

LICENSING RICKSHAWPULLERS

Thousands to be deprived of livelihoods

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Several lakh rickshawpullers are to be deprived of livelihood as Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) plans to go tough on unlicensed rickshawpullers.

The city corporation is providing only 1.76 lakh driving licences to the rickshawpullers while different sources said the number is not less than 10 lakh in the city.

According to DCC, there are about 79,000 authorised rickshaws and 10,000 rickshaw-vans in the city. Based on the statistics, DCC has set a target to grant licence to 1.76 lakh pullers considering two shifts for each

three-wheeler.

DCC has so far provided 1,46,000 licences to the pullers.

"None would be allowed to pull rickshaws without driving licence," said Sayed Jahangir, chief of the Wheel Tax Department of DCC.

He said the city corporation on every Saturday provides rickshaw-pulling licence and by the end of the present fiscal year they will reach the target of 1.76 lakh.

According to DMP, DCC and rickshaw-garage owners, there are 5 to 6 lakh authorised and unauthorised rickshaws in the city and the number pullers is almost double.

If the number of rickshaws is kept restricted within 1.76 lakh, around 8 lakh unlicensed rickshawpullers will become jobless, sources said.

Not only the rickshawpullers, a large number of people are involved in related jobs such as rickshaw assembling and repair, and selling of rickshaw parts.

Asked how will DCC deal with the huge number of unauthorised rickshaws, rickshaw-vans and unlicensed pullers, Jahangir said: "We will discuss it with DMP and then will decide about the ways to tackle the situation."

About the fear of possible forgery of licences due to very

poorly made licences, he said the licences do not have any security features. These are merely printed papers with DCC seal. DCC does not have funds to make forgery-proof licences.

DCC collects Tk 30 from the applications for each licence.

According to the government's Strategic Transport Planning, a 20-year plan for Dhaka, rickshaws are daily carrying 34 percent of the total number of passengers in the city. In STP, rickshaw is considered as the feeder transport service.

Rickshaws are seen as one of the main reasons for traffic congestions in the city as the number of rickshaws has grown

over the years due to lack of any controlling mechanism.

Moreover, road space of the city has not been increased to allow movement of more vehicles with the rapidly growing population in the city.

Morshedul Anwar, head of the subcommittee of the Regional Transport Committee, told Star City that as roads are not constructed with the arrangement of rickshaws, these are creating trouble in the main arterials of the city road networks.

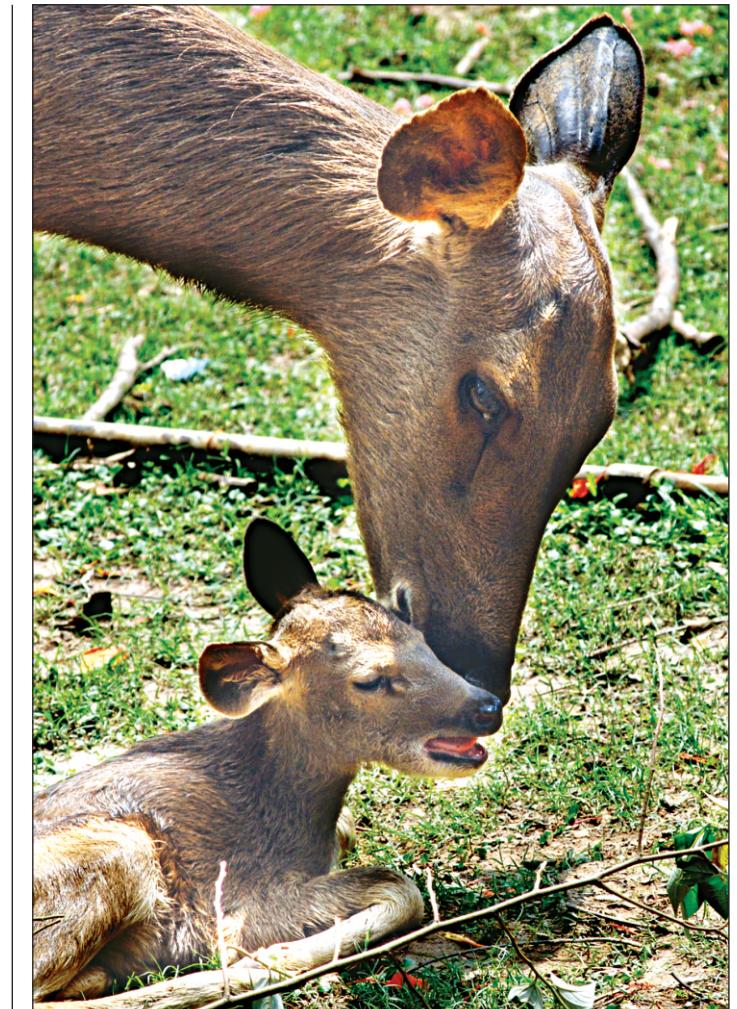
There should be more rickshaw-free and rapid moving roads in the city, he said.

