

CNG buses continue to charge higher fare

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Most CNG bus operators in the city continue to charge passengers higher fare ignoring the government-approved rate, causing suffering to commuters.

In April 2008, the government fixed the fare after the price hike of compressed natural gas (CNG). For buses, the rate was fixed at Tk 1.20 per kilometre and for minibuses, the rate was Tk 1.10. And the minimum fare was fixed at Tk 5.

But most CNG buses are not following the government-approved fare chart. They are charging a rate much higher than the government-fixed rate, passengers said, adding that the extra amount is as high as Tk 5.

Most buses also charge Tk 8 in minimum fare instead of Tk 5.

Monirul Islam, a resident of Mirpur section 12 who works as a sales person in Farmview Super Market, said, "When I travel from Mirpur 12 to Farmgate, the fare is Tk 10. But if I get off at an earlier bus stop such as Shewrapara, they still charge a flat rate of Tk 10 regardless of the distance. The distance between Mirpur and Shewrapara is half the distance to Farmgate."

The tickets provided by the operators show the distance and the approved rate in a bid to convince the passengers. But the reality is that the fare applies to commuters travelling from the first bus stop to its last stop. Bus operators are charging all, including those getting off at any bus stops in between, a flat rate, ignoring the government-approved rate.

According to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Farmgate is about 9 km away from Mirpur section 12 while Shewrapara is only 4.4 km away.

For a distance of 7.5 km from Motijheel Shapla roundabout to Farmgate, the fare is Tk 10 to Tk 12. But the same amount is being collected for a trip to Shabbagh, which is 5.2 km from Motijheel.

From Abdullahpur to Mahakhali, the distance is 12.5 km and the bus fare is Tk



CNG bus staffs sell tickets to passengers at different stoppages in the city. The picture was taken from Motijheel area recently.

15. The rate remains the same even someone wants to go to Khilkhet, which is 5.8 km away from Abdullahpur.

The situation remains the same on all the routes in and around the city. Currently there are 7,367 buses and minibuses operating on 157 routes.

"This type of practice by bus operators is causing suffering to us, but sometimes we are just happy to get on a bus considering the chaotic traffic situation these days," said Abu Taher, a resident of Mohammadi Housing in Mohamadpur.

Another unfair practice by local buses is causing confusion among passengers.

During the rush hour in the morning and in the afternoon, many local buses run as direct service in the name of 'sitting service' or 'gate-lock service' while they again become local buses at other times of the day.

They even charge extra fare in the morning, passengers alleged.

BRTA, however, said there is no permission for buses to run as 'sitting' or 'gate-lock' services in the city considering the huge rush of commuters and the limited number of buses.

ABM Shahjahan, executive director of Dhaka Transport

Coordination Board and also the head of the 2008 committee formed by the communication ministry to fix the fare, told The Daily Star that the transport owners agreed to follow the fare chart when it was fixed last year.

"When the rate was fixed, we also considered some parameters, including the price of the bus, number of daily trips, number of seats, mileage and longevity of the bus," he said.

"These factors were considered so that they can have a good profit margin. The owners also agreed to the rate and conditions. There is no reason for them now to collect

extra fare from the passengers," he added.

BRTA Magistrate Md Tofael Islam said the department cannot enforce the fare due to manpower shortage. The Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983 does not have enough provisions to punish the offenders, he added.

There are options to cancel the route permit of the offenders, said a BRTA official on condition of anonymity.

However, it takes a long time to complete the departmental procedure, giving the bus companies the chance to carry on unlawful act, he said, adding that BRTA mobile court also focuses mainly on

fitness of vehicles.

Admitting the fact, Khandakar Rafiqul Hossain Kajal, president of the Association of Bus Company (ABC), said, "The operating cost of bus services, including spare parts, has increased tremendously compared to last year. The number of daily trips also decreased 50 percent because of terrible traffic jams."

