

NOTUN BAZAR TO GULSHAN-2

# Ban on rickshaw, bus causes untold suffering to commuters

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No form of public transportation facilities exists for thousands of commuters travelling from Notun Bazar to Gulshan 2 on the longstretch of Madani Avenue.

Prohibition on all sorts of public transportation including rickshaws, human haulers and buses on this avenue left commuters with no option but to depend solely on ever-defiant CNG-run auto rickshaws or taxi cabs.

Human haulers, the most favoured means of transport for the commuters, have been barred from this road earlier this year while rickshaws and buses were withdrawn years back.

The commuters from Notun Bazar to Kakoli, Banani or elsewhere need to find a way to reach Gulshan 2 from where they can board human haulers or buses that come from Gulshan 1.

Thousands of office goers, students, businessmen and general commuters undergo immense sufferings everyday on their quest to reach their destinations.

Thousands of private job-holders, students, businessmen and others have to undergo this suffering due to lack of public transport or rickshaws.

During the office hours, hundreds of commuters are seen on

the pavement beside the US embassy, anxiously waiting for transport. Whenever an autorickshaw stops there, several passengers encircle it to rent it. Eventually, the autorickshaw takes 4 to 5 distinct passengers charging around Tk 25 to Tk 30 from each of them for a small trip to Banani

himself in the middle of nowhere. After waiting around half an hour for an autorickshaw Tareq finally gave up and started walking.

As rickshaws are prohibited from the main street, sometimes rickshaw pullers agree to drop off passengers near Banani Bridge for a hefty amount of fare. They dodge traffic officials and slowly zigzag their way across the different alleys to finally drop the passengers off near the bridge.

Two to three passengers tend to share the rickshaw for such trip paying Tk around 20 each.

Local ward commissioner AFM Abdul Aleem could not be reached for his comment despite repeated attempts.

According to traffic officials, the lack of adequate public transportation in this street is due to the number of foreign embassies located in the region.

"This street is a vital organ in the city's traffic infrastructure as it connects the northern part of the city with the vast northeastern part. The thousands of people who use this street certainly need some more public transportation," said an official from the traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

"Buses are prohibited from plying this street, and I am not really sure why they banned human hauliers too," he added.

in a human haulier, but now I have to spend Tk 30 to cover the same distance with CNG three-wheelers," he added.

Tareq Ahmed, a student of American International University Bangladesh (AIUB), has to pass through this street to go to his university located on the Manik Mia Avenue. Although usually he uses a private car, once in a while he tends to take the bus when the car is not available.

He tends to leave the bus at Natun Bazar and board a human haulier to reach his university. However, unaware of the ban of the human hauliers, Tareq found



Hundreds of commuters wait along the main roads trying to find a transport.

## INFORMAL RECYCLING SECTOR 3

# Lead acid battery: Thousands cry for training on safe handling

DURDANA GHIAS

Several thousand people once involved in the lead acid battery recycling sector are now jobless as the battery dismantling units were shut down a few months ago as a measure to check environmental pollution.

"I closed down my factory after the restriction on dismantling batteries came into effect. When the factory was in operation we used to recover 1,000 tonnes of lead from used batteries a year," said Haji Lokman Hossain Khan who owns Madina Metal and Chemical Industry at Kamrangirchar.

According to a study by Waste Concern, an NGO working on recycling and waste management, used lead acid battery (ULAB) recycling is a big recycling sector in the country where around 6,000 people were

involved. Lokman and other battery dismantling factory owners are now waiting for government approval to resume their business in an environmentally safe method. "We will start our work again after six months after getting proper licence from government. We will import a machine from India to recycle batteries that will not pollute environment. By using that machine we are expecting to recover 65 percent lead," he said

In 2006 around 6,26,376 lead acid batteries were dismantled in the country recovering 7,428 tonnes of lead. Apart from lead, all parts of the batteries are recycled for making various products.

Big factories and the backyard smelters on the city outskirts like Kamrangirchar and Kholamora used to recover around 3,000 tonnes of lead a year. The used batteries are collected mainly from scrap shops.

The battery dismantling units were closed down due to a law forbidding unsafe recycling that pollutes environment and affects workers' health.

Lokman Hossain Khan has been in car battery dismantling business since 1980. His Madina Metal was the biggest battery dismantling factory in the city.

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## Tales of two workers

Tin recycling was another vibrant recycling sector situated mainly in the chars of the river Buriganga near Kholamora, Kamrangirchar. But these melting units are now almost nonexistent.

In Nawabchar and Baluchar in the middle of the river, there were around 15 tin melting units. Around a thousand people used to work in these factories. Boats are the only mode of transport to these chars.

Just a few weeks ago these chars were full of activities. But now the whole place wears a deserted look with towering black chimneys standing vigilant like quiet sentinels. Sacks full of lead ashes are stacked up in a corner. Heaps of coal used in the melting process, were piled up.

Big furnaces to melt tin are lying idle under the straw roofs. Several dies are scattered here and there. These were used for making tin oxide bars to sell them to traders of Mirford area and to the corrugated iron sheet factories. Each bar weighs 7.5 kg and is priced at Tk 1,470.

Md Abdul Kader, a tin-melting worker, was walking through such a factory, which looked like an abandoned place. "We used to melt tin cans, aluminium foils and tablet strips. Everything is sold. Nothing goes wasted," said Kader, working in the factory for the last 28 years.

"There were 30 trawlers engaged in transporting goods for the factories. All of them are now out of work. Previously we could go to our MP [Amanullah Aman] for help. But now he is in jail and we have no one to turn to," he

said. The residents of the area on the other hand are happy that the factories are now closed.

"Joint forces have shut down the factories following the complaints of the residents because these factories emitted thick black smoke causing breathing problem especially for children," said Md Rahim, a tempo driver of the area.

"It is true that the factories were polluting the area. But isn't recycling also saving environment?" said Kader.

"We were not given any prior notice before shutting down. If we have been told how to recycle in a safe way we would have followed that. But what will I do now? I do not know any other work. I will have to become a rickshaw puller or a day labourer to feed my family. I cannot even continue the

studies of my three children," said Kader with despair.

The recycling of dry cell batteries in small households is still going on as there is no

law banning its unsafe recycling process.

In Kamrangirchar and Lalbagh embankment areas

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Workers are dismantling lead acid batteries in a scrap shop in Segunbagicha despite the law forbidding the activity.

## the city that was

After the British cantonment was relocated from Purana Paltan area in 1840, Paltan was maintained by Puroshova. Puroshova developed garden in a part of the cantonment area, known as Companybagicha. Students of Dhaka College used the other part as playing ground. The playground or Paltan maidan was used for cricket at the end of the 18th century. Sometimes it was used for public meeting as well.

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