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Uniform fare in city buses?

Passengers remain sceptic as Dhaka's 'seating service' ends today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With transport owners set to stop so-called "seating service" today, passengers are sceptical about getting benefits in the absence of strict monitoring by the government.

The move to stop such self-devised service came amid media reports that the bus authorities were charging passengers high fares in the name of seating service, gate-locked or special service.

The transport owners on April 4 announced that such services would stop operating in the capital after April 15.

At a meeting yesterday with officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), they agreed to follow the fare chart set by the government.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khondaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity, said vigilance teams would be employed today at five points -- Asad gate, Agargaon, west side of Airport, in front of Engineers Institute and Jatrabari -- to make the decision effective.

Five executive magistrates from BRTA and adequate police members will be assisting the teams, he said.

According to the Enayet-led association, at present approximately 150 transport companies are operating around 4,500 buses in the city.

The "seating service" is illegal, according to BRTA officials. Many buses were seen accommodating standing passengers yesterday. But they were charged excess fare.

Passengers expressed fear that transport workers would continue charging them extra fare in overcrowded buses if the authorities didn't keep a watch on the bus operation.

Around 3:30pm, for less than four-kilometre ride from

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A passenger gets into a "seating service" bus in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday. From today, no public transport will operate in the capital in the name of such "seating", "gate-lock" "nonstop" and other so-called special services, according to announcements from the BRTA and the transport owners. Bus operators have long been charging passengers extra with these unauthorised services. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

2 killed in 'gunfight' with police

AMANUR AMAN, from Kushtia

Two alleged extortionists were killed in a "gunfight" with police at a brick kiln in Hariadah of Meherpur's Gangni upazila early Friday.

The deceased were identified as Shipon Ali, 24, and Alamgir Hossain, 26.

Police claimed that both men were members of an organised gang involved in extortion but victims' families say otherwise.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Gangni Police Station, said following a tip off, he sent a police team to the SAB Bricks Kiln at around 3:00am. A gang had demanded Tk 2 lakh earlier from the kiln.

When the police team reached there, the gang opened fire resulting a gunfight in which Shipon and Alamgir died and four policemen were injured, he claimed.

Police recovered two crude bombs, one home-made gun and two bullets from the spot.

VICTIM'S FAMILIES

Mustahara Begum, Shipon's mother, said her son was a labourer at the brick kilns.

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The Economist

Delhi-Dhaka romance star-crossed

THE ECONOMIST

Engulfed by India, its giant neighbour to the west, north and east, Bangladesh can look small. But it is the world's eighth most populous country, with one of its fastest-growing economies. And its location, between India and South-East Asia, with a long littoral on the Indian Ocean, puts it in the thick of things, geopolitically speaking.

China clearly sees some potential. Xi Jinping, its president, visited last year and pledged \$15bn in loans. China is Bangladesh's biggest trading partner—and arms

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Politics unwanted over Teesta issue

India's water minister critical of Mamata

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's Water Resources and River Development Minister Uma Bharti said the federal government has a positive stand on the issue of Teesta river water-sharing with Bangladesh and it will take the right decision considering all aspects.

"We don't want any politics on Teesta water issue. All aspects of it are being examined carefully," Bharti said before attending a meeting of her party BJP in Howrah, near Kolkata, on Friday evening. Asked about West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's opposition about the Teesta agreement, Bharti said, "She (Mamata) is hardly happy on any issue."

"Several questions have been raised on the issue both in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Things will be resolved through discussion with the state government," she said.

The Teesta issue had come up in the



Uma Bharti

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US govt hacked SWIFT systems

Hackers release files indicating NSA monitored global bank transfers; experts say released info can pose risks to clients

REUTERS

Hackers released documents and files on Friday that cybersecurity experts said indicated the US National Security Agency had accessed the SWIFT interbank messaging system, allowing it to monitor money flows among some Middle Eastern and Latin American banks.

The release included computer code that could be adapted by criminals to break into SWIFT servers and monitor messaging activity, said Shane Shook, a cyber security consultant who has helped banks investigate breaches of their SWIFT systems.

The documents and files were released by a group calling themselves The Shadow Brokers. Some of the records bear NSA seals, but Reuters could not confirm their authenticity.

The NSA could not immediately be reached for comment. Also published were many programs for attacking various versions of the Windows operating system, at least some of which still work, researchers said.

In a statement to Reuters, Microsoft, maker of Windows, said it had not been warned by any part of the US government that such files existed or had been stolen.

"Other than reporters, no individual or organization has contacted us in

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Praised for going above and beyond



STRAITSTIMES.COM

Etihad Airways has been praised for their "above and beyond" customer service when a plane was turned around at Manchester Airport to allow an elderly couple to visit their dying grandson.

The couple, who were preparing to set off for Australia via Abu Dhabi on March 30, found out about their grandson's condition only after they had boarded the flight, reported The Independent.

The couple's travel agent, Becky Stephenson, said they were switching off their mobile phone when they noticed a missed call from their son-in-law.

"They were taxiing on the runway when they got

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facebook

ACTIVE USERS

Dhaka 2nd among top cities

Bangkok top city, US top country

STAR REPORT

Dhaka has been ranked second among the cities with the largest number of active Facebook users.

The number of active FB users in Dhaka is 2.2 crore, which is 1.1 percent of the total active users of the social networking site, says a report, titled "Digital in 2017 Global Overview", prepared jointly by We Are Social and Hootsuite.

The estimated number of people in the city is 1.5 crore. With 3 crore active users, Bangkok topped the list of

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FB users face disruptions

STAR REPORT

Many Facebook users of the country in the last two days found their accounts disabled as the authorities of the social networking site began to detect and disable fake accounts.

Those who failed to access their accounts were asked to go through a verification process to regain their accounts, said affected users.

Facebook asked them to provide necessary information by clicking "submit an appeal" on its website. Some users provided images of their identity cards, email IDs and their

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Kader, a worker at Pori Carrom Board Factory in Jessore's Newmarket area, painting a carrom board recently. Eight such small factories in the area employ hundreds of people in the district.

PHOTO: STAR

Carrom industry creating jobs

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Popular in cities, towns and villages throughout the country, the game of carrom was probably invented in the royal courts of ancient India though exact origins are unclear.

In Jessore's Newmarket carrom is not solely about leisure. It's a cottage industry employing hundreds of people in eight factories. Jessore-made carrom boards are sold right across the nation.

A visit to a carrom factory is to find it alive with noise: a paintbrush flicks back and forth, a chisel taps away, saws buzz rhythmically as timber is cut and an electric sander whirrs as wood is smoothed. It's hard for the ears to know what to focus on among all the activity.

"I've been working on carrom boards for three years," says painter Abdul Kader who works at Pori Carrom Board Factory. "We use timber from wood apple, acacia, north Indian rosewood and mahogany. Plywood and bamboo nails help tighten the timber." Abdul earns Tk 400 per day painting the boards, which he says is satisfactory.

Another worker at the factory Nayan Hossain, 20, had to give up his study after completing class six, due to his family's dire economic circumstances. "I like this work. I earn Tk 200 per day and it's helpful to our family."

For factory manager Sanowar Hossain, who works at Meghna Factory, carrom boards have returned his life path to the straight and narrow. "I did various unlawful deeds during my political life," he confesses. "Since joining this enterprise as manager my life is wholesome once more."

He is not alone. According to several factory owners, many jobless young people who once led wayward lives have been able to reform themselves thanks to employment in the carrom industry. "Sports materials make a man happy," says one factory owner. "Here, they can forget their troubles and earn enough to lead an honest life."

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 16
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-45 6-24 7-45
JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28 8-15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION