



After visiting the two spots, it was seen that the U-loop near Jashimuddin Road was completely demolished, while a major part of the one in front of Rajlakshmi Shopping Complex was torn down. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Public money goes down the drain

Airport Road's 2 U-loops, built spending Tk 3cr two years ago, demolished for BRT work

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The U-loops on Dhaka's Airport Road might be a perfect example of how public money is spent on arbitrary projects.

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) constructed two U-loops over two years ago – spending Tk 3 crore – despite knowing that they would be demolished just years later to construct bus rapid transit (BRT).

Recently, the structures, one in front of Rajlakshmi Shopping Complex and the other near Jashimuddin Road in Uttara, were torn down, as BRT's construction started on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

The U-loops, opened for public in June 2019, were built under a Tk 24.83 crore project taken up in 2016 for building 11 U-loops, to ease the city's nagging traffic congestion. These structures allow vehicles to take turns without obstructing traffic flow.

The project was revised later, and the

total cost shot up to Tk 31.81 crore.

Transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque said DNCC was well aware that the structures would get in the way of BRT, and they would have to be demolished eventually. And yet, authorities went for it.

Just two years after construction,

"The government should hold the DNCC mayor and others involved in the project accountable for spending public money in such a way."

The government took up the country's first bus rapid transit project (BRT-3) in 2012, to ease traffic congestion on Dhaka-Gazipur highway. DNCC's Khandoker Mahub Alam,

he said.

After construction of BRT and flyover, similar U-loops will be constructed in between the gaps of the flyover's pillars, he added.

Visiting Uttara recently, this correspondent found the U-loop near Jashimuddin Road completely demolished, while a major part of the other one was torn down.

Md Sujun Ahmed, employee of a private company in Uttara, said as footpaths were narrowed down and roads were removed, pedestrians and commuters face problems.

Mahatab Uddin, a traffic police officer who was on duty at Uttara, however, said the U-loops did indeed ease traffic congestion.

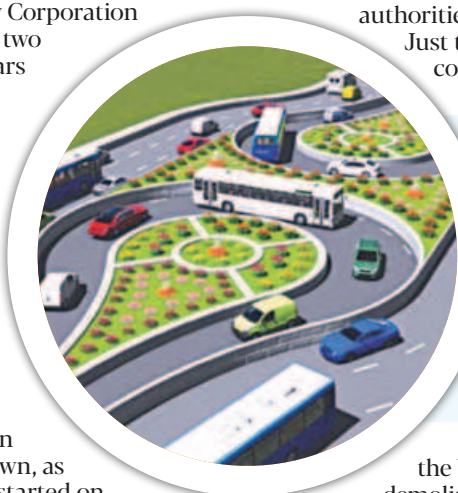
Meanwhile, commuters have been facing difficulties while travelling from Gazipur to Abdullahpur, ever since BRT's work began in 2018.

Md Munibur Rahman, additional commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the U-loops that were built on narrow roads have created bottle-necks, and so traffic jams at certain points are seen.

Those built on wide-road space and the flyover U-loops at Badda proved to be fruitful in easing traffic congestion, he added.

project director of the U-loops, admitted that when the U-loop project was undertaken, it was mentioned that the ones in Uttara would be demolished when works for big projects like BRT and flyover start.

Asked why they were constructed then, he said to ease severe traffic jams. For the last couple of years, the area was largely traffic-jam free, because of the structures, and people praised the move,



the U-loops were demolished.

"It was a blunder, and they did it believing that they would not have to take responsibility for the mess. There should be accountability. Public money is not a plaything," he said.

Shamsul, professor at Buet's civil engineering department, further said DNCC built the U-loops by demolishing service roads and narrowing footpaths.

- DNCC was aware that structures would get in way of bus rapid transit
- U-loops were built by demolishing service roads and narrowing footpaths
- The structures eased severe traffic jam, according to officials
- After constructing BRT, flyover, similar U-loops will be built

PRICE HIKE OF ESSENTIALS LGRD minister blames it on pandemic, war

UNB, Dhaka

The prices of essential commodities have increased not only in Bangladesh but also in other countries due to the ongoing global situation, said LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam yesterday.

