

Waste pickers search for recyclable materials, including plastic, metal and paper, amid towering heaps of rubbish at the Aminbazar landfill in Dhaka yesterday. Without protective gear, they work in hazardous conditions, exposing themselves to pollution and potential health risks as they sift through the waste. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Dhaka to get two franchise bus routes in 7 days

## Full rollout in 6 months



FILE PHOTO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to introduce franchise-based bus services on two routes in Dhaka within seven working days and make the system fully operational within six months.

It will also finalise franchises for 32 routes within two months.

The decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Secretariat yesterday.

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and bus owners' association have been tasked with implementing the route rationalisation plan.

Under the system, one designated company will operate on each route, taking responsibility for vehicle fitness, discipline and legal compliance. Counter-based services, e-ticketing and GPS tracking are also planned.

DTCA Executive Director (Secretary) Mohammad Mashiur Rahman said only 98 of Dhaka's 418 approved bus routes were operational, served by around 7,500 buses belonging to 66 companies.

The DTCA proposes reorganising them into 32 routes, around 70 percent of which correspond to existing routes.

The plan is based on surveys of boarding and alighting by more than 10,000 passengers and the origins and destinations of over 35,000. Vehicles were counted over 72 hours at 52 key locations, while drones filmed around 400 km of the bus network.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, CHILDREN

# Law promises speedy trials, oversight remains absent

## Despite 2016 HC directive, SC yet to form monitoring cell for tribunals

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

A decade after the High Court ordered the formation of a monitoring cell to ensure speedy disposal of cases under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, the Supreme Court administration has yet to implement the directive, even as thousands of cases remain pending.

The law requires tribunals to complete trials within 180 days of framing charges, but the deadline is frequently missed.

As of June 30 this year, 1,16,392 cases were pending before 101 Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals across the country, including 26,249 that had remained unresolved for more than five years, according to SC sources.

On September 30 last year, the backlog stood at 1,42,575 cases, including 30,623 pending for over five years.

In a judgment delivered on December 5, 2016, the HC directed the SC registrar general to establish a monitoring cell to oversee compliance with the 180-day deadline.

The cell was to be headed by the SC registrar general or HC registrar, with representatives from the home and law ministries. It was also required to submit periodic reports to the SC and government to facilitate action against those responsible for unexplained delays.



**Law requires trials to finish within 180 days**

**1,16,392 cases pending across 101 tribunals**

**26,249 cases pending for over five years**

**No mechanism to monitor compliance with deadline**

**HC recently summoned judge over prolonged trial**

Under the law, if a trial cannot be completed within the deadline, the tribunal judge, public prosecutor and investigating officer must submit separate reports explaining the delay to the SC and government.

The bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim issued the directive after finding that the provision was virtually being ignored.

However, SC sources said no initiative had been taken to form the cell, and officials familiar with the matter could not explain why. Consequently, updated nationwide information on tribunals' compliance with the deadline remains unavailable.

Contacted recently, Mazharul Haque, special officer of the High Court, confirmed that no such monitoring cell existed under the SC registrar general.

He said he needed to enquire about the judgement and whether any system existed for judges or public prosecutors to report trial delays.

Mazharul said all current senior officials at the SC Registrar General's Office, including Registrar General Mohammad Habibur Rahman Siddiquee, joined long after the verdict.

An official at the office claimed that the 180-day provision was directory, not mandatory.

The issue resurfaced in June when the HC summoned a tribunal judge over delays in a child rape and murder trial in Habiganj.

On June 9, an HC bench of Justice KM Emrul Kayesh and Justice Md Sagir Hossain summoned Tribunal Judge Syeda Minhaj Um Munira after observing that the trial had remained pending for more than four years.

The order came during a bail hearing for accused Golam Hossain.

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IN BRIEF

## EC to announce UP poll dates Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said it would announce the dates and phases of the upcoming Union Parishad elections on Monday following a commission meeting.

Election Commissioner Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah told reporters at the EC headquarters in Dhaka's Agargaon that the commission would hold dialogues with political parties after finalising the poll dates.

On September 17, Sanaullah said the commission aimed to complete the local government elections, particularly the UP polls, before June 6 next year.

Asked yesterday when the elections would be completed, he said, "We hope to complete all election phases within the timeframe we had originally outlined."

## Playground to be built on cleared Faridabad site

### Says DSCC administrator

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A playground will be constructed within a month on a site cleared of an illegal settlement in Faridabad's IG Gate area under Dhaka South City Corporation's Ward 47, DSCC Administrator Md Abdus Salam said yesterday.

Inspecting development activities in the adjacent Bangladesh Bank Colony area, he said the government-owned land had been occupied for nearly five decades and the area was known as a drug den. A new road will also be built nearby, while a community centre may be constructed if space permits, he said.

## Five more die of dengue, 1,935 get hospitalised

### Death toll now 294

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five dengue patients died and 1,935 others were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the latest deaths, three were reported in DSCC and two in Khulna division.

With the new deaths and cases, the dengue death toll this year has risen to 294, while the total number of cases has reached 94,151.



Medicine specialist Dr ABM Abdullah said repeated infections, delayed diagnosis and changes in the clinical presentation of dengue were contributing to severe cases and deaths.

"Dengue has four serotypes. When people are infected for the first time, they often do not realise that they have dengue. They may mistake the symptoms for influenza or another common illness and recover without serious complications," he said.

# PM pledges support for Abrar case

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday assured the family of Abrar Fahad of all necessary government support in the ongoing murder case, while pledging to consider their various demands, including a bridge over the Gorai river in Kushtia to be named after the slain Buet student.

Abrar's father Barkat Ullah, mother Rokeya Khatun, and younger brother Abrar Faiyaz, among others, met the prime minister at his office at the Secretariat, said a release issued by the PM's Press Wing.

Barkat sought the premier's cooperation in expediting the judicial process in his son's murder case and executing the verdict.

In response, the PM said the case is currently pending with the Supreme Court, and the judiciary will independently complete the trial process. He assured the family that the government will provide all necessary support in the matter.

Abrar's father also sought the construction of a bridge over the Gorai river in Kushtia, saying around 40,000 to 50,000 people in the area currently cross the river using a makeshift bamboo bridge.

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A pedestrian covers his nose and mouth to protect himself from thick dust stirred up by ongoing construction work in the capital's Lalbagh area yesterday. Students, office-goers and pedestrians face heavy dust pollution while traveling through the area during the dry season. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

'REMARKS ON VEIL'

## DU teacher relieved of duties

DU CORRESPONDENT

An associate professor at Dhaka University's Department of English has been relieved of teaching duties following a complaint that she made inappropriate remarks to a female student about her clothing.

The decision was taken at an emergency academic meeting of the department yesterday and forwarded to the university's higher authorities for review, said department Chairperson Tazin Aziz Chaudhury.

She said the decision was based on a complaint from students, adding that the department did not have the authority to conduct a formal inquiry or suspend a teacher. The professor's courses have since been reassigned to other faculty members, Tazin said.

The department also adopted a resolution describing the complaint as unfortunate and saying the alleged remarks did not reflect its values or practices.

"The remarks reflect the teacher's personal views, not those of the department," Tazin said. She declined to disclose details of the complaint.

Dr Abul Kalam Sarker, dean of the Faculty of Arts, said, "The department took the decision unanimously because the allegation was found to be true."

A video obtained by The Daily Star, containing statements from the student and

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