

CNG AUTORICKSHAWS

Drivers, owners as defiant as ever

CITY CORRESPONDENT

More than a month after new regulations were enforced to improve the efficiency of CNG-run auto rickshaws, passengers continue to face unreliable services and extortionate prices.

On May 1, the government imposed measures to prevent the auto rickshaw drivers from refusing to take passengers to any destination or from turning fare meters off and demanding exorbitant prices.

However, the drivers have ignored the new measures saying the government has failed to prevent the auto rickshaw owners from extracting from them more than the approved daily fees. The drivers claim that without overcharging, they would not be able to make ends meet.

Passengers complain, if they are lucky enough to convince any driver to take them on a metered trip, most drivers would then demand an extra Tk 10 to 20. Many of the drivers who do not argue with the passengers over the fare or the destination, are deceiving the passengers with tampered meters, they

added.

The Auto Rickshaw Owners' Association rebuffed the drivers' claim that the owners were extracting illegally high daily fees.

The long-running dispute centres around the exact level

overcharging passengers to pay the fees.

In an attempt to resolve the problem, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has been conducting mobile courts at garages of auto rickshaws, said Humayun Rashid, a direc-

said, the huge number of unemployed drivers made it possible for owners to extract the unauthorised daily rates.

"If I refuse to pay Tk 600 a day to the owner, he will not give me the vehicle because he has so many drivers in line who are ready to pay Tk 600. How can I take the risk?" he said.

HM Iqbal, general secretary of Dhaka CNG Auto Rickshaw Owners' Association, said drivers were just making excuses for overcharging.

The owners' associations alongside the BRTA campaigned for the implementation of the new rules, he said. "Of course I do not claim a 100 percent implementation of the new daily fees, but at least 75 percent have been implemented."

Continuous raids by BRTA mobile teams could make the implementation of the new rules a success, he suggested.

Humayun Rashid added that the BRTA mobile drives are conducted whenever magistrates are available. A magistrate from the CMM court is currently assisting BRTA conduct its drives and "it would continue the drives as long as the magistrate is available".

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of the daily fees paid by the drivers. The auto rickshaw owners used to collect Tk 600 in daily fees instead of the government-fixed rate of Tk 300.

Under the new rules, the drivers have to pay Tk 450 a day. However, many claim owners are still collecting Tk 600 and the drivers say they have little choice but to continue

toratBRTA

"We have received many complaints against the owners for not following the daily rate. We have even heard that some of the owners are collecting Tk 600 from the drivers, while giving a receipt for Tk 450," he said.

Kamruzzaman, an auto rickshaw driver from Mirpur,



A commuter negotiating a fare with an auto rickshaw driver at Paltan.



A child roaming with its mother in smoke-free zoo.

Dhaka zoo goes tough on smoking

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Smokers are no longer welcome in Dhaka zoo as the authority announced the zoo premises a smoking free zone and soon they will enforce ban on polythene and other plastic bags.

"Originally when the zoo was established it was made a smoking free zone. It was however never enforced properly. Last week we just reinstated the previous rule", said Kazi Fazlul Haque, Curator, Dhaka Zoo.

With the help of a social organisation Pratyasha, Dhaka zoo authority started the campaign against smoking in public from last week. Pratyasha donated 20 signboards to the zoo sending messages about the ill effects of smoking to the visitors.

Situated in Mirpur, the zoo covers an area of about 186 acres. On average the Dhaka Zoo attracts around 7 to 10 thousand visitors. The numbers reaches up to 30 thousand on Fridays and other holidays.

Haque said that the zoo officials alone cannot monitor so many people inside the premise. "If we find anyone smoking inside the premise we will ask them to refrain from doing so. If they still continue we will ask them to leave the premise"

"We do not have the power

With the help of a social organisation Pratyasha, Dhaka zoo authority started the campaign against smoking in public from last week. Pratyasha donated 20 signboards to the zoo sending messages about the ill effects of smoking to the visitors. Situated in Mirpur, the zoo covers an area of about 186 acres. On average the Dhaka Zoo attracts around 7 to 10 thousand visitors. The numbers reaches up to 30 thousand on Fridays and other holidays

beyond that. It is not possible to enforce the law without public awareness", he said.

Haque mentioned that with a few security personnel sanctioned, it is almost impossible to maintain the security.

Currently the zoo has only 20 Ansars sanctioned to maintain the security. "We have positions for another 40 in house security personnel, 20 of the position however is vacant", said Haque.

Due to lack of awareness about the ill effect of second hand smoking, people tend to smoke in public spaces violating the Smoking and Tobacco Product Usage (Control) Act 2005.

The law bans smoking in

public places and in vehicles. Punishment for smoking in public places is a fine of Tk. 50 fine, which the public ignore.

Educational institutions, government and non-government offices, libraries, lifts, healthcare establishments, airports, seaports, bus, launch and railway terminals, ferries, cinemas, theatres and other halls, markets and shopping malls and children's parks are defined as public place in the act.

Soon the zoo authority will also announce it a polythene free zone. "People litter inside the premise throwing packets anywhere they like. Most visitors arrive with little children. We want to create a better

environment for them"

"Often visitors throw potato chips inside cages. It is harmful for the animals, which is why we are banning polythene and related objects"

There are about 189 species of animals in the facility. Among them there are 70 types of mammals including Elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger, Cheetah, Rhinoceros, Zebras, different species of Monkeys and Chimpanzees, Hippos and more.

There are about 74 species of birds, 16 species of Reptiles including snakes and crocodiles. There is a huge aquarium showcasing around 400 fish. The birdcage has about 1200 birds.

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Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday  
Stadium Market-Friday  
Bangabazar Market-Friday  
National Museum-Thursday  
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.  
New Market-Tuesday  
Gausia Market-Tuesday  
Mouchak Market-Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Eastern Plaza-Sunday  
Farmview Super Market-Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday  
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday