

City Corporation (DCC). "DUTP is a project of the Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB). The board came into being in a special act passed at the parliament in April of 2001; it is tasked with co-ordination of transport in Dhaka," says Nazrul Islam, Professor, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka, and honorary chairman, Centre for Urban Studies.

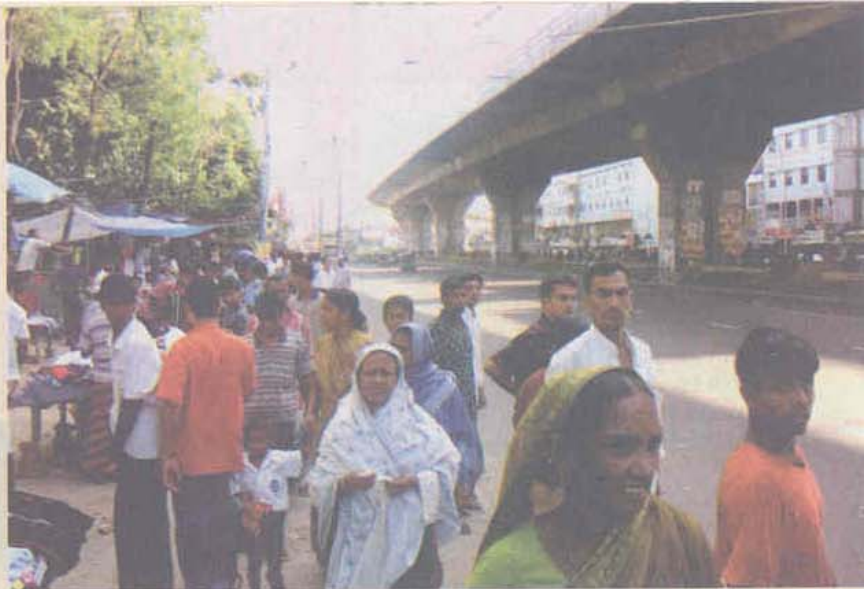
With the city mayor as the chairman of DTCB, and the secretary of the Ministry of Communication as the vice-chairman, it is steered by a committee of 23 members. The members are either chiefs of the concerned authorities or their representatives. The main tasks of the DTCB is implementing STP and its consultants are The Louis Berger Group and Bangladesh Consultant Ltd.

"The firms came up with a long-term strategy for Dhaka traffic, the main issue that they tackled was how the transport problem would be solved. An advisory committee was formed to review their plan, it was a high-powered committee with 32 members," informs Islam.

The main recommendations of the consultants were "delegated bus lane and 'pedestrian first' policy". "The main proposal was that a lane would be created for Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS), it would be an imitation of the Bogota model," Islam points out.

The advisory committee was to review the strategies that the consultants put forward; Islam himself is one of the members of this committee. Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of BRAC University, is the chairman of the committee. He is in favour of the metro-rail and its early implementation. "We are pressing for an immediate feasibility test. In the STP the consultants have put a lot of emphasis on BRTS. I think the cost of BRTS has been underestimated, and the existing roads are too narrow for designating a separate lane for this system to work," says Chowdhury. He stresses the fact that it is the responsibility of the consultants to take the idea of metro-rail seriously and take steps to expedite the process.

Islam as well as the rest of the members of the advisory committee was happy about the plan of having



The city needs a "Pedestrians First" policy as sixty percent of city dwellers walk to their workplace everyday.

Possible solutions

- Implementation of the proposed link roads that will connect the eastern part of the city to the west.
- The proposed Dhaka bypass roads are to be built.
- "Pedestrians first" policy footpaths need to be widened to facilitate easymobility.
- An integrated traffic system involving metro-rail, waterways alongside motorised and non-motorised vehicles plying the roads.

BRTS, as long as it did not remain the only option. For them having a separate lane for speeding buses was a partial solution to the overall problem of traffic management. As for the 'pedestrian first policy', they were in agreement with the consultants, as they all acknowledged that Dhaka was a city where a major portion of the office-going public reach their workplace on foot. The advisory committee was overtly critical on the point that the long-term strategy to manage Dhaka traffic regarded BRTS as the only solution. "Their plan hinged completely upon roads, overhead expressways. We pointed out that their plan did not include metro-rail. In a city of 10 to 12 million people, which will, in next 20 years, stand at 30 or 35 million, we can't exclude the idea of metro-rail if we are to facilitate the transport service," Islam points out.

"The consultant firms were not happy about incorporation of metro-rail. They relied solely on BRTS. But BRTS can provide a short-term solution to the problem," says Islam. It was at the insistence of the advisory committee that the consultants incorporated metro-rail in their strategy.

As for the pedestrian first policy, the advisory committee was happy to have regarded it as one of the most important features of the strategy. "Dependence on private automobiles has to be reduced to facilitate smooth mobility of commuters," Islam says. He hastens to add that 60 percent of all journeys to work is on foot. "A huge workforce belong to the garment sector,