



Increase in fares has not stopped commuters travelling in buses, as crowds wait to board a bus at Farmgate.

Bus fares go up

IMRUL HASAN

Rajshahi bound Mahmud Amin was surprised to discover at the counter of Hanif Paribahan that the bus fare from Dhaka, which was 180 Taka only days ago, had gone up to 220 Taka. Even though it was an infuriating situation, Amin still bought tickets as he just had to take his family to Rajshahi. "If I had protested, they would not have given me seats near the front," said Amin who was just one of many angry passengers waiting at the Gabtali bus terminal. Bus fares have risen across the country recently. On an average, there has been a Tk. two increase on all routes inside the capital and between 20 to 40 Taka on long routes. Transport owners have attributed the fare hike to the increase in diesel

price. "There is no opportunity to bargain. Most of the passengers are paying the extra amount and so am I," said Natore bound Shajib Ahmed at the Mohakhali bus stoppage. The Bus-Truck Owners Association has distributed a list of previous and present rates of bus fare at every ticket counter in the city. According to that list, passengers have to pay 20 Taka more if their intended destination is the southwestern part of the country. To travel to Jessore, one has to spend in the region of 250 Taka in place of Tk 230 and Tk 280 for Khulna, Benapole and Satkhira although it was 260 not so long ago. Passengers used to travel to Kaligonj, Jhenidah, Barisal and Magura paying 200 Taka for tickets. They now have to add another 20. "The present situation is

better because there were no fixed rates for selling tickets in the past. Now everyone is buying tickets at the same rate at different counters," said Subrato Roy, manager of Diganta Paribahan. "The present rate has been fixed by the government. But it had been fluctuating because of the conflict among the bus owners," claimed the manager. Travelers to the northern districts have been affected most by the fare increase. Bus operators are now charging 40 Taka more for tickets to Rajshahi and Natore. For Bogra, Jaypurhat, Kurigram and Kushtia, the fare is up by 20 Taka. Ticket prices have however remained unchanged on the Dhaka-Chittagong route. "There are complaints that bus fares have been raised all over the country. We will take proper steps in this regard," said

Minister for Communications Barrister Nazmul Huda. According to the Bus-Truck Owners Association, the new fares have been in effect from April 10. The government's fixed rate is 72 paisa per kilometre for each passenger of a 52-seater bus. In some long routes the rate is one Taka per kilometre. "The fare has not been increased but adjustments have been made to the rates in certain routes because of the higher price of diesel, bus engines and other maintenance costs," said GM Siraj MP, chairman of the bus-truck owners association. "The bus fare was less in comparison with the fuel price before. The present rates resemble the government rate. If an operator takes more than the fixed fare he will be punished," said Jubayer Naim, vice-chairman of the association.

Eight new police stations await approval

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The proposed setting up of eight new police stations in the capital is not expected to materialise before July at least, as the Ministry of Finance has not approved the project yet. Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) sources informed that the ministry had agreed in principle to approve the project but nothing has been made official yet. "The new police stations may need three months to start functioning after the approval is given. We have to rent houses and allocate the manpower to the new stations," said an official of DMP. "We have already finalised the primary details of the project. We are hopeful of inaugurating these police stations within a

month of getting the approval," said Anwarul Karim, joint secretary (police) at the Ministry of Home Affairs. The new police stations will be set up with Ramna divided into Shabagh and Ramna, Dhanmondi into New Market and Dhanmondi, Mirpur into Shah Alibagh and Mirpur, Demra into Sarulia and Demra, Motijheel into Paltan and Motijheel, Badda into Khilkhet and Badda, Uttara into Shah Kabir and Uttara and Mohammadpur into Adabar and Mohammadpur. "We have not asked for any separate budget for infrastructure, this fiscal year. The new stations will start functioning in rented houses and gradually we will think of permanent addresses. We have not decided anything on the manpower issue yet," said Karim. The government last year took the initia-

tive to increase the number of police stations in the city with the aim to improve the service of the law enforcers by reducing pressure on them. Recently the state minister for home affairs pointed out that in developed countries like the USA, there is one policeman for every 300 people. But in Bangladesh the ratio is 1:1300, which is not at all conducive for maintaining law and order. "With the city's population on the rise always, the existing police stations have become overburdened and law enforcers struggle to reach the crime scenes on time. Also, they can not conduct investigations fast enough. These are the main reasons why we had initiated the project," said Hasanul Haider, assistant inspector general (requirement and manpower) of Bangladesh Police.



The Dhanmondi Police Station which will be divided into two sections.

9x3

3x2

6x2

3x2

6x2

9x3