

NAGAR PARIBAHAN BUS

Mixed reactions mark first day of service

HELEMUL ALAM

The first day of the much-awaited Nagar Paribahan bus service from Ghatarchar to Kanchpur under one authority was greeted with mixed reactions yesterday.

On one hand, passengers were satisfied with how the buses didn't waste time boarding passengers, but on the other, some of them expressed frustration with how they weren't allowed to get off the vehicles at their preferred stops.

With a fleet of 50 buses -- including 30 Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) double-deckers -- the new Nagar Paribahan Bus service started plying the capital's streets yesterday, with hopes of bringing discipline to the city's transport system.

The inauguration programme was attended by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader virtually, while Dhaka South City Corporation mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh chaired the session, with Dhaka North City Corporation mayor Md Atiqul Islam in attendance.

After the inauguration, the mayors bought tickets and boarded a bus, along with other guests, from Mohammadpur and got down at Shankar bus stoppage.

This correspondent also boarded one of the buses on a journey from Mohammadpur to Motijheel to experience the service and gauge passenger reaction.

One of the first things he noticed is that none of the staffers wore the green uniforms mandated for the service. The promise of providing the driver's personal details at the back of the driving seat was also missing.

"We will get our dress within a few days," said bus conductor Md Swapan.

Speaking of his own experience, Swapan said the first day's troubles included the

passengers' demand to get down on the spot of their choosing, rather than only at stoppages, as per instructions.

Meanwhile, passengers spoke of their mostly favourable experience. "It's good that the buses don't stay at one spot for long to board passengers and don't compete with other buses," said college student Tanbin Ahmed Anik. "I hope the authorities put in the effort to maintain the service quality."

But another passenger, Azizur Rahman, expressed his anger as he was not allowed to get down at his preferred spot, saying the authorities should allow room for this, otherwise people might have to walk a long way after getting down at the stoppages.

He also suggested the authorities repaint the buses as they are running old buses now.

Md Ali, an enlisted driver of the service, said passengers will be able to file complaints using the service's hotline numbers, which will be available at the buses in a couple of days.

QUADER, MAYORS PROMISE QUALITY SERVICE

Addressing the programme, DSCC mayor Taposh said though the first couple of days of the service may see some issues, they will be eked out eventually.

He also said they have started with 50 buses on a pilot basis and will double the number within two months.

The service will be run by dividing the capital in to nine clusters and operating all buses under six separate companies within 2023.

DNCC mayor Atiqul said over 9,000 buses currently run in 291 routes of the city, which creates unhealthy competition for passengers, chaos on the streets, and raises risks of accidents. He said they hope to

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Queued up passengers board a Dhaka Nagar Paribahan bus from Mohammadpur bus stand on the first day of its operations. The ticketing process is digitalised, which can be purchased on spot and online as well.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LAUNCH FIRE
Petitions seek HC directives to compensate victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two writ petitions were filed with the High Court yesterday, seeking its directive on the authorities concerned to give adequate compensations to the families of victims affected by the deadly fire on the MV Abhijan-10 launch.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunus Ali filed a petition requesting the HC to order the authorities to give Tk 50 lakh each as compensation to the families of the victims who died in the incident and Tk 20 lakh for each critically injured victim.

In the petition, he urged the HC to direct the government to constitute a judicial commission to conduct inquiry into the incident in which 41 people died and at least 100 were injured.

Meanwhile, Saumitra Sarder, another SC lawyer, submitted a petition to the HC seeking its order on the government to give Tk 10 lakh as initial cost to the families of each deceased victim and Tk 10 lakh for treatment of each wounded victim.

Lawyers Eunus and Saumitra told The Daily Star that they will place the petitions before the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman today for hearing.



Padma Bridge to open to traffic in June: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

The much-awaited Padma Bridge will be inaugurated in June 2022 as per target, said Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"The pitch-casting work is ongoing. Once that's done, the entire project work will be completed," said the minister while talking to reporters during the inauguration of 'Dhaka Nagar Paribahan' virtually from the secretariat.

Quader said, "The Padma Bridge will be inaugurated within the target as we've already completed the approach road."



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Regarding the inauguration of Metro Rail and Karnaphuli Tunnel in 2022, he said, "We're working to open these projects next year. You'll be informed about the time. However, our target is to open the projects in 2022."

Meanwhile, about the new service Dhaka Nagar Paribahan, the minister said all kinds of cooperation will be provided to build a disciplined and modern public transport system.

He wished the service success and said it will be expanded in phases.

There are plans to introduce the service on 42 more routes in and around Dhaka City, including Narsingdi, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Gazipur district, the minister added.

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PM returns home today

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will return home from the Maldives today, ending her maiden six-day bilateral visit.

"A special VIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her entourage members will depart the Velana International Airport at 13:00 (local time) tomorrow [today]," Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told the news agency.

The flight is scheduled to arrive at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 5:45pm today.

The prime minister reached the Maldives on December 22 at the invitation of the country's President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

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Syed Shaukat Ally passes away

CITY DESK

Syed Shaukat Ally passed away on December 23 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.



He left behind his wife Arefa Shaukat, daughter Afreen Emdad, son Mehreb Ally and four grandchildren.

