

Process of introducing new buses in city remains stalled

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Efforts to introduce new buses under the 'company system' have remained stalled due to sickness of the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) mayor and lack of initiatives by the authorities concerned to carry out negotiations with all stakeholders.

Sources said though Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) is responsible for conducting negotiations with bus operators and workers, they have remained silent in this regard.

"DTCA was mainly dependent on DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq, but they don't feel comfortable to carry out negotiations for having their past experience of facing political interference," said an official preferring anonymity.

Official sources said during several meetings with Mayor Annisul Huq, all stakeholders agreed to form six companies dividing the Dhaka city into six sectors and came to an agreement on forming a business model to introduce new buses and replace old ones.

Alhaj Abul Kalam, president of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity, said the negotiations proceeded with agreeing on the business model to replace three-year-old buses and introduce new buses with banking arrangement.

The modalities of the model were supposed to be discussed and finalised afterward, he told the FE at his office.

"Bus owners have agreed to cooperate with the bus companies planned in six directions," Mr Kamal added.

At the directives of the Prime Minister, the DNCC Mayor in 2016 took the initiative to launch negotiations with all stakeholders for operating city buses by bringing uniformity in the transport sector.

Since then, he held meetings with traffic experts, city bus and transport owners and workers and traffic police several times. At all the meetings, commitment was made to form six bus companies in the city after he assured them of providing compensation for affected small operators.

The prolonged illness of the mayor halted all kinds of activities of the project.

A DNCC senior official, however, refuted the allegation of suspension of negotiations on formation of bus companies following sickness of the mayor and said the DTCA is carrying out necessary works to finalise bus routes in the city.

The FE correspondent, however, found that DTCA's efforts to finalise the bus routes also remained stopped following closure of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

It conducted a study on bus route rationalisation under the technical project on the BRT-3 funded by the World Bank under CASE project. The BRT-3 project closed this year after completion of detailed design work of the BRT-3 corridor.

"We don't have funds to carry out works afterward," said a DTCA official.

Bus route rationalisation and bus service operation under the franchise system have been recommended in the 20-year strategic transport plan (STP) for making mass transport system integrated with mass transit systems - BRTs and MRTs.

BRT and MRT are supposed to create dedicated corridors in the city and other transports mainly bus operators will provide support to the commuters.

The DTCA study recommended bringing the number of bus routes below 70 from existing more than 230 routes operating in the city by overlapping and repeating in different corridors.

Source: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/process-of-introducing-new-buses-in-city-remains-stalled-1511871348>