



Near constant traffic gridlock has become commonplace in Chittagong city which many blame on, among others, an increase in vehicle numbers, illegal parking and shops, lack of wide roads, and rickshaws plying on roads meant for motorised vehicles. The photo was taken from Dewanhat area recently.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Traffic jams plague Ctg city

Lack of coordination between Traffic Division, CDA blamed

MD TYMUR JAHAN CHOWDHURY, Ctg

Near constant traffic gridlock is taking severe proportions in Chittagong city which many blame on a lack of coordination between Traffic Division of Chittagong Metropolitan Police and Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and their lack of initiatives.

Intense traffic jam, especially during the morning and evening peak hours, causes immense sufferings to commuters every day.

The problem intensifies at such intersections as CDA Avenue, Agrabad, Bahaddarhat, Mehedibagh, Saltgola, Jubilee Road, Jamal Khan, Muradpur and Oxygen.

Sources at the Traffic Division think the increase in the number of vehicles, much more than the roads can accommodate, is the main cause behind the tailbacks.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Chittagong office, around two lakh vehicles ply in the city.

The number of public transports is around 17,000, including over 13,000 CNG-run auto-rickshaws, 984 buses, 605 human haulers and

1,605 auto-tempos.

On an average, 36 vehicles are registered a day, said BRTA sources.

Moreover, the number of roads has not increased in proportion with the rapid increase in vehicle numbers, opine traffic officials.

Construction works of CDA projects to widen roads take up a major portion of the roads and the slow implementation pace seemingly magnifies people's sufferings.

These development works can be seen on streets, from Chawkbazar to Gani Bakary, Dewanhat to Pahartali and Bahaddarhat to Kalurghat.

Illegal parking, illegal shops set up on streets and stops by public transports for passengers at undesignated sections of the roads only add to the problem, hampering the smooth movement of vehicles.

Many commercial buildings, including restaurants, private clinics, educational institutions and shopping malls at OR Nizam Road, CDA Avenue, Muradpur, Chawkbazar, Sheikh Mujib Road, Jamal Khan, Dampara, Zakir Hossain Road, Panchlaih and Mehedibagh have no parking facilities.

Therefore, residents of these buildings and visitors who arrive park their vehicles on the road, blocking off a lane meant for traffic.

Traffic Division Assistant Deputy Commissioner Tanvir Arafat said, "We allow only a single lane for parking in a few streets and penalise multi-lane parking.

"We also impose fines and file cases against owners of around 400-450 vehicles every day for illegal parking.

"We repeatedly issued notices to educational institutions to provide transport facilities for students or to provide parking spaces but none responded."

On public transports stopping at undesignated places for passengers, Tanvir Arafat said, "We always try to take action and file cases against these vehicles whenever we notice this."

Lax monitoring by CDA means that many building owners do not keep parking spaces even for themselves, let alone for guests, said traffic division officials.

CDA Deputy Chief Town Planner Sarwar Uddin Ahmad said, "Many citizens do not follow the building plans accurately after getting

approval. Some keep a nominal parking space and some do not keep any space at all.

"Due to manpower shortages and other limitations, we cannot always monitor and take action against the guilty."

He also blamed the plying of a huge number of illegal rickshaws on roads meant for motorised vehicles for the traffic congestion.

The Traffic Division and Chittagong City Corporation sources said around 1.5 lakh rickshaws are present in the city though only 35,000 have CCC licenses.

Moreover, the Traffic Division took a decision to ban rickshaws from Barik Building Mor to Bahaddarhat early this year. But it was scrapped due to agitation by rickshaw-pullers against the decision.

Moinul Islam, a commuter, said, "Traffic jam is gradually increasing in the city causing untold sufferings to us, wasting working hours and also dampening our spirit.

"The authorities concerned must take remedial measures soon otherwise the problem would turn out to be a big one like Dhaka is facing at present."

Baral river dying due to unplanned govt structures

Two lawmakers demand capital dredging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unplanned structures constructed by Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) under government projects have narrowed down the Baral river and blocked its water supply, alleged two lawmakers at a press conference yesterday.

The Baral river originates from the confluence of the Padma river in Charghat area of Rajshahi district and flows through a good number of upazilas of Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna and Sirajganj districts.

The lawmakers -- Principal Abdul Kuddus of Natore-4 constituency and Sharier Alam of Rajshahi-6 constituency -- demanded that the government conducts capital dredging on the river to ensure the river's navigability.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) organised the press conference in Jatiya Press Club in the capital demanding removal of the structures from the Baral river.

Save Baral Movement Convener Gour Chandra Sarkar presided over the programme.

The Baral river, the main feeder of Chalan Beel, the biggest wetland in the country's northern region, is now drying up. This is a threat to the livelihoods

of the thousands of people who inhabit the areas surrounding the river, said the speakers.

The speakers said engineers of BWDB constructed a sluice gate in the mouth of the river at Charghat in 1985, closing the river's major source of water.

Later some other structures, including dams and small culverts, were erected, shrinking the river even more and nearly changing the ecology of a vast area adjoining the river, they said.

"The engineers of BWDB acted most irresponsibly by killing the Baral river in the name of development works without considering the impacts those might cause," said Principal Abdul Kuddus.

Sharier Alam said the Ministry of Water Resources did not take any effective steps to assess the effects of the structures, frustrating the inhabitants.

"We have to save the Baral river at any cost," he said.

The speakers announced to form a 220-kilometre human chain along the river's bank, from Charghat to Baghabari of Sirajganj, on March 14 next year.

Bapa Secretary General Abdul Matin and Save Baral Movement Secretary General Mizanur Rahman also spoke at the press conference.

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Dhaka to host int'l astronomy olympiad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh for the first time will host the Asian-Pacific regional round of an international astronomical science quiz competition from November 26 to December 4.

The International Astronomy Olympiad - the VIII Asian Pacific Astronomy Olympiad will be participated by students from 10 countries -- Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Russia, South Korea, India, Malaysia and United Arab Emirates.

This year 10 students are representing Bangladesh in the contest in Cox's Bazar, said the organisers at a press conference in the capital's Russian Cultural Centre yesterday.

The Bangladesh Astronomy Olympiad National Committee, under the auspices of the Bangladesh Astronomical Society, and Cultural Department and Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh are the joint organisers.

Admission office is open also on Fridays

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Bijoy Campus
138 Kalabagan, Mirpur Road, Dhaka
Phone: 8151781-5
Cell: 01682 244 120, 01944 722 560

HOTLINE : 9128329
Fax : 88-02-8123296
E-mail : info@sub.edu.bd
Web : www.sub.edu.bd

Main Campus
77 Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Phone: 8151781-5
Cell: 01711 228 900