

# Expressways no solutions to traffic congestion

## Public transport must get priority: Sunita Narain

**Rafiqul Islam Azad**

The solution to the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution in Dhaka city lies not merely in the construction of expressways or flyovers but in controlling the growth of number of the transport vehicles.

Stating this at an exclusive interview with The New Nation Sunita Narain, Director General of the Delhi based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), said yesterday the benefits of construction of flyovers and conversion of motor vehicles to CNG-driven ones have been lost to failure to regulate the growth of the number of motor vehicles in New Delhi.

The world famous environmentalist and recipient of India's highest civilian award "Padmashri", said in the city of Dhaka where the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution are worsening there is still time to avoid mistakes committed in New Delhi.

Sunita Narain, who edits the Down to Earth magazine of CSE which runs a feature service on environment and



development issues, said, road space in Dhaka city is decreasing with the increase of the number of motor vehicles which explains the chronic traffic congestion.

She mentioned that Delhi had built flyovers, expressways and underpasses but the traffic congestion remained beyond control with unregulated increase of motor vehicles.

"We (Dhaka and Delhi) have to learn from each other that the construction of flyovers and expressways are not the solutions to the traffic congestion and air pollution. This is not possible, unless we can control the number of vehicles," she said.

Sunita Narain said the Bangladesh government must come up with a realistic policy to promote the public transport system and discourage the increase of private cars.

The policy should encourage allocating compressed natural gas (CNG) to public transports like buses, three-wheelers and taxis with a view to promoting the public transport sector instead of subsidising private cars, she said. Sunita also suggested differences in the price of gas for public transports and private cars.

Bangladesh still has huge opportunity to correct the prevailing problems now since a maximum number of people is still using bus services and walk for movement. The government may also consider earmarking separate routes for plying public transports, she suggested. Dhaka must reinvent mobility, she added.

Sunita Narain, who is now on a visit to Dhaka said the purpose of the media briefing being organised by CSE in Dhaka tomorrow is to exchange views and share experiences to reduce the problems.