

DHANMONDI CIRCULAR BUS SERVICE

Commuters satisfied so far, want authorities to maintain quality

JULEKHA PARVIN

As the bus pulls up, the driver opens the doors automatically at the push of a button. Those on board are first allowed to leave, before the passengers waiting in a queue can enter the bus that stopped at the corner of Dhanmondi Road 15 and Satmasjid Road.

This was the scene of the circular bus service on the Dhanmondi-New Market-Azimpur route that hit the roads on March 27 in a bid to ease commuting woes and traffic congestion in Dhanmondi and nearby areas.

Passengers can avail the service for Tk 10-30, depending on the distance travelled. As tickets are bought from makeshift booths under red and green umbrellas at every stop prior to boarding the bus, there is no rush nor a chance of haggling or dispute.

This service is part of a plan by Bus Route Rationalisation Committee, which was formed to bring city bus service under discipline. Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon inaugurated the service that currently operates 19 air-conditioned buses. These 50-seat buses ply two circular routes and stop at 36 points.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Md Jahurul Islam, a tickets salesman at Dhanmondi Road 15 bus stop, said, "People are responding positively to this new service." Some curious by-standers were also seen observing passengers embarking and disembarking with ease and the orderly manner in which the tickets were sold.

"Even if there's no seat available in one bus, passengers don't get frustrated as the next bus is just 5-10 minutes away," Jahuraul told



People wait in line to board the recently launched BRTC bus on Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi. Inset, passengers inside the bus. PHOTO: COLLECTED

from the roads; recruiting drivers who would receive a monthly salary instead of wages; making the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) more transparent and effective and launching a training academy in every district to enhance the skills of drivers.

Speaking as chair, columnist Syed Abul Maksud, vice president of Bapa, claimed that the chaotic situation [on roads] is unprecedented. He said expecting that the country can be changed in a day would be unrealistic, but the government has to be sincere in proper implementation of law.

"Transport owners backed by an influential group are responsible for the chaos, so the government should implement public-oriented policy to handle irregularities in this sector," he said. Former PSC chairman Ekram Ahmed, president of Families United against Road Accidents, urged the government to bring adequate amendments to the vehicle law to control indiscipline.

Recalling unpleasant experiences with public buses before, she said, "The service providers need to focus on maintaining quality. I hope it

does not turn into a typical public bus service in future." Niger Sultana, another passenger in the queue, said she commutes to Dhanmondi regularly from Azimpur to drop her son at school and pick him up. "We usually take rickshaw, but just last week, my son and I spotted the new buses stopping in front of the ticket booth and got curious. We have used the service for a couple of days, and so far so good."

It is a comfortable ride and hopefully quality of service will be upheld by Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, said others waiting in the queue.

There is a lot of traffic on the Dhanmondi-New Market-Azimpur route because of a high number of rickshaws and private cars. This service should improve the situation, Nayeb hoped.

The writer is an intern at The Daily Star

Govt negligence, transport owners' greed behind deaths on roads: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers demanding safe roads yesterday blamed government's negligence and the intentions of transport owners and drivers to maximise profits for frequent deaths on roads.

Apart from long-term projects, they also urged the government to take adequate measures to ensure safe and smooth journey for homebound people ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The demands came from a human chain under the banner of "Stop death toll on the roads: ensure safe public transportation" in front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in the capital.

A platform of 27 civil society organisations -- led by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) -- organised it.

Citing a survey done by the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh, Dr Abdul Matin, general secretary of Bapa, said that around 64 people die in road crashes every day across the country, of whom 14 are children.

Quoting the World Health Organization (WHO), he said around 21,000 people in Bangladesh die every year because of road accidents, and over 34,09,300 people are injured, leaving around 80,000 of them physically disabled.

"It is nothing short of murder, so the transport owners must be brought to book for irregularities in the sector," he added.

He presented a 17-point demand, including amending the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983; bringing transport owners to justice; removing unfit vehicles

from the roads; recruiting drivers who would receive a monthly salary instead of wages; making the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) more transparent and effective and launching a training academy in every district to enhance the skills of drivers.

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Prof Abu Sayeed, president of Doctors for Health and Environment, blamed the mismanagement in the road transport sector for bad governance and social injustice in the country. "We want accountability in every sector," he added.

Among others, representatives from the Department of Environmental Science of Stamford University, Dhaka Jubo Foundation, TaruPallab, Bangladesh Ghuri Foundation, Old Town Citizens' platform, Work for Green Bangladesh and Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity were also present.



Speakers at the human chain in front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

'Hizb ut-Tahrir' man held in Jatrabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Terrorism Unit of police claimed to have arrested a member of banned militant outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir from Jatrabari area in the capital city.

The arrestee was identified as Jahidul Islam, 37. He used to be a member of the outfit's media wing, Md Mahiduzzaman, superintendent of police (Legal and media) at Anti-Terrorism Unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A special team of the unit arrested Jahid from Bibir Bagicha (Gate-1) area in Jatrabari on Thursday night, he said.

During the drive, the ATU team also seized a laptop, four mobile phones and extremist books from his possession. SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'Govt trying to kill Khaleda in jail without treatment'

Fakhrul claims

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the government is trying to kill the party chief Khaleda Zia in jail.

"The government is prolonging Khaleda Zia's stay in jail by creating obstacles to her release using various ploys. They are trying to interfere in the trial and pushing her towards death in jail without treatment," he said.

Speaking at a press conference at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, Fakhrul said the government is depriving the BNP chief of bail, although she deserves it in all the cases against her.

"We think the government is showing an inhumane attitude towards Khaleda Zia by depriving her of legal rights. It's also tantamount to violating the constitution," the BNP leader added.

Fakhrul also alleged that the authorities are depriving Khaleda of her right to treatment. He said the party requests the apex court to grant bail to Khaleda and uphold her rights.

The BNP leader also urged the authorities to take steps for Khaleda's release so that she can receive proper SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DHAKA TODAY

SEMINAR

Budget for higher education to achieve SDGs
Organiser: Reading Club
Venue: Social Science Building (2nd floor), Dhaka University
Time: 2pm

MEMORIAL SPEECH

Prof Muzaffar Ahmed's Contribution to Economics
Organiser: Prof Muzaffar Ahmed Smriti Sangsad
Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi
Time: 11:30 am

EXHIBITION & TALK

Kala Kendra Kothopokothon 47
Venue: Kala Kendra, Mohammadpur
Time: 4:30 pm

SALE

Organiser: Le Royal
Venue: Le Meridien Dhaka
Time: 3pm

WORKSHOP

Advanced Photoshop
Organiser: Through the Lens: Bangladesh
Venue: Sony Flagship Store, Bashundhara City
Time: 10:30 am

FOOD OFFER

Taste of Arabia
Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka
Time: 6:30 pm

CHARITY EVENT

Clothes for homeless children
Venue: Aziz Super Market, Shahbagh
Time: 12pm

FAIR

Charu Eid Mela
Venue: Midas Center, Dhanmondi
Time: 12 pm

PHOTO OF THE DAY

PRABIR DAS



Eid shopping is surely fun, but can also be exhausting for children as it takes a while for guardians to make their final choices. This little boy fell asleep in the lap of a family member, who also decided to sit down and catch a breath during shopping at a market yesterday.

Advertisement for Ramadan Tips by United Hospital. Includes text about fasting and headache, a photo of Dr. S M Hasan Shahriar, and contact information: CALL 10666 9852466. For Appointment Emergency & Ambulance.

Advertisement for the National Students' Union (NSU) election. Title: সন্ত্রাসবাদ কে 'না' বলুন. Includes details about the election process, dates, and contact information: www.dmp.gov.bd