

# Persistent diggings cause miseries

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Afrina Ahmed, a student living in Malibagh, was already late for her class at 9 in the morning. She was desperately looking for a cab or a CNG auto-rickshaw at Malibagh intersection and after fifteen minutes, finally found one.

There was a huge fissure of around 3 to 4 feet right alongside the footpath she was standing on. The road had been dug by Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company in order to install a pipeline.

"I requested the cab driver to bring the vehicle as close to the fissure as possible. The dugout continued till quite far and so I decided to jump," said Afrina while describing her story to Star City.

She made a rash decision to jump over the 4 feet crack. Though her right feet had reached the other end, she slipped.

"My head fell backwards and struck the footpath while the rest of my body stumbled into the gap," she said.

The cab driver and other pedestrians came to her aid. Fortunately, she had not fractured any bones but had cut herself in a number of places.

"I could not get out of my house for the next two days, due to the pain. I missed two midterm examinations because of this," said an angry Afrin.

City dwellers, like Afrina, have been suffering regularly due to the persistent road-digging carried out by Titas Gas and the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) of Dhaka around the city.

"When these authorities begin digging in one area, the supervisors usually inform the residents that the entire work will be completed within two weeks to a month's time. But most of the time, they miss the deadline stretching the time limit to one and half months or even more," said Khalek Bashar, a resident of Moghbazar.

The city-wide digging initially began by Titas Gas to install a 100 kilometre pipeline.

"This is being done under the Dhaka Clean Fuel Project (DCFP) to reduce the current crisis of gas in the city," said a senior official of Wasa.

Most of the work in the city began almost four months back and was supposed to be completed by mid-March. "At least, that is what we were told. It's April now and the digging does not seem to end for quite some time," said Nusaiba Akhand, a resident of Elephant road.

Therefore, the roads of Elephant Road, Moghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh, Rajarbagh, Shahjahanpur, Bangla Motor and other areas are in a dilapidated condition.

In addition broken concrete, soil and dust are not only making it difficult for the pedestrians, they are also causing traffic severe congestion in these areas.

"I have been stuck in this traffic for twenty minutes now as the road width has been reduced by 7 feet since the digging and piled debris on the road have eaten up half of the road," said Hashem Chowdhury of Shahjahanpur.

DCC had announced that roads would be repaired within 15 days of completion of work. But in some places, the dug up roads remain unusable for three to four months.

The digging has changed the daily lifestyle of most city dwellers.

"Earlier, I used to come out for a walk in the evening. But now, as I am allergic to dust, I seldom venture out," said Maher Ferdous, a resident of Moghbazar.

Titas gas sources assured that the overall work will be completed by this month. DCC authorities followed up on the assurance.

"There was a crisis in the availability of pipes which were to be installed. This has delayed the task. But it will hopefully be completed by the end of April," said an DCC official.

As if this was not enough, Wasa has begun their digging a week or so back in areas like Kalabagan, Rajarbagh, Shahjahanpur and other areas.

"This will be completed within a week or so. We are just installing pipes to connect our new subscribers," said an employee of Wasa at Kalabagan Lake Circus.

The DCC official further pointed out that they are observing the work progress to ensure efficiency and effective work.

"Titas Gas and Wasa need to finish their jobs by end of April before the arrival of the monsoon season," he said.



STAR PHOTO

## Errant pvt university expands

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Farmgate and outer campuses in Bogra, Khulna and Jessore without permission.

"I have informed the Anti-Corruption Commission of the case," said UGC Chairman Prof M Asaduzzaman. "ACC member Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah told me that he would talk to the education minister on the matter to take action."

The investigation committee recommended its closure finding neither any students nor any teachers during its visit to the university campus in Banani, except for Dr Mostafa Kamal as VC and his younger brother as the registrar, Prof Asaduzzaman said.

When this correspondent called to the university's Banani office seeking admission, administrative officer Hasan Mansur said: "We have turned our Banani campus into a corporate office and are now opening a new Dhaka campus in Farmgate area."

"We are looking for a suitable place for bigger campus to establish a medical college alongside

the university," he said.

The university in 2005 allegedly realised Tk 1.32 crore from 1,100 B Ed students, mostly teachers of non-government schools, promising them certificates. The schoolteachers would submit the certificates to the Directorate of Education for drawing higher salaries.

B Ed certificate seekers vandalised classrooms and offices of the university's Rajshahi campus on September 9, 2005 protesting against the cheating.

When this correspondent talked to the university's Accounts Officer Nurul Islam, stationed at Rajshahi, as an admission seeker, he said that the summer semester of B Ed programme will begin in next May. Islam insisted on getting admission as soon as possible, saying "there is a huge rush for admission under this programme."

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Education) of Rajshahi SM Zahidul Karim said: "We have written to the University Grants Commission for necessary action against the alleged

unauthorised activities of America-Bangladesh University at Rajshahi but we are yet to receive any response from the UGC in this regard."

Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi Syed Ahsanul Haque in a letter on September 19, 2005 to the UGC chairman, reported issuance of B Ed certificates in exchange for money by Am-ban University and sought redress to the matter.

This correspondent tried to contact the VC of Am-ban University over telephone as he is currently staying in Rajshahi, but Accounts Officer Nurul Islam received the call. He said: "You can tell me whatever you want. You can't talk to the VC."

On a second attempt to contact the VC, one Shawkat Ali identifying himself as a lecturer of Marketing, received the call and said: "I will not provide you with the VC's contact number, no matter you are calling from a newspaper."

## No relief to traffic jam

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utilisation of more public transport like other mega cities in the world that has a high population density. Bus routes should be well planned and designed so that availability of buses on time increases".

"Commuters should be made aware of the benefits of using public transport as in the case of cities like Tokyo. An alternative to assist in curbing the traffic congestion could be the introduction of the underground train," he added.

Another cause for congestion is the haphazard parking anywhere

along the main streets. Parking facilities should be increased and anyone utilising the lots should pay a certain charge according to the duration of time the vehicle is parked, he further said.

Meanwhile, the DUTP expert said that the ideal flyover could have been from the Zia International Airport to Gulistan via Farmgate, Shahbagh and Motijheel and would meet the proposed Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover with diversion points at Farmgate, Shahbagh and Zero point to help commuters to change directions.

Other urban experts said that such an expensive venture like the Mohakhali flyover should not have been jumped into without considering strategic transport and town planning.

The Communications Minister, Nazmul Huda to Star City that a plan to build a tunnel at the end of the flyover to Agargaon to ease the traffic congestion is under process.

"However we can not start any new project in the rainy season," he added.

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