

Taxicab drivers demand official guideline

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After this interim government set new regulations and price structures for CNG-run auto rickshaw operations from May 1, drivers of taxicabs also hope

that this government would take similar measures to end irregularities in the taxicab operations.

The recent revised price chart, daily payment to owners and operational guidelines

were prescribed only for the CNG auto rickshaws, not for taxicabs. Residents of this city also look forward to seeing stringent measures taken by this interim government to end lawlessness and suffer-

ings caused by the taxicab drivers.

Taxicabs are another significant mode of transport in the capital with a total of 10,000 vehicles plying the streets of Dhaka. Like CNG auto rick-

shaw drivers, cab drivers in this city are also causing immense sufferings to passengers with the excuse that the vehicle owners do not follow any guidelines for collecting daily payments from the driv-

ers.

Even though a taxicab driver's daily income is similar to that of the auto rickshaw driver's, the cab owners compel the drivers to pay Tk 650 to Tk 750 for each black taxi

to force the passengers pay extra money above the metres or even refuse to go by metres.

Absence of law enforcement and higher payments to the cab owners has turned the drivers so arrogant that they

of maintenance and rising prices of spare parts, lubricant, etc. are the main reasons why the owners collect high payments from the cab drivers. "Considering the high cost of operations, we should be charging more, but we do not do so because the drivers would not be able to afford that much."

A top communication ministry official told Star City that last year, after the media largely focused on passenger sufferings of CNG auto rickshaws in the city, the then government formed a committee for recommendations.

The recommendations made by the committee were not unimplemented during that government.

The communication adviser of the present interim government looked through the recommendations made by that committee and formed another committee headed by the BRTA chairman to explore if the recommendations could be implemented.

Since both the recommendations made by the committees were only for CNG auto rickshaws, the latest steps taken by this government have also been geared toward the auto rickshaws only, the official explained.

Humayun Rashid, director (operations) of Bangladesh Road transport Authority (BRTA), told Star City that whenever the BRTA and the cab owners held meetings, the issue of daily payments was not addressed. The main topic of concern has always been how to replace the battered taxicabs. "The cab owners only discussed over the beat up vehicles, not the daily payments or the fare."



Taxicab drivers wait for passengers at a parking

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(non-AC) daily while Tk 950 to Tk 1,100 daily for each yellow taxi (with AC), said Abdul Wahed, a taxicab driver.

While visiting different taxicab garages, this correspondent found that Wahed's claim of cab owners collecting high daily payments was true.

The drivers say since the government did not set any guideline for payment collection by cab owners when taxicabs were introduced in 1998, the owners have been taking advantage of the drivers by making them pay exorbitant daily payments. As such, the drivers have no other way but

make their own rules and refuse to take passengers to any destination. They do not take passengers to short distances either.

Cab driver Wahed also said unlike the auto rickshaw drivers, the cab drivers do not have any drivers' association. That is why they cannot make any collective effort to negotiate with the owners or the government. He wished that this government would soon look into the irregularities in the taxicab sector and introduce regulations for all.

Mozahar Hossain, a cab owner, said increasing cost

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