

Parking fee a pinching expenditure

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Down

LAHORE, June 17: Parking stands have turned into a private transport tax recovery mechanism from people for using their own vehicles. The inadequacy of public transport, however, makes such use necessary.

The parking fee collection is a thriving business for the toughs and a pinching expenditure for motorcycle owners. Those using private transport due to inadequacy of public transport have to pay it as a penalty.

Over Rs100 million are being collected annually by the city district government, administrations of six towns, the Lahore Cantonment Board, Wapda, PIA, Pak Telecom, Pakistan Railways, the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and the Parks and Horticulture Authority through the award of parking fee collection contracts for more than 100 selected spots in the provincial metropolis.

The Lahore airport, the railway station, the Fortress Stadium, district courts, civil courts, sessions courts, cantonment courts, Model Town courts, Wapda House, Panorama Centre, AG's Office, Alhambra Art Centre, Lahore Stock Exchange, the

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, the LDA Plaza, Nila Gumbad, GPO, Shalamar Gardens, Mayo, Services and Jinnah hospitals and Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Racecourse and Model Town parks are parking fee collectors' favourite spots with daily collections running into thousands of rupees.

Parking fee is recovered as a kind of compulsory tax from the motorists parking their vehicles at the places for which contracts have been awarded. The CDG has awarded contracts for lifting of vehicles parked in 30 no-parking zones to compel the owners to park the same at the specified stands. The vehicles parked in the vicinity of stands are lifted and their owners have to pay a penalty of Rs200 for committing the mistake of saving Rs5 by failing to park the vehicles at stands. Notices displayed at certain places like the one in front of Diyal Singh Mansions on the Shahrah-i-Quaid-i-Azam say the fee would be recovered even if someone is sitting in a motorvehicle.

The CDG and towns have prescribed parking fee of Rs5, Rs3 and Re1 per trip for cars, motor-

cycles and bicycles, respectively. The rates charged at the airport and the Fortress Stadium are much higher. The parking stand contractors, however, charge the prescribed fee not only from the car owners but also try to extort an equal amount from motorists. Those refusing to pay the excessive amount are insulted. The contractors neither wear uniform nor display the parking fee rates at the stands. They are also required to compensate the motorvehicle owners in the event of theft but seldom fulfil the responsibility. The vehicles parked at the offices are left unguarded in case the owners do not take delivery within half an hour of the closure time.

Parking stands facility existed only at cinemas in the beginning. It was introduced at other places as a kind of service with nominal charges with an increase in the incidence of motorvehicle thefts in 1970's. The motorvehicle owners were allowed parking at their own risk in the beginning but were made to pay charges when the parking fee collection started developing into a thriving business after 1980's.

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