

# Decision on 'seating service' soon: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the special drive against so-called "seating service" buses plying the Dhaka streets re-called suspended for the last six months, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government will take a decision in this regard within a couple of weeks.

The committee, which was designated to make recommendations for quality passenger services in mass transport sector in Dhaka, will submit their report to the ministry within next week, Quader said.

Then, a decision over seating services will be taken scrutinising the committee's recommendations, he told reporters emerging from a meeting of the Road Transport Advisory Council at the ministry. Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan was present there.

Mahbub-U-Rabbani, director (road safety) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), and also the head of the committee, told The Daily Star: "We have already submitted our report to the chairman of BRTA. Now he will forward the report to the ministry."

He declined to disclose any detail of the report. However, a committee member, on condition of anonymity, told this correspondent that they had opined in favour of "seating service."

Amid widespread allegations of charging extra fare in the name of "seating service", BRTA in association with Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association conducted mobile courts to stop such practice in mid-April. However, the drive was suspended as a good number of buses were withdrawn from the streets for five consecutive days of the drive.

Then, BRTA formed the eight-member committee, which has submitted its recommendations recently to BRTA.

Talking to reporters, Obaidul Quader said the ministry has sought opinion from Buet experts about extending the economic lifetime of CNG-run auto-rickshaws. "A decision would be taken soon after receiving the opinion," he said.

In November last year, leaders of auto-rickshaw owners' associations in the capital submitted to the ministry sought extension of the economic lifetime of CNG-run auto-rickshaws by six more years.



A piece of land protruding into Kalyanpur canal is a portion of the water body filled illegally by grabbers. The place has now become a rickshaw garage and home for people. In Dhaka city, water bodies are shrinking fast, chiefly because of the grab of encroachers getting wider without hindrance. Though there have been occasional drives by law enforcers and authorities concerned against the grabbers, these have been proved mostly futile because in most cases, such structures return shortly afterwards. The photo was taken in the capital's Darussalam area on Tuesday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## RESEARCH ON FEMALE GARMENT WORKERS

### More overtime duty, narrow career prospect

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women in the country's nearely made garment sector face a range of discriminations including being subject to do more overtime duty than their male colleagues and getting fewer promotions, say a study report of Karmojibi Nari and CARE Bangladesh.

Findings show that female workers have a narrow career prospect as very few of them are promoted to supervisory positions.

The study report was disclosed at a discussion at the Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

As part of the European Union-funded "OIKRO (unity) project" on policy implication for women workers in the RMG sector, the researchers conducted the study by analysing secondary data on women workers' issues, doing focus group discussions and taking interviews of key informants in Dhaka in August-September.

Presenting the findings, Mostafiz, an assistant professor of social work at Jagannath University, said female garment workers get eight weeks' maternity leave, while for women in the public sector it was six months.

He said the labour law also lacked the provision of voluntary leave for menstruating women, which was introduced in countries like Japan, Italy,

Korea, Taiwan and China.

The factories are also not free from the scourge of sexual harassment, which "ranges from simple insults and demeaning remarks to unwelcome touching and grabbing", according to the report. Moreover, few factories have daycare facilities and designated places for nursing mothers to breastfeed their babies, it says.

The women workers face a lot of other problems as well. The findings say long working hours affect women's health more adversely than male workers' and women face a severe problem of work-life imbalance.

Most factories also do not have women doctors for women workers. There are fewer toilets for women than necessary, and do not provide sanitary napkins for women during their menstrual cycles, according to the report.

Representation of women workers in negotiation channels like trade unions is also "disproportionate", it says.

Speaking at the programme, Khushbu Chowdhury, Golam Mozammel, research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said women workers' problems had to be addressed.

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### Health support cuts workplace absence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Encouraging female garment workers on sexual and reproductive health and providing them with health-related support can help reduce their workplace absence and boost their productivity, according to a recent study.

Garment factory officials who were interviewed as part of the research said the absence of female workers was reduced to 5 percent from 12 percent after they were provided with such knowledge and support like distribution of sanitary napkins.

Population Council, a non-government research organisation, surveyed 2,165 female garment workers, aged between 18 and 49, in 10 factories of Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj early this year.

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of HERhealth model, a USAID-funded project of non-profit organisation BSR. The model was developed to improve sexual and reproductive health condition of garment workers.

BSR's Dhaka office yesterday revealed the findings during a seminar at a hotel in the capital.

Referring to the garment workers, Kazi Mustafa Sarwar, director general of Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), said, "Without ensuring their good

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Participants at a seminar on national mental health at Dhaka University. Rotary Club of Dhaka Urbana organised it on Saturday marking World Mental Health Day. Prof Dr Harun-or-Rashid, vice chancellor of National University, was present as the chief guest. Julia Niblett, Australian high commissioner; Md Habibur Alam, Bir Pratik, vice president, Bangladesh Scouts; and Rtn Fazlul Haque Arif, district governor, Rotary International Dist 3281, Bangladesh, were also present.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

### HC stays trial of seven cases against Moudud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed trial proceedings of seven cases against BNP leader Barrister Moudud Ahmed, also a former minister.

The cases were filed with Ramna, Paltan and Shajahanpur Police Stations on charges of vandalising vehicles and setting fire to them during the countrywide agitation enforced by BNP-led alliance in 2013.

The HC also issued seven rules asking the government to explain why the trial proceedings should not be scrapped.

The bench of Justice Miflah Uddin Choudhury and Justice Zafar Ahmed came up with the orders and rules after hearing seven petitions filed by Moudud, also a former BNP minister.

Barrister Moudud argued for himself. Deputy Attorney General Shaikh AKM Moniruzzaman Kabir told The Daily Star that the government will move separate appeals before the Supreme Court against the HC orders.

Meanwhile, the same HC bench yesterday stayed the trial proceedings of a vandalism case filed in 2015 against BNP leader and Supreme Court Bar Association Secretary Barrister AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon.

It also issued a rule to this effect.

### Fighting

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The Daily Star recently contacted a top official of the security service division of the home ministry to learn about their concerns regarding the insufficient manpower and poor logistics.

On condition of anonymity, the official said they had received two proposals from the directorate of prisons for upgrading the existing officers and recruiting additional manpower.

But there are some problems in the proposals, he said without elaborating the details.

Therefore, the directorate of prisons was asked to send a proposal by combining the two, he added.

# CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN BANGLADESH CELEBRATING LIFE GALA

The Daily Star Standard Chartered CEMS Exhibition



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