



Scalpers add to troubles of homebound people

DWAIPAYAN BARUA and NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

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Anxiety grips the homebound people in the port city as the advance tickets for inter-city trains and inter-district buses have almost been sold out on the eve of Eid-ul Fitr, the largest religious festival of the Muslim community.

In such a situation, passengers said the Chittagong Railway Station authorities are yet to start selling of a good number of tickets to the intended passengers, which worsens further the woes of homebound people residing in Chittagong.

"They preserved those tickets to cash in on final hours' 'so-called' ticket crisis or high demand," the passengers said.

The Railway in Chittagong sold advance tickets on five scheduled dates from October 24 to October 29 this year but many passengers said they could not buy any ticket waiting in long queues for hours. Many of them even queued up from the previous night and in the morning when their turn comes in the counter they found in utter despair that 'there is no more ticket for the day!'

Faizul Kabir is one of those unfortunate passengers.

He told these correspondents that he tried two days in vain to collect five advance tickets for November 2 to go to Comilla with family members.

"When I failed to collect my tickets on October 28 standing all day long, I went that night again and waited the whole night sitting in line as the following day was the last day to collect tickets", Faizul said.

"As ill luck would have it, I failed again despite waiting in queues the whole next day," he said adding, "the railway men closed the counter declaring that all tickets were sold."

Many passengers alleged that some scalpers in connivance with a section of dishonest railway staffs bought most of tickets to sell

those at exorbitant prices to the passengers.

Station Manager Shafiuddin Ahmad, however, denied the allegation saying that all the tickets of the districts with shorter distances such as Chittagong-Feni or Chittagong -Comilla were sold

as per scheduled date and timing. "But tickets of inter-city trains are still available as rush for such tickets is yet to begin", Shafiuddin said on Sunday.

Although the station manager assured of available inter-city tickets the real picture is different.

Many passengers of the inter-city services did not get their tickets despite repeated attempts at Chittagong railway station.

Anwar Zahid was trying to convince the man at the counter his urgency but all his efforts and entreaties went in vain.

Zahid said he along with his wife and children usually visit their relatives at home in Tangail every year during Eid and hasn't faced such a crisis in the past.

"I am not sure whether I would be able to go to Tangail this time," he said.

Termining the crisis as natural on the eve of Eid, Shafiuddin said they will arrange two special express services from Chittagong to Chandpur on November 3 and November 4, and at least two or three additional coaches will be added to each inter-city trains to lessen the crisis.

Murad Hossain, divisional commercial officer of the railway station, said they had to preserve some advance tickets for the VIPs.

The similar scenario is also seen at different bus stations too. The anxious people bound for home are facing the same troubles.

The owners, drivers and workers of inter-district buses are now taking advantage of the crisis and situation by charging higher price for tickets.

The most piteous scenes are noticed at Kadamtali Bus Terminal. Buses of as many as 22 routes each day depart from this station.

The fares for different inter-district buses here were raised from one-and-half to twice. The tickets up to Noakhali or destinations with equal distance like Sonapur, Raipur or Chatkhil are being sold at a minimum price of Tk 130 whereas the normal price is around Tk 60 to Tk 80.

When asked about the over-charging, the bus owners and staffs said they sell tickets according to the new tariff chart of the government.

Abdul Khaleque of Balaka Express said "We sold tickets at a cheaper rate till last week but we have to raise it to keep pace with the price hike of essentials."



Homebound people wait in long queues at Chittagong Railway Station for advance tickets, top, while several others, bottom, take a break on the floor as they got tired of standing in queues for hours. The picture was taken at midnight on October 28.

Police still clueless about Maulana Iqbal murder

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Police are still clueless about the murder of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) leader Maulana Iqbal Bin Yakub even after more than two weeks.

Apart from the arrest of one housewife Samina Haq Mita, reported lover of Iqbal, and her brother-in-law Abu Hossain Babla, the police have failed to make any remarkable headway in the case.

Police recovered the body of 32-year-old Maulana Iqbal from KB Abdur Sattar Road adjacent to the Goods Hill residence of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, parliamentary affairs advisor to the prime minister, at around 11:45pm on October 15.

IOJ leaders and family members of slain Iqbal said it is 'a cool-blooded political murder' and blamed the Jamaat-BNP goons for the killing and demanded fair trial and arrest of the real killers.

They said the slain leader had strife over ownership of a private clinic with Jamaat leader Abdur Rahim, one of the directors of Amanat Hospital Pvt Ltd, and urged police to take the issue into consideration during the investigations.

Later, police detained Rahim but set him free within hours for reasons unknown. Police now play 'mysterious role' and dilly-dally the case.

Kotwali Police of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) detained Mita from her Chatteshwari residence as a suspect of the murder. They also detained



Maulana Iqbal Bin Yakub

her brother-in-law Babla and took them remand twice to unearth information about the murder.

Mita, while in remand, admitted her close relation with Maulana Iqbal but denied her involvement with the murder and told police that Rahim and Iqbal had feud over business issues.

At this stage, police suddenly dropped the issue of 'political or business feud' and concentrated on 'much-hyped' extra-marital affairs with Mita to dig out motive behind the killing.

Even, the CMP Commissioner Mazedul Haq while talking to a group of journalists on October 20 dismissed outright political link to the murder. His comment at the midst of investigation drew widespread flak from different quarters.

