

Fleets of new taxicabs to replace old ones

BRTA decides to scrap over 4,000 dilapidated taxicabs and replace them with more cylinder capacity and durable vehicles

WAHIDA MITU

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has decided to replace city's rundown taxicabs by fleets of vehicles with more cylinder capacity, sources in the BRTA said.

BRTA sources also said that more than half of total 9000 taxicabs plying on the city roads are in dilapidated condition and polluting the city air. Over 98 percent of these taxicabs have never bothered to obtain fitness certificates since 1998 when they were first introduced.

As per the decision, the 800 cc black cabs will be replaced by vehicles with 1350 cc engines. Similarly, the old yellow cabs (air-conditioned) will be phased out and replaced by at least 1500 cc cars.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has finalised a decision in this regard.

"As black cabs with 800 cc engine is small, uncomfortable and do not offer better service,

BRTA has decided to replace the cabs with 1350 cc engines," said Md Humayun Rashid Khalifa, BRTA's director (engineering) of BRTA.

He made it clear that as the new cabs would run on the road as a replacement of dilapidated cabs, the number of cabs will not increase. Only the owners of the rundown cabs would be entitled to replacement vehicles. The official however could not elaborate on what kind of vehicles would be imported for the replacements. The Ministry of Communications under the BNP government was highly criticised for importing thousands of vehicles for taxicabs, which became rundown within months of import.

According to Cab Association of Bangladesh (CAB) more than 9,000 cabs are operating in the city. Among them more than 4,000 are in dilapidated condition.

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Rundown taxicabs seized by police at a city police station.

Miseries of city traffic policemen

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Poverty, hardship, discrimination, corruption and fear of assault -- all are part of the job description of a traffic constable in Dhaka.

It is extremely difficult to perform professionally under such conditions, traffic constables lamented while talking to Star City.

Around 1400 traffic constables serve this city under the traffic wing of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

Star City visited 12 points in Dhaka and had a candid conver-

sation with traffic constables and some of them revealed their painful experiences and difficulties at the job that no one seems to care about.

Almost all of them complained about poor quality of food rations and inadequate residence facilities they are provided with. When it comes to leaves -- especially Eid holidays -- it seems that there is no fair policy being followed by their management. Furthermore unplanned and mismanaged transportation stretches their eight-hour shifts sometimes to even 12 hours.

All the constables this corre-

spondent spoke with refused to be quoted except Nurul Islam -- on duty at Mirpur section 10 crossing. He transferred to serve under DMP traffic wing a year ago from Netrakona jail. He received his 42-day traffic training a few years back. "It is enough to perform my duty," Nur said, "I really know how to handle the traffic. Common sense is more necessary than training."

While talking to this correspondent, at least 5 passers-by asked Nurul for directions. Nur failed to help them as he did not have any idea of Mirpur area. "I heard that traffic police in foreign countries can give directions, but how can I do it? We don't have any training on that and we are not even provided with a map of the area."

Instead of carrying a DMP provided cane, Nur was carrying a makeshift bamboo stick in his hand. The reason for that was, "Those sticks cause us trouble because if lost or broken, we have to answer a lot to the authority."

About all the difficulties with food ration, residence, transportation, leave and duty hours, he did not however blame the authorities, "More or less, every profession has its pros and cons and we have them too."

About inadequate accommodation at police barracks, Nur said, "It is very difficult to serve efficiently the next day if one cannot take sufficient rest after working over eight hours standing on his feet."

When asked about living standard of the constables, who needs bribes and why, he said, "They (constables) are simply poor.but those who wish to reach a higher standard of living exceeding the standard presumed by the government for constables need bribes."

Most of the interviewed constables said the quality of their food rations including rice and lentil is very poor. Those are not even edible most of the time.

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Desperate hawkers, evicted without any rehabilitation program slowly return to the footpath again. The picture was taken on the Mirpur Road near New Market on Saturday by our staff photographer.

Eviction raises hope for car park

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The planned car park in the city's Karwan Bazar commercial area is yet to be built despite selection of site and handover of the land to the authorities concerned.

Neither Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) nor Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is sure of when the parking facility will be developed.

The authorities recently evicted the illegal occupants of the car park and left the area unattended. Rajuk in its master plan has earmarked the open space as a car park for the commercial zone of Karwan Bazar. The area is situated on the eastern side of the DCC's kitchen market.

Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon said Rajuk has already handed over the land to DCC for development and maintenance of the parking lot. "DCC will develop the car parking facility. We will remind them to develop it," he said.

Mayor of DCC Sadeque Hossain Khoka also said, "We will develop the car parking facility."

Asked when they will build it, Khoka said, "I will immediately instruct our chief engineer to initiate the process."

Maintenance of the Karwan Bazar kitchen market was handed over to DCC during Ershad regime in 1985. The land for the car park was later leased out to the wholesale traders to make room for 160 makeshift shops.

After Khoka took over as the mayor, the DCC leased out a children's park to the wholesale traders of the kitchen market. The park was set up in 1985 on two bighas of land. It was finally turned into a market by 2005.

The army-led joint forces in the last week of January demolished hundreds of makeshift shops, offices of different political parties and vendors illegally set up on the public land at Karwan Bazar.

These shops have been running for decades under the patronage of professional criminals and toll collectors belonging to two major political parties and the police.



The open space in Karwan Bazar recently cleared of illegal occupation is designated for the sole car park in this commercial area.

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.

"If there is a free flow of information, there will be no corruption"

--Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman
Former chief adviser

Said at a consultation meeting at Cridap auditorium in the city, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

"Anything harmful for the country should not be published in newspapers"

--Mainul Hossain
Law and Information Adviser

Said at a meeting with Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists Dhaka Unity of Journalists at information ministry, on Monday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj.

"We have made a little mistake and committed a small sin"

--Kartik Chandra Das
General Manager, Meghna Group

Told a reporter about encroaching Meghna river and burying rotten wheat, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo.

"I have rented out the basement to a shop which was meant for parking"

--Ashraf Ali

Owner of Shariatullah Building on Gulshan Avenue

Told a reporter when asked whether the construction plan passed by Rajuk required to have parking provision, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

"My father was a construction contractor and he knows about safety better than anyone else"

--Ziaul Islam

Son of Z Islam, owner of a building in Tejgaon industrial area which has developed several cracks

Told a reporter, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

"I have the right to construct a building on my land ... regardless of our possession being illegal or not"

--MA Hashem

Chairman of Partex Group and a former lawmaker

Said while arguing with a Rajuk magistrate to stop the demolition of Partex Holdings much talked about encroachment on Gulshan Lake on Mohakhali-Gulshan link road, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

"It is quite normal that political leaders would try to avoid arrest ... I think there is nothing wrong in it"

--A BNP leader

Told a reporter, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star.

"It is up to me when I resign"

Maniruddin Ahmed

Commissioner, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)

Told reporters, on Wednesday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj.

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias