

45,000 vehicles dodge fitness, pay no tax, fines for long



SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

As many as 44,915 registered vehicles operating in Dhaka and surrounding areas have not appeared for renewing their fitness certificates for a long time, sources from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) said.

Terming these vehicles 'fitness defaulter' the BRTA officials said apart from causing frequent accidents in the city, these unfit vehicles are depriving the gov-

ment either, depriving the state coffers of a gigantic amount of revenue.

BRTA is losing around Tk 2.89 crore in fitness certificate fees every year while the amount of loss due to non-payment of tax is over Tk 22.65 crore. The amount of fitness certificate fee is Tk 645 while the yearly tax is Tk 5,045 per vehicle, according to fitness department officials.

Yearly fine for fitness default is Tk 1,800 and for tax non-payment fine is Tk 7,500.

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ernment of a huge amount of revenue every year.

Even there are some vehicles that did not appear for fitness certificate in last 7-8 years.

Humayan Rashid Khalifa, director (operations) of BRTA, said, "The number is too high. We are losing a great amount of fitness fees. Fitness defaulters are also entitled to pay fines if they fail to appear on time. They are not paying the fine as well."

The fitness defaulters do not pay the yearly tax to the govern-

A BRTA official said the defaulting owners never pay the tax or the fines to avoid being held for fitness defaulting.

"Some of the vehicles do not appear just because they will not get the fitness certificates because of the dilapidated condition of the vehicle. A large number of buses, taxicabs and almost all the human hauliers fall in this category," he added.

They continue operating in the city ignoring rules, sometimes even with cases filed

against them by the traffic police.

"There might be some vehicles that were discarded for severe damage caused by accidents while some might be hijacked or some might have went out of Dhaka to operate in another district," the official said.

BRTA cannot ascertain the total number vehicles plying in the city or the number of discarded vehicles as the owners never report to the authority about their status.

"We have sent letters to the owners requesting for their cooperation. If they do not respond after a second notice their registration will be cancelled. Advertisement will be posted in the newspaper regarding the cancellation," Khalifa said.

The list of fitness fee defaulters has also been sent to traffic department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police for action, he said.

The defaulting vehicles include private car, bus, mini-bus, cab, human haulier, cargo van, truck, jeep, microbus etc. Of the total, the highest 18, 837 are private car owners.

The list includes 1,725 buses and minibuses that will be phased out of the city as per a recent government decision.

The total number of registered vehicles in the city is around 4 lakh. The number is 10 lakh in the entire country. There are also thousands of unregistered vehicles.



Medical waste including plastic syringes, blood bags and other disposable items are washed and dried on the roadside by road cleaners who collect those from the ayas of private hospitals in Green Road. Instead of being destroyed or incinerated these are allegedly reused.

Cars top the list of fitness defaulters.



Working women struggle to avail normal buses most often as the number of special buses is too inadequate in the city.

Special buses too meagre to ease women commuters' woes

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Women commuters continue to face hassles on their way to work and back home every day as the number of special buses introduced for them is inadequate in the city.

According to regular commuters most city service buses these days do not have separate seats for women and those with reserve seats rarely keep those free for them.

"Buses do not want to take female passengers even if they have reserved seats. Whenever a woman passenger wants to get into the bus the conductors say they do not have any seat left. But the fact is in most cases the male passengers occupy our seats," said Shamsun, a service holder.

"The authorities should look into the matter and women must be more vocal and ask the conductors to ensure the reserve seats for them," she said.

Many women commuters said during rush hours in the morning and in the evening it

becomes tough to get into a bus.

"There was a time when public buses used to keep seats for women but today women have to literally fight to get a seat," said an elderly woman who is a regular commuter.

However, many women commuters have different thoughts about the special bus service.

"I think it is not logical to have separate buses for women because in that case we should also have separate buses for the elderly people and the physically challenged. If there are enough buses then we do not need separate buses for women," said Shahana, a regular commuter.

"Number of working women is increasing every day. So, keeping reserved seats will be meaningless in the near future," she said.

Change in mentality and cooperation of the male commuters is a vital thing to help ease problems in public transports, she observed.

Shubhashish Saha, DGM Operation, BRTC, said the women's service is not very

encouraging and the authorities are incurring losses in running the women bus services.

"One main reason is that most of the time the working women do not wait for the special buses. When their work is over they rush for the normal buses to go home as soon as possible," he said.

