

Dangers at flyover ramps

Absence of footbridge or warning signs turning them into accident spots

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The ramps of Mohakhali and Khilgaon flyovers in the city have become major accident spots due to absence of safe way for pedestrians to cross the road.

Drivers of speeding vehicles often lose control over the steering at the exit of Mohakhali flyover near Chairmanbari, posing a risk to pedestrians. Minor accidents involving pedestrians crossing the road take place at this place almost every day.

The nearest footbridge is located at Kakoli, more than one kilometre from the flyover end, forcing pedestrians, especially thousands of readymade garment factories in the area, to cross the road risking their lives.

Besides, special markings and traffic signs at the spot are gradually fading away. There is hardly any warning by the traffic police while reckless driving is on.

Md Hasan, salesperson of Amir Ali Traders near Mohakhali flyover, said, "We have serious problem while crossing the road. The nearest foot-over bridge is far away while the road dividers have iron fences on them. We can only cross the road at the exit of the flyover where most vehicles pass at a very high speed."

Abdullah-Al-Mahmud, sales manager, New Pacific Aluminium Enterprise at Amtoli, Mohakhali said, "There should be a mecha-



People crossing road near Mohakhali flyover risking their lives.

nism to force vehicles to slow down at the flyover exit. Every day from my store I see minor accidents taking place. On Sunday a taxicab slammed into the railings, shattering all its glasses."

"The authorities remain silent as no major accidents took place here so far," he added. "But I must say, there should be precautionary measures."

At least three people were killed on the night of December 31 last when a car lost control over the steering just after crossing Mohakhali flyover.

A vegetable trader was killed and five others were injured when a truck turned upside down on the flyover

in January 2007.

Mohakhali flyover, the first of its kind in the country, was opened to public in November 2004. The 1.12 km long and 17.9 metre wide flyover cost around Tk 114 crore to build with financial assistance from the World Bank.

The Khilgaon flyover ramp leading to Atish Dipankar Road, Bashabo is risky too.

In November 2008, a female employee of an insurance company was killed on Khilgaon flyover after falling off a motorbike on the ramp.

A 42-year-old man suffered hand and knee injuries when a minibus crashed

into his rickshaw on the Malibagh thoroughfare near the flyover in January 2007.

About a week later, a 25-year-old man suffered back injuries when a minibus bumped into his motorcycle near Malibagh bazaar.

An elderly man was critically injured in another accident also in January 2007.

Majority of these victims were hit by speeding vehicles near the street stretching from Khilgaon flyover to Malibagh level crossing.

Khilgaon flyover connects areas including Rajarbagh, Malibagh, Shahjahanpur, Khilgaon, Goran, Bashabo and Sabujbagh.

The flyover was opened in March 2005 at busy Khilgaon road-rail intersection. It is a 1.9-kilometre-long and 14-metre wide flyover constructed at a cost of Tk 81.75 crore.

Prof Md Shamsul Hoque, director of Accident Research Centre, Buet, explained that while descending from flyover it is obvious that the speed will go up. It might create obstructed vision, preventing the drivers from seeing the special signs or crossing people.

"Combined with this factor, the level of unawareness among our drivers and pedestrians increases the number of accidents," he said.

"At Khilgaon flyover the touchdown point is too close to the side road. Vehicles speeding from the flyover and the side road might hit one another as there is not enough space between them," he said.

Prof Hoque also mentioned that in Bangladesh most vehicles do not have fitness while trucks and buses always tend to overload, which can become dangerous on flyovers.

"The roads near flyovers are also not suitable for pedestrians. There should have been footbridges nearby. It is also urgent to install special marking signs with retro-reflective paints and 'tiger's tail' sign at fly-over junctions," he pointed out.



Hawkers make a comeback taking advantage of lax monitoring. The city wore a clean look after the caretaker government took steps to remove and rehabilitate them. At the fag end of its rule the hawkers came back with their makeshift stalls on the plea of Eid but they never returned. The picture was taken from Karwan Bazar yesterday.



