



#PERSPECTIVE

## The conundrum of commuters' woes in Dhaka city

Commuting in Dhaka city can be tricky, nerve-wracking, and both emotionally as well as physically exhausting. Most of all, one may contract anger management issues and find the need to consult a psychiatrist after manoeuvring in this city that is home to more than 18 million dwellers. This city is vibrant with people of all sorts. Ironically, the magnificent yet puzzling Dhaka is equally famous for its notorious traffic system. Dhaka is a strange city, and we, the regular commuters, never fully succeed in beating the labyrinthine roads and streets that this city has.

It doesn't take long for someone to become accustomed to the rhythm that Dhaka city owns — after riding around amidst its crowded streets. The alleys are always buzzing. And the novel coronavirus seems to have very little effect on this vibrancy. Though our Dhaka city has many streets and roads, these roads are punctuated by many horrendous potholes and choke points. Thus, the streets of Dhaka never fail to keep the commuters extra cautious.

Dhaka has more twists and turns and narrow alleys than one can count. Therefore, one can have the scariest experience while driving a car in this city — and the expertise in driving skill that each driver exhibits should be heartily praised. However, it is not uncommon for commuters to witness some occasional fights among these expert drivers or bikers. If you are taking a drive out in Dhaka city, it can frequently get on your nerves.



Commuting in Dhaka city is time-consuming — no surprise since the streets and highways of the capital are decorated with slow-moving, non-mechanised vehicles. One will not be amazed to hear that the number of these tortoise-like vehicles is booming, keeping in line with the growth rate of the population. Hence, the result: the untameable traffic jam and congestion. Travelling in the grandiose Dhaka city can take hours, and we, the patient commuters, tolerate this nightmare day in day out.

Be sure to know that the residents of Dhaka city take more than three hours to cross the distance that is fewer than seven kilometres.

Traffic circles and rules generally work in



other parts of the globe where people tend to abide by the rules that have been imposed upon them. However, the commuters in Dhaka city will often witness a scenario in which the traffic policemen are taking their siesta under the shade of trees. And oh, boy! What innovative stratagems they use to handle the traffic. These ranges from blocking the road with the box to flashing a laser light.

Have you ever taken a stroll (on foot) at Dhanmondi 27 during a particularly heavy rainy day? If you have, wading through the knee-deep greenish clogged water in the middle of the streets would not have been pleasant.

The local buses of Dhaka city are vintage pieces—more specifically, ancient. These

buses are so scarred that they look like they have been to a war zone (quite literally).

The commuters riding in these buses are sure to find tonnes of colourful characters every single day. You may meet the Slippery Head who usually uses the fellow commuter's shoulder as the comfortable night pillow. Or you may also find the Wide Reader who tends to look over another person's shoulder whilst reading a book or typing a text. In short, the rides in the local buses of Dhaka city can be noisy, crowded and as fascinating as a Mary Poppins movie.

Factors such as sound pollution, wastage of time and commuter dissatisfaction are a common phenomenon in Dhaka city; and so is our constant habit of complaining. We, the commuters of Dhaka city, are exceptionally good at complaining about our misery or commuting hassles. Simultaneously, we are equally skilled at boasting of our commuting efficiency. The diverse sets of commuters are just like two sides of the same coin living in the same city. Nonetheless, some prefer to stay in the grey area and do the jaywalking.

With all that being said, no matter how different the commuters of Dhaka city are in characters, professions or preferences, we all voice one fundamental need. The need for the deliverance of the promise of a clean city, clean air and a good, systematic transportation network.

By Ayman Anika  
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

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