



Ever since educational institutes reopened, the roads of Dhaka have been filled to the brim with vehicles of all kinds. Commutes are now eating up even more time, giving city dwellers yet another problem to deal with every day. This photo was taken in Asad Gate area. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Better use of roads, fewer dev projects

### Say urban planners on reducing traffic congestion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Instead of focusing on infrastructure development projects, authorities should optimise the use of roads and public transport to reduce traffic congestion in the capital, said urban planners yesterday.

They also urged the government to spread employment, education and medical-care facilities outside the capital to stop migration to Dhaka.

They came up with the recommendations while speaking at a virtual urban dialogue on traffic congestion in Dhaka, organised by Institute for Planning and Development (IPD).

IPD Executive Director Adil Mohammed Khan, who presented the keynote speech, said since the reopening of educational institutions, city dwellers are suffering seriously due to traffic congestion.

Many are hoping that the metro rail will solve the problem. But in reality, it will not be a solution, as it will cater to only 10 percent of passengers. Instead, the government should

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## 225 new buses on 3 routes

### Says Taposh on bus route rationalisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After inaugurating the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur bus route -- with 50 buses operating under one company -- on December 26 last year, the bus route rationalisation committee yesterday decided to run 225 new buses on three routes.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh disclosed this. However, he did not mention an exact date for starting operation, and instead, gave a timeline for finishing all preparations by the next 90 days.

After holding the committee's 22th meeting at Nagar Bhaban, the mayor, also chairperson of the committee, said among the routes, 50 buses will run on route-22 -- Ghatarchar to Sultana Kamal Bridge.

A total of 100 buses will run on route-23 -- Bosila to Kanchpur via Mohammadpur Shia Mosque; 75 buses will operate on route-26 -- Ghatarchar to Kadamtali.

Taposh also said they will add 20 more buses on Ghatarchar-Kanchpur route within the next month and have given a proposal to a private company to run 50 more buses.

## BUS FRANCHISING SYSTEM

# New law on the cards

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is going to formulate a new law to regulate bus service using the franchise system, which is expected to bring discipline in Dhaka's public transport sector.

Under the system, buses of all companies in a particular zone or line will have to run under a single company, and the revenue is shared among all companies.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), under Road Transport and Highways Division, has taken the initiative to enact the law. A pilot project for the franchise system already kicked off in the city last year.

DTCA has already prepared a draft of the act and forwarded it to the division, which has convened a meeting on March 27 over the issue.

Representatives of different agencies under the division were asked to participate in the meeting over the draft of "Bus Transport Service Operation and Special Rights (Route Franchise) Act", officials said.

Neelima Akhter, executive director of DTCA, said several meetings will have to be held to finalise the draft.

The franchise system will ensure that bus drivers do not engage in unhealthy competition for more passengers, which is a major reason behind accidents and traffic congestion.

Although the issue of bus route rationalisation and introduction of franchise system has long been in

discussions, it got momentum when late Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Anisul Huq took an initiative in this regard.

But, the initiative lost momentum after his death in November 2017.

In the meantime, the High Court in June 2019 had directed authorities concerned to bring bus services in all metropolitan cities under the franchise system.

The court gave the directives while dealing with a case over compensation for the family of road accident

are being operated under the system.

A committee led by Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, which oversees the pilot project, yesterday announced its plan to run 225 new buses on three routes in Dhaka.

Currently, some 6,000 buses operate in Dhaka and adjacent cities under several hundred companies and individuals.

In many cases, bus owners lease out their vehicles to drivers or conductors on a daily contract basis,



victim Rajib Hossain, a student of Government Titumir College.

He died in April 2018, after a bus of BRTC and another of Sajan Paribahan were trying to overtake each other in the capital's Bangla Motor.

But, the franchise system was not introduced until last year, when a pilot project was launched on Ghatarchar-Kanchpur route from December 26.

Currently, 50 buses under "Dhaka Nagar Paribahan"

and drivers get involved in unhealthy competition for picking up more passengers to maximise profit.

Transport experts said if all buses come under a couple of companies, share their income, and in return, get profit as per their investment, then this problem will end.