About the possible transport

crisis if only 1.76 lakh rickshaws are allowed to operate in the city, he said if buses were utilised in a proper system, demand for rickshaws would reduce. "The problem is not transport gap but unemployment of thousands of people."

"Safety is another concern. Rickshaws are plying with the high speed motorised vehicles in the same road lane and risking lives of the passengers and the pullers," he said.

"We always helped DCC in controlling the number of the rickshaws. We should remove unauthorised rickshaws and pullers from the roads in phases," Morshedul said.



ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

Dhanmondi chaos starts disappearing



A policeman in Dhanmondi stands guard to implement the recent decision to turn roads in Dhanmondi into one-way thoroughfares.

STAR PHOTO

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) bid to smoothen flow of traffic in Dhanmondi during rush hours by imposing one-way traffic in several streets have been greeted with warm responses by the local residents.

Dhanmondi, best recognized for its towering buildings, hospitals, private schools and more importantly, its slapdash traffic congestions and pollution, has altered to a great extent since

DMP declared one-way traffic in a number of its streets.

"It is quite remarkable to see such smooth flow of traffic. There are even no honking, and the frequent sites of cars pushing from the middle of nowhere to create gridlocks that lasted for hours is not there either," said an excited Tanzil Ahmed, resident from Dhanmondi.

While children shambling with their schoolbags and toddling their way to the schools across the static gridlocks espe-

cially in the mornings and afternoons used to be a common spectacle that roughly symbolized Dhanmondi even a while back, Dhanmondi residents find it difficult to recognize the fact that the situation is quite different now.

"It is quite hard to believe that the unbearably lengthy queue of cars that prickled in the Dhanmondi streets has disappeared," said Madheeha Hafeez, a banker from Dhanmondi.

"It is evidently the most effec-

tive measures been taken by the authorities to smoothen the otherwise exasperating conditions of traffic in Dhanmondi," she added.

However, opinions seem to vary from commuters to commuters. Several Dhanmondi residents alleged that although abrupt traffic hold ups are as frequent as they used to be, they still tend to take place from time to time, as confusions about the new regulations are still apparent amongst local residents. Chauffeurs and dwellers from other parts of the city are not fully aware of the new policies as well

"There have been times when the situation was even worse than the usual turmoil. Although a number of law enforcers are stationed before the streets with the one-way signs and posts, numerous cars still manage to come through the wrong way and creates huge traffic confusions," said Rakib Hasan, resident from Dhanmondi.

That sort of confusion has arisen quite a few times since then as general people are still confused about the exact details concerning the roads that were made one-way. In times like these the rickshaw-pullers also tend to charge outrageous fares, as they have to take longer routes," added Rakib Hasan.

Abdul Hakim, a rickshaw puller said, "This new policy has

made our task even tougher as we have to take longer and trickier routes to reach destinations, and we had to increase our fares for this".

The roads of 6, 7, 8, 6A, 7A, 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A, 12A, 13A, 14A and several other residential areas of Dhanmondi were brought under the purview of this new DMP scheme. According to this scheme, one-way traffic will be applicable in these streets from 7:00am to 9:00pm except for the

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