

JU transport crisis plight of students

*Six rundown buses operating now;
nine out of order*

SM NAJMUS SAKIB

The transport crisis at Jahangirnagar University has continued to worsen in the last few months due to the rundown buses and alleged mismanagement in the university transport office.

Nine out of the 20 buses have been out of order, and six other dilapidated buses are operated on daily repair, which are not enough to facilitate transportation of 13,000 students.

The remaining five, including four air-conditioned minibuses, carry only teachers and university staff but they could share the six shabby buses with students.

The four minibuses have recently been received from a state-run bank and private donors, and the university authorities are in the process of buying two more air-conditioned minibuses for teachers for Tk 1.25 crore, JU transport office sources said.

The sources said three outdated buses among the nine would be sold very soon.

To mitigate the transport crisis, the authorities have rented seven Chinese double-decker buses, which are also not in good condition, said Ibrahim Akhanda, assistant registrar of the JU transport office.

"Around Tk 30 lakh is immediately needed to repair the six rundown buses and we have already sent a notice to the vice chancellor's office," he said.

Because there is no allocation to repair the rundown buses properly, a lot of money is being spent for temporary repair daily, he added.

The official said there is no immediate plan to buy new buses for students.

Students said sometimes it becomes quite difficult for female students to

travel in public buses, and even if they get into a university bus, most have to travel standing.

Rakib Haydar, a third-year student of anthropology, said, "For years, we have been deprived of many student services as teachers and the administration are indifferent to our plights."

Meanwhile, irregularities in buying different parts of the buses and giving university buses to Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists for their political purposes have added to the crisis, the transport office sources said.

Seeking anonymity, a professor, who is also a transport office in-charge, said

students have to raise their voice for getting new buses, the way teachers did.

Prof Lutful Elahi, additional in-charge of the office, said purchase of two new buses for teachers and allocation of funds to repair the damaged buses are in progress.

Sheikh Rahat, secretary of Jahangirnagar Sangskritik Jote, said recently different student

bodies, including Bangladesh Chhatra Union, demonstrated demanding an increase in student buses.

The university authorities charge Tk 2,000 as the transport fee from each student during admission, yet there is no development in addressing the crisis, he said.

"Students are being deprived of their rights and any teacher or even student leader does not speak in favour of the students' interest," he added.

Apart from the transport fee, students pay the Central Student Union fee, residential charge, medical fee, and other development fees but they rarely get the benefits, the students said.

