

Thursday, August 09, 2018



Students exposed to accident for lack of dedicated buses in Bangladesh

Mohiuddin Alamgir | Updated at 02:34am on August 09, 2018

Teachers call for school-college bus service

Lack of designated buses has not only exposed students to unsafe journey, accidents, harassment and misbehaviour from transport workers in capital but also increased education costs by way of travelling expenses.

In absence of school bus services, students and their guardian rely on public transport, use car, rickshaw and auto-rickshaw, which empty guardians' pocket, head teachers and principal of colleges of capital said.

They, while talking in a views exchange programme with education minister Nurul Islam Nahid and others top official of the ministry in the capital on Sunday, demanded steps for arranging school bus service.

They proposed dedicating public transport for school-goers under the interim management and 50 per cent fare concession for students in public transport.

They alleged that transport workers often harass and misbehave with students, which should be stopped.

Absence of buses for schools, many of them located in residential areas, also lead to increasing traffic congestion before and after school hours as number of volume of traffic often exceeds the capacity of existing roads.

Many students often face accidents, minor or major, but many of them remain unreported. When some of the accidents turn fatal, students take to the streets.

Students took to the streets after two of their fellows were killed as a bus ploughed through a crowd of students and other waiting for bus at Kurmitola in Dhaka on July 29.

'Only a few schools and colleges, most of them public, of the capital have school bus. Rest of the schools are not interested to introduce own bus as they think it will increase their maintenance cost as well as students cost,' former director general of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Fahima Khatun told New Age.

'In absence of buses, guardians spend a good amount for travelling,' she said.

'Arranging school buses will be a good step to reduce traffic jam in the capital,' she thinks.

According to the BANBEIS officials, there are at least 900 secondary schools, 240 colleges, about 400 government primary schools

and a good number of kindergarten and scores of English medium schools in the capital.

Shaikh Burhanuddin Post Graduate College principal Abdur Rahman, Lalmatia Mahila College vice-principal Mujibur Rahman, Government Bangabandhu College principal Hari Chand Mandal, Adamjee Cantonment Public School principal lieutenant colonel Masud Rana, Monipur School and College assistant headmaster Tajul Islam and others demanded bus services for school and colleges at the views exchange meetings.

Education ministry's secondary and higher education division organised the two views exchange meeting with principal and vice-principals of colleges and head teachers and assistant head teachers of schools at International Mother Language Institute on the day.

The education ministry called on the meeting on an emergency basis in the wake of student protest on the demand of safe road and justice for their fellows and student of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College killed in the road accident.

Masud Rana at the meeting said that it was really positive that prime minister Sheikh Hasina gave five buses to Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College. 'Unsafe road for is really a problem for students.'

'All schools need buses so that they do not have to wait for transport,' he said.

At least three principals at the views exchange programme said that transport workers often harass and misbehave with students.

Hari Chand Mandal said it was really unfortunate that transport workers misbehave with students.

He also proposed 50 per cent fare concession for students in the public transport and speed breakers in front of all schools and colleges.

Secondary and higher education division secretary Sohrab Hossain said that they would look into recommendations of the teachers.

Finance minister AMA Muhith during his budget speech on June 7 had proposed introduction of school buses for Dhaka city aiming to reduce traffic jam, safer and easier journey for students.

He had also said concession or exemption of duties would be considered on importation of school bus upon receiving applications from schools or related agencies.

Most of the schools in Dhaka city do not provide school bus service. This may be one of the reasons of traffic jam in city.

'Like developed countries, through providing safer and easier journey by introducing dedicated school bus, we can reduce traffic jam,' Muhith had then said.

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation in 2011 launched a bus service for school-going students from Pallabi to Azimpur to ease off traffic jam in the capital with 14 buses in the fleet.

But currently, only two such buses are plying the route.

Seeking anonymity, a BRTC official said the number of buses in the special school service was reduced because the authorities tried to cover the shortage of staff buses for public service employees as well as its own.

On November 11, 2009, education ministry and school and college authorities in the capital agreed in principle to introduce the bus service for students of certain schools in a bid to ease off traffic jam.

In 2015, prime minister Sheikh Hasina ordered for school buses.



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