked like proper

we are still clinging to primitive ones. To cut back on project time and cause minimum inconveniences, National Highway Authority (NHA) in India has gone for using computerized cement mixing plants or batching machines and giant paver machines for speedily laying bitumen mix on the dressed surface on a large scale.

cially of Dhaka city has suffered because we could not build proper roads linking the nooks and corners of the city. Surely, if we could build roads for fast moving traffic we could witness a whole new kind of progress. If we have doubts all we need to do is to make a quick trip to Malaysia or Singapore to find out what a difference modern roads make. Leaving aside the express way or modern roads we should give immediate attention about the maintenance of existing city roads connecting different areas namely Wari, Kamalapur, Bashabo, Narinda on one side and Mirpur, Uttara, Banani, Gulshan on the other side of Dhaka city. For industries to grow and commerce and business to flourish, smooth communication is a must.

Undoubtedly true, other than being a nerve centre for political power, Dhaka has a different charm for different businesses. For many MNCs and sophisticated industries, the proximity to government, better international flight connectivity, recreational opportunities and English medium school for children are big practical considerations.

Even after passage of one and a half year the pipe line laying job of the Sayedabad Water Treatment plant is yet to be completed. Because of such unremitting digging throughout the year, all the city roads turn into virtually mini water reservoirs during monsoon. Notwithstanding the fact that this sprawling metropolis is a city of dreams for many, yet for those inhabiting this capital it often becomes a city of nightmares. The night-mare is often manifested by the mind boggling traffic jams, chaotic rickshaw tangle and shortage of mass transportation made worse by the extremely poor condition of the roads pot-holed and dug at places with piles of debris, rubbishes, wastes, bricks and pebbles blocking transportation services and pedestrian movement.

However there is no doubt that road sector is most eligible to kick-start the economy. With widening of the city roads as well as maintaining them in proper condition the gains will far outweigh the cost. Yearly savings on fuel, spare parts and vehicle maintenance will be substantial, trade would get a fillip as travel time is expected to be reduced by 60 percent. Yearly savings due to fewer accidents and damage to property will be several crores of taka. The earlier our city corporation and other utility organizations realize that the path to growth is through better roads, the better.

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do business. Incidentally, the Adamjee Jute Mills devoured 110 crore taka last year without accruing any profit to the exchequer and the total liability of that mill now comes to 1100 crore taka.

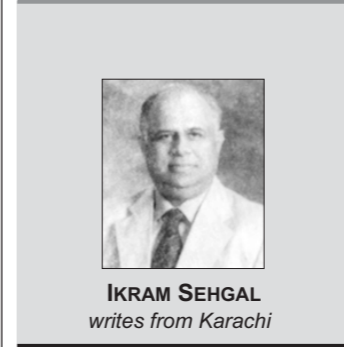
Instead of depending on World Bank and ADB for development works we should try to find out where the thousands of crores of taka we have already spent on different public sector enterprises has gone. Even after making so much investment we would only discover that people in the country live in primitive conditions because the money meant for roads, electricity, and telephone lines has disappeared into the pockets of a vast network of 'vested interest' which doesn't exclude politicians, officials, their

cities and not slums. True, if these cities could be provided with adequate basic amenities there would be instant support and growth of economic activities that could break the vicious cycle of terrifying poverty most evident in 60 per cent of the city dwellers. It hardly needs to be told that smooth, wide and motorable road connection will ease movement and kick-start business activities and enable phenomenal savings in fuel.

