

Wasa's 30,000 meter purchase delayed

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Alleged interference by a coterie of contractors has delayed the process of purchasing 30,000 meters for the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) subscribers.

Wasa had to defer the closing date of tender for meter purchase at least for five times. After the fifth time deferment the closing date was finally fixed at November 22.

"It is not postponed...we only shifted it to a new date," said ANH Akhter Hossain, managing director of Wasa, declining to make any further comment.

Wasa has around 2,17,000 legal consumers in the city largely outnumbered by illegal connection

holders who do not have meters. Some 77,000 of the legal consumers also do not use meters leading to severe mismanagement in revenue collection.

A section of dishonest meter readers are cashing in on non-existence of meters. They collect money from these consumers through underhand dealings. They also reduce the bill of those who use water without meters.

Sources said Dhaka Wasa loses around Tk 50 crore in revenue each year due to systems loss that occurs due to the theft and use of water without meters.

Wasa could earn large amount of revenue if better quality meters are fixed to every consumer, an official

said. "It would reduce the systems loss up to 48 percent. We can earn at least Tk 3.5 crore a year if only one percent systems loss can be checked."

The government asked Wasa one and a half years ago to buy 77,000 high quality meters but it could not buy a single one until now amid pressure from an influential quarter in the government who want withdrawal of a condition in the tender.

"They are asking for withdrawal of the condition that the meters has to be ISO 14001 certified," said one of the officials in Wasa. "This certification assures quality and environment friendliness of the device," he said.

He said a powerful group of contractors backed by some Wasa offi-

cial are trying to get rid of that condition as they plan to bring low quality meters after getting the contract. "May be they maintain a strong connection with the government high-ups."

"We should follow the ISO 14001 certification as we have to look at the public health," said another high official in Wasa. He clarified that most low quality meters has lead that could cause severe health hazards especially to children.

Moreover, low quality meters do not give perfect reading. "It would be a suicidal decision for the government if we withdraw the condition. The government will lose huge amount of revenue due to low quality meters," he said.



The bus operators put up their own fare charts on the ticket counters at different stoppages that do not match the BRTA-approved fare chart.

Private helicopters getting popular

Even bridegrooms now charter choppers to wedding ceremonies

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The private helicopter service is gaining popularity as a mean of fast and convenient transportation.

People have even booked charter helicopters in advance before and after the Eid-ul-Fitr, informed Commodore (Retd) Shamsher Ali, managing director of South Asian Airlines Ltd.

The helicopter ride is preferred

mainly by the wealthy who want to avoid long travels and time wastage. Some people also charter helicopters when they fail to buy airline tickets or want to travel somewhere on an emergency basis. For those who wish to go directly to their distant village homes during Eid, helicopters can be a wonderful mode of transportation.

South Asian Airlines Ltd. have one helicopter, manufactured by

Robinson R-44 of the USA. It is a small 3-passenger helicopter popular among cowboys in the US.

The Aero Technologies Ltd., another private operator, have a helicopter made by Airbus which can carry five passengers.

The rate of chartering a helicopter varies. Aero Technologies Ltd. charge Tk 60,000 for every hour and a waiting charge of Tk 5,000 per hour. South Asian Airlines charge Tk

17,200 per hour and Tk 3,000 for waiting.

Aero Technologies are the pioneers of private helicopter service in Bangladesh having introduced it in 2000.

"We started the helicopter service to make it popular among the people as we did not have anything like it in our country," said Group Captain (Retd) Hassan Faruque, managing director of Aero Technologies.

Because of its wide body, Aero Technologies often receive bookings for emergency patients.

"We have special arrangements for the emergency patients. We reduce our rate for them. Recently our helicopter was chartered to carry eminent writer Shahrier Kabir who was critically injured in a road accident," said Hassan Faruque.

Foreign diplomats and embassies also prefer helicopters for various visits. There is a demand for helicopter service in marriages too.

"Sylhetis settled abroad often charter helicopters during marriage ceremonies," said Hassan Faruque.

Though the demand is increasing, private operators said they needed more people to ride the helicopters for making their business viable.

South Asian Airlines are operating flights at an average 20 flying hours per month but they need 60 flying hours.

