

# Mishuks against meters



With meters or without, Mishuks are not meant to ply the city's main streets, only the lanes and bylanes.

BISHAWJIT DAS

Hardly any Mishuks in the city, four-stroke three wheelers, have installed fare-meters, though the ultimatum expired on 1<sup>st</sup> August. Neither do any of these three wheelers have route permits for the main streets of the city.

Three wheelers were all initially asked to set meters by Feb 1, 2003; but later it was extended up to August 1, due to technical problems.

Mishuks can ply out of the city periphery without meters, however, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Ansar Ali Khan Pathan, informed the Star City that only 170 Mishuks out of 270 have route permits to ply in the city. He added that these permits do not allow them to ply in the main roads, only the allotted lanes and by-lanes as alternative to rickshaws.

Their fares are set equal to the compressed-natural-gas (CNG) three wheelers though Mishuks run by petrol. CNGs charge Tk. 12 for the first two kilometers and Tk. 5 for every kilometer after.

The Mishuk Owners Association failed to increase the fixed fare rate. They urged Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to rethink the matter since the expense of petrol is higher than for

CNG. The traffic department earlier asked the Mishuk-owners to colour their vehicles grey and white in the body and hood to differentiate them from green CNG three wheelers.

This Star City correspondent found only two Mishuks out of thirty-two equipped with a meter. Mishuk drivers explained that it costs around Tk. 6,000 to Tk. 6,500 to install a meter. While answering why they had not installed meters, some reported they could not manage the money within the time given.

Others claimed that the time has been extended to install the meters. But deputy commissioner (traffic-north), Ansar Ali, in fact confirmed that they had not extended the time. He also said that police have now decided to bar meter-less Mishuks.

However, those Mishuks with meters are not always abiding by the law either.

"Even though the Mishuk I took this morning had a meter installed, the driver refused to go by meter," said an office worker.

"I do refuse to go by the meter" confessed a Mishuk driver. "It has become a normal practice that CNG drivers charge an extra Tk. 5 or Tk. 10. The reason they say is it takes hours to refuel their vehicle."

"I will starve if I go by the meter fare."

# Titas takes back medical cover

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Alauddin, Nannu Miah and Sultan Khan, three employees of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Ltd. (TG), had gone to Lalbagh to repair a gas pipe leakage in May this year. While they were working, an explosion ripped through the place badly injuring them.

The three sustained burn injuries and needed skin grafting. Being employees of the TG, they were supposed to get their medical expenses paid by the company. However, since TG's medical facility had been suspended from January 2003, the men had to bear all their treatment costs themselves.

Like them, there are some 2,000 employees of TG who get exposed to extremely hazardous and risky tasks regularly. Transplanting lines or repairing leaks can be dangerous, as the pressure remains very high inside the pipes.

For the risk involved in their job, TG's employees had enjoyed unlimited medical benefits since the company started off in 1964. But

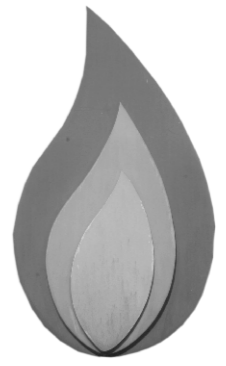
that was challenged following a government decision in 1989, which stipulated that all government employees should have equal medical benefits which in effect, contradicted the TG's medical policies.

For 14 years, the government order wasn't implemented as some TG employees filed a case claiming that they should still receive unlimited medical facilities because they were appointed under terms and conditions which promised that benefit. However, the court gave the verdict in favour of the government in January and the previous medical facilities were immediately suspended.

Now, the TG is only providing medical concesses have to buy necessary medicines themselves.

In the past, the TG had covered medical benefits amounting to around Tk. three crore 54 lacs a year.

Meanwhile, to minimise gas explosion related accidents, the TG is planning to equip its field workers with fireproof suits in line with the international standards from September.



# Rickshaw-vans need bells and pedals

SYED TASHFIN

The van drivers of the city are going through rough times while they try to carry on with their daily jobs at the respective 'bazaars' of the city. Usually the vans are found around areas like Kawranbazar, Kalabagan, West Dhanmondi, Jatrabari, New Market, Malibagh and so on, where they cater to the shop owners of the local markets.

These van drivers, live on a hand-to-mouth

basis where their average daily income is around Tk 100 to 200 at most, which also includes the daily rental fee of Tk 50 to their 'malik'. "We are thankful that we have customers like the shop owners of Kawranbazar, who provide us with the daily trips," said Rafiq, a van driver working around the kawranbazar area.

