



Nearly half the space on some of the busiest streets in the capital is used for illegal parking throughout the day. In places, double-parked vehicles barely leave any room for a car to pass.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN, RASHED SHUMON AND PALASH KHAN

Occupied by parking

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phenomenon," said Enamul Huq, a local.

Different roads beneath the Bijoy Sarani-Tejgaon railway overpass are also under illegal occupation with makeshift kitchen markets, shops and shanties here and there.

There is, however, no such nuisance under the Banani-Matikata overpass. It would be a complete waste of public money if the practice was not stopped, said transport experts.

"Roads under a flyover must remain free for traffic movement but that's not happening [in the capital] due to lax law enforcement," Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who headed the advisory committee on the Strategic Transport Plan of greater Dhaka city, told The Daily Star.

The thumb rule is the existing roads would be least affected. Design of an elevated way must be such that the roads underneath remain fully operational, clear and effective, said Prof Moazzem Hossain of Buet's civil engineering department.

The very rationale for undertaking a "capital-intensive" flyover is to achieve "the goal of enhanced traffic circulation", he added.

Contacted, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon admitted that such illegal occupation was rampant across the capital. The city corporation authorities lack manpower, resources and police support to check the practice on a regular basis, he said.

"Besides, in many cases, those grabbing the roads are backed by extortionists, who make money in the name of ruling quarters," he added.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Additional Commissioner (traffic) Mosleh Uddin Ahmed said they carried out eviction drives under the flyovers but those occupying the roads reappear.

"We take regular legal action, it's a continuous process," he said.

According to urban experts, one third of the city's road space remains occupied by random on-street parking, which is one of the foremost causes of the hellish city traffic.

Some of the roads are choked with parked cars on both sides, blocking the pavements even.

Such parking is all too common in the commercial hub of Motijheel and on the major thoroughfares -- Mirpur Road, Rokeya Sarani, Pragoti Sarani and Nazrul Islam Avenue.

It also happens under the very nose of the law enforcers near hotels, restaurants, community centres, schools, private universities, shops and clubs in residential areas, including Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Shantinagar and New Eskaton.

City corporation authorities are supposed to keep the pavements free and the DMP is to ensure unobstructed traffic movement on streets and Rajuk to make sure parking spaces are built according to the rules.

Officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) said there were instances in which underground car parks of a large number of building were being used commercially. Cases filed for such practice are pending with courts.

Traffic police say they seize hundreds of illegally-parked vehicles and fine drivers for the offence every day and that their action remains inadequate since the number of offenders is overwhelming.