We must realise the fact that an unceasing influx of business is changing the beat, tenor and character of the city. When the rest of the world including our neighbouring country India has taken steps to speed up the road construction activities by upgrading technology,

People have chosen Dhaka as the final destination because it is the city with the fastest job creation. All the multinationals, like Telecom companies, Gas exploration companies, electronic and automobile companies have chosen Dhaka as their base with sales, marketing and administrative headquarters. In Dhaka the unceasing advent of new businesses has spawned the growth of innumerable industrial units since 1990. At least the garment factories were till recently employing about 15 lakh workers mostly female. Many other industries and businesses are coming up every day. Such a large scale deluge of business and people is changing Dhaka into something it never was. But the progress or development of the country espe-

Airpower and unconventional warfare



IKRUM SEHGAL writes from Karachi

"AIRPOWER" and "unconventional warfare" have radically changed the concept of war in the 20th century. Addition of the fourth dimension, the air, has brought speed, flexibility and dynamism to the modern battlefield while "unconventional war" has meant a non-linear battlefield with no front and no rear, with soldiers without uniforms targeting combatants and non-combatants alike without observing Marquis of Queensbury's rules of gentlemanly conduct. The savagery of unconventional warfare can be very pervasive, even regular forces have resorted to conduct anathema to the Geneva Convention as seen in Qila-e-Janghi with respect to prisoners of war.

Airpower had already become a decisive factor during conventional war. Stealth technology and precision guided bombs have force multiplied its lethality. However airpower is costly, fragile and can never be a substitute for clear military objectives. Rapid advances in science and technology ensured that airpower has accuracy, speed and is difficult in countering, making it also more decisive in unconventional wars. Unconventional warriors not having the resources to afford counter-measures or avoid being manipulated into providing conventional targets.

World War II and the Arab-Israeli wars show the decisive effect of airpower on conventional forces, a number of intangible factors delayed decisiveness in unconventional warfare till very fairly recently. The major intangible, intelligence, unless reliable, can limit the influence of airpower on conduct of military operations, effectiveness of airpower depending on its timely and accurate availability. An infantry soldier firing his weapon sees the enemy physically in real-time, artillery is dependant upon forward observation officers (FOOs) acquiring targets, like Special Forces providing forward air observation in Qila-e-Janghi and Tora Bora. A conventional army may find it difficult to acquire accurate information because an unconventional enemy does not (and should not) conform to the known rules of warfare. The technological advance has been startling, when one looks at the Gulf War, the Bosnia and Kosovo air campaigns and compare it with Afghanistan.

On Sep 11 in New York, an unconventional enemy crafted a commercial aircraft into unconventional airpower and made a major impact on conventional forces. Conventional forces miserably failing to protect against unconventional means. In Afghanistan, the US faced for the first time since Vietnam an unconventional enemy but used both superior technology and human assets to acquire intelligence, and having target acquisition delivered maximum force with decisive effect. Intelligence succeeded for conventional forces in New York, in Afghanistan Stealth technology was not needed but smart bombs were guided by real-time intelligence in causing crippling damage to the Taliban rank and file, both materially and psychologically. Airpower was devastating in Vietnam but failed the US because Viet Cong seldom gave lucrative

targets to airpower already straitjacketed by US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara's fatal decision to restrict air support within South Vietnam, allowing North Vietnam to be used as a staging point for guerrilla warfare in the South. With the North Vietnamese dragged their feet during subsequent Paris Talks in 1972, US President Nixon ordered air strikes against Hanoi and Haiphong in North Vietnam, only 700 B-52 sorties brought the North Vietnamese back to a successful conclusion of the peace negotiations.

In Afghanistan we have seen an awesome display of US airpower, a combination of cruise missiles, B-52s, B-1 and B-2 bombers, as well as unarmed Predator aircraft, both armed and unarmed, and F-14s, F-15s and F-16s, etc launched from ground bases and aircraft carriers, delivering virtually designer-made precision-guided munitions (smart bombs), this crescendo rising to a Wagnerian climax at Tora Bora in non-stop bombing for over a week. The effects of this concentrated assault could be seen on the dozen or so shell-shocked Qaeda prisoners paraded by the bounty hunting Mujahideen (you cannot purchase an Afghan, you can only rent him by the hour). They shuffled into view like Zombies, living dead.

