

The area now known as Nilkhet was desolate until the turn of the 20th century. It underwent development during the partition of Bengal (1905-1911), along with the Ramna and Dhaka University area, and indigo cultivation began here, hence the name of Nilkhet.

Dhaka Bypass near complete



The new bypass is expected to relieve some of the city's traffic congestion.

SOHEL ISLAM

The construction of the Dhaka Bypass is expected to be complete this year, helping thousands of vehicles to travel to and from eastern and western parts of the country without getting caught up in the city's traffic jams.

The entry point of the bypass is Madan, which then will touch Bhulta via Kanchan, finally joining the Joytebpur crossing, according to a meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office last month.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is supervising the construction of the bypass at a cost of Tk 255.65 crore. The bypass will be open for traffic by the end of this fiscal year.

The total length of the bypass is 48 kilometres. Its construction began in 1997, with the Government of Bangla-

desh financing the entire cost. "Apart from 12 kilometres, its construction is almost complete. Initially we are making the width of the bypass 24 feet

Apart from 12 kilometres, it is almost complete. Initially we are making the bypass two lanes and later it will be extended to four lanes

with two lanes. Later it will be extended to a width of 42 feet with four lanes," said superintendent engineer of RHD (Dhaka Division) M A Malek. All vehicles will have to pay

tolls for the use of this bypass. "We are yet to fix the tolls for the vehicles. We are planning to install the toll counters at both ends of the bypass. Finally we will hand over toll collection to private operators. The maximum toll should not cross Tk 30," said another high official of RHD.

"Despite opening the bypass for traffic at the end of this year, vehicles will still have to use the ferry service at Kanchan in Narayanganj because the bridge there will not be completed until 2005," said M A Malek.

Construction of the Tk 65.5 crore, 415 metre long bridge at Kanchan started in 2002. "Once the bypass is opened for vehicles traffic congestion in the city, especially near the Kanchpur Bridge and Sayedabad is expected to decrease to some extent," said M A Malek.

No respite from session jams for DU students

SULTANA RAHMAN

Dhaka University has again plunged into long-term session jam owing to the mismanagement of the authorities as is widely alleged. Since the four-party alliance came to power, the university has experienced two unscheduled vacations and student strikes on two occasions. As a result, classes were suspended and the examinations were deferred.

"The recent strike called by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has added four months to the normal academic life. 40 examinations of different departments had to be postponed because of the week-long strike," said a senate member of DU.

Last year, the general student body protested the night-time police raid at Samsunnahar Hall, when female student were brutally attacked, and demanded the removal of the then Vice Chancellor Anwarullah Chowdhury. Due to the stalemate, the university was closed for about one month.

"Finally Anwarullah Chowdhury was compelled to resign but it cost the students at least nine months of session jam," said the senior senate member.

The university authorities are allegedly more interested in filling vacant posts with their candidates of choice, rather than allocating posts on merit. Political motivation is also entering the overall management and administration of the university, it is alleged.

Sources have said that Dhaka University authorities has filled sixty-five posts, from senior officials to fourth class employees, without any employment advertisement. What they looked into is the candidates' political background.

Whenever a change of government takes place, the management of the university goes through enormous change with respect to senior positions in particular. "Although the government has completed almost two years, the reshuffle in the administration has not ended. It is still affecting the normal activities of the administration," said the senior senate member.

"This year, the university authorities tried to appoint two lecturers of the chemistry and geography departments violating various clauses of the University Ordinance 1973," added the senate member. But the strong opposition from senate members made the authorities

cancel their appointment.

It is not a new phenomenon for Dhaka University to go through session jams. Some years ago, however, the session jam scenario had improved remarkably. But again, in the last two years, the situation has come to reflect the worst of past times. As such, the future of 30 thousand students has dipped into enormous uncertainty.

Vice Chancellor, Professor SMA Fayed, told Star City that to reduce the session jam they have planned to regularise the university in a systematical way without any extra pressure to the students. "A peaceful scenario will be maintained by regularising the classes and scheduled exams," he added.

He however claimed that there were some emergency appointments without any advertisement. "But most of these appointments are on a 'daily basis' due to the embargo by the Ministry of Education as well as the University Grants Commission," he clarified.

Over the past two months these two bodies have banned any new appointments because of the allegations of political appointments in the past.



Session jams are not a new phenomenon for Dhaka University, but the situation had improved at one time only to worsen again over the past few years.

Power cuts prove inescapable part of city life



Frequent load shedding and power outages are turning out to be an inescapable part of daily life, feel most city dwellers.

