



A chouki or security outpost during the Moghul period in Karwan Bazar was set up where people were security checked before entering the city. There was a caravanserai near the chouki. The word Caravanserai was later distorted to Karwan Bazar.

BRTC city bus service for women flops

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has failed to provide quality service through its special bus service for working women on nine routes in the city.

Most of the female commuters complained of poor and inadequate service. "I go from Mirpur to Motijheel everyday in the morning but I see the special bus service only once," said Shahina Khatun standing at Mirpur-10 bus stand.

"Sometimes the BRTC bus comes with hardly four or five female passengers during office time but most of the time we see male passengers on board," commented Khokon Mia, owner of a betel leaf store at the bus stand.

Last year BRTC had five buses for women commuters and it added ten more buses including nine double-deckers to the fleet in September. The buses are supposed to ply from 6:00am to 10:00am and 3:00pm to 6:00pm on nine routes.

The routes are: Mirpur-1 to Motijheel via Mirpur-10-Asad Gate-Azimpur-Palashi-Gulistan; Mirpur-12 to Motijheel via Mirpur-10-Farmgate-Gulistan; Mohammadpur to Gulistan via Satmasjid Road-



Female garment workers walk long distances in the absence of a bus service.

Curzon Hall; Mirpur 12 to Uttara via Mirpur-14-Cantonment-Banani; Mirpur-12 to Kamalapur via Taltala-Agargaon-Khejurbagan-Sangsad Bhaban-Science

Laboratory Azimpur-Gulistan; Khilgaon to Gulistan via Taltala; Gulistan to Narayanganj; Tongi to Motijheel via Banani-Mohakhali-Moghbaraz and Mohammadpur to Gulshan-1

and 2 via Mohammadpur-Town Hall-Mohakhali. Rahima Khatun, the lessee who runs 18 double-decker buses said they are unable to provide quality service because

of run-down vehicles. "At least five of the 18 buses are in bad condition. "These buses go out of order

the next day these are repaired. How can we ensure proper service to commuters if four or five buses are always at workshop," she said.

"All these double-deckers hit the road in 1990 and now these are worn out," she said. "Had the BRTC given new buses, we could have fulfilled the commuters' needs."

Rahima said she is unwilling to continue the service as she faces huge loss. She paid Tk 2.5 lakh at a time and now pays a monthly amount of Tk 21,000 for each bus. "The expenditure is double than the income from this service," she said.

She said five people including the driver works in one bus. "The driver is paid Tk 400 a day while each helper gets Tk 150," she said.

Taimur Alam Khondaker, chairman of BRTC, said they are unable to purchase new buses due to shortage of fund. He admitted that the service has got some problems but said BRTC will look into the problems.

"Even airplanes get broken down sometimes," he said when asked about the run-down buses. He said the service in new and it takes some time to be established.

No free rides for commuters on the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover

SULTANA RAHMAN

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC)'s plan to construct the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover could become an unwanted burden for citizens as they will have to pay to use it.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved in principle the seven-kilometre flyover project to be implemented by a joint venture of Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates and India under build, own and operate basis. If the Prime Minister endorses the project, Orion of Bangladesh, UAE's Belhasha and Indian Acom will work together to connect Jatrabari with Gulistan in 30 to 36 months at a cost of Tk 710 crore.

The flyover will have six entry and exit points and four lanes on either side. Vehicles that will pass through it will have to pay tolls according to their characteristics.

For motorcycles, the rate is five Taka, a CNG-run autorickshaw has to pay ten Taka, cars Tk 35,

jeeps Tk 40, minibuses Tk 50, minibuses Tk 100 and trailers and lorries Tk 200.

The toll will be revised after every three years according to the inflation rate. The contractor of the flyover will own it for 24 years and then the DCC will take over. The DCC will get a five per cent share of profit from the income from the flyover.

"Nowhere in the third world you have to pay to commute inside a city," said a top government official.

More alarming for commuters is the fact that they will have to spend money to use the at grade roads of the flyover as they have been leased out to the contractor by the DCC. It is mentioned in the cabinet division approved project paper that the contractor will be empowered to construct, operate, maintain and collect tolls of the flyover. At grade roads will be given to the company as mortgage and it will only become free from toll collection after the agreed concession period (24

years). "It means the private company will collect tolls not only from vehicles getting on the flyover but also from those that will be moving under it," a DCC official said while terming the project 'anti-people'.

"Belhasha will invest 710 crore Taka while they will earn more than five thousands crore Taka from tolls collected over 24 years. It will become a serious burden for the citizens," the official added.

