



Winter rolls on. After a few days' relief, residents of the capital are met with another round of cold. Meanwhile, the trees of the city aren't showing any signs of spring's arrival either, for their leaves are yet to return. This photo was taken yesterday from Lalbagh area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BUS-ROUTE RATIONALISATION

3 more routes to operate under single company

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bus-route rationalisation project -- the plan to bring buses under select authorities -- took a leap forward after one route was inaugurated in December last year.

Now, the government is working to bring three more routes under a single company as soon as possible to improve bus services.

The routes are Ghatarchar-Bhulta via Bosila, Asadgate, Farmgate, Shahbagh, Paltan, Gulistan and Rupsi; Ghatarchar-Meghnaghat via Asadgate, Shabagh, Paltan, Sayedabad and Kamalapur; and Ghatarchar-Narayanganj via Mohammadpur Town Hall, Asadgate, Kalabagan, Kakrail, Shaplachattar, Dayaganj and Postagola.

"We have already started one of the eight planned routes, Ghatarchar-Kanchpur, on December 26 last year. We have now decided to bring all buses under one authority as soon as possible," said Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, after holding the 21st meeting of the rationalisation committee at Nagar Bhaban yesterday.

He said the entire city will gradually come under the system. The mayor said service for the pilot route is still good, and passengers are satisfied, while work is on to introduce 65 more brand-new buses on the route.

Taposh said a team is working on the three new routes, and it will submit recommendations in the next committee meeting. Responding to a question about buses getting delayed, the mayor said they did not hear the complaint, as buses arrive every five minutes.

Earlier, the government started the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur route with fifty buses, including 30 BRTC double-deckers, on December 26 last year.

The "Bus Route Rationalisation and Operation of Bus Services on Company Basis in Dhaka" initiative was first taken up by late mayor Annisul Huq. However, the project lost steam following his death in late 2017.

'A transnational syndicate'

Turkish, Indian nationals held over attempt to steal money from ATMs



CRIME TIMELINE

- January 2-4: They made 84 attempts of cash withdrawal with cloned cards
- January 18: Leader got arrested by CTTC
- January 25: Gave confessional statement to court

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Between January 2 and 4, he attempted to withdraw money with cloned cards 84 times. The cards are from nationals of around 40 countries, including the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

Hakan Zamburkan, leader of the transnational credit-card cloning syndicate, used to keep two passports to help stay out of trace. Using them, the Turkish national has visited Bangladesh at least six times in the last five years, Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) revealed.

Interestingly, two Indian members of the syndicate had also entered Bangladesh with Hakan, but in a more rudimentary way. Sakib Hasan and Saber Ali would always reach Khagrachari border point through Tripura. The duo crossed the border at least three times last year.

Another Indian, Romel, would maintain the whole network from Mexico.

Hakan's last plan was to take shelter in Pakistan, as the syndicate has members there too. But before

that, he was arrested by CTTC unit on January 18.

When he tried to withdraw money from an Eastern Bank Limited ATM, he was thwarted by its anti-skimming protection.

On January 25, Hakan gave a confessional statement before a Dhaka court.

During investigation, CTTC claimed to have got the findings, which officials disclosed with The Daily Star.

Investigators said they have come to know that the syndicate has members in India, Mexico, Bulgaria, Bangladesh and Turkey.

Hakan in his statement said he had learned about cloning ATM cards after meeting Romel in Mexico. He has visited India and Bangladesh several times in the last couple of years. During a visit to India, Hakan met syndicate member Sakib.

Hakan said the other member Saber enters Bangladesh by crossing the border, and their plan was to withdraw Tk 1 lakh from different ATMs.

However, Hakan failed to withdraw money even after using 40 to 50 cards for around 70 to 80 times, court sources added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TREE-FELLING ON PERSONAL PROPERTY

Restriction on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering a move to impose restrictions on felling trees at personal properties, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam yesterday.

"People who plant permanent trees or set-up gardens cannot cut trees arbitrarily. There are rules in this regard in almost every country," he said while briefing journalists over the approval by the cabinet, in principle, of the draft of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation Act, 2022.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the cabinet meeting held at the secretariat. She joined the meeting virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

"We were asked to think over it in a bid to give protection to all kinds of forest industry... We had a conception that the forest act is only for reserve forests, but actually it is not," he said. "We've to understand that it is about permanent trees. Gourd plants can be removed [without permission], there is no problem with that."

The cabinet meeting also discussed the fourth quarter report on the implementation of its decisions in 2021. "The implementation rate of the cabinet's decisions taken in the last three years is 89.26 percent," said Anwarul Islam. However, a report showed the rate dropped to 73.33 percent in 2021 from 92.43 percent in 2020.

No DU 'Gha' unit entrance exams from now on

Students to be admitted based on results of Ka, Kha, Ga, and Cha units

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University authorities yesterday decided not to hold any first-year honours admission tests for "Gha" or "D" unit, under the social science faculty, from the 2021-2022 academic year.

The university's deans' sub-committee, at a meeting of DU's general admission committee, was assigned the responsibility to form a policy to admit students to Gha unit seats via admission tests for Ka, Kha, Ga (A, B, C) units and Cha unit.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof M Akhtaruzzaman chaired the meeting.

The vice-chancellor told The Daily Star that all students can get admissions to this unit by taking the entry tests of their respective units (Ka, Kha, Ga and Cha).

"We have prior experience as the university has admitted students following this system earlier," he said.

The meeting also recommended reducing 1,040 seats from the next academic session.

According to DU public relations office, this agenda will be finalised by the university's Academic Council's meeting immediately.



Bureaucratic administration running country

Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Depoliticisation is rife in the country's politics, Jatiya Party Chairperson GM Quader said yesterday.

"The country's electoral system has collapsed. People have lost interest in elections. As a result, depoliticisation has started to take root in politics. It is no longer in the hands of politicians," he added.

There is no accountability anywhere, GM Quader added, mentioning that the country is being run by the bureaucratic administration.

GM Quader, also deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said this while speaking at a special meeting of the party's Dhaka south unit at his office in Banani.

On the formation of the next Election Commission, he said JP wants a strong commission formed with competent, neutral and acceptable people.

"However, an acceptable election will not be possible if the commission is not empowered during the election period."

"But the law on the appointment of chief election commissioner and other commissioners doesn't say anything about this," he said.



COKE KOLOROB... Celebrated musical franchise 'Coke Studio' has finally opened its doors to Bangladesh. Yesterday, 'Coke Studio Bangla' hosted a lavish opening ceremony at a city hotel. The venue was festive with the presence of prominent faces of the music industry, including the likes of Arnob, Tahsan, Momotaz Begum and Ankhi Alamgir. State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak were present as special guests at the programme.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Shamsul Alam Belal passes away

CITY DESK

Prominent journalist, columnist and poet Shamsul Alam Bhuiyan, commonly known as Shamsul Alam Belal, passed away in a hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

He was 63.

He was admitted to Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital on February 5 due to breathing problems. He suffered a cardiac arrest early yesterday and could not be revived.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters, a host of relatives, friends and well-wishers.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Jatiya Press Club

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4