



PHOTO: STAR

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka (inset) unveils a plaque at the foundation laying ceremony for Nilkhet Square Market in the city yesterday. On the occasion, the Nilkhet City Corporation Market Shop Owners Association erected a canopy for the programme on the adjacent road, causing hindrance to traffic movement.

48 ministries, govt bodies owe Tk 3.5 cr to BRTC in unpaid bills

RAFIQ HASAN

Forty-eight ministries and government and semi-government organisations owe Tk 3.51 crore to the state-owned Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) in unpaid bills, sources said.

But the BRTC could not realise the outstanding bills despite several attempts to this end.

At a meeting on the performance of the corporation recently, BRTC Chairman Toimur Alam Khondaker requested the Communications Minister Nazmul Huda to take an initiative in this regard so that the transport corporation could be a profitable organisation.

In response, the minister stressed the need for holding an inter-ministerial meeting on the issue.

Toimur said the BRTC has become a losing concern because of these unpaid bills and pre-independence liabilities. Besides, frequent requisition of BRTC buses and trucks by police is another reason for economic losses suffered by the government body, he added.

The corporation calculated the total unpaid amount up to April this year from the bills for its services at its truck depots in Dhaka and Chittagong and at the Tejgaon Repairing Centre.

Sources said the food ministry owes Tk 62.69 lakh, home ministry Tk 38.28 lakh, primary and mass education division Tk 32.26 lakh, industries ministry Tk 21.38 lakh, law ministry Tk 12.38 lakh, communications ministry Tk 11.11 lakh, water resources ministry Tk 10.18 lakh and the Prime Minister's

Office Tk 13.73 lakh.

The BRTC has sent letters to them several times, asking them to pay the bills, but to no effect, the sources added.

Although the corporation is making an operating profit in the recent years, it is being termed a losing concern because of various liabilities, Toimur said. He also requested the government to write off the previous liabilities.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to set up a car washing and painting plant before imposing a ban on run-down buses.

The plant, which will be set up with financial assistance from South Korea, will also provide services to private buses and other vehicles.

At the meeting, Toimur alleged that the police requisition inter-district buses with 100-150 litre fuel

oil and forced the passengers to get off the bus at any point of their journey. Later, they return the bus without fuel and compensation, he said.

The BRTC chairman said the police department owes Tk 30.96 lakh to the BRTC for requisition of its vehicles. The corporation suffers a net loss of Tk 1.54 crore due to police requisition, he added.

The communications minister asked the officials to write a departmental letter to the home ministry for an end to such illegal requisition.

According to the sources, the BRTC, with a fleet of 767 buses and 144 trucks, earned an operating profit of Tk 8.16 crore in the last fiscal year.

'Existing strategy for adolescents on reproductive health not adequate'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for expanding advocacy, healthcare services and behaviour change communication programmes for the adolescents.

They said the existing strategies to inform adolescents on reproductive health are not adequate.

The three-day workshop on 'Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) Strategy Development' was organised by Adolescent RH Drafting Committee at Spectra

Convention Centre in Gulshan in the city.

The speakers pointed out that reproductive health education in school textbooks needs more elaboration on certain areas like personal hygiene, sexual behaviour, and use of contraceptives.

They said lack of coordination among the ministries concerned and non-government organisations often slow down the progress in implementing the programmes particularly in the rural areas.

They said many of the clauses

related to existing laws on Reproductive Health (RH) also need amendment.

Four papers including Government responses in ARH needs, NGOs responses in ARH needs, UN responses in ARH needs and Situation analysis on ARH in Bangladesh were presented at the workshop.

Managing Director of Marie Stopes Yasmin H Ahmed has been given the responsibility to develop ARH strategy for Bangladesh that started in 2001 but failed to make

progress except for documenting a profile on ARH in 2004.

She will be guided by a group of five-member adolescent RH drafting committee.

Tahera Ahmed of UNFPA, Dr A J Faisal of EngenderHealth, Dr Munira of Unicef, and Joint Secretary of health Dr Md Serajudowla attended the inaugural session.

Representatives from different ministries, UN agencies, ward commissioners, imams and media representatives spoke at the workshop