AS I SEE IT
Airpower pulverized the Taliban but it could not accomplish the primary war aim and/or attack what it could not sense, it allowed Mullah Umar and Osama Bin Laden to escape, at least till now... Airpower can blow a door of its hinges but unlike a simple combat soldier it cannot see what is behind the door.

Writing in "Unofficial History", Field Marshal (then a Brigadier) Slim (of Burma), mentions the panic created in the whole Brigade by a very good British infantry battalion at Gallabat who could not bear Italian bombing for even 10 minutes. Despite all its decisive effect, one of airpower's limitations lies in its basic inability to hold ground. It is also relatively too expensive, being vulnerable to far cheaper anti-aircraft weapons and total dependence for its success rests on strategic and tactical intelligence. If a relatively strong country had been supporting the Taliban's unconventional forces morally and materially, airpower's effects could have been drastically checked and/or curtailed. As the massive onslaught of B-52 carpet bombing and precision-guided bombs on Tora Bora has shown, topographical factors can severely limit the use of conventional airforce against unconventional forces.

Airpower can create opportunities but political realities can only be altered by exploitation by ground conventional and unconventional forces to bring down political rivals or targets, as the sudden break-up and rout of the Taliban has shown while the Taliban's resilience was overcome by airpower creating shock and dislocation. Gen Jim Jones, Commandant of US Marines, speaking on CNN's Larry King Live, contrasted the Kosovo air campaign with Afghanistan in the use of airpower. In Kosovo they had no one on the ground to act as "eyes and ears" to "paint" the targets, in Afghanistan this was done effectively. Speaking on the same programme, Senator John McCain spoke of the tremendous impact of airpower but said in the end soldiers like the US marines have to go on the ground to complete the job.

Achieving or not achieving air superiority can decide the outcome of other conventional or unconventional war, it is a balancing factor that can change the equation for the positive. Airpower brings great flexibility to land forces and can cause severe psychological damage not only on the enemy leadership but also rank and file as we have seen in Afghanistan recently. In actual fact, the Taliban and Northern Alliance ground forces came into live ground contact only at Shebergan near Mazar-i-Sharif and for a short time at Kunduz, thereafter the Taliban were relentlessly pursued by concentration of airpower. With Afghanistan in the throes of impending famine, US used another strategic employment of airpower, dropping hundreds of thousands of food packets in a bid to reach directly into the hearts and minds of the Afghan population. The result of these "food bombs" strategy is not yet known.

Airpower as an offensive weapon must be employed primarily to accomplish strategic objectives before turning to tactical needs. Sound intelligence and all air resources must be pooled to be virtually and laterally integrated, commanded and controlled by air experts rather than being employed by jacks of all trades. There is a case for a poor man's airforce to meet the land force's needs while the battle for air superiority is raging.

Strategic and tactical planners firstly ensured that application of superior technology was combat effective and well integrated. The Taliban did not have the means of countering either the force and/or its effects. They did not have the military sense to avoid giving lucrative targets to airpower, resulting in a total rout. Aircraft were used in multi-role or multi-tasked wherever necessary and whenever possible to create "strategic paralysis". However, this does not equate to defeat, if opposition forces had remained tactically vital, they would have required defeat in detail. Faced with the contrasting requirements of garrisoning urban areas and to defending them, the Taliban made the classical mistake of not doing either properly. They denuded their garrisons by occupying defensive locations and were pounded in their pitiful defensive lines around cities. Though US airpower is even now acting against the Al-Qaeda to inflict defeat in detail, the Taliban almost total extinction as viable governing entity was caused by airpower. The Mujahideen they had disarmed in 1996 on coming to power were re-armed by the Taliban's as a last resort in the vain hope that they would side against a common external enemy. A combination of pent-up hatred at the humiliation of several years at the hands of the Taliban and the green of US dollars easily subverted their loyalties. Providing adequate intelligence to US Forces, they also supplied fighting soldiers (on payment) for ground combat. Supplemented by unarmed reconnaissance vehicles predators (UAVs), positioned satellites, electronic surveillance units, etc. This served to identify and destroy the Taliban's control mechanism producing, transporting or giving combat.

