

Mirpur's CNG refuelling stations trapped in extortion web

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A handful of miscreants have begun to extort Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) station owners along the Mirpur 10 to Gabtoli and Rokeya Sarani roads.

The amounts demanded in extortion ranges from Tk 5,000 to Tk 200,000 according to a station owner.

Another station owner requesting anonymity told Star City that the stretch along this road is becoming home to such miscreants. "They fearlessly sent their men to the stations who openly demand for the extortion money," he said.

Most CNG station owners said they were facing about 50 percent loss by closing the stations during the peak hours -- 12 noon and 2.00 pm -- because of a gas crisis. "As it is we cannot cater to our clients -- three-wheelers and taxi cabs --as the pressure of gas falls short of the requirement," he said. "And now we are saddled with the burden of paying large amounts in extortion," he added.

"It costs around Tk. 2.5 crore to setup

one such pump. Specialised machines to produce and dispense gas to the CNG driven vehicles have to be installed," said Ahmed Sharif, the manager of a station.

"It is a tedious task trying to recover our investment, and now the pressure of paying extortion money has added to our woes," he added.

Other owners too think alike and said that well-known miscreants like Taj, Shohor Ali and Raja operate in that area.

It is alleged that these extortionists have threatened the lives of CNG station owners if they informed the police of such activities.

"My station was attacked few months back. The Police and RAB drop in often to check on us, but the threatening calls continue to come demanding large amount of extortion money," said the proprietor of Aria CNG filling station.

"I am already running in a loss with the present gas crisis. Where can I earn the extra money to pay these men? The miscreants not only attacked my shop but shot the security guard in the neck, leaving him seriously wounded," he added.

Another CNG filling station said if such practices continue, he might have to leave this area. "I thought of opening a second CNG station a few blocks away, but now it is getting difficult to hold together the business in one station," he said.

In this regard, General Secretary of Bangladesh CNG Owners Association, Colonel Shahabuddin said: "We cannot tackle these situations and we have not yet received any complaints regarding this matter at any of our association meetings. But we will certainly look in to the matter if any complaints are brought up".

Other station owners also alleged that when the local police station is notified of any activities, persons within the police station give details of the complainant to extortionists. The owners then get in to bigger trouble than expected.

Assistant Sub-inspector Bilkis Banu of the Mirpur police station said they are not aware of such activities and denied any police involvement. "There have been no complaints till now and if they come we will take immediate action," she said.



A CNG refuelling station in Mirpur: Business must go on under any circumstance.



Is it moving at eighty, hundred or more? A speeding car on the Manik Mia Avenue gives ample reason for setting up speed detectors

Unmarked limits defer setting of speed detectors

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) could not set up speed detectors to catch over-speeding drivers in January as the authorities did not yet mark the roads with signs of speed limit.

Under a World Bank (WB) funded project, the DMP planned to set up 30 portable speed detectors in Dhaka to check speed of vehicles from January with a view to reducing road accidents.

The DMP doubt they might be able to implement the plan even this year as they expect the road marking authorities of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Department of Roads and

Highways (RHD) to take time to mark the city roads cautiously.

"Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (BTCB) and we are conducting a survey to classify the city roads. After the survey we will mark the roads with appropriate signs," said Syed Kudratullah, chief engineer, traffic engineering department of the DCC.

He said the survey will take time to come to complete.

Meanwhile, the WB is insisting on implementation of the speed limit measures.

"Recently, a WB team in a meeting told us to install these detectors in a short time. But we could not implement the system due to lack of speed signs. Because if there is no signs,

then the drivers will get an excuse to avoid punishment for breaking the speed limit," said Anseruddin Khan Pathan, DC (traffic) south.

"We have procured the speed detectors and trained 100 traffic sergeants and 30 inspectors on operation of the machines," said Pathan.

The DCC decided to install the detectors to control speed of vehicles in the city and adjoining areas as most accidents take place due to over-speeding.

The detectors with high performance satellite receivers will measure acceleration and detect the over-speeding vehicles. These machines could be installed anywhere according to need.

"It is now a must to control speed specially on the Airport Road and Chittagong Highway to control reckless driving. Most of the fatal accidents take place on these roads," said Pathan.

According to traffic law, speed limit for vehicles in the city is 40km an hour and on the highways 60 km an hour. But most drivers are unaware of the speed limit.

"That is why we need the speed limit signs," said Pathan.

According to the DMP traffic department, about 350 to 450 accidents happen in the capital every year.

8x3

8x2

8x3