Under the existing law, a bus operator, upon receiving route permit, cannot legally be prevented from running their bus on a particular route.

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## Govt working to ensure labour rights, payment

### Law minister tells ILO event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is working to ensure rights and accurate payments of workers and also for their better work environment, said Law Minister Anisul Huq.

The government is pledge-bound to do so, the law minister said while addressing the 344th conference of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) governing body in Geneva of Switzerland on Monday night, a law ministry press release said yesterday.

He said Bangladesh has already ratified the Protocol 2014 of ILO Convention, 1930 which is an effective step for ensuring the rights of labours. "Besides, Bangladesh last month has ratified the ILO Convention 138, regarding the minimum age for joining the work. The Bangladesh government will officially hand over the relevant documents over the ratification to the ILO," he said, adding that Bangladesh is going to join the club of the countries who have ratified ILO's eight fundamental conventions.



## 'AL did not keep their word'

### Alleges Oikya Parishad on ensuring rights of minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There has not been any visible measures taken by the ruling party to protect the country's religious minorities, alleged Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday.

"Attacks on houses of minorities, their places of worship, shops, grabbing of their land, abduction and rape of minor girls... have become regular events," said Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of the Parishad, at a press conference.

They organised the press briefing at Jatiya Press Club as part of their latest initiative to press home their demand to materialise the manifesto of the ruling Awami League on protecting minorities.

In the briefing, Rana Dasgupta said, "If the Awami League had implemented their electoral manifesto on protecting minorities, there would have been no need for us to wage movement for ensuring our protection."

He also said in the existing reality of politics, the religious and ethnic minorities of Bangladesh are feeling "hopeless".

"The constitution of 1972 could not be free from communalism even after 50 years of the country's independence," he added.

**If the Awami League had implemented their electoral manifesto on protecting minorities, there would have been no need for us to wage movement for ensuring our protection.**

RANA DASGUPTA

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## JASHORE, KHULNA, RAJSHAHI

# BERC proposes 20pc gas price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The technical evaluation committee (TEC) of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) has recommended increasing the average gas price at the consumer level by 20 percent in the southwest and north-western districts of the country, including Jashore, Khulna and Rajshahi.

They recommended a per cubic meter price at Tk 11.64 from the existing Tk 9.70.

On the second day of the public hearing yesterday, organised by BERC, the committee made the recommendation after getting the proposals from Sundarban Gas Company Limited (SGCL) and Pashchimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL), two distributors of the regions.

Both of the companies wanted to increase the price by 110-117 percent while placing their proposal.

According to the TEC recommendation, the new prices for a double burner is Tk 1,080 from the existing Tk 975 and Tk 990 from the existing Tk 925 for a single burner at the household consumer level.

However, both of the companies sought to increase the gas price to Tk 2,100 for a double burner and Tk 2,000 for a single burner.

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A rickshaw-puller covers his head with a towel to get some respite from the scorching heat at Kakrail signal. Lately, commuters in Dhaka have been facing much hardship, travelling through the city amidst the gridlock and heat. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 5 held for making fake NID, driving licence: Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have arrested five members, including the mastermind of a gang which had been preparing fake driving licence and NID cards for about 10 years.

The arrestees are: Golam Mostafa (60) the mastermind; Jalal Bashar (54), Muslim Uddin (65), Minarul Islam (22) and Tarek Mridha (22).

A team of Rab-3 arrested the five along with 26 fake NIDs, 18 fake driving licences and huge materials used for producing the fake items from different parts of Dhaka on Monday, Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, told a press conference yesterday.

The Rab official said the gang members used to target people who would go to the Election Commission and BRTA offices for the relevant documents. They assured them of obtaining a driving license and NID card in the quickest possible time, the Rab official said.

They used to provide fake money receipts using fake seals and signatures of the officials concerned. The fraudsters charged Tk 3,000 to Tk 10,000 for providing one fake NID card or driving licence, Moin said.

The gang members also swindled people through advertising on social media, he said, adding that Mostafa started the fraudulent activities in 2010.

PRAYER  
TIMING  
MAR 23



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-55	12-45	4-45	6-16	7-45
Jamaat	5-30	1-15	5-00	6-20	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION