



THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ROADS

WE are losing our roads and, sometimes, our commonsense in this growing chaos we know as traffic jams or congestion. Call it what you will. The fact remains that conditions on the roads remain horrendous, for two basic reasons. Firstly, there are hardly any new roads that have come up in the last many years. Secondly, new vehicles continue to be disgorged on Dhaka's streets and therefore does life get newer instances of desperation. Ask any resident of Dhaka. He has a lot to say. The pictures speak for themselves. In the larger image, everything has ground to a halt and not one vehicle seems to be moving. And then come other pieces of truth. Watch the young man trying to go over to the other side of the road by sliding in through the wire. He talks and slithers. Whenever will such people learn? The billboard behind the desperate man crossing the road is explicit --- 'While crossing the road use the foot overbridge'. A hapless policeman tries to have some discipline on his watch. No one listens. A burly man tries negotiating through the wires to get to his destination, not realizing the comedy of it all. And jaywalking? It is everywhere, with vehicles often finding it tortuous exercising their right of movement. The pedestrian has right of way, no matter what. And those buses and cars and other vehicles make doubly sure that they do not give way to each other. Sometimes a rickety bus scrapes another in a risky attempt to pull ahead. You dream of a quiet city. Your worst nightmare is a thought of being on the road. You plan to kill the miles. The miles nearly kill you.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

