



DTCB targets 20 years to ease traffic

An immediate action plan is underway

MIZANUR KHAN

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) has designed an immediate action plan to construct flyovers, set up multi-storey car parks, develop public transport, construct bypass and link roads in an attempt to ease the ever-increasing traffic congestion in the city.

The plan also includes shifting railway lines out of the city and improving the traffic system. "The plan will be implemented in phases and we hope these steps will minimize the present congestion," said a DTCB official. "The transport system has really turned chaotic because of lack of proper infrastructure. If no action is taken immediately the capital may turn into a dead city within the next ten years," he added.

The Strategic Transport Plan (STP) which will span 20 years was initiated by the DTCB in March to conduct a comprehensive study on a methodical transport system and is sched-

uled to be completed by March 2005. Sixty percent of the plan has already been worked on which includes the immediate action plan; others still lie on paper.

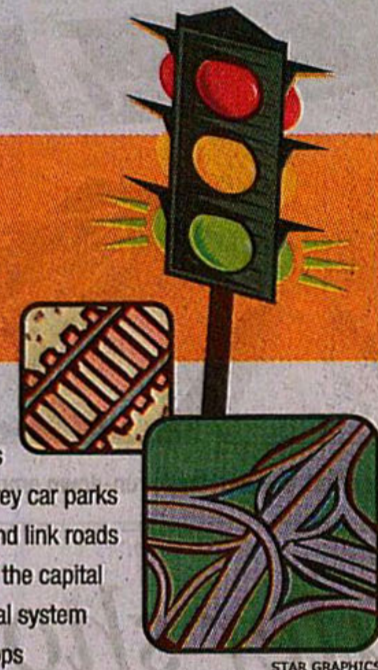
"The city has not been developed according to any plan. The future of Dhaka has not been considered in the construction of roads and for the first time we will bring out a transport model for the city," said Shahinuzzaman Arun, a DTCB engineer.

The construction of a kilometre long tunnel from Shaheed Jahangir gate to Agargaon was a suggestion of the STP. This is expected to ease the traffic congestion from Mohakhali along Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in front of the prime minister's office.

Construction of the long awaited and much talked about Panthapath-Sonargaon-Rampura road, improvement of the Uttara-Ashulia-EPZ-Chandra road, construction of the Zia Colony-Mirpur Road, rebuilding of the road stretching from Mirpur Ansar Camp to Kachukhet and the construction

PLAN TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

- Construction of 8 flyovers
- Setting up more footbridges
- Construction of 3 multi-storey car parks
- Construction of bypasses and link roads
- Shifting railway lines out of the capital
- Improvement of traffic signal system
- Construction of 200 bus stops



of Mirpur-2 to Agargaon have been given priority.

According to the plan, four other roads will be constructed from Mohammadpur bus stand to west flood protection embankment, Ring road to Mohammadpur bus stand, Hazaribagh to west flood protection embankment and from Bijoy Sarani to Tongi diversion

road, to ensure the smooth flow of traffic.

Suggestions for an underground metro, elevated expressway and sky train have been incorporated in the DTCB's action plan, which proposes the construction of eight more flyovers by 2020 to ease traffic congestion.

The flyovers are proposed at

the Hotel Sonargaon, Banglamotor, Moghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh, Kakrail, Airport and Pragati Sarani intersections.

The plan has within the proposals, the construction of three multi-storey car parks at Dilkusha, Motijheel and Karwan Bazar. Presently, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is constructing the parking facility at Motijheel while Sadharan Bima is constructing another at Dilkusha.

The plan proposes 200 bus stops, an eastern bypass, two more bridges on the Buriganga river, construction of link roads with newly developed outskirts and three truck terminals, while emphasising on the improvement of the traffic signal system, construction of the Jatrabari flyover and feeder roads with circular waterways.

DTCB officials said making an action plan is easy but when the authorities start implementing many problems arise. "It will not be possible to implement all the plans in a day because of the many factors involved," said an insider.

Students cry for concessions

Request retrieval of transport fare privileges

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Students in Bangladesh are deprived of special privileges against their identity cards both in government and private sectors although almost every country in the world provides students with various facilities.

Students of other countries enjoy concessions on bus, train and air tickets and also at cinemas and other entertainment facilities. Medical and other utility services also reserve preferential treatment for students in many places.

Even five years ago student concession was available on bus services of the city. BRTC buses on route six were preferred by students because of the reduced fare if one could show the ID card.

But that privilege has been withdrawn.

"I enjoyed concession on bus fare of route six. Suddenly the authorities stopped it and put notices on buses that 'no half pass was available' and started calling it 'sitting service' although it still runs like a local bus service," said Golam Kibria, a student.

Taimur Alam Khanodoker, chairman of BRTC said that they had stopped student concession to make BRTC more profitable.

"We are charging the least possible fare for our services and if we continue to give student concession, we will incur losses," said Khanodoker. "We will try to resume it after BRTC becomes more profitable," he added.

"As a student I enjoyed vari-

ous concessions, sometimes even up to fifty percent reduction on buses and trains, at the cinema and clubs in Australia," said Russell Rahman who has just returned from that country after completing his graduation there.

Sohel Islam, who had studied in India, also echoed the same experience.

Students want the government to take initiatives to re-launch student concession even if it is in the transport sector only.

"As a non-resident student of Jahangirnagar University I have to spend a lot of money to attend classes travelling some 26 kilometres from Dhaka everyday. If I get a concession, it will ease the pressure on my family," said Masum Ahmed.

At present, only national flag

carriers Bangladesh Biman provide 25 per cent concession for students on their domestic flights.

"Very few students take this opportunity in fact as most cannot afford air travel. It is practical on trains and buses," said a Biman official.

State Minister for education ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon said he had also enjoyed student concession, which he thought was a very admirable practice.

He promised to take necessary steps to resume the student concession system as soon as possible.

"I will put it forward in a ministerial meeting and re-start the concession system on transportation and entertainment facilities," Milon told Star City.



Pedestrians suffer as footpaths remain occupied, filthy

Residents welcome rickshaw-free Mirpur Road

SULTANA RAHMAN

City residents have welcomed the step to make Russell Square to Azimpur section of the Mirpur Road rickshaw-free, but commuters are suffering from lack of alternative transport arrangements and unusable footpaths.

The busy road was made off-limits to non-motorised vehicles on December 17 forcing the commuters to take bus or walk on the footpaths which are lying in poor condition.

Footpaths on both sides of the Mirpur Road are fully occupied by hawkers, with some

points remain full of garbage. The dumping of garbage on the footpath continues due to lack of effective monitoring by the authorities.

"I welcome the government decision to make the road rickshaw-free but before implementing the decision they should have arranged adequate buses and made the footpaths usable," said Zebunnessa, a college teacher.

Zebunnessa took a rickshaw from her house at Green Road and left it at Science Laboratory crossing. Then she walked five minutes for getting

a bus to her workplace Eden College. "It took more than half an hour to reach the college."

When rickshaws were available, she could reach the college in 15/20 minutes, Zebunnessa said. "You cannot walk of the filthy footpath near Science Laboratory as people use it for urinating," she said.

"But this is not the end of sufferings," she continued. "I found it really difficult to board a bus in front of Teachers' Training College. I could easily walk to my college if the footpaths were clean and free from hawkers."

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has pressed 40 double-decker buses into service on the route and decided to run them for free to passengers until December 26 but it is inadequate to meet the passengers' demand.

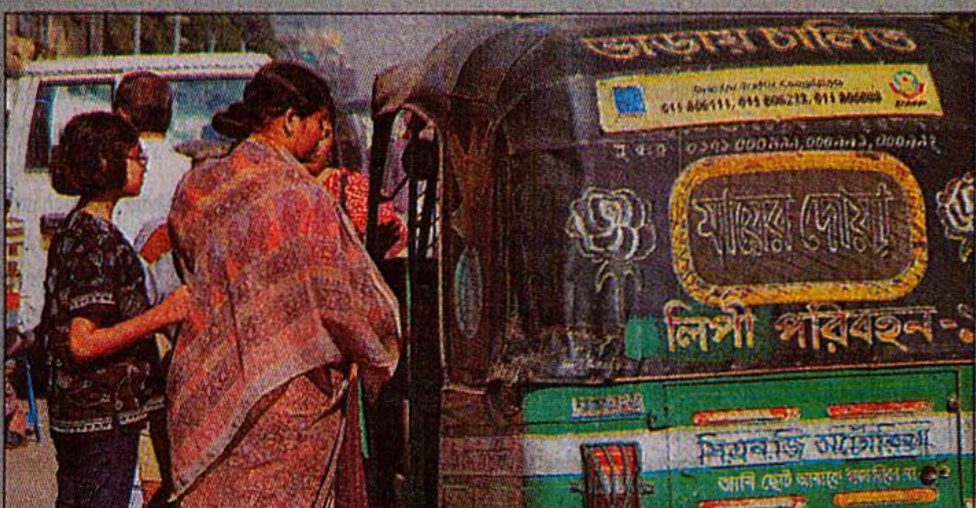
However, most commuters welcomed the decision to make the road off-limits to rickshaws as the step eased traffic congestion on the busy road. Now only the pedestrians and commuters of short-distance are suffering.

"We the residents of Dhaka seldom walk whereas those in

most big cities do not use a vehicle for a short distance," said Helaluddin Nagri, an official at the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

He however agreed that the dwellers in Dhaka have limited scopes for walking as most of the footpaths are inconvenient for the pedestrians.

According to Dhaka City Corporation, many rickshawpullers are affected due to the rickshaw off-limits plan for Mirpur Road. "This is nothing but an attempt to kill poor people," said Abdul Latif, a rickshawpuller.



Commuters are compelled to spend more on CNG-driven auto-rickshaws as a part of Mirpur road was made rickshaw-free on Friday.