Apart from Bangladesh, commodity prices have risen in India, China, England and Singapore, he said. The minister was talking to the reporters after the Bangladesh Youth Cadet Forum Ex-Cadet Camp-2022 at the proposed Sheikh Kamal Krira Palli in Cumilla.

The minister said production in many industries has declined due to the pandemic. "Communications were halted and fuel prices rose to record levels."

Besides, the Russia-Ukraine war has affected the global market, he added. "The government was trying to control the prices of essential commodities for people."

He added, it's not possible to reduce price of all products suddenly. Even then, the government is trying to keep prices of daily necessities within the reach of people. The government has decided to reduce VAT on imported essentials so that people can buy at lower prices.



'Nazrul Utsav' kicks off



PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Nazrul Utsav 2022", a two-day festival honouring the work of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, began at the capital's Gulshan Society Lake Park yesterday.

The event, organised by Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha, Arunaranjani, and Gulshan Society, also commemorates the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. HSBC is the title sponsor of the festival.

The event celebrates the life of the poet by bringing together artistes from both the Bengals.

Ekushey Padak-winning Nazrul Sangeet exponent Khairul Anam Shakil, also general secretary of Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha, is the festival's convener.

The festival is dedicated to the memory of National Professor Dr Rafiqul Islam, one of the most distinguished researchers on Kazi Nazrul Islam. His widow, Jahanara Islam, spoke on the occasion.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid inaugurated the festival as chief guest.

Eminent actor and lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor, Liberation War Museum Trustee Dr Sarwar Ali, Founder Trustee of the Liberation War Museum Mofidul Hoque, Bangla Academy director general and poet Muhammad Nurul Huda, HSBC's Country Head of Wealth and Personal Banking Ahmed Saiful Islam, Gulshan

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As jubilant as ever

DIPAN NANDY

The Amar Ekushey Boi Mela saw the most jubilant crowd on the last weekend of the fair yesterday, with readers trying to make the best use out of the remaining few days of the fair.

It was a grand affair, to say the least.

Shishu Prohor started in the morning as usual and continued till the afternoon. Children had a fun time getting their favourite books and playing with Sisimpur's Halum, Tuktuki and Ikri.

The afternoon saw a huge crowd containing people of all ages. It was even grander in the evening, with longer-than-usual queues on the entrances. Sales saw an all-time peak as well.

Hridita Nur, a Dhaka University student, was seen buying books after looking at the catalogue that she collected before. "I look forward to this fair all year round. From coming here with friends and buying books of my taste, every moment spent here is a great one," said Hridita.

Publishers were heard echoing the same sentiments as the readers, with an almost festival-like atmosphere prevailing on the last weekend of the fair.

"With this year's fair coming to an end, we have to start thinking how the next one can be made even more beautiful," said Mazharul Islam, chief executive of Anya Prokash.



Most children working on the streets have to grow up years before their time to aid their parents in their family's survival. At the book fair yesterday, two children took a break from their salesperson routine to enjoy a puppet show arranged for children just like them. As they sat on the tall stool for a better view, for a little while they got the opportunity to be kids again.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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Two killed in road accidents

UNB, Dhaka

Two persons were killed and two injured in separate road accidents in the capital early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Samanta Alam Jyoti, a 19-year-old second-year mechanical engineering student of UCEP Institute of Science and Technology (UIST); and Kazi Aminul Haque (35), son of Kazi Alimul Haque and a resident of Mohakhali.

The first accident occurred at Mirpur around 1:00am while Jyoti was returning home in Diabari Bazar area from the UIST campus on her friend Niloy's motorbike, said her father Nurul Amin.

"Niloy lost control over his bike as a speeding truck zipped past. Both the riders fell off the bike and sustained serious head injuries," said Aminul Islam, a sub-inspector at Darus Salam Police Station.

Locals rushed them to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and