

DEATHS ON OUR NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

The Editor Dawn, Karachi

Dear Sir,

To me Newspapers are strange documents that arrive on our doorsteps every morning. Looking at them more closely one finds that not more than 20% is 'news' in these papers. Mostly they are scrambled with advertisements (which again are sans any ethical code or order) and of course the ever-present, mudslinging and political cock fight. I dare say that only some articles, letters and editorials have informative and educational value.

The news bit that we do receive mostly turns out to be so depressing that a normal and a sensitive person could have a brain damage. I think we urbanites are not normal anymore, the damage has been done. We would receive a most stunning or heart breaking news yet we toss away the paper with a calm, cool and collected attitude or maximum a sigh, perhaps because the news does not directly influence our lives. Obviously most of the time we cant do thing about it but even if we can we prefer to give a deaf ear to it. I can say that with confidence for all the governmental officials and people in position who really can do something to alter the situation.

16th march'90: 29 people die in head-on collision.

17th march'90: 7 people die, bus falls in a ditch.

22nd march'90: 21 people dead, bus wagon collision.....

I'd like to ask why these news items reach us, to inform us about the casualty rate of the highways, that the highways are not safe anymore, to inform us that there is reckless and senseless driving going on or perhaps mad drivers on the roads, or perhaps the present roads do not cater for the traffic plying on them etc. We all know about this, the government knows about this, but what's the answer?

If I am not mistaken there must be a National Highways Directorate somewhere in the country or related departments in the respective provinces,

what is really their job? Could the high ups of Ministry of Transport or the said departments possibly shed some light on what's going on and how the situation can be changed for better? Can these departments be made accountable to the public somehow? What have they done so far and what are they planning for the future considering the astronomical growth of our population. Why are do the innocent travelers get slaughtered endlessly!?

Only a small bus journey from one town to another will indicate that perhaps just by widening the highways corresponding with our traffic levels would reduce the shocking deaths to half. There is speed limiting exercise. High-instant fines for violations of highway codes. Selective recruiting and rigorous training like we have for the Air pilots, (remember peoples life is at stake) why not! Comprehensive Training programs, Education for the drivers as well as the Passengers. Use the media! Can we lease out Highways to private sector for expansion and upkeep?

National Highways may seem like a small problem in comparison with other national issues that we always have hot on the agenda. But I feel, Sir, We require more inspirational editorials, special reports, special feature or issue and coverage for experts on the subject.

I am writing on behalf of hundreds of innocent lives which are mercilessly devoured every month. If we have failed to control the population we should at least make some efforts to save it from getting butchered!

DAZ