



# No buses for 18 lakh residents of Khulna city

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

For Moniruzzaman Jamaddar, a resident of Damodar village in Phultala upazila, memories of student life in Khulna are inseparable from the once-vibrant bus services that connected the city with its outskirts.

The 59-year-old NGO official recalls how, in the early 1980s, he would travel nearly 23 kilometres daily to attend classes at Khulna City College and later at Khulna Commerce College.

"Buses would leave every five minutes from Phultala to Rupsha ghat and stop at more than 20 points. They were often packed with passengers," he told The Daily Star.



For students, the fare was as low as one taka. "It was not just public transport – it was part of our life," he reminisced.

But all this is now a distant memory.

Khulna, a city of nearly 1.8 million people, now has no bus service. For the residents – especially students and low- to middle-income groups – the absence of city buses has turned daily commute into an expensive and stressful ordeal.

The gap has been filled by three-wheelers, including CNG-run and battery-powered auto-rickshaws and easy bikes. With fuel prices rising, fares have been increased by up to 20 percent in recent weeks, adding to commuters' financial strain.

Residents say that travelling from one end of the city to the other now costs between Tk 150 and Tk 200 – a sum many find unaffordable on a daily basis.

Dipa Banerjee, a student of Khulna Government Girls' College, said, "The distance from Phultala to Rupsha ferry ghat via the dak bungalow is 26 kilometres. If I share an auto-rickshaw ride with someone, I have to pay Tk 70 for the journey," she said, adding that had

there been a city bus service, the fare would have been much lower.

"It is essential to introduce bus services from Phultala to Khulna city and on four to five other routes," she said.

Akmol Hossain, a jute mill worker from Rupsha upazila, said, "The three-wheeler drivers' union raised fares on April 5, citing fuel price hikes. I have to pay an additional Tk 10 daily to reach my workplace at Phultala from Rupsha after the fare was increased to Tk 70."

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) documents, around 1,250 three-wheelers registered with BRTA operate on the Khulna-Phultala route.

## WHY DID BUSES DISAPPEAR?

In the 1990s, more than 60 buses were run by private operators on various routes, including those from Rupsha to Phultala and Shahpur. Students from Jashore and even Narail used to travel via Phultala to BL College, Khulna Commerce College, and Khulna Government Girls' College, say locals.

Many people from Fakirhat, Mollahat, Rampal, Mongla and other places in Bagerhat relied on these bus services to commute to the city.

"Back then, this was the main mode of transport for lower- and middle-income people," said Rahmat Ali, who worked as a bus conductor for 15 years.

As recently as 2005, around 50 buses operated within the city, serving as affordable and reliable transport.

But things started changing rapidly after 2010 when CNG- and diesel-run three-wheelers hit the roads in big numbers.

By 2017, the number of city buses dropped to just five before completely going off the road in August 2018.

Meanwhile, in 2016, BRTA

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Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrates his ninth Test century -- and his first against Pakistan -- with his trademark leap on Day 1 of the first Test of the two-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. His 130-ball 101 also made him the first Bangladesh captain to score a Test century against Pakistan, helping the Tigers finish the day strongly at 301/4 in 85 overs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## BNP moves to restore grassroots discipline

### Tarique to sit with leaders today

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will sit with grassroots leaders today as the ruling party seeks to restore discipline and strengthen its organisational structure.

Party leaders said there is no formal agenda for the meeting, but they expect the party chief to issue a strict warning to leaders across the country to follow party rules and avoid any activities that could damage its image or give the opposition any scope to criticise it.

The meeting, to be held at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium in Dhaka's Farmgate, may also give local leaders a chance to discuss the government's activities, problems in their areas, internal conflicts, and weaknesses within their respective units.

Party insiders said grassroots leaders will likely tell Tarique that the selection of new leadership for committees whose terms have expired should proceed through elections.

This will be his first such meeting with grassroots leaders since becoming prime minister and the BNP's return to power, said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, PM's political affairs adviser.

Presidents, general secretaries, conveners, and member secretaries of

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## JOURNALISM CONFERENCE 2026

# Editorial autonomy key to investigative journalism

Speakers urge media houses to resist pressure, protect reporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Establishing strong editorial institutions and resisting financial and political pressures are essential for the survival and growth of investigative journalism, speakers said at an event yesterday.

The remarks came at a session of the

of its editorial team. Meanwhile, management and publishers' support is crucial.

"Unless you trust your editor and his team to do good journalism, there is no way a media house can flourish," he said.

Calling the exposure of corruption "a kind of public service", he warned that self-censorship is often more damaging than direct censorship,

**The survival of a media house depends entirely on the autonomy and integrity of its editorial team... Unless you trust your editor and his team to do good journalism, there is no way a media house can flourish.**

Zaffar Abbas  
Editor of Dawn

**Investigative journalism is the only element that distinguishes one news house from another. Democracy needs defenders, and our investigative reporters and editors stand bravely on the front line.**

Michael Cooke  
Former editor of Toronto Star

Bangladesh Journalism Conference 2026, titled "Investigative Journalism in Bangladesh: Current Status, Challenges and Way Forward", organised by the Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) at the Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel in Dhaka.

Zaffar Abbas, editor of Pakistan's Dawn, stressed that the survival of a media house depends entirely on the autonomy and integrity

as media outlets cannot publicly admit to it. Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said a strong editorial institution is a precondition for independent and investigative journalism.

"An editor should not be a PRO [public relations officer] of the owner. While owners have a role, there must be a distinction between

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## PMO cell to track MPs' dev pledges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Prime Minister's Office has formed a special cell to ensure quick and effective implementation of the promised and expected programmes of members of the parliament.

The decision was announced in a PMO notification issued yesterday.

According to the notification, signed by Nohemia Jamil, director administration at the PMO, the cell has been formed to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination and ensure transparency and accountability. The order will take effect immediately, it said.

The seven-member cell will be headed

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## ERRATUM

In the report headlined "West Bengal assembly dissolved" published on Page 12 yesterday, content from another report was mistakenly used. The error has been fixed on our website. We sincerely apologise for the mistake.



PHOTO: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

Chhayanaut students perform during the first day of two-day "Rabindra Utsab 1433" at its auditorium in Dhaka yesterday. Story on Page 3.

## US trade court rules Trump tariffs illegal

### Blocks levies for three importers

REUTERS, New York

A US trade court dealt another blow to President Donald Trump's tariff strategy, ruling that his latest 10 percent temporary global duties are unjustified under a 1970s trade law, but blocked the levies only for two private importers and the State of Washington.

The US Court of International Trade's 2-1 decision leaves the temporary tariffs in place for all other importers while any appeal by the Trump administration plays out. They are expected to expire in July.

The court ruled that Trump's imposition of the tariffs under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 was misguided. One of the judges said it was premature to grant victory to the plaintiffs.

While the ruling applies to a set of levies due to expire in about two months, it marks another major setback for Trump's global tariff ambitions and comes a week before he is due to discuss trade tensions with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.