

Commerce ministry expands taskforce to control price hike

TCB to play major role

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The commerce ministry has expanded its taskforce from 12 to 23 members to make it more effective in dealing with price hike.

In its last meeting on June 6, the task force said 11 new members had been included.

"It was necessary to expand the numbers to look into the price hikes. The present strength was insufficient to take care of this problem," said Matur Rahman, chairman of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Earlier, a 12-member force with Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury as its convener and TCB chairman as member-secretary was formed.

The other members being joint secretaries of the ministries of commerce, agriculture, industry, food, fisheries and livestock, communication, home, LGRD, finance and planning and national board of revenue (NBR).

But 12 members were not sufficient to tackle the price jumps and 11 other high-ranking government and non-government officials were invited to join the task force. They are deputy director of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), additional inspector general (AIG) of police, joint secretary of livestock, director of Bangladesh Bank, market management officer of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), director general of National Bureau of Statistics, director of Agriculture Marketing Directorate, chief officer marketing of TCB, representative of federation of Bangladesh chamber of commerce and industries (FBCCI), representative of consumers association of Bangladesh (CAB) and the president of Jatiya Press Club.

CAB was included to protect consumer's rights, Press Club represents the press and civil society while BDR deals with cross-border smuggling. The other departments have been included for better coordination and information sharing. CAB welcomed the task force's expansion.

"We have been asking for a Consumer Protection Act for a long time. Price hike and quality products are vital issues," said Quazi Faruque, general secretary of CAB.

Abdur Rab Shikder, chief officer marketing of TCB, said: "The joint secretary of fisheries came from the ministry of fisheries and livestock but the joint secretary of livestock did not attend the meeting. It is important that we need both to control price hike."

TCB's chief officer, marketing was included in the later 11 as the authorities decided that the TCB would play an important role in the issue of price hikes.

Although the importance of TCB in price control was under question as many of its employees had been given a 'golden handshake'. The decision of bringing TCB to the forefront was reconsidered recently.

The parliamentary standing committee of commerce ministry headed by Redwan Ahmed formed a three-member committee to

investigate the problems of price hike. The committee visited India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia and found that similar organisations like TCB help government to control prices of items.

"The reason for abolishing TCB was free market economy, but in our country a limited number of importers have formed a syndicate to control the price," said the chief officer of TCB.

"The policy of syndication is followed everywhere. The shop owners association fixes retail market prices. For example, the price of ginger in wholesale market is Tk 55-60 now whereas it is sold in the retail market at a fixed rate of Tk 80," said the TCB officer.

"Newspapers can help consumers to know about the wholesale prices of commodities. This will help them to bargain with the retailers," he added.

The task force's next meeting will be held after the commerce minister returns home on June 22.



The price hike of essentials has not stopped people from buying their wares. The authorities of TCB (inset) will play an important role in the taskforce to curb the price spike.

Bad days for local audio market

Stringent anti-piracy laws demanded



Stocks of latest releases of CDs and audio tapes on sale at a shop in Patuati.

FAIZUL A TANIM

The local audio market is experiencing a period of depression because of illegal reproduction of CDs, audio tapes and Mp3s, according to the city's CD vendors and production houses.

"Piracy is by far the biggest problem our industry faces. The sale of original albums is affected by the rampant production of Mp3 CDs. The process involves compiling three or four popular albums into a single Mp3," said Sentu in charge of music shop Aria at Rifles Square.

These Mp3s are much cheaper than individual albums and music enthusiasts prefer these three-in-one combinations to single albums that flounder in the market, he added.

Indian pop and film music albums sell faster than locally produced albums because of the vast media coverage that the Indian music industry gets.

Even if people are not into this kind of music, they are influenced by the repeated visuals of the albums on television, another vendor said.

"We need the local TV channels to promote our own music and make them popular with the masses," an Eastern Plaza shop owner told Star City. "The music videos also need to be more innovative to draw viewers' interest," a young music enthusiast said.

Adding to the existing problem on the local music market is political trouble. "Frequent hartals, strikes and other political demonstrations affect concert dates and programmes on album manufacture. Shipping and handling are also delayed whenever there is a strike," a record label representative said.

"The trend for visual entertainment has led to a marked increase in demand for music VCDs, which is gradually gaining preference over traditional audio CDs," Hasan of G-Series said.

"In the face of this rising demand, there is yet to be a corresponding rise in the production of quality VCDs," a music fan complained.

Delwar, a representative of Soundtek, a popular audio production house, said the situation in the music industry is dreary. He also blames it on piracy but others have spoken about seasonal factors such as inclement weather. He maintains that piracy alone is the reason for the sordid situation.

Vendors, audio-production houses, artists and musicians -- all want stringent anti-piracy laws. "Unless we end this malpractice, we cannot expect the local industry to survive, let alone make it compete in the international arena," a vendor said.

Dream mugged

Alim lost money, visa and other travel documents to muggers a few hours before his flight to Saudi Arabia

CITY CORRESPONDENT

When Abdul Alim travelled all the way from Chittagong to Dhaka, he was dreaming of going to Saudi Arabia to make a living for a change in life.

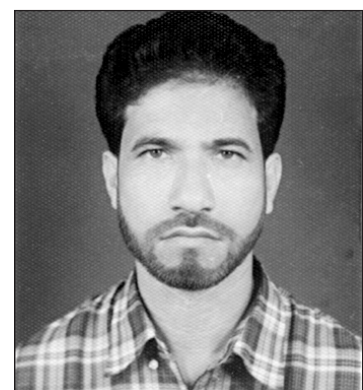
He was ready with a ticket, visa and would have surely flown to Saudi Arabia on June 11.

Only a few hours before his flight at 7:30pm, Alim found his dreams dashed when muggers snatched his money and all his travel documents such as visa and work permit.

All happened in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque. "I went there to say my Zohr prayers because I never said my prayers at the national mosque before," a shell-shocked Alim said.

Son of Kala Mia of Khagoria in Satkania in Chittagong, Alim has all reasons to be shell-shocked. He sold his ancestral land and took loans from relatives to go abroad.

"I came to Dhaka on June 10 and took my passport, visa and relevant papers from the Al-Sarwar Overseas (a recruiting agency)," he said.



The next day muggers attacked him soon after Zohr prayers. "They snatched my bag and melted away into the crowd," he said.

He was set to fly on BG-049 later in the day. But he had to file a general diary (GD) with Motijheel Police Station instead of flying.

"The police later took me to a number of places trying to help me identify the muggers," Alim said. "I could not trace them."

Alim also sought help from his recruiting agency, but nothing came up. "I don't know what I am going to do next," Alim cried.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air Alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223
National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

Dolphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundaran Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751
World Runner Express Ltd.- 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

OUTING

Museum and Zoo
National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday 3 pm - 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am - 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoi	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahala
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahabagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard - Motijheel-Shahabagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan