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Public burden heavier now

Govt caves in to pressure to raise bus fare up to 28pc, launch fare 43pc

TRANSPORT FARE HIKE	NEW	OLD
Long-distance bus	1.8	1.42
Bus in Dhaka & Ctg	2.15	1.7
Min. bus fare in Dhaka & Ctg	10	7
Minibus in Dhaka & Ctg	2.05	1.6
Min. minibus fare in Dhaka & Ctg	8	5
Launch first 100km	2.3	1.7
Launch next 100km	2	1.4
Min. launch fare	25	18

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The bus and launch fares are now up by as much as 28 percent and 43 percent respectively, in the first manifestation of the impact the Tk 15 hike in diesel and kerosene prices will have on the cost of living for the poor and the middle-class.

The new bus and minibus rates, approved to appease the transport owners who have been on strike since Friday to protest the fuel price hike, come into effect today, according to the notice from the Road Transport and Highway Division yesterday.

But the bus operators who resumed normal service in the evening began to charge the new fares soon after the notice was issued around 7 pm.

The launch operators, who went on strike on Saturday noon seeking a doubling of the fares fixed in 2013, also resumed normal service from the evening with the latest tariff set by a government committee led by Delwar Hossain, member of planning and operations of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

"This is nothing but injustice to the passengers," Mozammel Hoque

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"The bus and launch fares have been hiked unilaterally by the government, the transport owners and the workers' leaders without considering the people's interest."

MOZAMMEL HOQUE CHOWDHURY
Secy gen of Jatri Kalyan Samity



Commuters struggling to get onboard a packed BRTC bus and a pickup on Kemal Ataturk Avenue in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

LEFT HELPLESS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rashida Aktar, a postgraduate student, suffered a lot on the road when she went to Eden Mohila College in the capital for an exam yesterday morning.

Her seven-month old baby and younger brother travelled with her from Tongi. But the way back home was much more difficult.

At the capital's farmgate in the afternoon, she made several failed attempts to get onboard the packed state-run BRTC buses while holding the baby.

"I managed to get on a BRTC bus in Tongi in the morning. Though it was fully packed, I somehow

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DHAKA MAYORS' DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

Not always going to where it should

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Affluent people and political leaders, instead of the poor, are often the beneficiaries of the Dhaka city mayors' discretionary funds that the mayors set up going beyond the city corporation act.

Not much prudence is exercised in releasing the funds, say sources at the city corporations.

Crores of Taka are allocated every year for the city corporations to conduct social welfare activities and ensure civic services.

A sizable chunk is kept aside for the Mayor's Discretionary Fund and mayors have been disbursing money from there, in most cases, at will.

"There is no provision for discretionary funds in the city corporation act. It is their own invention.

They can't do this," said local government expert Tofail Ahmed.

There are mentions of discretionary work in addition to mandatory functions. "But there is no mention of discretionary funds," he said of the act.

The budget documents of Dhaka north and south city corporations show that at least Tk 72 crore was allocated for the discretionary funds between 2016 and 2020.

Dhaka North City Corporation's (DNCC) revised budgets show that it allocated Tk 5 crore in 2016-17, Tk 15 crore in 2017-18, Tk 6.9 crore in 2018-19, Tk 6.5 crore in 2019-20, and proposed Tk 7 crore in 2020-21 for the discretionary fund.

On the other hand, Dhaka South City

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RUN-UP TO UP POLLS

2 killed, 20 hurt as violence on

STAR REPORT

Violence has continued ahead of the second phase of the union parishad polls claiming two more lives and leaving at least 20 others injured in five districts since Saturday night.

Some of the incidents of violence involved clashes between supporters of candidates nominated by the ruling Awami League and those of the AL rebels.

Amid this situation, the AL yesterday expelled seven party men in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila after they announced that they would contest the polls as rebel candidates violating party discipline.

Some 846 union parishad across the country are set to go to polls on November 11.

With the two dead, at least 21 people have been killed across the country in violence centring the staggered UP

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KIWIS IN SEMIS, INDIA ELIMINATED...New Zealand's Devon Conway (L) and Kane Williamson run between the wickets during their T20 World Cup match against Afghanistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. The Kiwis won the match by eight wickets to seal a spot in the semifinals alongside Pakistan from Group 2 as India and Afghanistan failed to make it through. For more see page 10.

PHOTO: AFP

SECONDARY ADMISSION

Lottery mulled for all schools

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Admissions to all government and non-government secondary schools in the coming academic session are likely to be held through a central lottery.

Students have to apply and pay fees online in this regard, proposes the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

The DSHE made the proposal to lessen the hassle of students and guardians and "reduce the irregularities" during the admission process at non-government schools, top officials of the directorate told The Daily Star.

"We have made some proposals. The guideline for admissions to the secondary schools is yet to be finalised. The guideline will be finalised soon," Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk, director general of DSHE, told this correspondent.

"We will start the process of filling up and submitting of applications after the guideline is finalised. We are planning to hold the lottery in December," he said.

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Silent heroes of 'Surokkha'

Five local engineers took up the challenge to develop Covid vaccine management app

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

User-friendly and functioning without any major hiccup, vaccine registration app "Surokkha" is a small statement of capabilities of homegrown information technologists.

Created by five local engineers, the app with an access capacity of five crore people at a time, has been playing a key role in the country's Covid-19 vaccine management campaign.

The effort of the fantastic five also saved a lot of public money as the government was planning to outsource a registration platform as part of vaccine rollout management in January this year.

"We were looking for a system from various local and international companies. At that time, the five officials of the ICT division presented their proposal," NM Zeaul Alam, senior secretary of the Information and Communication Technology Division, told The Daily Star recently.

The five engineers of ICT Division who have created the platform in the shortest possible time are -- ASM Hosne Mubarak, Md Harun Or Rosid, Md Abdullah Bin Salam, Abdullah AL Rahman and Md Golam Mahbub.

While working as programmers in various districts, they first gave an idea of Central Aid Management Systems for smooth distribution of cash

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END OF A STELLAR JOURNEY

AZIZUL HAQUE CHOWDHURY
1st October 1943–6th November 2021

We deeply mourn the passing of Mr. Azizul Haque Chowdhury—a prominent and visionary entrepreneur, one of the founding Directors and former Vice-Chairman of City Bank, and Chairman of Aziz Group.

He will be remembered for his extraordinary contributions to the economic growth of the country.

May his departed soul rest in eternal peace.