"There is also a hefty amount of bank loan plus interest to be paid every year. Many owners have gone bankrupt in recent times," he said.

He also demanded review of the fare chart considering the current situation.

Introduce second shift of trial

Outgoing CJ requests president

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday emphasised quick disposal of the pending cases for minimising sufferings of the people seeking justice.

He made the suggestion when outgoing Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin called on him at Bangabhaban.

During the meeting, the outgoing chief justice requested the president to introduce second shift of trial in the administration of justice as he noted that this system has already been adopted by some countries for quick disposal of cases.

Emphasising modernisation and reform in the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) and the

Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), Justice Amin said, "All the stakeholders -- such as lawyers, investigation officers and officials concerned -- should be properly trained for speedy disposal of cases."

Besides, the chief justice hoped that the backlog of cases would largely be reduced if the system of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is made compulsory in the judiciary.

Zillur appreciated the contribution of the outgoing chief justice to "establishment of the rule of law in the country".

Secretaries of the president's office were present at the meeting.

Rampura OC closed on bribery charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Ali Ahmed Hasmi of Rampura Police Station was withdrawn yesterday after publishing a report on The Daily Star on Monday on his alleged bribery.

Ali handed over his charge to Detective Branch (DB) Inspector Md Saidur Rahman, who has been posted as the OC in the police station, around 4:30pm as Ali was withdrawn and closed to Rajarbagh Police Lines, said the newly joined OC.

Following the report published in the newspaper, the Security Cell of Bangladesh Police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities have been investigating the allegation on taking the bribe of Tk 1.70 lakh by the former OC from Altaf Hossain, a resident of West Rampura.

Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Alamgir Alam, also the chief

of Security Cell, told The Daily Star that he assigned an inspector to investigate the matter on Monday.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of DMP Mohammad Nazrul Islam said, "At the directive of the DMP commissioner, I visited the victim's house on Monday and talked to the victim and I will submit the report on my findings to the commissioner on December 26."

However, both the personnel declined to talk further regarding the findings for the sake of investigation.

Asked, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Moinal Haque of DMP Motijheel Zone said, "As the investigators find something unexpected, OC Ali was withdrawn."

The victim, a resident of Mohanagar residential area in the city's West Rampura, on Thursday alleged that OC Ali took a bribe of Tk 1.70 lakh from him by threatening to implicate him in false cases over last one month and a half.

'Protect rights of persons with disabilities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday stressed the need to implement and monitor the law on protecting rights of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) for which a draft is yet to be finalised.

Discussing different sections of the draft law, they called on the government to ensure the functioning of the law to guarantee the rights of PWDs.

A draft will be finalised soon to reform 'Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act 2001'. National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) is making the draft under the supervision of social welfare ministry to make it a 'right-based law' instead a 'welfare' one.

The meeting was organised by

Parliamentarian Caucus on Disability, Disability Rights Watch Group and NFOWD at Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS) in the city with advocate Abdul Matin Khasru, convener of the caucus, in the chair.

Rasheda Begum Hira MP at the meeting said the law will help promote the rights of PWDs, adding that the law must be made effective to establish the rights of PWDs and be a comprehensive one.

Mentioning a specific section of the draft law, which states on the identity card issue of PWDs, advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA), said the concern for identity card for a PWD should be prioritised along with other priorities as it distinguishes PWDs from others.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to a caretaker government, discussed the draft law determining PWDs' right to education.

She underscored the importance of amending Compulsory Primary Education Law, which sometimes bypasses PWDs from participating in the formal education programme.

Lawmakers advocate Fazle Rabbi Miah, advocate Mir Shawkat Ali Badshah and Rawshan Jahan, Dr Nayeem Ahmed, NFOWD President Khandakar Zahurul Alam, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam, Kazi Rozi, convener of Disability Rights Watch Group, Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury, member of the UN committee protecting the rights of PWDs, and Prof Shafiq Siddiq also spoke.

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