

# When Going Gets Tough

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**D**haka, one of the most ill-planned cities in the world, has seen a consistent rise in terms of population over the last one and a half decades, but the most basic infrastructural requirements needed to accommodate that ever-soaring population have never been undertaken. While it is possible to mention any number of resultant problems, commuting certainly ranks among the greatest woes.

Dhaka is a terrible city for every variety of commuters. Whether one travels by rickshaw, or bus, or auto-rickshaw or cab or even on foot, a journey within Dhaka city is a virtual nightmare.

Commuting in Dhaka is inevitably tied to getting locked in terrible traffic jam that puts one's patience to test. Commuting in Dhaka is often physically challenging, especially for those who travel by local bus. Travelling by local bus is like fighting a battle where one never wins and always ends up exhausted. Commuting in Dhaka is also hazardous -- drivers of a large number of motor vehicles drive recklessly and carry fake license. Commuting in Dhaka is taxing, in more ways than one. Not only is precious time wasted just waiting in hellish traffic; the waiting also eats at our spirit and sense of well being; after making a single journey one often ends up with a sagging spirit.

It's almost impossible to quantify either in terms of time or money the Dhakaites have to lose due to traffic jam, but a glimpse into any individual commuter's plight gives an idea about the collective misery of the public.

For a large number of commuters in Dhaka, bus (local buses, most of which are mini in size) is the only option, simply because it is affordable. But the cheap fare comes at a terrible price. A bus ride within Dhaka city is a formidable journey. From getting on a bus to disembarkation, it is a virtual war; in between, it is a continuous hassle while sweating incessantly amidst continuous shoving and pushing from all around, gasping for breath. "I could still bear up with this if the bus did not have to halt every few minutes in a jam, especially in this hot and humid weather," says Shajal Dhar, a salesman at a gold shop at Chadni Chawk. It takes him 1.15 to 1.30 hours to move

