

Local bus drivers take advantage of commuters

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Commuters in the city complain that they are held hostage by local service bus operators who charge a higher fare during rush hours or inclement weather in the name of providing direct or sitting service.

"Hundreds of commuters wait for buses during the rush hours and we are bound to pay the extra fare because there are no alternatives," said Rabui Alam who regularly travels between Farmgate to Mirpur.

"There is no scope for bargaining. Most of the passengers are paying the fare for direct service and so am I. Otherwise I will not be able to get a transport," said Gulistan bound Rajib Ahmed who got on a bus from Mohakhali.

At prominent bus stoppages of the city, local service buses suddenly become direct or sitting ones during the morning or the after office hours. With helpers of local buses shouting 'direct', home or office bound commuters rush towards the buses all at a time and often chaotic scenes unfold.

Md. Nurul Islam, general secretary of Mirpur Sharak

Paribahan Union said that they would punish the drivers and helpers if specific allegations were brought against them.

"It is the duty of the passengers to complain against the drivers. If they do that then we are prepared to take action against those who run direct service on local buses," said Islam.

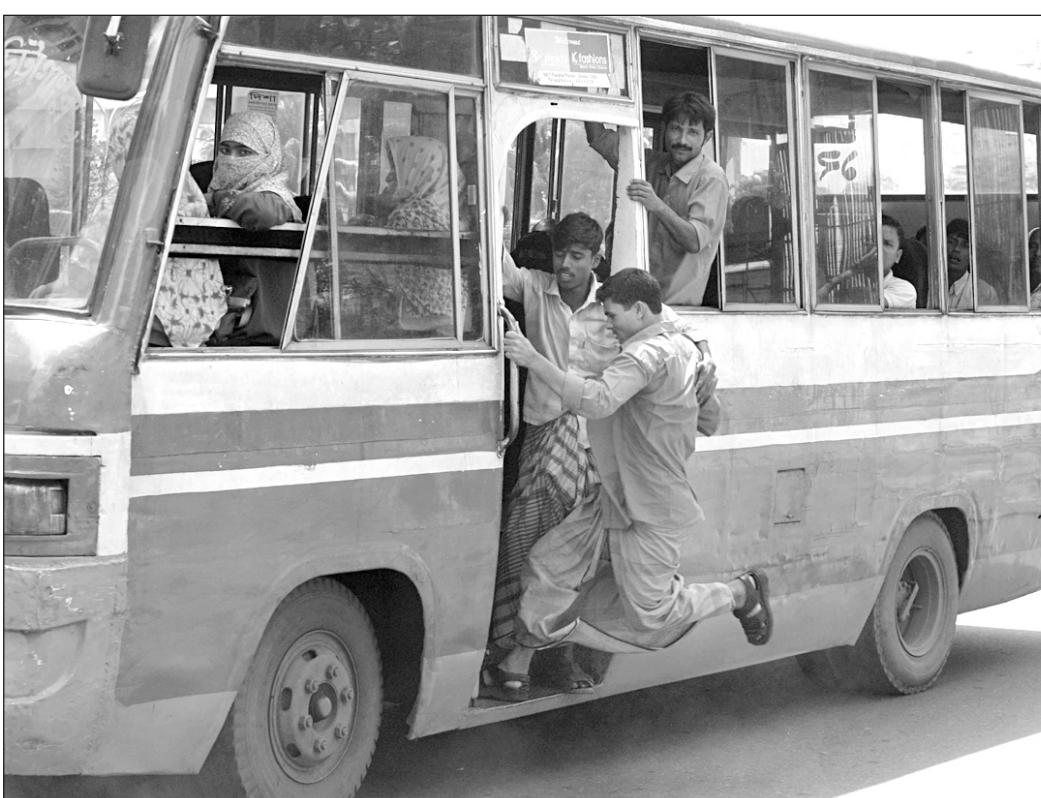
The chairman of the bus-truck owners association GM Siraj (MP) admitted that some local buses, especially those bearing number 8, go direct at times.

"In order to facilitate the commuters, we provide direct service during rush hours. We do it because the number of buses on the route is insufficient."

About these make-shift direct or sitting services, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials said that these buses usually take regular permits for plying on any of the city's 48 routes.

"To provide direct service temporarily is illegal. It is against the rules and regulations of the BRTA," said Mizanur Rashid, motor-vehicle inspector of BRTA Dhaka Zone.

Meanwhile Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police SM



A speeding minibus at Sonargaon intersection slows down to pick up a passenger and charge the 'direct service' rate.

Mizanur Rahman said commuters hardly complain about the illegal direct or sitting service buses.

"People never come to us directly with the numbers of such buses. If we get specific allegations, we punish them on the spot," said Rahman.

8x3

12x3

12x2

5x3

7x3