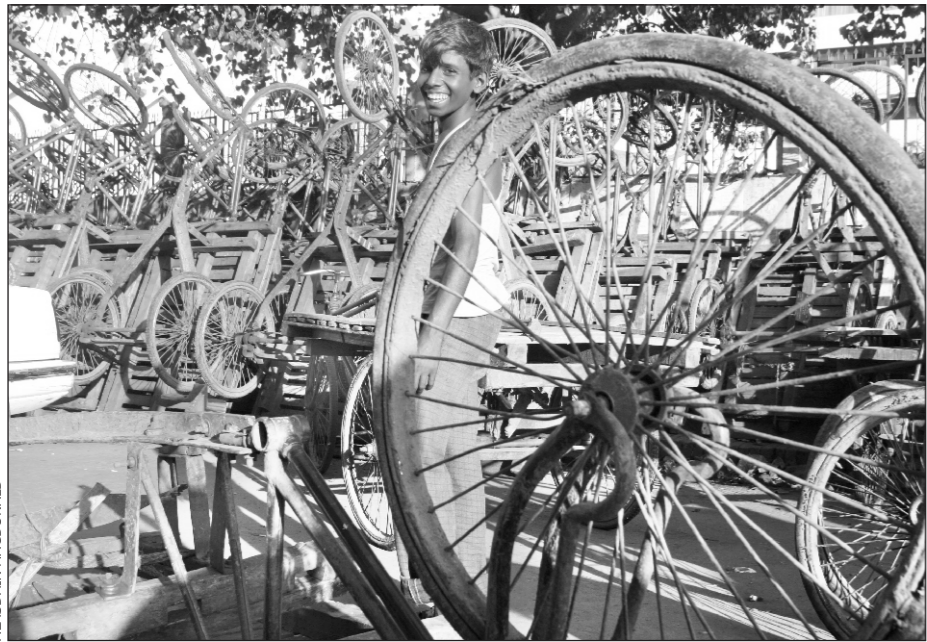
But, most city dwellers do not know the fact that the van-drivers of Kawranbazar do not have the necessary bells, chains, pedals and so on, on their vans, as is the usual scenario

with all other three-wheeler rickshaw styled vehicles. "We do not use the equipment since such mechanism cause difficulties and delay our trips during the night," said Taher, another van driver of Kawranbazar. "We have to pull a load of at least a ton or so, from where the trucks unload, near the railway crossing of Kawranbazar; if we used pedals and chains, we would have never been able to deliver the goods on time," he said. Since the trucks carrying the massive loads deliver the goods at night, these vans mostly, operate during midnight.

Yet, these van drivers feel the necessity of such equipment from time to time when they suffer unexpected accidents during their nightshifts. These van drivers are victims of 'hit-and-run' cases by the speeding cars and trucks, which are normally seen after midnight around the Kawranbazar area. Recently, Eskander, a poor van driver, was injured in such an accident and is now in a critical condition at his village home in Chandpur.

These van drivers are therefore, in a dilemma as to what they are to do when their security is actually on the path to a collision course with their daily jobs. On each trip, these van drivers do not make more than 50 to 60 Taka. But yet with the growing number of van drivers, they have to settle for the lowest possible wage and thus acquire as many trips as possible.

"We are working as efficiently as humanly possible, even it means that we have to risk our lives," Said Taher.



Rickshaw vans lie piled up in Karwan Bazaar, as van-pullers are barely making a living.

# A polite mugging



CITY CORRESPONDENT

Very soon Dhaka may well be named 'the city of mugging.' The rate of mugging and robbery in the city has risen steeply in the last few years.

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), there were only thirteen muggings (without physical assault) in the last month. But surely the number of mugging is higher than this?

The DMP sources agree that the number is of course higher than this, but the police stations classify those muggings in which physical injuries take place under different categories.

Also not everybody always reports the incidents they experience. Some are even threatened after the event into not reporting it. Only those who loose a good amount of money or jewellery, or get injured, report a general diary or file a case in the local police

station.

Muggers follow various modes of operation. The latest innovation is to rub a painful balm on the eyes so that the victim will not be able to witness much, neither the muggers' faces nor the getaway vehicle or number-plate.

No one escapes the menace of muggers, not even policemen. A sub-inspector of Tejgaon thana was assaulted on his way home from work, even after (or perhaps because!) he gave his identity to the muggers.

Another victim of muggers was kicked and then stabbed with a knife when he asked for his wallet back, which contained important papers, after the muggers had taken the money.

The following incident, therefore, is unusual in that it relates a *polite mugging* that city dwellers rarely have the luck to experience.

"The 'polite' incident occurred just in front of the Rajarbagh Police Phari (Police Base)," recalls Atik (not his real name). "I had just come out of the hospital after seeing my doctor

and was talking on my mobile."