"We need 30 flying hours per month to reach breakeven but now we have an average of 20 flying hours. But we are hopeful about the future," said Hassan Faruque.



For critical patients, private helicopters can be the difference between living and dying.

City bus operators charge high fare

BRTA fare chart ignored

ABDUL KADER

In the absence of government control, most bus operators in the city are charging fares at will in the name of providing 'better service' for the commuters.

The passengers alleged bus operators who run the so-called 'sitting services' by setting up ticket counters at different points are charging exorbitant fares on all routes.

Transport leaders and operators however said they fix higher fare as they have to pay the police and extortionists regularly to run the services.

Bikalpa Auto Service, which runs sitting service buses on Motijheel-Mirpur route via Shahbagh and Farmgate, takes Tk 6 for both Shahbagh and Farmgate from Motijheel, although the normal fare is Tk 2 for Shahbagh and Tk 3 for Farmgate.

'Roadstar' takes Tk 10 for Kakrail, Moghbazar and Satra from Gulistan while the normal fare for Moghbazar is Tk 3 from Gulistan. Meghla Transport charges Tk 8 for a trip to Jatrabari from Gulistan against the normal fare of Tk 2.

Bikalpa Service takes Tk 14 on Jatrabari-Mirpur route against the normal fare of Tk 9. Air-conditioned Premium Bus service charges Tk 15 for a trip from Gulistan to Mohakhali and Banani, against the normal fares of Tk 5 and Tk 7.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), the fare rate for per kilometer is 72 paise for bus and 75 paise for minibus. But almost all the bus services are charging double or more than double the BRTA rate.

"The distance between the National Zoo and Mirpur Section-1 is hardly one kilometer and the fare is supposed to be Tk 1 but the buses take Tk 3. The bus staff often misbehave with passengers if anyone protests the high fare," said Akbar Hossain,

a Mirpur resident.

Besides, during rush hours passengers face severe difficulties getting seats in the buses, which are supposed to touch and collect passengers from every stoppage. Some buses do not stop at all the stoppages to avoid passengers of short and mid distance.

All the passengers who buy tickets from counters are supposed to get seats but during the rush hours most buses take standing passengers, alleged Victor Rozario, a non-government official. "These are cheating service, not sitting service."

Contacted, BRTA Chairman Faruq Ahmed said there are fixed fare rates and BRTA would take action against the operators who charge extra. Asked whether

BRTA has any monitoring system, he said BRTA has acute shortage of manpower.

When asked, Zahirul Islam, deputy commissioner, traffic (north) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), said: "The bus operators are supposed to take fare according to the chart of BRTA. When we get any complaint of extra fare, we take steps."

Mahtab Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, joint secretary of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, admitted the allegation of charging high fare and said some operators have to take higher fare because of some extra expenses.

According to official statistics, a total of 6,625 buses, minibuses and other public transports ply on 130 routes in the city and its peripheries.

New city bus service opens today

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Modhumoti City Service is launching a new CNG-run luxury bus service today from Gulshan-2 to Kamalapur.

A venture of Modhumoti Foundation Limited, the Service will operate the buses from Gulshan-2 to Kamalapur through Mohakhali, Nabisco crossing, Moghbazar and Motijheel.

Md Enamul Haque Shohon, director, operations of Modhumoti City Service, told Star City yesterday that 10 Tata buses each having 57 seats would hit the road, for a start.

Shohon said they plan to expand the

fleet in phases by adding more buses in the future.

The buses will ply frequently on the route, at least in every 15 minutes, from 7:00am to 10:00pm, said its Managing Director Md Shaiful Alam. However, he added it may vary depending on traffic on the street.

The fare has been fixed from Tk 3 up to Tk 12 and 16 ticket counters have been put up at different city points.

"We want to help commuters get to their work and head back home in a hassle-free, relaxed manner. It is going to be a fun ride for them," said Director Shah Bakhtiar Elias.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Intl (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 Intl 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
Sundarban 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, 955640
The American Centre (IRC)- 8813440-4, 9886395
The 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- 9126252-6
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 Jadugarh-
9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm,
Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadugarh-
8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadugarh- 9666466
Open: 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

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