

CNG stations at risk for low quality equipment

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Most of the 60 CNG (compressed natural gas) refuelling stations in the city are running with low quality equipment and unskilled workers, posing a serious threat of accidents.

The stations set up during the last two years are not equipped with fire-fighting devices. A few of them have such equipment but are inadequate to face emergency situation.

The government still has no policy or monitoring system for these stations. However, the policymakers are going to enact a law to maintain standard of CNG stations, sources said.

Recently a CNG station at Nilkhet narrowly escaped an accident due to gas leakage in its delivery pipe. No-one was hurt, but the accident created panic in the area.

Witnesses said gas started coming out with huge sound when one of the delivery pipes at the station leaked. The same thing happened on three occa-

sions in a month.

"Suddenly we heard a sound from the CNG station where gas was coming out of the delivery pipe. Being panicked, people started running helter-skelter," described Razia Begum, a cigarette vendor opposite to the station.

A staff of the refuelling station said a nozzle of the delivery pipe was detached due to huge pressure of gas. "We fixed it quickly to avert a fatal accident."

The market beside the station is of bedding stores with highly flammable materials and a hostel of Eden College is located behind it. A fire at the station could cause huge damage to life and property due to its location in a crowded area.

"After the first incident we requested the CNG station staff to take safety measure but they just ignored it. Then similar accidents happened twice in a month," said Abdur Rahman of Nilkhet City Corporation market.

The Eden College authorities

also requested the station owner to check such accidents.

When conducted, officials of the CNG Distribution Company Ltd, owner of the station, denied the allegation of three accidents. They said the incident took place once.

"We took safety measures immediately after the incident and we informed the RPGCL officials who later inspected the station," said Major (ret) Anisur Rahman, in-charge, Operation Control Unit of the station.

He said now there is no possibility of recurrence of such accidents. "We will install fire-fighting devices at the station soon," he assured.

Officials at Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd (RPGCL), state-owned CNG conversion and supply company, said they cannot monitor all the stations due to lack of manpower. Twenty-six more stations are going to start operation soon, they added.

Shafiqul Islam, deputy man-

ager of RPGCL, said the accident might have taken place because of low quality equipment or faulty set-up. "We will talk to them and ask them to take necessary action to prevent such accident in future."

He said RPGCL will import high quality equipment for CNG stations and CNG-run vehicles and conversion kits, to maintain standard. "We will hand over these equipment to private sector for installation and operation," he headed.

The Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources is however seriously thinking of a code of conduct for CNG stations and CNG-run vehicles.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain said the government is considering enacting a law on CNG to maintain standard in its utilisation.

"We are preparing a bill with necessary guidelines that is expected to be presented in parliament soon," Mosharraf told Star City.



A CNG re-filling station in Nilkhet which escaped an accident because of gas leakage in the delivery pipe.

City dwellers deprived of cheap communication



A card phone booth in Azimpur lies deserted as the machine is out of order.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Card phone service in Dhaka has almost become non-existent as 312 out of the 508 phones have either been withdrawn or remain out of order.

This is depriving the city dwellers from getting the cheapest and most convenient mode of telecommunication.

From its launch in 1992 to July 2004, the Telephone Shilpa Shangsha (TSS) Ltd installed 307 chip-type and 201 magnetic card phones in the city. Among those 127 chip type and 185 magnetic card phones are now out of order or are not in use.

It has been alleged that deliberate poor maintenance by a section of corrupt officials of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) to allow private phone shops to do brisk business, was the main reason for the virtual death of the service. TSS officials even blamed the private phone shop owners for intentionally damaging the card phone booths for self-interest.

About five years ago, two card phones were installed near Anarkali market in Mouchak but the TSS later removed those even though a large number of people were using the booths every day. There were allegations that the TSS took away the phones after taking bribe from the owners of phone-fax businesses in the market. But officials of TSS claimed that phone shop owners damaged the phones every time they fixed them and that was the reason for the withdrawal.

Most phone booths in Eastern Tower, Mouchak and Anarkali markets have faced the same fate.

Although 50 card phone maintenance personnel are working in Dhaka to repair phones within 24 hours if they go out of order, in reality they seldom bother to fix

them.

"The magnetic card phones that had been installed cannot be fixed as they have already passed the expiry period of five years and the spare parts are out of production. So we are bound to withdraw them," said Rafiqul Alam, manager customer services of TSS, sole operators of card phone service in Bangladesh.

He also added that 36 of the chip type card phones are out of operation as BITB's phone lines for those had been distributed among personal phone subscribers.

Whatever the reasons, the total breakdown of the service is causing immense sufferings to the people and at the same time, the government is incurring huge revenue losses.

Sources said card phone service earned Tk 4.74 crore in 2002-03, Tk 5.57 crore in 2001-02 and Tk 9.35 crore in 2000-01. During its peak period in 1995-96 the turnover from the service amounted a staggering 1.20 crore a month. It has dropped to around 10 lakh Taka

per month now.

Taking advantage of the unavailability of card phone service, the private phone shops are charging a higher rate.

At present, a local call from a cardphone costs Tk 2 per 6 minutes and Tk 7.50 a minute for ISD calls whereas phone-fax shops charge Tk 5 per 3 minutes for a local call and ISD call charges are negotiated.

The small number of card phone booths that are still operating in the city are losing users fast as prescribed calling cards are not found in the market.

"Phone-cards are not available in post offices these days although once you could get them even at grocers shops. If one gets lucky, he has to buy the 100 Taka cards at Tk 150," said Golam Nabi, a salesman in New Market.

Nabi informed that at the card phone centre opposite to the market, brokers sell cards and charge Tk 5 per unit although the rate fixed by the TSS is Tk. 2.

Officials at post offices, which are authorised distributors of the cards, are also reportedly involved in corruption as they apparently sell the cards only to the brokers on commission.

One broker at the card centre at New Market boldly proclaimed: "Phone cards are not available for public. They are reserved for us."

The scenario is almost the same across the country. Among 1525 cardphones, 831 chip type and magnetic card phones are out of order.

TSS is planning to install more card phone booths in the country as well as in the capital. Mir Doulat Hossain, managing director of TSS said that this time around they would take proper precautions to save these phones.



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- 9558806
 Banmgladesh 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- 9126525-6
 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8850141, 8850142
 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
 Muktiuddha 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 Shaplachatter
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 Ranimahall
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khligoan-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