Asked if there is any plan to increase the number of buses for women passengers Saha said, "Right now we are unable to increase the number of buses or routes because the existing ones are in short of passengers. We are incurring considerable losses for operating the routes."

"To recover the losses we have a plan to use the buses in normal routes and rent them out for student services at the Dhaka University. In this way we expect to compensate 70 percent loss incurred from the service," he said.

"Still we are running the service and only BRTC is running it. Private bus companies can also create example by introducing women's service but they are yet

to come forward," he said.

He suggested if government subsidises then it would be possible to expand the service.

"Maybe then we will be able to make it viable," he said.

At present BRTC have women bus services on several important routes in the city. They include: A. 8: 10 am: From Mirpur 10 to Gulistan via Asad Gate, Science Lab and Azimpur. B. 8:15 am: From Khilgaon Taltala to Gulistan via Basabo, Mugda, Motijheel. C. 7:30 am: From Khilgaon Taltala to Gulistan via Basabo, Mugda, Motijheel. D. 5:05 pm: From GPO to Khilgaon Taltala via Basabo, Mugda, Motijheel. E. 7:30 am: From BISCIC to Gulistan via Pagla and Jatrabari.

One bus that starts from Mirpur 10 to Gulistan via Asad Gate, Science Lab and Azimpur at 7:40 am is shut down temporarily because it was not getting enough passengers because of Ramadan.

"It will start again after Ramadan," he said.

54 accident-prone spots where 400 die, 700 get hurt annually

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Accident researchers have identified 54 spots in the city where most of the fatal road accidents take place. On average, 400 people die and about 700 are injured annually at these spots, according to findings of a study.

Accident Research Institute (ARI) at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) identified the spots by analysing the accidents recorded at police stations in the city since 1998.

The researchers blamed faulty road design, unscientific road and traffic management for frequent accidents at these spots.

The ARI, formerly Accident Research Centre, a government project for studying accidents, believes the actual number of accidents and casualties will be higher than in the study findings, which are based on police records.

According to the ARI list, Jatrahari crossing is the most deadly traffic intersection in the city where 7/8 people die in road accidents every year.

Farmgate, Kakoli, Bijoy Sarani, Shanir Akhra crossing, Shapla Chattar in Motijheel and Purana Paltan crossing are the other deadly traffic points in the city.

"According to police records, yearly 6/7 people die at most of these spots. The number would have been bigger had all the accidents been recorded with police stations," said Mazharul Hoque, director of ARI and professor of Civil Engineering Department at Buet.

He said the number of accidents and fatalities are increasing at these spots due to inadequate road safety measures.

Giving example of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel crossing, he said, "This point was one of the most deadly intersections in the city but strict handling of traffic and pedestrian movement by police has reduced the number of accidents and fatalities there."

He stressed the need for ensuring pedestrians' safety as

they constitute 80 percent of total casualties from in road accidents in the city, which was almost half 20 years ago.

Every accident causes some damage and it has a value. ARI researches calculated Tk 65.67 lakh as average cost of every fatal accident occurred in the city in 2006.

The institute could not calculate accident figures of 2007 as information from two police stations were not yet available, said Sohel Alam, a fellow at the research institute.

Asked about the causes of the accidents, he pointed faulty traffic design, pedestrian and driving behaviors and traffic and road management of the city.

Sohel said functional classi-

fication of the city roads has not been considered enough during construction.

Scientifically, some roads should be used as main arterial, some should be as connector and some as regional.

"Roads designed for different functions should be designed differently, transport modes should be in consideration. Reality here is that each road carries all kind of transport modes and functions for same purpose," he added.

Sohel said police records reveal that the number of fatalities is increasing in the city. In 2005, police recorded 496 road accidents among which 265 were fatal. At least 271 people were killed and 240 injured in those accidents.

In 2006, police recorded 603 accidents including 383 fatal, killing 390 people. Although two police stations did not provide information, the number of accidents recorded in other police stations was 696 including 417 accidents that killed 428 people.

Abdush Shakur, another research fellow at the ARI, emphasised establishing adequate bus bays, effective foot-path and footbridges to boost up pedestrians' safety.

"Among the accidents 40 percent occurred during road crossing and 40 percent during jaywalking. It is significant because it revealed the behaviour of the pedestrians and lack of safety concern," he said.



Shapla Chattar intersection in front of the Bangladesh Bank in Motijheel is one the 54 accident-prone spots.