Dhaka Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka has told journalists that he expects the Prime Minister to inaugurate the project within April. Khoka also tried to justify the toll system for the flyover. "Many countries in the world have toll collection system for flyovers, even in our neighbouring countries."

But flyovers in different Indian cities including Kolkata are part of their free regular communications infrastructure.



The flyover is expected to solve the unbearable traffic situation in Jatrabari but commuters have to pay a price for that.

WAYSIDE COLD DRINK SALES

Unclean water, utensils give rise to water borne diseases



How safe are the drinks these people are consuming? Yet some are left with no choice but quench their thirst with drinks sold at these wayside outlets.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Sales of various types of unhygienic drinks along city footpaths are on the rise as summer sets in putting public health at risk.

Many people fall prey to water borne diseases with the consumption of these drinks, which are prepared under unhygienic processes. The use of contaminated water, artificial colours and flavour to attract customers makes the risk high.

"Selling juice and sherbet is not the problem but the unhygienic preparation and use of artificial colours and flavours threaten public health," said Colonel Dr.

Azizul Haque, chief health officer, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Every year with the arrival of summer hundreds of vendors start selling various drinks like fruit juice and various varieties of sherbet under the open sky. These ice-cold drinks attract thirsty movers in the city.

"I suffered from diarrhoea last year after having sherbet at an outlet in Farmgate and I gave up consuming such drinks from wayside outlets," said Saleh Ahmed, a student of Tejgaon College.

Yet some people consume these drinks every day. "It is the cheapest way of quenching my thirst so I drink it. All edible items sold in the market are contaminated, so if I fall sick I

cannot definitely blame it on the drink," said Arifur Rahman, a service holder in a private company.

Hundreds of such makeshift sherbet outlets are mushrooming in the city especially at the crowded spots. Ramzan sells lemon sherbet at the Golap Shah Mazar intersection at Gulistan. He said that he uses water from the mosque nearby. When asked, the mosque authorities said they do not permit anyone to use the water outside the mosque.

Ramzan said that the ingredients he uses to prepare his sherbet are sugar, lemon, yusufgul and ice, stating that he does not use artificial colour to his orange juice.

"The colour is because I add

papaya to give the sherbet a special taste," he said.

He sells his sherbet in a van and the environment and the materials he uses to serve this 'special' sherbet are very dirty. Flies roam around over the rusty container and dirt-stained glasses and adding to the contamination is the dirty water used to 'cleanse' the glasses.

This situation prevails in all around the city where hundreds of vendors are selling these types of drinks, while the authority - Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) - to oversee public health affairs has no power to check these food items alone stop their sales.

"The food inspectors of DCC apply Food Ordinance 1959, Pure

Food Rules 1967 and DCC Ordinance 1985 while inspecting foods sold in the open market but sales of street food does not fall under the purview of these acts," said Golam Sarwar, public analyst, DCC.

Only 107 varieties of food items are enlisted under these laws. An inspector collects samples of only the enlisted items and sends them to the DCC lab for testing.

"The DCC cannot test any food items that are not enlisted. As street foods are not enlisted under any DCC law, no street foods can be tested unless they are enlisted," Sarwar said.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We will consider compensation from our end and put pressure on the factory owner to compensate the victims"

-- Lutfuzzaman Babar
State Minister for Home Affairs
Told journalists on a visit to the scene to witness the rescue operation in Savar on April 11.
Source: The Daily Star

"I started crawling but against different blocks only to look again for the hole. And after several hours I saw light and myself outside the debris"

-- Ruhul Amin
Knitting Operator who survived the tragic building collapse in Savar
Said recalling his seven hours inside the rubble, on April 12.
Source: The Daily Star

"We will never get back our father. But this verdict is a great consolation for us. We will be truly happy when the judgement is executed"

-- Zahid Ahsan Russel
MP
Eldest son of slain MP Ahsanullah Master
Told journalists on the verdict handed down by a Dhaka court on the slaying of Awami League lawmaker in May last year in Tongi, on April 16.
Source: Prothom Alo

"The building was not properly designed and constructed. The owner of the building did not even take Rajuk's approval before its construction"

-- Shahid Alam
Chairman, Rajuk
Told journalists on the collapse of the nine-storey sweater factory in Savar, on April 11.
Source: The Daily Star

"I don't know why such a false story was run by the state-run news agency. You need to ask them why they did so"

-- Sajib Wajed Joy
Son of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina
Told journalists expressing concern on the news that he met Indian Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee on his arrival at the airport in Dhaka, on April 14.
Source: The Daily Star