



FROM THE EDITOR.....

Once notorious for traffic congestion, roads in Bangkok have now been virtually surpassed by roads in Colombo and Mahanuwara in the same ominous lines. Though by far, we have been lucky not to be enveloped in smog, even that day is not far away from the early signs which are more than evident around our main cities. Hardly a day goes by, without our media reporting another debilitating, fatal and horrendous road accident. Significant portions of the productive time of working population are spent in transit. Irritability, short tempers, physiological ailments related to pollution and stress as well as psychological afflictions of regular travellers have sharply increased.

All above statements point at one and the same root cause: too many vehicles on the roads. We have ample examples from so called developed countries which have gone through this phase, faced the consequences, suffered terribly and have wriggled out or trying at their best to extricate themselves from a calamity created by none other than themselves. Then why did we fall into the same trap in broad daylight, which they fell in the dark?

The answer is that we are trapped in another of their misnomers, which defines economic development on an escalating scale of consumption, or rather, over consumption of resources of this planet with impunity. In place of austere life styles we were historically used to, we have adopted a comfort seeking, selfish, fast track existence which demand status symbols for acceptance, hence the acquisition of automobiles, beyond real need and economic viability. This pushed the economical and conservative public transport systems to such a far back seat of neglect, that even people of right mind wishing to utilize thus, are dissuaded.

Engineering solutions to traffic congestion are predictably, among other things, wider roads and less restrictive intersections as provided by numerous flyovers that have come up in recent times. However, evidence is clear that these only alleviate the problem in a very temporary way. So, may be it is time that Engineers got involved in resolving the root cause of over consumption, disregard for nature and lack of passionate concern for the well being of future generations, which have become hallmarks of the present day human society.

Eng. (Prof.) T. M. Pallewatta, Int.PEng (SL), C.Eng, FIE(SL), FIAE(SL)
Editor, 'ENGINEER', Journal of The Institution of Engineers.