

## BRTA VEHICLE INSPECTION CENTRES

## Private operators to run business

RAHMAN SABUKTAGIN

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) will hand over its five vehicle inspection centres (VIC) to private operators within next two years.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing Tk 3.54 crore for the operation and maintenance of the centres, which failed to serve the BRTA since their establishment in 1997.

The VICs could play a vital role in examining the fitness of vehicles but it could not be possible as the centres are poorly managed and equipped with faulty machinery.

BRTA is widely blamed for providing fitness certificates to unfit vehicles due to corruption of a section of officials and "visual testing" of vehicles.

As the system proved useless, the government set up eight computerised vehicle-testing centres, five in Dhaka and three in divisional cities, funded by the ADB. The centres were supposed to examine fitness of vehicles using camera and report it automatically.

But the centres could not work properly due to faulty equipment installed there by a Dutch company along with a local company. The equipment cost more than Tk 44 crore.

Humayun Rashid, director (operations) of BRTA told Star City that BRTA cut 10 percent of the suppliers' performance allowance as fine for installing

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the faulty equipment.

But a source at the BRTA told Star City that the amount of penalty was too little compared to BRTA's loss due to the defective equipment.

Besides, a section of officials who inspect the fitness of vehicles played a key role in keeping the VIC inoperative, as it would reduce their illegal income, the source added.

Failing to get expected service from the centres, the BRTA again sought ADB funds to make the centres capable under the Road Network Improvement Maintenance Project-2.

Under this project, the Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) is soon going to appoint a consultant for repairing the equipment of the centres and outlining the

maintenance and operating regulations for private operators.

Humayun said: "We have sent all the papers to the ministry to sign contracts with the IIFC in this regard. After the project approval, BRTA will hand over the centres to private operators within two years of signing the contract."

"We hope the VICs will enhance BRTA's fitness-testing capability and remove unfit vehicles from the roads," he added.

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The idle VIC at BRTA premises in Mirpur.

STAR PHOTO



A 15-year old teleprinter at the Gulistan International Telegraph office.

## USE OF TELEGRAPH

## A matter of forgotten technology

DURDANA GHIAS

Once upon a time telegram was a vital mode to send message overseas and within the country quickly. With the passage of time that role of telegram is almost nonexistent.

There was a time when the telegraph offices used to buzz with activities all the time. But now the telegraph offices wear a deserted look, with workers spending relaxed hours.

With the advent of fax and internet the purpose of sending telegram has dwindled. But still there are several telegraph offices in the city. There are two types of telegram offices – central and international.

Central offices deal with telegrams at district levels. The only international telegraph office of the country is in Gulistan in the city. For any international telegram, all district level offices send messages to this office through fax. The messages are then sent abroad through tele-

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graph.

On Sunday morning workers and officials were seen working at the International Telegraph Office at Gulistan. Some of them were typing telegram messages in F13 format, a code used for sending telegram. Some were working with telephone bills.

"It is not true that telegram is not sent at all now. We do send telegrams but not like before. There was a time I had been so busy, you would not have had the chance to talk with me," said an official, working at the office since 1970.

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