



STYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Gas being used day and night without any restriction by slum residents of Mohammadpur, another reason for pre-paid meters in all areas.

# Pre-paid gas meters next year

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Petrobangla expects to introduce pre-paid gas meters for domestic gas consumers by January 1, 2005.

As the governing body of the state-owned Titas and other gas transmission, distribution and production companies, Petrobangla initiated the move more than a year ago. It is now in a hurry to complete the process following an energy ministry directive to introduce the pre-paid meters by the first of January.

A technical committee was formed with representatives from Petrobangla, Titas, Jalalabad and Bakharabad gas distribution companies to set the characteristics of the pre-paid meter. The committee has already submitted its proposal to Petrobangla, which is expected to forward it to the energy ministry soon.

According to the sources in Titas, the pre-paid meters will be introduced as a pilot project in Dhaka at first. Titas has more than eight lakh subscribers in the city but initially around 10,000 will get meters installed.

"We will go for installation of pre-paid meters throughout the city in phases once we see that the pilot project is successful," said an official of Titas. He

also said that subscribers from Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Uttara will get them in the first phase.

The idea of introducing pre-paid meters surfaced following allegations of pilferage, system loss and misuse in domestic consumption of gas in the country. Sources said at present, the total system loss in the gas sector stands at nearly 10 percent which is equivalent to Tk 300 crore annually. An insider of Titas claimed that it has Tk 1,200 crore in uncollected bills from subscribers.

Another reason for installing pre-paid meters was to save subscribers from unnecessary hassle while paying gas bills. The authorities are hoping that the pre-paid system would put an end to the current 25 per cent misuse of gas in the domestic sector.

In the proposed plan, the basic concept behind pre-paid mobile phone cards were followed. Sources said that the size, type of metal, perfect readability of gas consumption and flow, easy card-punching system, fire safety and availability of the card were the main issues considered in the proposal. Initially Titas, Jalalabad and Bakharabad will sell the rechargeable cards and later they will recruit dealers for distribution. The pre-paid meters will be imported from China or Turkey or

other European countries. An official of Titas said each meter might cost around US\$ 200.

One member of the technical committee said the place to install the meter could be a problem. "If the pre-paid meter is installed inside the kitchen, some households might face difficulty as they may not have spacious kitchens. If it is placed outside of the house, meters can get stolen or damaged by rainwater," feared the member who ruled out possibilities of deceit by unscrupulous subscribers.

"The authorities will monitor the subscribers all the time. They will be caught if they do not buy recharge cards for too long. Moreover, there will be technical measures to prevent subscribers from removing meters and reinstalling them before inspection. Once removed, the meters will not work if someone tries to put it back in the same place," he said.

Officials said that they would try to reduce the expenditure of domestic subscribers in the new pre-paid metering system. "If they are paying Tk 375 per month now, we will try to introduce a card worth Tk 300 with which they can pass a month," said another member of the technical committee.

# Snatching at speed

CITY CORRESPONDENT

As a speedy mode of snatching, miscreants are using taxicabs and CNG autorickshaws. Women passengers on rickshaws are common targets of this new crime trend.

The muggers are taking two kinds of approaches. They either forcibly take handbags and valuables from the victim by waylaying him and flee on the vehicle or close in on the target from the opposite direction in a cab or an autorickshaw before snatching the bag in one swift motion. Everything happens so fast that the poor victim is unable to react before it is too late.

Normally in such incidents, the miscreants threaten their target by brandishing firearms or sharp weapons but this new phenomenon is based on the quickness of the crime. People are exposed to this form of mugging anywhere in the city and it is often difficult to identify the taxicab or autorickshaw in which the crime has been committed.

Usually the criminals target unsuspecting commuters and follow them on taxicabs and autorickshaws. When they get to a suitable place, they just extend their hands from the moving vehicle and snatch their desired object and vanish without trace.

"About two weeks ago the muggers

took my purse and mobile phone on the Satmasjid Road in front of the Meenabazar shopping mall. They came in a CNG-run autorickshaw and were gone before I could take the numbers of the vehicle," said Shornali Siddiquee, an undergraduate student of Newcastle Law Academy.

In recent times, students and passerbys on the Dhaka University campus have been mugged this way.

"My handbag was snatched by muggers on a black taxicab beside the Dhaka University Snacks (DUS) on September 8. I can not believe that the campus has become unsafe for me," said Mahbuba Hoque, a resident of Shamsunnahar Hall.

"I have been robbed in this way

too. The criminals did it within a very short time. I had no way to resist them," said Mohammad Hassan, a resident student of Surya Sen hall of Dhaka University.

The fast snatchers have not spared even the law enforcers

"This type of mugging has increased in recent times. I have been mugged twice when I was in civil dress," said an ASI of police.

"Many victims are coming to us to report incidents of this nature. We are trying to find out the criminals," said ASI Asma Begum, duty officer of Ramna police station.

