Bus franchise takes off with ageing fleet

Service launched on 6 routes amid concerns over vehicle fitness, route disputes

SHAMIMA RITA

Dhaka's long-discussed franchise-based bus service was launched on six routes yesterday, amid concerns over ageing and unfit vehicles and unresolved disputes over route allocations.

After two postponements, Pabna-5 lawmaker and Transport Owners-Workers Unity Council Chief Coordinator Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas inaugurated the service at Manik Mia Avenue around 11:30am.

At an October 8 meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, authorities decided to launch the service on two routes within seven working days. The deadline was later extended to October 25.

During a visit to the inauguration site, this correspondent saw buses operated by Paristhan, Projapoti, VIP and several other companies lined up for the launch. Many appeared old and poorly maintained, while some seemed to have been freshly painted despite their deteriorating condition.

Liakot, a driver and operator of Paristhan Paribahan's Route

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Buses operated by several companies line up on Manik Mia Avenue ahead of the launch of a franchise-based bus service on six Dhaka routes yesterday.

IN FOCUS

PURBACHAL PLOT SCAM

Showkat Aziz Russell sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday sent Amber Group Chairman Showkat Aziz Russell to jail following his conviction on October 13 in a corruption case involving irregularities in plot allocations under the Purbachal Residential Project.

Judge Abdus Salam of Special Judge Court-9 passed the order, rejecting Russell's bail petition, said ACC Public Prosecutor Khandaker Shamim Hossen.

Russell surrendered before the court yesterday and sought bail in the case, he said.

On October 13, the court sentenced Russell, Partex Group Managing Director Ashfaq Aziz Rubel and six former Rajuk officials to 14 years' imprisonment each in their absence. It also issued

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Zero passes, twice in a row

At least 32 institutions record repeated failures; minister orders action within a week

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

At an institution in Narail, 35 candidates appeared in last year's HSC examinations. None passed. This year, 43 candidates sat for the examinations. Again, not a single student passed.

Makrail Karim Khalek Solaiman Institution in Lohagara upazila is not an isolated case.

A preliminary comparison of the 2025 and 2026 results by The Daily Star identified 32 institutions that appear to have recorded zero passes for two consecutive years.

Of these, 19 were under Dinajpur Board, five under Jashore, four under Cumilla, two under Barishal and one each under Chattogram and Mymensingh.

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon yesterday directed officials to take steps within a week to hold institutions with zero or exceptionally low pass rates accountable, according to a post on his verified Facebook account.

A day earlier, he said the government was considering merging poorly performing colleges with nearby institutions, many of which had been established without sufficient demand.

Across the country's 11 education

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Over half of children lack basic learning skills

Speakers call for all-party caucus, stronger oversight to fix primary education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than half of the country's children aged five to 15 cannot read Bangla properly or perform basic arithmetic, while the dropout rate exceeds 33 percent by the secondary level, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

Lawmakers and policy analysts blamed parallel education streams, corruption and poor monitoring for deepening inequalities and weakening primary education, particularly in rural areas.

They called for an all-party parliamentary caucus, stronger grassroots oversight and increased education funding to address the crisis.

The observations came at a roundtable titled "Parliamentarians for Equality: Building a Country of Equal Opportunity", jointly organised by the Institute for Informed

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Participants at the roundtable organised by Institute for Informed Development and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ex-army officer Hafiz arrested in sedition case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday placed Major (retd) Khondokar Abdul Hafiz on a four-day remand in a sedition case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rakibul Hasan passed the order after the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police produced him before the court with a seven-day remand prayer, said Additional Public Prosecutor Muhammad Shamsud Doha Sumon.

A DB team arrested Abdul Hafiz, 56, from Dhaka's Banani area early yesterday after his name surfaced during the investigation, the investigator said.

On October 12, Lt (retd) Kazi Gulshan Ara and Lt Col (retd) Debashish were placed on a four-day remand in the same case.

According to a forwarding report submitted to the court, Abdul Hafiz, along with Gulshan Ara and

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