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Dhaka-dwellers are hardly being allowed to enjoy the monsoon, the anticipation of thundershowers to assuage the rising heat, the croaking of frogs as the sun sets. The month of Shrabon is nearing its end, but the frequent power-cuts added to sultry weather are making life miserable for the city's inhabitants.

Frequent load shedding and power outages are turning out to be an inescapable part of daily life, feel most city dwellers. "We are resigned to the fact that at least we are getting some hours of electricity throughout the day," said Masudul Hasan living in Dhanmondi.

Though the situation improved somewhat a few months back, it worsened considerably recently, following the glitch in underground power-lines of the Ulan substation on Wednesday last. Moreover, the crisis mounted when two transformers at Kalyanpur substation became overloaded.

People at different areas of the city have therefore been enduring a nightmare plight since Wednesday last. Residents of Nababpur, Rampura, Bonoshree, Paribaag, Dhanmondi, Hatirpul, Kathalbag, Bhuter Goli, Shantinagar, Farm Gate, Eskaton, Naya Paltan, Mouchak, Motijheel, Kanwan Bazar, Lalbaag, New Market, Elephant Road, Bakshi Bazar, Nilkhet, Bijoy Nagar, Paltan, North South Road, Taltala, Shewrapara, Mirpur and other places are struggling to live with the severity of load-shedding. The worst complaint is the almost unbearable

Though the situation improved somewhat a few months back, it worsened considerably last week, after a glitch in underground power-lines of the Ulan substation, the crisis mounted when two transformers at Kalyanpur substation became overloaded

discomfort of the humidity and heat. "We try to complete the daily chores that need electricity before the 'dreaded' hours of power failure," said Seema Rahman, a housewife living in Dhanmondi. She added that frequent power fluctuation and power outage left the electrical and electronic goods vulnerable. "We remain constantly alert to switch off electric goods when the voltage is low," she said.

Young children are also falling sick due to power crisis during the hot and humid weather, mentioned many people in the city.

However, suffering may be at its worst for students in the city. "It becomes impossible to study under candle light during this energy sapping heat," said Maruf Hasan, a student living in Rampura.

On an average the city is facing a load-shedding of 35 to 45 MW of power from 9 am to 10 pm, said sources inside Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA). They mentioned the fault found near Rampura Bazar in the cable that stretches from Ulan to Dhanmondi as causing the power crisis. These cables were installed by a British company who were asked to help in 1998 when a severe fault occurred. Foreign experts and equipment are needed to fix the faulty cable on this occasion also, sources said. It will take two to three days more, they added.

However, DESA hoped that power shortages in the city will be less severe in the future once the new substation at Green Road is operational. They say it will begin working very soon.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"I am first a lawyer, because it is my original profession. Then comes my ministerial work, which is temporary."

-- Nazmul Huda

Communications Minister

Commenting on his appearance at the High Court and talking against the strike of the lawyers, reported by Prothom Alo



"Indigenous people of Bangladesh have rather been evicted from their ancestral lands as a result of the developmental works of the government like dams, sanctuaries, parks, eco-tourism, electricity generation from water and others."

Jyotindrio Bodhipriyo Larma alias Santu Larma
Chairman of the Forum of Bangladesh Indigenous People
Talking to a reporter of The Sangbad last week, on the occasion of International Indigenous Day

"For the benefit of imperialism the present government is trafficking gas. It is possible to save Tk 3000 crore a year from using CNG instead of petrol-diesel. Whereas government is planning to sell 50 crore cubic feet of gas for Tk 1000 crore a year."

-- Engineer Sheikh Monammad Shahidulz
Convener of Oil- Gas- and Electricity-Port Preservation Committee

Speaking in a meeting at Muktomancha last Friday, reported by Prothom Alo

"It is Gram Chharkhar (village destruction), not Gram Sarkar (village government). Gram Sarkar being formed by the government will make elected Unions Parishads inactive and useless."

-- Hossain Mohammad Ershad
Former president and chairman of Jatiya Party

Addressing a public meeting at Nilphamari town last Tuesday, reported in The Daily Star

"Bhai, the most important thing is that I have returned with all the players I took with me."

-- Shahabuddin Ahmed
General Secretary

Bangladesh Swimming Federation
Commented to the press when he returned from Barcelona with all the members of the national swimming team intact, published in Bhorer Kagoj, last Monday

"The Prime Minister agrees with every proposal made to her, but does not implement a single one."

-- Najur Rahman Manju
Chairman, BJP

Commenting at the anniversary of his party, published last Wednesday in Bhorer Kagoj