Airpower pulverized the Taliban but it could not accomplish the primary war aim and/or attack what it could not sense, it allowed Mullah Umar and Osama Bin Laden to escape, at least till now. Without knowledge it cannot defer attacking what it should not have, thus causing civilian casualties. Airpower can blow a door of its hinges but unlike a simple combat soldier Nathu Khan, it cannot see what is behind the door. The manhunt for both Taliban and Al-Qaida leaders goes on.

While there is no doubt about its effectiveness, an unconventional enemy has to be as obliging as the Taliban to be decisively defeated by airpower.

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Prospect of IT in Bangladesh

ASM NAZRUL ISLAM

Present Information Technology (IT) is a subject of widespread interest in Bangladesh. There are around 100 software houses, 35 data entry centres, thousands of formal and informal IT training centres and numerous computer shops. The Government has declared IT as a thrust sector and that computer training centre will be set up in each divisional and district headquarters of Bangladesh. Import of computer hardware and software is now duty free, VSAT is deregulated, high speed DDN (Digital Data Network) has been introduced. One fourth of the 45 recommendations of JRC report on software export has already been implemented; rest is in the process of implementation. A tremendous activity is going on in

every sector including e-commerce, e-governance, computer networking, Internet, web browsing, web applications, multimedia product development etc. Some active steps and initiatives are already there, as described below for an exposure of the present and future prospects of IT in Bangladesh.

Telecommunication: Bangladesh has one of the lowest tele-density in Asia, with a mere 0.6 (in India 1.5) lines per 100 people. In terms of phone connectivity, the charge of Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) is one of the highest in the world, approximately US\$500.00 (in India US\$60) for normal single telephone line connection. However, there has been significant improvement in services of telecommunication within last few years. Present government is also trying to get additional telephone

lines from a Canadian firm. If these telephone lines are available in Bangladesh, most of the PC users will be able to use internet and find a scope to build up international career.

Associations and professional bodies: The associations and professional bodies who are playing vital role to develop the IT sector in Bangladesh are as follows:

- * Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS) was formed in 1979. This is an association of the IT Professionals.
- * Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) was formed in 1987. This is basically an association of Computer Vendors.
- * Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) was formed in 1998 to promote the interest of IT business, especially for software development and related IT services.

- * Bangladesh Software Marketing and Promotions (BSMP), a private organisation, has been formed with the view to helping the local computer programmers and promote their software.
- * Bangladesh Computer Writers Association has been formed to promote the writers activities in the country.

- * Bangladesh Association for Information Technology Education (BAITE) has been formed to promote the activities toward standardising informal IT education in the country.

Banks support: Well-trained Bangladeshi IT professionals can start their business like Data entry, Web development, Multimedia, ISP and Medical Data Transcription services. Cybercafe and IT Training Centre. They can easily get financial help from bank. A number of government banks have already started credit programmes to encourage the entrepreneurs in software industry. Some private banks are using our locally developed software too. However, due to some constraints the outcome is not up to the expectation.

Government initiatives: The Government of Bangladesh has taken some important initiatives to develop our IT sector. Still we are waiting to see a fruitful change in our Information Technology. However, some remarkable steps of government are highlighted for information.

- * IT has been declared as a thrust sector.
- * Quick implementation of the recommendations of JRC report (a high powered committee for software export).
- * Waiving all taxes and duties from import of computer hardware and software.
- * Hundred percent remittances of profit and capital gains for foreign investors without any approval.
- * BTB's implementation of DDN

service.

- * Decision to link Bangladesh to global highway through submarine cable link by next two years.

Bangladesh Computer Council: Bangladesh Computer Council is the apex body of the government dealing with Information Technology. BCC is running according to BCC Act, 1990 as an autonomous organisation under the administrative control of the Ministry of Science & Technology. BCC is playing various types of roles regarding the IT booming over the country.

