

Traffic mess continues to choke Karwan Bazar

Site for parking lot occupied again as city fathers sit on the plan

TAWFIQUE ALI

Traffic mess continues to choke Karwan Bazar, one of city's busiest commercial hubs, with the city corporation yet to build car parking facility at the designated site in the area.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has a plan to develop a multi-storeyed parking facility at the place from where the joint forces in a drive in January 2007 removed illegal makeshift shops, offices of different political parties and vendors.

However, DCC has not yet been able to remove a number of grocery shops in the western side of the parking area, as it formally leased out the land. Rickshaw vans, garbage and stockpiles of grocery goods always keep the place occupied, sources said.

Syed Kudrat Ullah, superintendent engineer of DCC's Traffic Engineering Division and project director of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), said that the process to develop a hard standing pavement for car parking bay at the site is underway.

"The project is approved. The tender committee will hold a meeting by next week," he said.



STAR PHOTO



Top, Site for parking lot, occupied by rickshaw vans, shows no sign of being freed from the grip of encroachers and, above, traffic jam has become a regular feature at Karwan Bazar.

Vehicles with dark shaded glasses up

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Many car owners in the city ignore the government instructions not to use tinted glass in the vehicle due to a lack of strict enforcement of the ban.

Use of dark shaded glasses in car windows is a violation of traffic rules and offenders are supposed to be fined an amount between Tk 1,000 and Tk 2,500.

"It seems to be a worrying trend among motorists and motorcyclists to fit tinted glass in car windows or use helmet with tinted visors," said Jasimuddin, joint traffic commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

According to globally accepted laws, front windows of a vehicle must allow 70 percent of light through and the front windscreen 75 percent. But there are many illegal tints seen in cars on Dhaka's streets letting as little as 10 percent light through. Traffic officers believe such excessive tints are potentially dangerous, particularly at night.

"Excessive tinting of windows has a similar effect to wearing sunglasses at night. They can seriously reduce a driver's visibility making it harder to spot potential hazards such as pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles," said Sohel Arman, a traffic sergeant.

Traffic police officers said tinted car windows are prohibited so that criminals cannot travel under the cover of dark

shades to avoid detection.

Tinted glass is usually used in vehicles carrying VIPs for security reasons, they said.

The home ministry sometimes gives permission for using tinted glass to VIPs considering the necessity. But such glasses on private automobiles have become very commonly.

Traffic police officials break down the offenders into three groups.

There are some innocent car purchasers who just want their cars to look stylish and nice. There are criminals who seek to hide behind the windows. Then there are people who consider tinted windows as some kind of a fashion.

Abu Syed Sarkar, a car importer, blamed an increasingly celebrity-obsessed media for the rising use of tinted windows.

"People these days believe

status is reflected in the cars they drive," he said. "Super-sized chrome rims, massive sound systems, DVD, and mystery glass -- they want the full package," he said.

Considering the rising demand, unscrupulous traders are importing automobiles fitted with tinted glasses and openly selling them at showrooms.

Glasses are being tinted with special papers in some cases,

sources said.

Customs officials at ports and officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), who are supposed to prevent such practices, are issuing clearances and registrations for automobiles fitted with tinted glasses in exchange for bribe.

Majority of the luxurious sedans and sports utility vehicles from expensive brands are usually fitted with tinted glasses. Medium priced automobiles such as Vauxhall, Townace, Nissan and Mark II are also often fitted with colour window glasses.

Tinted windows users apparently have their reasons for flouting traffic laws. "I think complaining about tints is just another way of pursuing motorists while avoiding other major issues," said Fahad Bin Khalil, who drives a car with tinted windows.

"There are many benefits to tinted windows -- more privacy, cooler ambient temperatures, and better protection to vehicle interiors. I have not seen anyone stopped for their sunglasses to be checked and these often allow less light through," he said.

However, other motorists believe these are merely excuses to hide. "There is no way you can get sunburn through plain glass. The ones who use tinted windows in their cars are obviously trying to conceal something," said Mushfiqur Rahman from Mohammadpur.



STAR PHOTO



SYED ZAKIR HOSSEIN

After his brilliant 'Rajoshik' in front of the Hotel Sheraton, sculptor Mrinal Haque has presented the city with another magnificent work 'Protasha'. The sculpture, built on the theme of Liberation War and world peace, has been set up on the triangular island adjacent to Bangabazar Government Employees Hospital. Sponsored by the Dhaka City Corporation, it was inaugurated by Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday.

Roadside food 'popular' source of diseases

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Roadside food and beverages remain popular in the city as always in spite of the spread of food and waterborne diseases.

Consumers and sellers care very little about the hygiene and nutrition value of the foods. This has added to the worsening situation of diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases this summer, experts said.

Roadside fruit vendors do not maintain cleanliness. Most of the time the knives used for slicing fruits are seldom washed.

Day labourers, rickshaw pullers and people from low-income groups tend to drink



washing the cups and plates all daylong.

"I know that boiled water should be used to wash the sliced fruits. But I use a bucket of supply water for this purpose. If I want to keep clean and boiled water I will have to carry gallons of water for which I will have to buy some buckets and a big cart to carry those. Besides, I will have to boil the water," said Wahidur Rahman, a vendor selling white flesh melon on the Dhaka University campus.

"To tell you the truth I don't

have money to arrange these. I am already burdened with the soaring price of rice," he said.

Other fruit and tea vendors voiced the same opinion.

Sliced green mango, watermelon, cucumber, chanachur, jhalmuri, pickles, chotpoti, sugarcane juice, aloe vera juice and beef kebab top the list of street side food lovers.

Many have the habit of munching on food while walking and buying roadside food without thinking whether those food are fit for eating.

"I need something to munch on while walking. Who cares whether those are healthy or not," said Rizvi, a private university student.

"I never think about the hygiene of the roadside food. They are more tasty than those cooked at home. May be because they add an extra spice made of street side dust," Moshed, a student of Jahangirnagar University, said humorously.

According to experts, people from lower income brackets are main victims of diarrhoea for lack of awareness and poor sanitation.

Dr Iqbal Hossain, an associate scientist at the ICDDR,B said that diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid, hepatitis A and jaundice can attack after intake of unhygienic food and water.

The practice of boiling water is almost absent among those who use firewood and other means of fuel other than natural gas, he said.

"Hot tea is comparatively less harmful if the teacups are washed with full boiled water. But if washed with normal or merely warm water then the risk remains," said Dr Iqbal.

In summer rivers and Brooks, that are sources of drinking water, are dried up and contain high concentration of bacteria, he added.

Sources at ICDDR,B said that patients are pouring into the hospital as diarrhoea situation has worsened in the city. Most of those admitted to the hospital are rickshaw-pullers and day labourers.

The number of diarrhoea patients peak in May every year, they said.