The one-way sign is still there in Dhanmondi. But the traffic jam is on the increase because of poor attention.

Chaotic traffic making a comeback in Dhanmondi

One-way system not working well for lax monitoring

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhanmondi residents enjoyed a month-long run of virtually empty, traffic-free streets thanks to the back-to-back holidays of Eid-ul-Azha, national elections and year-end as most of the educational institutions were closed during the time. But that is about to end. "The bad news is classes in many schools have resumed. In another week or two classes in all schools will be in full swing and then terrible traffic jams in Dhanmondi will be back as usual," said Tanveer Hossain, a teacher.

Dhanmondi, best recognised for its residential apartments, hospitals and private schools, has been plagued with traffic congestions. But the scenes on Dhanmondi streets have changed to some extent over the past one year, as the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) introduced one-way traffic in a number of streets.

During the past three or four weeks the Dhanmondi streets were traffic jam-free mainly due to the fact that most of the schools were closed at that time. Since the first week of this month schools started to resume their classes. And the gridlocks are slowly making a comeback in all the Dhanmondi streets.

In a bid to rid the residential area of the gridlocks, a comprehensive one-way traffic system was introduced in May last year. The roads 6, 7, 8, 6A, 7A, 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A, 12A, 13A, 14A and several other areas of Dhanmondi were brought

under this scheme.

Initially, around 150 cops were deployed to monitor the new traffic system. Baton-wielding law enforcers were seen next to signs prohibiting vehicle entries, honking and parking in front of schools and other organisations.

Dhanmondi residents, to their surprise, observed that much of the haphazardly parked vehicles disappeared, removing traffic chaos while no offenders escape the penalties.

However, the whole system failed when the law enforcers were taken off the streets.

"Now there are practically no traffic police here to monitor the one-way system," said a resident of Dhanmondi road-11. "The only spots where you would find traffic sergeant are the bridge near the road no 8 and road no 27," he said.

"You may also find some traffic cops in the streets during the school hours. But the moment the school hours are over, they disappear and the situation becomes chaotic," said Ivan Karim, a resident of Dhanmondi road-8.

"Things get worse in the lakeside streets. There are always some programmes taking place by the lake drawing a lot of people. Absence of traffic enforcers there worsens tailbacks in other streets of Dhanmondi," he said.

With the departure of traffic officials, the job to monitor the streets has been taken over by the untrained and unqualified community police who can rarely exert authority.

"I doubt they have any training in handling traffic," said Bashir Ahmed, a resident of Dhanmondi road-7.

"Most often they naively let vehicles enter the one-way streets through the wrong way on request of the drivers. They even let vehicles park in no-parking zones if anyone requests nicely enough," he said.

But traffic officials would just bin the criticisms. "Of course we are giving our best efforts to control the traffic situation in Dhanmondi," said a traffic sergeant on duty around Dhanmondi road 8/A.

"Dhanmondi is a traffic hotspot. As the residents here have got used to the one-way traffic system, we decided to relocate some of our forces to some adjoining areas," he said adding, "Dhanmondi still remains one of our top priorities."

In absence of traffic cops the community police are still positioned, and they are doing a great job, he said.

Sources said the traffic police lack both manpower and logistics to supervise all the points of the whole city. So it would be unwise to devote a larger contingent of the force to oversee just one area, said some traffic officials.

However, Dhanmondi residents have some suggestions, which they believe would help ease the traffic congestion in their area.

"The traffic authorities should learn from big cities abroad. They should develop and introduce patrol cars for the area rather than round-the-clock police vigilance," said Naheem Akter, a resident of Dhanmondi 8/A.

"The schools can also play a role in easing traffic jam in Dhanmondi. They can appeal to the parents to abide by traffic rules and avoid parking cars near schools," she said.

Waste pickers often look for saleables in the dustbins in posh areas of the city. This picture was taken from Uttara Model Town yesterday.



STAR PHOTO