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The upcoming election will be challenging, and we have to overcome this challenge... Nobody can defeat Awami League, if we stay united.

OBайд QUADER  
Awami League  
general secretary



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Now vice-chancellors are engaged in corruption in universities, those who are working in the health ministry are engaged in corruption... there is not a single place without corruption.

MIRZA FAKHRUL  
ISLAM ALAMGIR  
BNP secretary general



Not even the students of DU, who call Kala Bhaban their home, know of Nilkhet Barrack and its connection with the Language Movement.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The Language Movement did not just come to be. Behind the historic movement, that brought about a turn of events for Bangladesh, are a million stories – of people, of premises, of places. In this 10-part series, we explore some of the places and premises vital to the movement. Establishments that we've lost to time, buildings that today bear no sign of the glories they once played host to. For part eight, we take you to Nilkhet Barrack, a residential area for government staffers who stepped up for the movement.

## From Nilkhet Barrack to 'Kala Bhaban'

DIPAN NANDY and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL



Over the years, Aparajeyo Bangla and Kala Bhaban have become enduring symbols of Dhaka University. Before the '60s, the same spot housed a residential area for government staffers, known as Nilkhet Barrack.

During the Language Movement, it was a bastion for those who demanded Bangla as the state language. After the police brutality of February 21, the Nilkhet Barrack was abuzz with protest. But with the passing of time, this historical fact has become dead and buried, with not even students of the Kala Bhaban aware of their premises' significance for the movement.

The barrack was built near the tail-end of 1947, to resolve the housing crisis of DU staffers. Though a residential area, its bamboo-made houses resembled an army camp, which is why it came to be known

as Nilkhet Barrack. Even before February 21 of 1952, its residents extended their support to the movement when it was still a grassroots movement in 1947-48.

In his "Ekushey'r Dinlipi", Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafiq said, "To this day, memories of the Nilkhet Barracks come rushing to me every time I come across that big tree opposite the VC's office. It saw everything, from meetings to protest rallies, and it all feels surreal coming from a staffers' quarter."

The barrack has now given way to the arts building. While that may be a necessity of time, the fact that the premises don't even have a sign or plaque to immortalise its historical significance robs the

thousands who visit it every day of the chance to feel proud of their institute.

"I didn't even know it used to be called the Nilkhet Barrack, let alone its significance for the Language Movement," said Sheikh Mumtaz Athoi, a student of theatre studies.

"The authorities should do something about this, even if for our sake."

Lamenting Nilkhet Barrack's lack of spotlight, Ahmad Rafiq told The Daily Star, "It was a big sacrifice by the government staffers, who chose to take a strong stance for the movement though it might have hampered their careers. If nothing else, the area should at least have a memorial plaque to signify its importance."

Contacted, DU pro-VC (administrative) Prof Muhammad Samad said, "It's not a bad idea to have such a memorial plaque here. It might help future generations know more about the history of this place."

## In-person classes to resume at DU, CU from Tuesday

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University and Chittagong University will resume in-person classes for all students from Tuesday, after a month of closure due to the pandemic.

Both universities issued different press releases in this regard.

The releases stated that all pre-scheduled examinations will be taken and all official activities will continue from Tuesday.

However, Chittagong University officials prohibited arranging any kind of programme -- except official meetings, exams and classes -- that may create crowds on campus.

They also asked all students to carry Covid-19 vaccine certificates.

Following a sharp rise of Covid-19 infections, the government closed all schools and colleges for two weeks from January 21. Later, the closure was extended till February 21.

## Another wild elephant found dead in Sherpur

UNB, Sherpur

A wild elephant was found dead near the Gazni border of Sherpur's Jhenaigati upazila early yesterday, said forest officials.

This is the third carcass of a wild elephant found in the district in the past four months.

Quamrul Islam Akond, an officer of the Jhenaigati forest department, said the elephant was 10-11 years old. Locals first spotted the carcass in Halchatiagram and informed the forest department. "A post-mortem will be conducted to determine the cause of death," said Quamrul.

In November last year, officials recovered carcasses of two wild elephants in the district.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

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