



DESIGN: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Restrictive upscale areas in Dhaka make commuting a nightmare for students

“The rickshaw fare is outrageous,” she says, “There is no set fare, so the rickshaw pullers can set whatever price they want. And the roads are absolutely terrible, so walking isn’t an option either. Unless you have a private vehicle, commuting even within the area is very difficult.”

RAIAN ABEDIN

If you’re one of the countless many who regularly commute via public transport to institutions located in certain upscale areas of Dhaka, there is a high chance that travelling in and out of these places has always been an unpleasant ordeal. Be it as a pedestrian, via public buses, or rickshaws, these places have probably never felt friendly as an outsider. And yet over time, it seems as if their desire to enclose themselves as miniature cities within cities keeps growing. Those who have to travel to these areas and face difficulties in doing so usually don’t get to have a voice in the decision-making process.

And with all this, one fundamental question arises – how did we get here?

Take Bashundhara Residential Area as a prime example. Outside rickshaws have always been restricted from entering the area, and while students studying at either North South University (NSU) or Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) have managed to commute with the residential area’s own internal rickshaws, the recent hike in fares has made the situation direr.

Rezwana Ahmed Aunu, a 21-year-old student at NSU and a resident of Bashundhara, shares her experience, “The rickshaw fare is outrageous,” she says, “There is no set fare, so the rickshaw pullers can set whatever price they want. And the roads are absolutely terrible, so walking isn’t an option either. Unless you have a private vehicle, commuting even within the area is very difficult.”

For students having to commute to Bashundhara Residential Area, the experience is nearly universal. Bashundhara as an area is home to not just the two aforementioned private universities, but to many schools as well. As such, it has been a centre for students of all ages. For them to be facing such terrible roads and exorbitant prices just to travel within the area is completely unfair. Yet the situation

arises only because the authority responsible seems unwilling to address it.

Instead, with recent developments, they have made Bashundhara Residential Area far less accessible, closing off many pedestrian entrances, and opting only to keep the major vehicle entrances open. As expected, this has led to commuters having to take detours just to enter the area and reach their institutions.

“I always used to enter Bashundhara through the Ghatpar gate. After it was closed, I had to change my whole route. I now have to change buses multiple times just to reach my destination. Inside, the rickshaw fare is unbelievably high. I try to walk but the open drainage system makes it unsafe,” says Azmira Hossain Aney, a 22-year-old student at NSU, sharing her experience of travelling from outside of Bashundhara to her university.

Many have argued that the reason behind closing down pedestrian entrances is to reduce traffic, yet, from personal experience, it seems that traffic has only increased at the other entry points where now more pedestrians are having to compete against vehicles for the slightest amount of room to enter.

One of the many ways these upscale areas grow in size and popularity is by introducing educational institutions inside of them, pulling in families and students to live in or around these areas. Yet, due to that same reason, these areas have restricted entry points to help control traffic and ensure the safety of all foreigners and businesspeople living in the area. The result is roads that are perpetually clogged and there remains a lack of proper public transportation.

Bashundhara Residential Area is not alone in this. Areas like Gulshan and Banani also fall under the same umbrella of problems. Though they are not home to many universities, the schools and coaching centres in these areas have resulted in many students frequenting these places.

Sayed Inan, a 23-year-old student of BRAC

University, shares, “I have to travel through Gulshan to get to my university, and my route always requires me to change transportation halfway through. There is no direct way through Gulshan, and this wastes a lot of my time just on the road. Rickshaw fares are also very costly, which is why I don’t get on rickshaws either.”

With all these in mind, many students frequenting these areas opt to walk to and from their destinations instead of the more expensive alternatives that are available. This brings into question the state of the roads themselves in these areas. While it may be seen that most roads in Gulshan and Banani are of decent quality for pedestrians to use, Bashundhara has seen complaints for the derelict state their roads constantly remain in.

Rezwana shares her account on this, “Sometimes they close off a road at any given time without any sort of notice, causing everyone to take detours. The pavements themselves are also of poor quality, and walking gets far more inconvenient than it should be.”

With all this coming to light, it seems rather clear that these areas are progressively shifting towards infrastructure that is friendly only to private vehicles. The disregard shown towards pedestrians and public transport users in these cases has persistently grown worse with no sign of stopping. Where does that leave the common folk? Especially with how in many private areas, the situation of the roads themselves are of exceptionally poor quality, why are no steps being taken to alleviate the problem?

As multi-faceted as these situations can be, the bottom line is clear – we, who are meant to grow up and eventually inherit the city, deserve better treatment.

Raian’s favourite activity is shouting. Shout alongside him at raibedin@gmail.com

5 YouTube channels to help you prepare for the SAT

AZNEEF CHOWDHURY

With the SATs coming up very soon, it’s prime time to start preparing for the exam. This year, students will take the test in a new digital format known as the digital SAT. While there are some fundamental changes to how the digital SAT will be conducted and its duration, most of the concepts and techniques employed in the traditional pen-and-paper SAT will still apply.

Having said all that, let us check out five of the best YouTube channels to help you prepare for the SATs.

