



the city that was

Badaam Tali Ghat (Ferry Point) was founded by Nawab Shayesta Khan during his regime between 1664 and 1677. Historians think there were some Badam (pea-nut) trees which the area was named after. There was also a wooden palace near the area that belonged to Nawab himself. However, the Nawab very often lived in a tent put up in the palace premises. The tent was then known as Katra Pakurtali.

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BRTC imports minibuses despite govt restriction

SULTANA RAHMAN

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has recently imported 20 new minibuses, contradicting a government policy to discourage these small vehicles on city roads.

The Ministry of Communications last year directed the authorities to stop registration of minibus and discourage its import. The ministry also decided that minibuses would be withdrawn from the city gradually as these buses can carry fewer passengers but occupy wide spaces.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) stopped registration of minibuses following the directives of the communications ministry and Regional Transport Committee (RTC). The RTC gives route permit for the metropolis but BRTC is now plying the new minibuses without RTC's concern.

BRTC, meanwhile, imported the new minibuses from India at a cost of Tk 2.5 crore to run in the capital. These 30-seater minibuses have already started plying on two routes on commercial basis. These buses were not registered with the BRTA and do not have route permit.

The BRTC minibuses are now running on Sayedabad-Balughat and Sayedabad-Natun Bazar-Khilkhet routes.

BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khandokar however said they will



A minibus recently imported by BRTC in operation.

get the minibuses registered very soon. He added that these minibuses have been brought for tourism and carrying schoolchildren to visit historical sites.

"We may increase the number of minibuses if we find public demand for this," Khandokar said. He added that there is no contradiction between the gov-

ernment policy and the import of minibuses by the BRTC.

But Dr MA Momen, chairman of BRTA, responsible for the registration of vehicles, said: "We have no

plan to register new minibuses as per the government decision."

"We discourage minibus to ensure smooth flow of traffic," he maintained.

"It is simply a dual role of the government. It imposes a policy for private transport companies while bends the policy for the public sector corporation," said Saiful Alam, president of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Samity (DSPS).

Meanwhile, DSPS has complained to the Traffic Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) as well as the communications ministry about the import of minibuses by the state-owned enterprise.

Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury, joint convener of the Association of Bus Companies (ABC) said, "All the government rules and regulations are imposed only on the private bus owners. It seems that BRTC is legally authorised to ignore official rules."

The minibus owners were frustrated when the ministry directed BRTA to stop registration of minibuses.

Presently around 3,000 minibuses are plying the city streets. The ministry has decided to phase out the minibuses and replace them with large single-decker and double-decker buses to enhance the capacity of public transport.

A recent World Bank study indicated that there is an immediate demand for about 5,000 large buses in the city. The study suggested withdrawing minibuses from the streets to ease traffic gridlock in the city.

Banglamotor not included in design for Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The design for the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover has been finalised without adding the Banglamotor intersection to the plan ignoring the suggestions of the minister for LGED & Cooperatives and mayor of the city.

On July 19, 2005, when the final design of the flyover was approved, the minister and the mayor had requested the project authorities to bring the Banglamotor intersection under the flyover. But concerned officials say that there are many barriers to include that intersection.

"The government has a plan to construct an elevated express highway from Gulistan to the Zia International Airport through the Banglamotor intersection. Until the design of that expressway is finalised, it would not be wise to construct a flyover there," said Robert E. Rickman, team leader for feasibility study, design and documents.

He also added that after crossing the Banglamotor intersection there is not enough

space for a flyover's landing. "At least a 200 metre space is required for a ramp to get down but at this particular location, there is not enough room for this purpose on the Moghbazar side."

Moreover, it was also not certain whether the funding authority for the feasibility study and probable financier of the project Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) would allocate additional budget, believed to be in the region of Tk 90 crore, for constructing the extended part.

"We are not sure yet about the availability of funds for feasibility study and construction. When we will send the final design to the funding authority, we will add a proposal to include Banglamotor. If they agree then we would run a feasibility study for this part," said Haider Ali, project director (PD) of Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover. He also said that they have designed the flyover in such a way that it can be extended at any part even at the final phase of construction.

"If the government finalises

the decision on the elevated expressway during the time of our construction, we might take a decision accordingly. We are not totally giving up hope of adding the Banglamotor intersection but that would depend on fulfillment of a number of conditions," said the PD.

