

# Lack of traffic policing muddles city streets during Eid

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Despite the deserted and sportive look of the city streets during the Eid holidays, irregularities in traffic policing created traffic disarray in many parts of the capital city with no traffic officials present to deal with the confusion.

Contrary to ongoing festivity and cheerful ambience of the capital city, many parts of the city streets seemed to be in disarray through traffic messes in absence of adequate traffic officials during the holidays.

No officials were seen to be dealing with the traffic disarray in Manik Mia Avenue, Mirpur Road and Sonargaon intersection, Dhamondi Road-27, Badda, Karwan Bazar intersection and some other major points in the city.

"I was stuck in a mess created by vehicles coming from all directions in Mogbazar intersection, and there were no traffic officials to deal with it," said Jahir Alam, a service

holder. "It was simply outrageous and unacceptable especially during the Eid day."

At some of the key intersections, vehicles remained stranded in long queues due to traffic mismanagement, commuters said.

On-duty traffic officers blamed the rickshaw-pullers and reckless driving for the disarray in the city streets during the Eid holidays.

"During the Eid festivals most

of the privately hired drivers go on vacation while inexperienced drivers take over and create confusions in the streets," said Johur, a traffic sergeant. "Then there are the rickshaws that only make things worse."

With modest traffic policing, bans making rickshaws off-limits to many city streets seemed to have been disappeared with countless rickshaws plying around the city streets.

The little number of traffic

STAR PHOTO



sergeants who were on duty on the Eid day seemed to ignore the dozens of rickshaws that pushed their way on all over the roads.

Rickshaws were seen plying even on the VIP roads including the one in front of Farmgate intersection, Airport Road, along the stretch from Karwan Bazar up to Shahbagh intersection and all around some of the major joints of the capital city.

When asked, traffic police officials expressed surprise concerning the absence of adequate traffic officials on the city streets during Eid holidays.

"The duties of the officers are usually scheduled days prior to the given day and strict supervision is maintained to ensure the efficiency of the traffic management, then there are the VIP transportations," said an official. "I don't see how there could not be adequate officials to oversee the traffic management."

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police's traffic

department, the deployment of security officials was as usual, and the enforcement of rules were more aggressive to prevent isolated incidents during the Eid holidays.

"No lack of arrangements were left in the traffic management and usual number of officers were deployed to oversee the city streets," said Morshed-ul Anwar, deputy commissioner (South) of DMP's traffic department.

"And unlike the Eid-ul-Fitr, the Eid-ul-Azha has majority of the city dwellers spending the Eid in the city so there are always possibilities for congestions," added Anwar.

Prior to the Eid holidays and the New Year's Eve, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Department along with the Rapid Action Battalion authorities disclosed that 10,000 law enforcers would be deployed to oversee the city streets and ensure public safety.

## Ambulance fares soar during political unrest

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Ambulance operators in the city charge more than double the actual fare during general strike or blockade programs called by political parties.

The fares are even higher when they carry passengers

instead of patients.

According to sources at different hospitals and clinics, there are at least 50 ambulance operators in the city plying around 200 vehicles.

Altaf Hossain, an ambulance owner, told Star City that in normal days, he charges between Tk 5000 and Tk 7000 a day," he said.

A group of brokers was found

within Dhaka. But during hartal and blockade he charges between Tk 3000 and Tk 4000.

"Rich businessmen and political leaders often hire ambulances for commuting during hartal. From them we collect between Tk 5000 and Tk 7000 a day," he said.

in front of the emergency department of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU). The brokers help patients hire an ambulance for an unofficial commission of up to 20 percent from the ambulance owners for negotiating.

During hartal these brokers usually broker deals between rich commuters and patients and make hefty sums.

"As the demand is high today you will have to pay more, it does not matter whether you are a patient or not," said a broker when this reporter tried to hire an ambulance posing as a customer at BSMMU recently.

Shah Alam, owner of two ambulances, denied carrying general passengers instead of patients during hartal or blockade but admitted taking extra fares on those days.

