

Run-down railway track, engine shortage hit commuter service

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Commuter train service connecting Dhaka city with surrounding districts is gradually attracting more passengers but it has become difficult to increase frequency of services as per demands for a number of reasons.

The difficulties the train services facing now include dilapidated railway tracks and engine as well as coach shortages.

Currently, there are 34 up-and-down train services connecting Jamalpur, Dewanganj, Brahmanbaria, Akhaura, Mymensingh, Joydevpur and Narayanganj with the capital.

According to information from Bangladesh Railway (BR), these services carry about 27,000 passengers every day to Dhaka city. Among these services, Dhaka-Narayanganj service is the most popular with 9,600 daily passenger movement.

Commercial activities of these train services are operated by three private companies, except the one from Dhaka to Dewanganj run by BR.

Currently, there are about 25 percent locomotive shortage and almost 50 percent coach shortage, a problem acute to the state-owned mass transport agency hindering quality services, said BR officials.

Md Atiar Rahman, one of the owners and director of Banna Enterprise, which operates the Dhaka-Narayanganj service, said: "Trains often take too much time to reach destination for dilapidated condition of tracks. Distance from Dhaka to Narayanganj is only 17km but it takes about 42 minutes to reach destination, often more. However, the duration is still less than road trans-



A train coming from Narayanganj enters Kamalapur Railway Station in the city.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

port." With all setbacks, passenger traffic is increasing every year, he said, adding that Banya Enterprise carried about 32 lakh passengers in 2008. The number increased to 37 lakh in 2009.

He also pointed out that train fare from Dhaka to Narayanganj is Tk 6 as the highest where as bus fare is about Tk 25.

Md Golam Rob, deputy managing director of Shifin Traders Ltd, which operate services to Brahmanbaria and Akhaura, mentioned shortage of locomotives for delays and inadequate services.

He said, "There is no exclusive engine supply for

commuter service. Engines from the link connection are used. Trains often cannot start on time because of the engine shortage. Besides these, engines remain in use continuously. So, they break down very easily for lack of maintenance."

"The schedule of station crossing is synchronised with all other train services. If one train fails to cross the station on time for engine change delays, it affects the timing of others increasing waiting period."

Shifin carried about 13 lakh passengers in 2009, which is about 2 lakh more than the previous year.

The owners mentioned that trains are bound to run

in slow speed because of too many illegal vendors occupying the rail tracks increasing the risks of accidents.

There are also problems such as poor quality of coaches, lack of toilets and cooling fans for passengers, they added.

Talking to this correspondent, BR Director General Md Belayet Hossain said: "The government has plans to expand commuter train services connecting Dhaka and surrounding districts in order to reduce pressure on road transports and ease traffic congestion in the city."

Admitting to shortage of engines and coaches, he said, "Procurement of 20 sets of Diesel Electric Multiple Unit

(DEMU) is currently in the pipeline. DEMU has the high acceleration and deceleration capacity along with flexibility of splitting or combining units with no need to reverse engine, which will reduce operational running time."

"It is possible to divert more passengers from road transport sectors by improving commuter train services with surrounding districts. Railway is also comparatively cheaper."

Passenger carrying capacity of a train is three times bigger than a bus. Railway is also the most environment-friendly mass transport with minimum energy consumption, the BRDG noted.

LIBERATION WAR MUSEUM

Call to help establish permanent building

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberation War Museum has called on institutions as well as individuals of the country to come forward with an offer of financial help to establish its permanent building on own land in the city.

A total of 27 distinguished personalities, including Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, donated Tk 12 lakh yesterday for construction of the museum on its own land at Agargaon.

Liberation War Museum organised the programme at its present address in the morning as part of its fund-raising campaign to this end.

Barrister Rafiq Ul Haque became a charter member of the museum by donating Tk 5 lakh and said he would be donating the same amount every year.

Matia donated Tk 1 lakh and became a life member of the museum while theatre personality Nasiruddin Yousuf Bachchu, magician Jewel Aich and Additional Secretary Dr Makhduma Nargis also donated the same amount each.

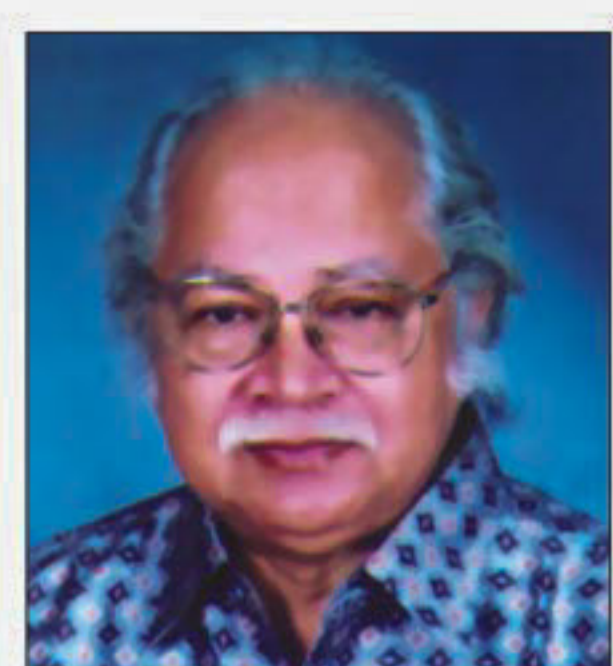
Maj Gen (ret) Golam Quader, advocate Sahida Begum, Morzina Begum and ABM Helal Uddin each bought a token brick of the museum by donating Tk 10,000 each while Kazi Yousuf Shakhawat bought 18 token bricks in the name of his family members.

The donors also pledged to raise more fund for the purpose in the coming days.

Trustee of the museum Dr Sarwar Ali and AL lawmaker Asaduzzaman Nur thanked the government for allocating land to the museum and hoped that individuals as well as institutions would make donations to materialise the noble dream of establishing its permanent building.

The construction of the museum, which will be built at an approximate budget of Tk 60 crore on 82 decimal of land, is expected to begin within three months.

A design has been finalised for the building through a competition in which 70 designs were submitted by architects.



Dr Enamul Haque honoured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata will award D.Lit (Honoris causa) degree to Dr Enamul Haque, the founder director general (ret) of Bangladesh National Museum, in recognition of his contribution to museology.

Dr Haque will receive the award from the university vice-chancellor at its 35th convocation, which will be held at Jorasanko Thakurbari in Kolkata on May 8.

Dr Haque is the first person in the Indian sub-continent to receive this prestigious degree in the field of museology.

He joined the then Dacca Museum in 1962 and retired from Bangladesh National Museum in 1991.

Dr Haque was born in 1936 at Bogra. He completed his graduation and master's degree from Dhaka University.

He earned a doctorate degree in South Asian Art and a diploma in museology from London.

He wrote books on the art heritage. He is a poet as well as a musician.

Five hurt in clash over land dispute in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Five people, including three Ansar members, were injured in a clash over a land dispute at Moulvi Pukurpur under Chandgaon police station in the port city on Thursday.

According to sources, the clash occurred when one Taskir along with a group of musclemen came to take possession of a portion of a 22-katha plot reportedly belonging to Sanwara Group at around 4:30pm.

They attacked the Ansar members who were on guard and workers engaged in earth filling of the plot, leaving five people injured.

Later, the police arrested two persons -- Morshed and Kazi Rezaul alias Mithun -- in this connection.

Sanwara Group Chairman Nurul Islam, also a lawmaker of ruling Awami League from neighbouring Kotwali (Chittagong-8) constituency, said that Taskir claimed to have purchased a portion of the land from one Harun.

"But if he really had purchased the portion of the land, he could have come up with documents to settle the matter instead of trying to occupy it forcibly," Nurul Islam told this correspondent.

Convocation of EWU tomorrow

METRO DESK

East West University (EWU) will hold its 9th convocation at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre tomorrow.

President Zillur Rahman is expected to preside over the convocation ceremony and confer the degrees on the graduating students as the chief guest.



PHOTO: STAR

Winners of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra's book reading campaign pose for photograph with the guests at a prize giving ceremony at the Central Public Library Seminar Room in the city yesterday. Founder of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed and Anisul Haque, deputy editor of the daily Prothom Alo, were present.

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra awards 40 best readers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra awarded the 40 best readers of its Study Circle at a programme yesterday.

The prize giving ceremony was held at the Central Public Library Seminar Room in the city.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, president of the Kendra, said, "The readers of the circle always find it hard to collect such varieties of books, so from the next time we will provide them with the books, but they need to return them to the Kendra."

Prof Aminul Islam of philosophy department of Dhaka University said, "All the readers are like flowers who can charm others with their fragrance and beauty."

People from all works of life should start reading books as a form of entertainment, as a media to gather information as well as to find a way of livelihood, he said.

A total of 824 readers took part at the first stage of the competition while 118 advanced to the final stage.

As part of the competition, the participants have to read the books and then write summaries.

Twenty-one readers who had read 45-59 books were awarded as "Shera Pathak" while 19 students that read 60-70 books were awarded as "Shrestha Pathak" at the competition.

The prizes were books worth Tk 1000 and Tk 3000 respectively.

The Citibank NA sponsored the prize giving ceremony. Mamun Rashid, country officer of Citigroup, Anisul Haque, deputy editor of the daily Prothom Alo, and Noor Hossain Talukder, director of Public Library Department, also spoke.

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