The proposed 6.1-kilometre flyover will end at New Eskaton, some 400 metres from Banglamotor intersection. If Banglamotor is added, the total length of the flyover would become 7 kilometres.

The estimated cost of construction is Tk 430 crore. The final report would be sent to the KFAED this week. If everything goes according to plan, construction work would start January 2006. The flyover will cover the heavily congested areas like Moghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh and Satrasta intersections. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is in charge of implementing the project.



Pedestrians walk across the street at the Bangla Motor intersection risking their lives.



People queue up at a diagnostic centre to collect reports.

Rates go up at diagnostic centres

IMRUL HASAN

Patients especially from middle and low-income group are destined to suffer most as clinics and diagnostic centres have recently increased charges of all pathological tests.

Rates of tests have gone up by 20 to 60 percent without any prior notice from August 1 at a number of private pathological laboratories.

At Popular Diagnostic Center, the costs for routine urine and routine stool tests have increased from Tk 60 to Tk 100. Rate of Random Blood Sugar (RBS) test

has gone up to Tk 120 from Tk 100 while Glucose Tolerant Test (GTT) now costs Tk 200 which was 150 before. The scenario was similar in other private diagnostic centres also.

Sources at some diagnostic centres, which are registered under the Bangladesh Clinic and Diagnostic Owners' Association (BCDOA), said that diagnostic centres located in the city have increased the rates due to the price hike of medicine, medical equipment and chemicals.

"We have no other option as the prices of imported equipment and chemicals have been raised," said an official of Popular

Rates of tests have gone up by 20 to 60 percent without any prior notice from August 1 at a number of private pathological laboratories

Diagnostic Centre. A high official of the BCDOA agreed that they have increased the charges claiming that they have done it to maintain the standard of service.

Meanwhile, diagnostic centres such as Al-Shefa, M.K. Nabi's Diagnostic Center, The Diagnostic Lab, Memory Diagnostic are charging the previous rates still as they have not been officially notified of any increase.

"I was not aware of it. You are the first one to inform me about this," an official of Al-Shefa Diagnostic and Medical Centre told this correspondent.

Officials of Directorate

General of Health Service (DGHS) also said that they were unaware of the rate increase. "We do not have any authentic information about the matter. We will formulate a policy on the issue soon. As they are private centres, we do not have any control over them. When the policy will be made, the charges will also be fixed," said Dr. Mahmud Hussain, a senior official of DGHS.

At present more than a thousand diagnostic centres are providing service in the city. Around 50 percent of these are reportedly unregistered.

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.

"If the Prime Minister has such confidence, then why isn't she arranging early polls, agreeing to the opposition's demand?"



-- Sheikh Hasina
Leader of the opposition and Awami League President

Told newsmen at Zia International Airport on her return from the US after a 19-day visit for treatment of her ears, damaged in the August 21 grenade attacks, on August 4.
Source: The Daily Star

"Jhantu was tried in a martial law court where he was deprived of his right to self defence and appeal against the government"

-- Moudud Ahmed
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister
Told a grand rally of lawyers of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, a platform of the pro-BNP lawyers, defending the presidential clemency to Mohiuddin Jhantu, a double murder convict sentenced to death by a martial law court, on August 5.
Source: The Daily Star

"In fact, this very person (Moudud Ahmed) piloted the two amendments to the constitution and thus helped Zia and Ershad legitimise their military power. Now he is shifting the blame on martial laws to disown his responsibility in manoeuvring presidential amnesty to a killer"

-- Suranjit Sengupta
Eminent Lawyer and a senior Awami League leader
Told a press conference, on August 2.
Source: The Daily Star

"The creation of Gram Sarkar is an insult to the concept of democracy and local government body under the constitution"

-- Dr Kamal Hossain
Eminent Lawyer and Gono Forum President
Told the High Court on behalf of the petitioner while the court declared Gram Sarkar Act 2003 illegal and unconstitutional, on August 2.
Source: The Daily Star

"We all have to praise the stomachs of the people of this country"

-- Mozaffar Hossain
A lentil trader in Old Dhaka
Said commenting on the ongoing safe food drive against adulterated food in the city, on August 2.
Source: Prothom Alo

"When one condition is met they come with another. When that is also met they put forward another condition"

-- M Saifur Rahman
Finance and Planning Minister
Told journalists commenting on the possibility of getting Development Assistance Loan from World Bank, on August 1.
Source: Prothom Alo