Meanwhile, Mita's family at a press conference on October 22 alleged police torture and harassment on them. They sought Prime Minister and Home Minister's intervention in this regard. The

family members also alleged that neither their lawyer nor any of them had been allowed to meet Mita in the police custody.

Following the press conference, police shown Mita and Babla arrested after implicating them in the murder case and sent them to jail.

Mita's family blamed the then assistant commissioner (Kotwali zone) Shah Mizan Shafiur Rahman for attempting to divert the course of the investigation towards 'wrong' direction to 'save Jamaat goons' from the murder charges.

IOJ chief Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini at a rally here on October 26 questioned the 'impartiality' of AC Shah Mizan and demanded his withdrawal from Kotwali zone and the home ministry transferred Shah Mizan and two other assistant commissioners immediately.

After this move, police changed its investigation strategy and now they are examining all issues ranging from political to business or others to unearth clues into the murder. The investigation, however, now is progressing at snail's pace.

Investigation Officer (IO) Sub-inspector Md Ahsan said we will consider and examine all aspects, issues and information available to reach the ultimate destination of the case. He denied of slow pace in the investigation saying it's a complicated case and it would take few more weeks.

DEATH TRAP



Vehicles run with risk due to a pothole in the middle of the only road at Saltgola Crossing point linking Chittagong Port and Shah Amanat International Airport. The pothole on the all-important road has been there for quite a few weeks but failed to draw attention of the authorities concerned.

theweekthatwas

Haque's contribution recalled

Speakers at a discussion urged the government give Abdul Haque Chowdhury, eminent researcher and historian, proper recognition.

They made the appeal at a discussion in observance of the 11th death anniversary of Haque at the Zila Parishad auditorium here on Wednesday.

Poet Nurul Huda was present as chief guest at the meeting organised by Abdul Haque Chowdhury Smriti Parishad with Poet and journalist Arun Das Gupta in the chair.

Professor Dr Souren Biswas, Professor Elizabeth Arifa Mubashira, columnist Idris Alam and Principal Shahidul Amin Chowdhury participated in the discussion.

Huda said Haque never followed so-called traditional path for acquiring knowledge or finding his destination. "He devoted his entire life to truth, history and research."

Dr. Souren said Haque was an

extra-ordinary researcher of the country.

IUB students visit CSE

A group of BBA student of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) visited Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) to

see the bourse's activities on Thursday. CSE President Habibullah Khan while addressing the visiting students emphasised the need for acquiring knowledge about the capital market at school level.

"If any country wants to see industrial growth or employment generation it must give focus on capital market developments," he said.

Referring to his experiences on a

recent visit to Thai Stock Exchange, he said the Thai Education Ministry has introduced capital market at school-level curriculum.

He said students could consider stock investment as a good profession like neighbouring India and Sri Lanka where many graduate students take the opportunity.

General Manager of CSE Management Support Group Golam

Rabban Chowdhury briefed the students about CSE operations. CSE executive AKM Shahroze Alam was present.

'Computer education a must'

Chittagong University (CU) Vice-Chancellor Professor AJM Nuruddin

Chowdhury on Thursday said computer education is a must to keep pace with the fast-growing world.

He was addressing the certificate giving ceremony of a 12-day training on Basic Computer Course for the members of CU Journalists Union at Central Computer Lab as chief guest.

The VC lauded the journalists for discharging their duties at the university and said the training will help them in their profession in future.

Chairman of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) Department Dr Mohammed Shahadat Hossain presided over the function while Pro VC Professor Dr Mohammed Shamsuddin was present as special guest.

CSE teacher Mohammed Sanaulah, Proctor Dr Mohammed Al Amin and journalist union president Madhul Kabir also spoke. Later, the guests handed over certificates among the 20 trainees.

CCC hands over allowances

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) on Wednesday handed over the annual

allowances of 500 the muazzins, priests and the social workers, engaged in switching on and off the streetlights of the port city.

CCC acting mayor Jahangir Alam Chowdhury handed over the allowances of Tk 1200 each at a function at the CCC auditorium.

The muazzins, priests and social workers were given the responsibility of switching on and off the streetlights with a view to preventing the wastage of electricity and government money. They get Tk 100 per month for this.

Jahangir said around Tk 50 lakh could be saved annually by introducing this method.

Executive Engineer (Power) Md Shahidullah, CCC Secretary Mostafa Kamaluddin, Mahfujur Rahman, Maulana Mustak Ahmad were present.

Protest against mishaps at ship yards

Environmentalists here on Thursday formed a human chain protesting fre-

quent accidents and deaths of workers in the ship breaking yards at Sitakunda.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in cooperation with environmental organisations -- Lead, Sharan, Shuchana, Nakshi, Barnali and Aurshad -- organised the 30-minute human chain from 11:00am in front of the Chittagong Press Club.

Speakers at the programme expressed grave concern over the rise of casualty. They said at least 800 people were killed in accidents in different ship breaking yards since the beginning of the industry.

"The poor workers have no trade union to protect their rights and they do not get proper medication after accident," they alleged.

They demanded security of workers involved in this industry, implementation of law, proper medication for the injured, withdrawal of child labour and saving water from pollution.

Field Manager of BELA Advocate Anwarul Islam Chowdhury, Research Officer Golam Kibria Sarker, Mohammed Hasan, Mohamed Arful Islam, Mohammed Farhad Alam and Shah Nurul Islam joined the human chain.



As Eid draws nearer young girls throng jewellery and cosmetics shops to buy ornaments and cosmetics.