"On Wednesday evening the fare was Tk 1500 when I reached the hospital but on Saturday morning when I searched for an ambulance for Sunday, they asked for Tk 3000 because there was a blockade on that day," said Abul Hossain, guardian of a patient. He was searching for an ambulance to transport his patient home from BSMMU.

"I am feeling like a hostage in the grip of these brokers and owners and no one is here to turn to," he said.



## Ghostly hands switch off lights

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When contacted, the project director of the Mohakhali flyover Bishwajit Dey said they had closed the project in June 2006.

"We handed over the authority of the Mohakhali flyover to DCC immediately after the 'defect liability period' was over in June 2006. Since then all the maintenance including lighting over the flyover is DCC's responsibility," said Dey.

He said that they have sent all the papers including the maintenance schedule to the then project director (PD) of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), Syed Qudratullah.

Qudratullah acknowledged that he had received the papers

needed to obtain the maintenance authority of the flyover in July 2006.

"Immediately after receiving the papers I have sent these to DCC Zone-9 to maintain the flyover and the lights as well," said Qudratullah.

However, to add more mystery the officials of DCC Zone-9 said they have not received any such papers from Nagar Bhaban.

Humayun Kabir, electrical engineer of DCC zone-9 said on Thursday that he has not received any official papers or any written order from the high authority yet regarding the maintenance of the electrical installations.

"Though we are not officially

assigned for the maintenance, after seeing the reports on Star City I sent a team for inspection. But they found the switch room under lock and key. We couldn't take any action as we did not find the keys," said Kabir.

He also said that he did not know who had switched off the lights.

In a caption story Star City first wrote about the wastage of electricity when dozens of streetlights burned day and night over Mohakhali flyover, on November 27, 2006 issue. Star City ran the same story on November 29, 2006 as nobody took any step to switch them off.

Meanwhile DCC and R&HD kept pointing fingers at each other,

each denying responsibility of the lights. Star City had to run another story on December 3 and 24, 2006 as the scenario remained unchanged.

On December 25, 2006 Star City ran another story finding a ray of light in switching off the lights. On the day before DCC officials started a move to take control of the Mahakhali flyover from the R&HD while the lights remained burning day and night for nearly two months.

Star City last published a story on the burning of streetlights over Mahakhali flyover on December 27, 2006. After that the lights went off for good. No one knows when those will be switched on again.

## Mismanagement at Dhanmondi Lake

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once in a month but it has sat five to six times in past five years.

The advisory committee headed by local government secretary has sat just once in five years though it is supposed to sit once in every two months.

"We try to hold meetings of the management committee regularly but the DCC zone-5 that performs the secretarial job of the committee, is supposed to convene the meetings," said Saifuddin Ahmed.

It seems that the zonal offi-

cials often fail to manage time to convene meetings, he said.

The committee meeting of August 24, 2006 decided that the chief estate officer of DCC would immediately evict establishments of sectors 1, 3 and 6 as defaulters. But the illegal commercial set-ups in the said sectors are still doing business.

Immediate past chief estate officer, Abu Taleb, said, "We could not evict establishments of the said sectors due to unavailability of police force."

The entire lake area is found infested with swarming hawkers

and beggars round the clock. An on-duty security guard named Minati was found surrounded by hawkers to the west of Panshi Restaurant on Thursday.

"We ask the hawkers not to enter the area but they don't pay heed," said Minati when asked why she let them in. "When we take the matter to our security officer Fazlul Haq, he says he will take care of it."

Though it was a decision of the committee that the responsibility of maintenance and security of the lake area would be entrusted on a body involving

any local welfare organisation, the decision still lies in paper.

An expensive water springer, meant not only for beautification of the lake but also to keep the water fresh, has been lying inoperative ever since it was installed behind the Panshi Restaurant in sector 5.

A number of makeshift viewing-decks (wooden and bamboo-made) installed around an island restaurant (near Russell Square) in sector 2 are unauthorised, the DCC has not yet demolished them.

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