

## Rationalisation of road spaces

### What is the issue?

\n\n

Traffic situation in developing nations are becoming a matter of concern wherein big cities among them are running out of space around the world.

\n\n

### What are the concerns with developing nations?

\n\n

\n

- Many recent reports show that world's most congested places are dominated by emerging markets.

\n

- Among cities in developed countries, only Los Angeles makes it into the top 15.

\n

- Some of the world's worst traffic snarls are in South Asian cities such as Dhaka, Delhi and Karachi.

\n

- Their problems are only likely to get worse as growing populations and rising incomes push already-straining transport networks to the limit.

\n

- In emerging economies, many cities have reached the point where roads' carrying capacity is running out.

\n

- There are about 40 registered vehicles for every kilometre of road in the US, France, Russia and Brazil, based on analysis of World Health Organization and Central Intelligence Agency data.

\n

- On the other hand, emerging economies like Iran, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia run more than 200 vehicles per kilometre.

\n

- However, number of accidents as a result of traffic jams is low in developing cities like Tehran, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City and Jakarta.

\n

- Two factors are responsible for this manageable traffic in developing

countries, atleast for the time being.

\n

- First, fewer people own vehicles in poorer places.

\n

- There are just 13 registrations per 1,000 people in Bangladesh, 30 in Nigeria, and 44 in Pakistan, compared with more than 500 in most wealthy countries.

\n

- And when people in low-income regions do get their first vehicle, they tend to be motorbikes and scooters, which take up less space than passenger cars.

\n

- However, both those mitigating issues are less helpful than they look, since as incomes rise, vehicle ownership rises too.

\n

- Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have almost as many vehicles per head as the UK.

\n

- For another, two-wheelers still require surrounding space to avoid collisions.

\n

- Scooters and motorbikes on the move take up about half the space of a car.

\n

- The release of exhaust fumes has already paved the way for motorbike bans implemented in parts of Jakarta and Manila and planned for the entire city of Hanoi by 2030.

\n

\n\n

## **What are the measures taken in this regard?**

\n\n

\n

- One way of stopping the rise of private vehicle usage has been restricting vehicle usage itself.

\n

- Road-space rationing programmes, which ban driving for some cars on particular days, have been implemented in cities from Manila and Mexico City to Bogota and Beijing.

\n

- London charges for entry into the central city, which has a similar effect.

\n

- Alternatively, car numbers can be limited by mandating special permits for car ownership and using auctions or lotteries to allocate a fixed quota.

\n

- This special permit system was first established in the 1990s by Singapore.

- \n
- It has since spread to more than half a dozen Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and even the comparatively sleepy outpost of Guiyang.
- \n
- Also, there are more free-market solutions like ride-sharing and autonomous driving which have attracted the most investments and interest in recent years.
- \n
- However, these aren't likely to make a decisive difference.
- \n
- Studies of ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft suggest they encourage some people to give up on owning their own vehicle.
- \n
- But it also tempts riders away from higher-capacity public transport modes.
- \n

\n\n

## **What should be done?**

\n\n

- \n
- Autonomous vehicles could increase road capacity by using shorter stopping distances than would be safe with human drivers.
- \n
- But for the moment, such technology remains on paper, especially in the complex, dynamic streetscapes of emerging-world cities crowded with scooters, hawkers, pedestrians and livestock.
- \n
- Thus the solution that is likely to be the most effective in the long-term is an expansion of public transport.
- \n
- In particular, metro and suburban rail networks have to be promoted to remove traffic from roads altogether.
- \n
- The world will add about the same length of metro-rail tracks in the 10 years through 2022 as it built in the previous 150 years since the opening of London's Metropolitan Railway in 1863.
- \n
- China's metro systems have expanded at breakneck speed this century, and India is gradually catching up.
- \n
- Even laggards like Dhaka, Jakarta, Lahore and Lagos are finally building dedicated commuter-rail networks.

\n

- The transportation systems in Beijing shows that a city can be able to meet the demands of transporting a fast-growing urban population.

\n

- It has created road-space rationing, vehicle quotas and a brand-new metro system to accommodate their swelling populations without grinding to a halt.

\n

- It serves as the showpiece capital of the most ambitious infrastructure-developer the world has ever seen.

\n

- Thus, city governments elsewhere in the developing world should have a vision of the future to emulate the best models of the developed world in the transportation sector.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Hindustan Times**

\n

