



**October 4, 2017**

## **Minister Bala's behaviour over e-ticket fiasco deplorable**

The attitude and behaviour of a senior Cabinet Minister during Monday's Speaker's debate is a perfect example of thuggery and dictatorship following questions directed him by members of the audience over Government's botched implementation of the e-ticketing system.

Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport Honourable Parveen Kumar Bala's answers, mannerism and tone showed his extreme arrogance and blatant disregard of the concerns of the members of the public who undoubtedly like many thousands of people who use buses as the only means of public transport over the implementation of the e-ticketing system.

Naturally, this resulted in the reaction by a youth Mr Kelvin Anthony who could no longer tolerate Mr Bala's arrogant behaviour and "my way or the highway" attitude and called him a thug.

This resulted in the Minister raising his voice and telling Mr Anthony that he (Mr Bala) knew who he is and where he works and lives. This constitutes a threat. Mr Bala should be ashamed of himself for displaying such behaviour, worse still in public.

When one views the Speaker's debate, it becomes absolutely clear that Mr Bala came to the debate with a pre-meditated mind to simply disregard and crush all legitimate concerns raised on the problems associated with the implementation of the e-ticketing concept.

He wanted only his point of view to prevail and wanted the audience to accept the fact that only the current Government has the ability, authority and mandate to implement any policy that it wants to without widespread consultation. Along with stakeholders, the people should have been consulted or given time to adjust to the system.

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All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

Every new concept has a transition period. E-ticketing is no exception. Government must understand that imposition hardens attitude. It is no use living in denial that immediate transition to e-ticketing is working. Not only passengers, but bus drivers are also complaining.

The usage of e-ticketing is time-consuming for drivers and buses are unable to depart or arrive at their destinations on time. And we have seen in many cases that due to the rush to adhere to the timetable, drivers do not pick up passengers along the route and the stranded passengers have no option but to catch taxis.

The best thing is to allow a transitional period of six months where both e-ticketing and cash should be allowed and accepted as fare. Even countries like Australia and New Zealand have both systems. A transition period will also allow bus operators to assess the level of increase in their income as this has been their basis for calling for the implementation of the e-ticking system.

And at the end of the six-month transition period, the logical step would be to increase the wages of drivers and other workers in the bus industry and also reduce fares because due to the expected significant increase in income.

This is the right way forward and Mr Bala as Transport Minister must accept the reality and convince Government and the e-ticket service provider Vodafone to alleviate the plight facing the traveling instead of riding roughshod over people's concern



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