Shaukat Ally was the son of late Syed Mustafa Ali of Moulvibazar, Sylhet and the younger brother of late SM Ali, the founding editor of The Daily Star.

His siblings include late Syed Muazzem Ali, former high commissioner to India, and Prof Fowzia Ally. Born on May 3, 1934 in Moulvibazar, his career began at Ispahani Tea. He later joined BJMC in 1970 where he became the general manager of the marketing division in the late '70s.

He received the President's Export Award in 1977-78 and then went on to set up the Atlanta

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Slow but not even steady

Delay in road renovation leads to Tk 160cr increase in project cost

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The cost for an important road project in Khulna city is likely to see a hefty Tk 160 crore increase, after the project was delayed due to land acquisition issues.

In 2010, The Khulna Development Authority (KDA) took the initiative to widen the four km road into four lanes from Rupsha Traffic mor to Khanjahan Ali Bridge (Rupsha Bridge), to link the rest of the city to the Khulna Shipyard.

However, almost 12 years later, progress is yet to be seen.

Even though eight years ago land acquisition and removal of establishments in the area was completed, the road remains completely inoperative today as the authorities took no initiative to repair its cracks in this period of time.

In May 2013, the 'Khulna Shipyard Road Widening and Development Project' was approved at the Ecne meeting with a fixed term till June 2015. On 22 July, 2020, the Ecne approved a revised project to extend the term till June 2022.

According to KDA sources, after the project duration increased, the value of the project increased from Tk 98.90 crore to a whopping Tk 259.21 crore.

Although, the road fell under the jurisdiction of Khulna City Corporation (KCC), its responsibility was handed over to KDA in 2013. As a result, KCC took no initiative for the repairs, sources said.

Meanwhile, KDA claimed that since



While the cost of the road widening project of Khulna Shipyard Road has increased due to delays, the important street also remains riddled with potholes. KDA says they're unable to start the works, as the project contract doesn't mention repairs.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

the project only allocated budget for the lanes and didn't specify any terms for repairing the road, they won't be able to address the issue either.

Over the years, locals staged human chains and demonstrations, demanding renovation of the broken road, but no heed was paid, even though vehicles often overturn on the road after falling into large potholes.

Visiting the area recently, this correspondent noticed numerous potholes and scattered bitumen on the road. Owing to this dilapidated condition, traffic has increased significantly.

Arif Hossain, Ward No. 31 councillor of KCC, said, "This is one

of the major roads of the city. Besides, Rupsha is also one of the main entrances into the city from Barishal and Khulna divisions."

Mahbubur Rahman Munna, general secretary of Nirapad Sarak Andolan of Khulna city, said, "Previously, this road was a short-cut for drivers to avoid traffic, but now, it's become a cause for their peril."

Contacted, Md Arman Hossain, project director and executive engineer of KDA, said, "We've faced a lot of trouble trying to acquire land on both sides of the road, as they were occupied by residents."

On the other hand, the allotted

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RT-PCR tests to begin at Ctg airport from Jan 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The RT-PCR Covid-19 detection tests for expatriates is set to start at Chattogram's Shah Amanat International Airport from January 1, 2022.

The test fee has been fixed at Tk 1,600. The report will be provided within 45 minutes to two hours, said Dr Elias Chowdhury, Chattogram's civil surgeon.

Four private organisations, namely Chevron Clinical Laboratory from Chattogram, Prescription Point and Lab Aid from Dhaka, and Modern Hospital from Cumilla, have been permitted to set up RT-PCR laboratories in Chattogram airport.

"They have already completed their arrangements," said Dr Asif Khan, deputy civil surgeon.

Many organisations, including Nagarik Udyog, have been urging for an RT-PCR lab at the airport, as most counties in the Middle East do not allow expatriates without a Covid negative certificate tested through the RT PCR machine.



As the country continues to urbanise, more cities are adapting to the features of the metros, a phenomenon that does not come with blessings only. The prevalence of concrete has made the simple joys of life somewhat unattainable. Nowadays, people have to resort to enjoying a game of cricket before the cacophony of traffic strikes, like these young men. This photo was taken from KDA Road in Khulna city yesterday morning.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Reazuddin Ahmed laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed was laid to rest beside his mother's grave at Banani graveyard yesterday, after the third namaz-e-janaza at Baridhara Embassy Jame Mosque.

Earlier, he was taken to Jatiya Press Club at 11:00am, where the first namaz-e-janaza was held. Eminent citizens, including his colleagues and political leaders of different parties, paid their last respects to him there.

Reazuddin was a four-time elected president of Jatiya Press Club and a founding member of the editors' council.

Industry Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) President AK Azad, former press club presidents Shaukat Mahmood, Muhammad Shafiqur Rahman, Saiful Alam, incumbent president Farida Yasmin and general secretary Ilias Khan participated in the janaza.

Former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, BNP Standing Committee Member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, BFUJ President M Abdullah, Dhaka Journalist Union President Kader Gani Chowdhury, Dhaka Reporters Unity President Nazrul Islam Mithu and General Secretary Nurul Islam Hasib were also present among others.

Later, Reazuddin was taken to his birthplace at Narsingdi's Monohardi upazila, where the second namaz-e-janaza was held.

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