public buses and we are seeing this more and more on the Dhaka streets.

Dhaka's traffic problem isn't anything new. In fact, donors have thrown millions of dollars at the problem to no avail. Historically, what has been the main impediment in getting money to lead to results?

You're absolutely right, money has never been the problem. Every government that has come in has been given a lot of donor money to fix the traffic problem. In fact, unlike other sectors, donors usually did not attach any strings with the money. Unfortunately, like almost all the problems of Bangladesh, there has been a serious lack of political will to fight to fight the traffic problem: politicians talk the talk, but they don't walk the walk.

Dhaka till very recently was known as the city of rivers, although that depiction sounds very dated now. How important do you think is getting our networks of rivers and canals back on track to the overall traffic situation of Dhaka?

If we look at neighbouring cities like Bangkok, for example, they have had the same problems. The long term, more sustainable solution is of course to bring industrialisation under control and slowly get rid of pollution from the rivers and canals. But this will take time and a lot of concentrated effort on the part of many different stakeholders.

What we could do meanwhile is introduce a set of high-speed boats and speedboats to immediately alleviate the problems that commuters face while travelling on these rivers and canals. These boats will also have to be coordinated with road transport on the banks of rivers and canals since otherwise passengers will be stuck. What we need is coordination between land and river transport systems that will help smooth the flow of traffic between water and land based transports. Till now, that link is missing.

Rapid economic development is sometimes blamed for Dhaka's traffic woes. Do we have to compromise on Dhaka's growth rates to improve the traffic situation or can we have our cake and eat it too?

I don't think there is a trade-off between economic growth and sustainability. Dhaka can certainly keep on growing but what we need is harnessed growth as opposed to uncontrolled growth. To put in another way, there is not

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precedence in Dhaka where growth poles have been planned and distributed around the city and outside. There are two ways of going about distributing urbanisation: one is to have satellite cities built around Dhaka, while the other option would be to manage growth within Dhaka so that it is sustainable.

I personally tend to side with building satellite cities around Dhaka since that is the best option for the long run. There is serious scarcity of land

