

Rawalpindi The strike by transporters entered second day on Friday against the removal of extra CNG cylinders and petrol cans installed under the seats. They have demanded of the concerned authority to give them a free hand to violate rules and regulations.

On Friday, a group of public transporters used force against drivers of Suzuki pickups and taxicabs for plying their vehicles on the road. They even did not spare private vehicles and pelted stones on them damaging a number of them.

On the other hand, helpless commuters waited for public transport in scorching weather without any luck. Some Suzuki pickups and taxicabs were plying, but their drivers charged high fares taking full advantage of the situation.

District Regional Transport Authority (DRTA) Secretary Owais Manzoor Tarar told The News that they have started taking action against transporters for using force against other transporters who wanted to ply their vehicles despite strike. I and the city police officer (CPO) have decided to send these violators to the Adiala Jail for manhandling other transporters, he warned. He said that he has also talked to the owners of long route transport to ply their vehicles on local routes to end the crisis. We are monitoring these violators and strict action will be taken against them, he said.

Muttahida Transport Union (MTU) President Haji Akhtar Awan said that he was not supporting the strike. He condemned transporters for creating law and order situation.

Muttahidda Transport Union (MTU) General Secretary Ghulam Mustafa said that they along with traffic wardens and police have arrested some drivers and conductors for using force against transporters and pelting stones on private vehicles.

Transporters are confused as there is no clear policy with regard to placement of CNG cylinders in vehicles, said Malik Muhammad Sultan, leader of protesting transporters. He said that they went on strike as they were harassed by police on daily basis for having CNG kits inside their vehicles. He said though public transporters were willing to give authorities some time to come up with a clear policy, the treatment meted out to them by police had forced them to go on strike. He said the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) had ordered that no CNG kit should be installed in the passenger compartment, adding that kits in public transport vehicles could only be installed in the passenger compartment as there was no other place.

Talking to The News, commuters standing at different bus stops said that they have to suffer a lot due to shortage of transport. For the last two hours, I am standing in the blazing sun waiting for a van to take me back to Rawalpindi, said Nazia Khurshid, a student who had come to Aabpara in Islamabad for summer classes. She said taxi drivers were taking full advantage of the strike and indulging in overcharging, but there was no choice.

Muhammad Zubair, a commuter standing at Kutchery Chowk, said that some transporters thrashed Suzuki drivers because they wanted to pick passengers. It is an open violation of rules and regulations and powerful transporters are challenging the government writ, he said. The concerned authority should take action against violators otherwise situation would become worse, he warned.

Courtesy: The News