



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# WHAT'S THE HURRY?

Jaywalking is one of the main reasons behind road accidents. A recently concluded drive attempted to curb jaywalking and promote the use of foot-over bridges. Was it effective?

UPASHANA SALAM

"Why take the trouble of climbing all these steps, when I can just crawl under this wire?"

You take the trouble to save your life. To ensure that you are not responsible for the devastation in your family that will follow your death.

According to data provided by the police, around 2132 people lost their lives due to road accidents from January to September this year. Since 2009, at



PHOTO: STAR FILE

least 950 pedestrians were killed in 1,102 accidents. In many of these cases, those who lost their lives were victims of reckless driving and lax traffic rules. Unfortunately, this number also includes people who are ready to lose their lives rather than "waste" time choosing the safer route.

Even though we are aware of the dangers of jaywalking, you'll still find people running to cross

the road just when a car approaches them, forcing the car to brake abruptly, consequently risking the lives of the rash pedestrian and the people in the car. This should not be considered too strange in a country whose residents seem to have a persistent death wish. Be it the 'risk-takers' who cram inside a overflowing trawler or the 'bravehearts' travelling atop the roof of trains, the people of Bangladesh seem to like challenging death and fate with the optimistic, if completely illogical, belief that they are

invincible.

So apart from the adrenaline rush and inexplicable moments of insanity, what motivates jaywalkers to risk their lives in order to save a few seconds of time? Experts argue that it's not just ignorance and a lack of awareness that encourage jaywalking. Just look at our foot-over bridges; it's as if they are almost threatening us to not use them. Dilapidated, disintegrating foot-over bridges (we are being polite here), stinky, dangerous, almost unusable underpasses and



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



the over crowded footpaths - how would this motivate a people, who are already wary of following safety precautions for their own benefit, to opt for the 'safer route?'

To surmise it, why shouldn't people jaywalk when our streets encourage us to do it? When despite the ever growing number of road accidents, our culture still accepts this as normal, when there is practically no punishment for doing it? Thankfully, our law enforcement agencies and the government are finally addressing this issue. As is the norm in this country, they've opted for the solution that needs the least amount of work and will be effective for the least amount of time.

Last month, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police