Human resource: Human resource is the most important component for IT industry. Bangladesh has a huge educated, unemployed youth force with the ability to read and write English. The country can take advantage of its immense manpower to train and prepare programmers and IT professionals. Government has already started a project to develop Computer Programmers in Bangladesh. All the universities are offering one year post-graduate Diploma course for the graduates. Our unemployed educated persons can take this opportunity to build their career as IT professionals.

IT awareness: Young generation in Bangladesh is very enthusiastic and has correctly identified IT as the future of the country. There are numerous computer clubs, computer festivals, programming contests, web design contests, IT related seminars and discussions in many cities of the country. There are about 16 magazines and four digital IT magazines are being published monthly and some daily newspapers publish IT pages once/twice a week. A few of the magazines are in collaboration with other international magazines, however, most of these are Bangladeshi origin. There are a few interactive sites and forums. A number of business centres and cybercafes have started up recently. Most of these business centres provide e-mail, e-mail to fax, phonefax services and cyber cafes offer Internet browsing.

E-commerce: Recently there has been a surge in E-commerce activities in Bangladesh. There are E-commerce related seminars and symposiums in the country almost everyday and all the major training centres are offering courses on E-commerce. Government is now formulating laws for e-commerce to enhance the business rapidly and smoothly.

IT park and international market: Some private organisations have already started to work for setting up IT park and IT villages in the country. Some investors are foreigners and they are very much interested to build Bangladesh students as IT professionals. They have already started to commission their views. Our Bangladeshi students can take this chance and hit the international

job market in the IT field. There are lot of scopes of working and entering into the international market. Just we have to take proper initiatives. Bangladeshi IT professionals have a good demand in international IT job market, which has been proved by some of our BUET students.

Conclusion: Our Bangladeshi students should be more aware about Information Technology and they should take proper decision to build their career. Indians have changed their whole financial position by IT. Their government also is very much serious about IT. Any way, Bangladesh has a long way to go in a very short time to enjoy the fruits of information age. It will be only possible when there will be political commitment with better IT infrastructure, internal network, country domain and above all a high speed fibre optic link to the Information Superhighway.

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Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

ABC of earache

What is an earache?
An earache is a pain in the ear. It can be associated with dizziness and loss of hearing.

What are the causes?
Earaches are usually caused by either:
* an external ear infection called otitis externa. (This is more likely if it is painful to pull on your ear) or
* a middle ear infection called otitis media.

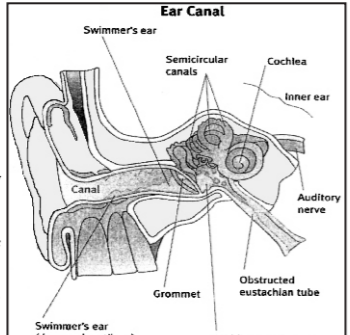
External ear infections
External ear infections are also called "tropical ear" or "swimmer's ear." They are caused by bacteria or fungi infecting the skin of the outer ear canal. Infections cause swelling of the skin and peeling. This may block off your ear canal and stop you from hearing.

Middle ear infections
Middle ear infections (otitis media) cause ear pain and a loss of hearing. Are there any triggers for middle ear infections?
Colds and flu can trigger a middle ear infection. Middle ear infections are more common in children because they have a smaller eustachian tube. This tube goes from the middle ear to the back of the nasal cavity and functions to equalize pressure behind the eardrum.

What complications can occur with middle ear infections?
When the fluid fails to drain from the middle ear cavity after an infection there can be significant hearing loss. Sometimes a grommet (a double cuffed tube) is inserted into the eardrum (tympanic membrane) to aid in ventilation.

When should I see my doctor?
If a child has a high fever with a cold, they may be developing an ear infection. See your doctor if a fever over 39° C persists for more than 24 hours.

Next: ABC of fever.



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