

Rickshaws use wrong way, create jam

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Hundreds of rickshaws are 'forced' to go wrong way on the Shaheed Selina Parvin Road near Moghbazar intersection in the city every day, causing traffic jam in the area.

Since a part of the thoroughfare leading up to Moghbazar intersection was announced rickshaw-free in November, the light vehicles heading towards the roundabout are now directed to take the opposite side of the road and paddle along the wrong way towards the joint.

Uniformed traffic and Ansar enforcers are seen standing beside a 'No Rickshaws' sign near Agora supermarket. The baton-wielding officials whistle the queues of rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles to cross a nearby median opening and take the wrong side of the street that leads to Mouchak market.

Not only do the invading rickshaws obstruct the fast-moving traffic on the other side, there have also been many occasions where a rickshaw evaded a serious accident by a hair's breadth, locals said.

Observers pointed out that incidents of accident scares on the street have reached an alarming level -- an opinion justified by a spate of minor accidents here lately.

A middle-aged man suffered a knee injury when a minibus bumped into the rear wheel of his rickshaw in December. The mini bus driver was a split second late to slam on the brakes while the rickshaw tried to zip across the street.

About a week later, a 22-year-old suffered a bad ankle sprain when his rickshaw got stuck between two other rickshaws. The two rickshaws were racing each other to an opening where a third incoming rickshaw came out of

nowhere. The impact made the passenger land a few feet away from the rickshaw.

Both these incidents have some indicators that most people should take note of. They took place in the street stretching from Agora super-

market towards the Moghbazar intersection and in both cases the rickshaw was going the wrong way.

Invariably, the rickshaws were on the side of street where they did not belong.

The fact that bus drivers

fancy the thoroughfare as an ultimate racing ground to drive as recklessly as possible makes the situation even worse. Past the Moghbazar intersection, they all pick up speed and suddenly find strings of rickshaws zipping

across the street.

"I do not get the point of this," said Kabir, a pedestrian. "Rickshaws are allowed in the whole thoroughfare starting from Bangla Motor to Mouchak market and beyond. So, why should this small

stretch of the street be made different?"

"If the street is VIP, why would it apply to only one side of the street and not the other? They would not allow any rickshaws on the lane going towards Moghbazar but rickshaws coming from the other way around is okay?" he said, putting a question.

Traffic sources said rickshaws were disallowed from the street to avoid traffic gridlocks at Moghbazar intersection.

"It's because of the rickshaws, a gridlock starts to build up at the signal of Moghbazar intersection. Rickshaws were disallowed to ease the flow of traffic at the intersection and make the long wait at the signal less," said Traffic Inspector Uttam.

However, observers said most rickshaws tend to go back to the original lane through the next median opening. And the traffic officers at the intersection do not seem bothered with the number of rickshaws at the signal either.

A traffic sergeant at the roundabout told this correspondent that rickshaws heading towards the intersection from Mouchak market are supposed to take a detour through Ramna to go to Bangla Motor.

"But a lot of rickshaws keep coming through to this street. So, we make them take the wrong way," he said.

"It has not been that long since the rickshaws were disallowed from this street. That's why, many rickshaws still take this route. As time would go by things would get normal," he said.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Traffic jam occurs due to illegal diversion of rickshaws near Wireless Gate on Shaheed Selina Parvin Road in the city.



US official Moon due tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Patrick S Moon arrives here tomorrow on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

This is the first visit of the US diplomat to Bangladesh.

During the visit, Moon will meet with the government officials, politicians and business and civil society leaders and will discuss a range of bilateral and multilateral issues.

He was appointed as the principal deputy assistant secretary of state in March 2009. Prior to the current posting, he served as the coordinator for Afghanistan beginning in January 2008 and from June 2008 to March 2009 he was concurrently the deputy assistant secretary of state for Afghanistan.

Prior to his current assignment, Moon, a member of the Foreign Service, served as the office director for Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

'Frame policy to stop sexual harassment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for formulating a policy to eliminate sexual harassment at workplace.

They also underscored the need for creating massive awareness to this end.

The national experience-sharing seminar with key stakeholders organised by Alliance for Women Workers Rights (AWWR) in association with International Labour Organisation (ILO) was held at the National Press Club in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum

Monnujan Sufian said, "A comprehensive effort has to be specified to deal with the issue effectively."

She highlighted the present government's actions to protect equal rights of women and workers.

Women have come a long way forward in the country, but such harassments are still taking place, which should be addressed immediately, she added.

"A legal framework to stop such violation is required but not enough to wipe out sexual harassment at workplace; rather a set of agreements between employers and workers to preserve the latter's

right is needed to curb the problem," said Panudda Boonpala, country director of ILO.

More practical measures should be taken in this regard and awareness should be massive as the problem exists in most working sectors, said Boonpala.

Alliance for Women Workers Rights also placed a set of recommendations at the seminar to address sexual harassment at workplace.

Prof Ishrat Shamim of Centre for Women and Children Studies and Abdul Matin Master, president of Jatiya Sramik League, also spoke.

CHARGE FRAMING AGAINST JALIL Hearing on February 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed February 10 for hearing on charge framing against former Awami League general secretary Abdul Jalil in connection with a tax evasion case filed in October last year.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Senior Special Judge's Court fixed the date after Jalil appeared before the court and submitted a petition saying that he had earlier got bail from the High Court (HC).

Meantime, Jalil's lawyer submitted a discharge petition on grounds that his client was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him. The court however fixed the same date for hearing on the petition.

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CONCORD



PHOTO: STAR

Naaz Farhana, vice chairperson of Saarc Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC), speaks at a seminar on 'Global warming: Climate change' organised by SCWEC and Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh at a city hotel yesterday. On her right is SCWEC Chairperson Indira Dutt.

Come forward to face climate change

Speakers urge entrepreneurs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming climate change a serious problem for all, speakers yesterday called on private entrepreneurs not to wait for the government or development agencies and step forward to meet the challenge.

The speakers said this at a seminar on 'Global warming: Climate change' organised by Saarc Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC) and Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh (WEAB) at a city hotel.

Dr Ainun Nishat, noted conservationist and senior

adviser to IUCN, Asia, spoke at the event as the key speaker.

MSVL Indira Dutt, chairperson of SCWEC, said Saarc countries are one of the worst hit areas by climate change.

"We don't need to wait for our governments or agencies. We have to find our own solutions."

Dr Nishat said Saarc did not play any role as a group during the Copenhagen climate change summit where other regional alliances played a significant role in the negotiations.

He emphasised the Saarc countries to be unified before the Mexico summit going to take place in November this year.

"Lots of tough negotiations are going to happen before Mexico summit," the expert added.

He delivered a brief presentation on climate change and its effect on Bangladesh.

Naaz Farhana, vice chair of SCWEC, Sharukh Rahman, immediate past secretary of SCWC, and Nasreen Awal, past chairperson of WEAB, also spoke at the session with Rehana Rahman, president of WEAB, in the chair.

Women entrepreneurs organised the programme to sensitise the women executives to many new and unknown aspects of climate conditions.

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