



To ease traffic jams more and more big coaches need to be introduced.

Near about two million garment workers reach their workplace on foot, had this been brought into consideration, the footpaths would've been wider and in better condition," adds Islam.

"It is in the cantonment area where footpaths are always in proper condition, and where it is being used appropriately. In other places lack of proper walkways or ill-maintained footpaths force the garment workers to walk on the roads," Islam points out. "There should have been wider footpaths in Dhaka. Even in Kolkata there are footpaths as wide as 16 feet. And in some Scandinavian cities, where pedestrians are few, there are footpaths that are very, very wide," Islam points out.

Chowdhury feels that immediate steps should be taken to make Dhaka's road pedestrian friendly. "Footpaths have been taken over by vendors, and in places there are encroachers who have put up structures. These have to be removed for a sound management of the walkways," he says.

In Dhaka the withdrawal of rickshaws from major thoroughfares had a principle behind it, it was to be replaced by faster, cheaper public transport with larger carrying capacity. However, Dhaka still remains a city that pathetically lacks proper public transport system. Even in the STP the consultants pointed out that "Dhaka is perhaps the only city of its size without a well organised, properly scheduled bus system or any type of mass rapid transit system".

For Dhaka there is no alternative to an integrated transport system. Islam believes that the waterway that had been planned, the metro rail that had been proposed

Dependence on private automobiles has to be reduced to facilitate smooth mobility of commuters

by the advisory committee, and even the non-motorised vehicles like rickshaw that ply in the connecting lanes would have been a part of the matrix.

The road surface, according to an estimate put forward by Islam back in 1976, is eight percent of the total surface area of Dhaka. In an integrated system, with waterways and metro-rail, the need for roads will not be that great. Still Islam estimates that the road surface in Dhaka should be more than 15 percent. "If we are solely dependent on roads, then it must be between 20 to 25 percent. But it also depends on what kind of vehicle we are to use. With the big and medium-sized cars on the road, we need wider roads, when our policy should've been to use smaller cars," says Islam.

Before the work for metro-rail gets started, the main task facing the relevant authorities is to build the already proposed link roads and by-pass roads. "The major defect in the transport network is the absence of link roads between eastern and western part of Dhaka. And the by-pass roads that are in the pipeline must be implemented very rapidly," opines Chowdhury.

As for the ten new roads that had been planned by Razuk as far back as in 1995, only one had been completed in the last ten years. The widening of the roads too has not seen any headway. An executive engineer of zone eight of the Dhaka City Corporation says that there were plans for building four link roads that had not been implemented. "Three of which was in the RAJUK Master Plan," he says. The authorities responsible for implementa-

tion of these roads have shown no interest in following the RAJUK Master Plan. The concerned engineer believes that the higher authorities have not given directives to build the roads because they entail huge expenditure.

However expensive it is to turn Dhaka into a commuter friendly city, the strategies must be governed by the need of the public, not by the expenditure that the projects entail. In the STP proposed by The Louis Berger Group and Bangladesh Consultant Ltd the final design and financing plans for the first metro line begins in the 2010 to 2014 phase. The experts feel that the work of metro-rail must begin immediately. As Prof Islam has pointed out, Dhaka needs an integrated system of traffic, where even the waterways would be in proper use to facilitate mobility of the city dwellers.