Star Tutors

If you’ve already mastered the SAT syllabus and are trying to get a better understanding of the question pattern, *Star Tutors* is the channel you’re looking for. It has an extensive list of question paper walkthroughs where the instructor goes over an entire SAT paper and explains the thought processes behind its answers.

The Princeton Review

The Princeton Review channel presents their acclaimed SAT learning modules and techniques found in their books in video form and helps grasp the more difficult SAT questions. The channel also takes a deep dive into understanding the digital SAT. Their dedicated playlist, “Digital SAT Updates 2023”, addresses frequently asked questions and explains how the digital SAT functions, which I’ve found very helpful.

Hayden Rhodea

Hayden Rhodea is an SAT instructor who scored 1590 on his SAT. His channel, of the same name, has over 400 videos dedicated to tackling various aspects of the SAT including Math, Reading, and the optional Writing section. The channel’s videos are straightforward, and Hayden presents tricky concepts in an easy-to-understand manner, making the videos suitable for all skill levels.

When watching his videos, you’ll find that Hayden Rhodea shares little time optimisation techniques as he goes along, which is extremely useful. His series, “Crack the SAT’s code”, tackles the reading and the optional writing section of the SAT, which has not been addressed by many other channels with such dexterity and detail.



DESIGN: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

SupertutorTV

SupertutorTV has well-produced and high-quality videos on the SAT, formatted in a way reminiscent of educational TV shows. This unique format makes *SupertutorTV*’s videos enjoyable to watch and easy to digest, which is commendable considering the complexity of the SAT syllabus. Their SAT segment addresses a variety of questions students may have and gives the viewer solid advice on a variety of concerns regarding the SAT, like preparing and managing the anxiety that comes with preparing for the exam.

Khan Academy SAT

Apart from their website and other forms of media, the non-profit educational organisation Khan Academy also has a dedicated YouTube channel for the SATs. Being the only College Board – the organisation responsible for creating and managing the SAT exams – partnered organisation for SAT preparation in the world, you can count on *Khan Academy* SAT’s videos to be reliable and accurate. The channel also covers the bulk of the topics tested on the exams, and their impeccable style of teaching, combined with the efficiently spaced learning modules, makes their videos a must-watch for exam candidates.

Azneef keeps switching from one incomplete task to another. Remind him to finish his work at itsazneefchowdhury@gmail.com

Dangers of obsessing over prestigious universities

ARANYO RISHI CHOWDHURY

In our last school years, alongside the all-out parties and crying hysterically over separating from all our friends, most of us are making plans of attending our dream universities. And for many of us going abroad, we have our eyes set on the most “prestigious” and reputable of them all. However, it might be worth examining whether attending these are really our dreams, or someone else’s.

Attending the biggest universities is glorified a lot and made out to be something really important by parents, teachers, as well as peers. Frequently, our obsessions with Ivy Leagues and other top-ranked universities are projected onto us. It’s often the lives our parents envision for us, as opposed to the lives we want to lead. The status surrounding these universities bewitches not just parents, but also our classmates. When we hear about all the people striving to attend these schools, we also begin to crave the respect and admiration that comes with going there. We crave the opportunities everyone says they provide.

However, what we don’t realise is the sheer cost of pursuing such a merciless academic path. People who are genuinely passionate about it develop a rigorous work ethic for grades while building a student profile full of other accolades and projects outside school. This often involves sacrificing a social life, spending meaningful time with friends, or going to functions to let loose. When someone inherits these lofty ambitions without thinking it through, doing all this work can be twice as draining because you’re working towards a goal with half-baked motivation. It’s difficult to be very enthusiastic about an aim that your parents and half-extended family picked out for you.

When we’re focused on an objective like this for a long time, we can develop tunnel vision, hinging our self-worth on the payoff.

While there’s nothing wrong with aiming high and being ambitious, it’s important that those ambitions be our own.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

We have a tendency to tie our intellectual ability to academic results. A small number of people get picked for the top-ranked universities, and it can be absolutely crushing to receive a rejection letter. It can lead to feelings of inadequacy, thinking of ourselves as stupid or slow for failing despite our best efforts, while not realising

that it might’ve actually not been your best effort since your heart wasn’t fully in it.

Even after one makes it to one of these top-rated universities, the hardship isn’t over. These are extremely competitive environments where the best of the best gather to compete. An inability to cope at a higher standard often results in poorer

grades in university which torpedoes self-esteem. Let’s not forget the burnout, either. For many, it’s just a way to speed-run the obliteration of their mental health.

While there’s nothing wrong with aiming high and being ambitious, it’s important that those ambitions be our own. A lot of us don’t have the luxury of choice. In a somewhat malicious way, some elders impose these goals on us through emotional abuse, seeking vicarious gratification. It doesn’t help that everyone romanticises being admitted to prestigious universities in the first place. Even with these obstacles, for our own sake, it’s important to consider if we’re really built for a life of constantly battling for academic glory and if we’ll be happy trading so much to attend these institutions. Easing expectations and acknowledging our limitations will help us deal with rejection less painfully. So, before scrolling through the QS university rankings, ask yourself this question: is this for you?

Rishi’s chronic procrastination is ruining his life. Send him more things to procrastinate with at: reeshe46321@gmail.com