# When a park turns into a toilet

ABDUL KADER

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is constructing a public toilet on a park at Jatrabari intersection although, according to the decision of a public toilet project, it was supposed to be built on unused land.

A few months back, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in the name of easing traffic congestion constructed a road by encroaching one-third of the parkland. The new road however has now become a parking place for public transports.

From afternoon to midnight, a makeshift kitchen market sits beside the new road on the park. On the other side of the road, the footpath is used by other vendors.

"The only walking place and playground for us has been destroyed in the name of the road and now for sake of the toilet," said Monir Hossain, a resident of Jatrabari.

The DCC is also constructing

The health department of the DCC is implementing the toilet project under which 70 public toilets with modern fittings will be constructed by December this year at a cost of Tk 6 crore.

public toilets on a park at Motijheel and on Osmani Udyan.

Environmentalist Abu Naser Khan, general secretary, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA), talking to The Daily Star said, "We are always against any construction on parks which should be preserved for our own future."

"Why on the park? The DCC owns

a lot of spaces. It can construct toilets in its scores of market places," he added.

DCC's Chief State Officer Abu Taleb, responsible for maintenance of the city parks, said the site for the toilet was selected a year ago before he joined the corporation.

The health department of the DCC is implementing the toilet project

under which 70 public toilets with modern fittings will be constructed by December this year at a cost of Tk 6 crore. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) funds the scheme. According to the project proposal, the toilets were supposed to be constructed on unused land.

Colonel Azizul Haque, chief health officer of the DCC, could not be contacted for comments.

The park is in the DCC's Zone-1 under Ward No. 84. Another park at Sayedabad has already lost its feature as it has become a waste dumping ground, a mini-bus stand, a motor workshop and a place to keep construction materials.

Although the DCC decided to hand some of its parks to the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry for better maintenance as suggested by the BAPA, it is yet to be implemented. The DCC has about 47 parks including children's parks most of which are in bad condition.



PHOTO STAR

## healthouting, taxicab & train timing

### HEALTH

#### Hospitals

**Heart**  
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD),  
- 9130800, 9122560-59

**Burn**  
Dhaka Medical College Hospital  
Burn Unit- 8626812-6

**Cancer**  
National Cancer Institute- 8014914,  
8826561-65  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib  
Medical University- 8612550-4,  
861455-9

**Diabetes**  
Diabetic Research Hospital  
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,  
8616641-50

**Mother & Child Care**  
Shishu Hospital- 9119119,  
8116061-62  
Azimpur Mother & Child Health  
Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

#### Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital- 9110794,  
9119315  
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,  
8114807

**Dental**  
Dental College- 9002035

**Orthopaedics**  
National Orthopaedics (Pangu)  
Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

**General**  
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-  
8626812-6  
Rushmono General Hospital-  
8317819

Holy Family Hospital-  
83111731-25  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib  
Medical University Hospital-  
8612550-4, 8614545-9  
Bangladesh Medical College &  
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,  
Shamarita Hospital- 9131901  
Suhrawardy Hospital - 9130800,

9122560-69

Salimullah Medical Collage  
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6  
Cholera Research Hospital  
(ICDDR)- 8811751-60  
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

#### Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563  
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040  
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,  
7310061, 7319022  
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-  
8626812-9

#### Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-  
8614040

#### Ambulances For Dead Body

Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail)  
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,  
7318166,  
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

### MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday  
Elephant Road-Friday  
Bishal Center-Friday  
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday  
Polwell Market-Friday  
BCS Computer City-Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.  
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday  
Stadium Market-Friday  
Bangabazar Market-Friday  
National Museum-Thursdays  
Ahsan Manzil--Thursdays.  
New Market-Tuesdays  
Gausia Market-Tuesday  
Mouchak Market-Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Eastern Plaza-Sunday  
Farmview Super Market-Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadugarh-Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday  
Shishu Jadugarh-Sunday

### TAXI CAB

#### Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065  
Salida 9344477, 0171620881  
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191  
Cab One 7113282-3  
Nihon 8624741-2  
Orion 9347277  
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611  
Capital 9352847

#### Union

8130485  
Kool 0171826731

#### Black Cab

Cab Ex 9358401  
Cabline 8321162  
JBS Cab 019364575  
Sajan 018126036  
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611  
Cab One 7113282-3

Palki 0171052500

Cab I 7113282

Jatri 0171540074

Nipun 9572277

R-Cab 8914782

Star Cab 9571919

Shihab 018202477 & 018228675

KGK 8620011

### TRAIN TIMING

**Subarna Express**  
Mahanagar Prabhathi  
Mahanagar Godhuli  
Turna  
Parabat Express  
Joyantika Express  
Upaban Express  
Tista Express  
Ekata Express  
Apakul Express  
Agnibeena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 1-55 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 10-55 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 6-40 am  
Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 6-40 am  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-15  
Reaches Noakhali at 5-00 am  
Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

### 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  
Information Resource Center, The  
American Center - 8813440-4,  
9886395-9  
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  
Press Institute of Bangladesh  
(PIB) 9330081-4