The mugger followed Atik as he was walking to the bus station, and began a conversation by 'accidentally' stepping on his shoe.

"The first thing he said was 'Sorry,' and then he asked, 'What do you do?'" remembers Atik. Atik answered politely and asked him the same question.

They carried on the conversation in a light tone, the stranger every now and then nodding to people he knew. He seemed to be acquainted with many people in the area.

"While I was just near the bus station, we shook hands and he asked me to have some tea with him."

The man kept hold of Atik's hand even though Atik declined the tea. "I did not understand that I was about to be mugged."

"All of a sudden he placed my hand on his waist and made me feel the presence of a 'point two-two.'" He said in a cool voice, "I am the top-man of this area. If I run a car over you right here no 'mother-f\*\*\*\*\*' will try to stop me."

"I gave the mugger the money I had. Then he wanted my wristwatch and my mobile too."

But then to Atik's surprise, the mugger asked which mobile company he subscribed to. They began to discuss the various mobile companies and their merits.

"Then realising that my mobile would be of no use to him he told me, 'Keep it since you need it.'"

Atik was astonished. "But I realised that, with all the polite conversation and the mugger's polite behaviour, this was really altogether a most 'polite mugging.'"

## health, utility, cabs & train timing

HEALTH	UTILITY	TAXI CAB	TAXI CAB	
<b>Hospitals</b> <b>Heart</b> National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59  <b>Burn</b> Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6  <b>Cancer</b> National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9  <b>Diabetes</b> Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50  <b>Mother &amp; Child Care</b> Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62 Azimpur Mother & Child Health Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980	<b>Eye</b> Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315 National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807  <b>Dental</b> Dental College -9002035  <b>Orthopaedics</b> National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150  <b>General</b> Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6 Rushmono General Hospital- 8317819 Holy Family Hospital- 8311731-25 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550-4, 8614545-9 Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202, Shamaria Hospital- 9131901 Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69  <b>Blood Bank</b> Red Crescent Centre- 9116563 Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040 Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061,7319022 Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-9  <b>Eye Bank</b> Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040  <b>Ambulances For Dead Body</b> Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166, AI-Markajul Islam 9127867,	<b>Electricity</b> Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566601-5, 9560170-9 Electricity Complex (DESA)- 8616737-43, 8617626 DESCO- 8123138-40 Complaints (Rural Electrification Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8  <b>Gas</b> Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)- 9563667-8 Kawranbazar-8112135-42 Mirpur- 8014132-3 Mohammadpur- 9117215,9113903 Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993 Motijheel-9667612  <b>WASA</b> WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31 Mirpur- 9000519 Mohammadpur- 8120192 Fakirapool-9115343 Asad Gate- 8917492 Uttara- 9559142, Segunbagicha- 7316348 Pagla- 8113900-39	<b>Fire Services</b> Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667 Mohammadpur- 9112078 Khilgaon- 7218329 Mirpur- 9001055 Tongi- 9801070 Demra-7400111 Postagola- 7410771 Sadarghat- 7119759 Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055 Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189	<b>Yellow Cab</b> Navana 9558065 Salida 9344477, 0171620881 Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191 Cab One 7113282-3 Nihon 8624741-2 Orion 9347277 Anudip 8125285 and 8127611 Capital 9352847  <b>Black Cab</b> Cab Ex 9358401 Cabline 8321162 JBS Cab 019364575 Sajan 018126036 Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611 Cab One 7113282-3  <b>Palki</b> 0171052500 <b>Cab I</b> 7113282 <b>Jatri</b> 0171540074 <b>Nipun</b> 9572277 <b>R-Cab</b> 8914782 <b>Star Cab</b> 9571919 <b>Shihab</b> 018202477 & 018228675 <b>KGN</b> 8620011
		<b>TRAIN TIMING</b>		
		Subarna Express Mahanagar Prabhati Mahanagar Godhuli Taha Parabat Express Joyantika Express Upaban Express Tista Express Ekata Express Upakul Express Padma Express	Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm Leaves Dhaka at 7-30 am Leaves Dhaka at 3-05 pm Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm Leaves Dhaka at 6-30 am Leaves Dhaka at 12-30 pm Leaves Dhaka at 9-30 pm Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 pm Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm Leaves Dhaka at 6-00 am Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm	
		Leaves Dhaka at 10:15 pm Leaves Chittagong at 2-55 pm Leaves Chittagong at 9-11 pm Leaves Chittagong at 7-05 am Leaves Sylhet at 2-30 pm Leaves Sylhet at 9-20 pm Leaves Sylhet at 6-40 am Leaves Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm Leaves Bahadurabad at 11-55 Leaves Noakhali at 1-35 pm Leaves Jagannath at 2-30 pm		

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