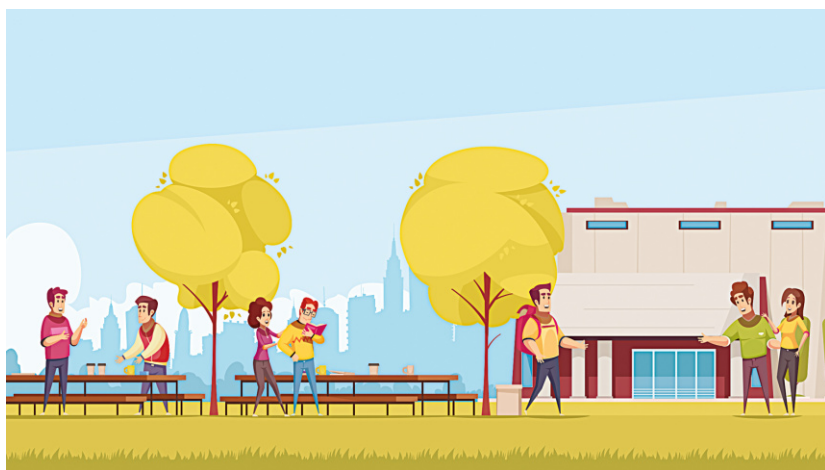


When distance becomes a decision for private university students in Dhaka

27 JULY 2026, 00:00 AM UNIVERSITIES OF TOMORROW

SHARE 

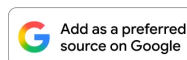
N Nishat Tasneem Shahara



For a long time, the defining image of a private university student in Dhaka was one of endurance. It was the student standing in the sweltering heat at a bus stop, clutching a backpack, watching the minutes tick away toward a midterm exam while trapped in a gridlock on Pragati Sarani or Mirpur Road.

For generations, the daily commute has been an unavoidable part of student life in Dhaka. Hours spent navigating congested roads, squeezing onto buses, or waiting for university shuttles have become almost a rite of passage. Yet as many of Bangladesh's private universities establish campuses in areas such as Bashundhara Residential Area, Vatara and Merul Badda, students are increasingly faced with a different question: should they continue living with their families and commute every day, or rent accommodation closer to campus?

Tap Here to Add The Daily Star As A Trusted Source



The Appeal of Living Close to Campus

With institutions such as North South University and Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) located inside Bashundhara Residential Area, United International University (UIU) situated near Vatara, and BRAC University in Merul Badda close to Badda, students living nearby can often walk to classes or reach campus within minutes. This eliminates the uncertainty of Dhaka's notorious traffic congestion.

Saving two or three hours of commuting each day means more time for studying, participating in student organisations, working on group projects, or simply getting enough sleep. It also allows students to make greater use of university facilities, including libraries, laboratories, sports complexes and common spaces. “I moved to Bashundhara Residential Area during my second semester, and it completely changed my university experience,” says Sehab Khan, an undergraduate student at North South University. “Although the rent is expensive, I save nearly three hours every day. I can get the full experience of university life. And still have time to relax afterwards.”

Living independently also teaches valuable life skills. Managing household expenses, cooking meals, organising daily routines and balancing academic responsibilities help many young people become independent and prepare for life after graduation.

The Financial Cost of Convenience

However, convenience comes at a price. Neighbourhoods surrounding universities have witnessed growing demand for student accommodation. Areas such as Bashundhara Residential Area, Vatara and Badda now host thousands of students looking for shared flats or bachelor accommodation. As demand has increased, so too have rental prices.

Monthly rent is only one part of the equation. Students must also budget for utilities, internet bills, groceries, transport, security deposits and other household expenses. For many families already coping with rising living costs, these additional expenditures can be difficult to justify. For many students, particularly those whose families already own homes within Dhaka, commuting remains the more practical financial decision.

This financial burden often outweighs the advantages of living close to campus. “I initially rented a flat near Vatara because I thought it would make university life easier,” says Sabrina Amin, a student at United International University. “But after paying rent, electricity, internet and food expenses every month, I realised it was becoming too expensive. I eventually moved back to Puran Dhaka in my home and now use the university shuttle despite the longer journey.”

The Comfort of Staying at Home

Living at home offers benefits that extend beyond saving money. Students who remain with their families often enjoy greater emotional support, regular meals and fewer responsibilities outside their studies. They do not need to worry about negotiating with landlords, paying utility bills or maintaining a household while managing demanding academic schedules. For first-year students especially, the familiarity of home can make the transition to university life considerably less stressful.

There is also a growing recognition that not every student needs to live independently to enjoy a fulfilling university experience. Many continue to excel academically while commuting daily, particularly when universities provide reliable shuttle services. “Commuting from home means I spend more time travelling, but I also avoid worrying about rent and household expenses,” says Tasnia Rahman, a student at BRAC University. “My family support makes balancing university life much easier. And I still participate in campus activities whenever possible.”

When Traffic Becomes the Biggest Obstacle

Nevertheless, Dhaka’s traffic remains perhaps the strongest argument in favour of living near campus. Unexpected congestion can easily turn a one-hour journey into a three-hour ordeal. Students frequently leave home before sunrise to attend morning 8 a.m. classes, while evening lectures often mean returning home late at night.

Long commutes do not simply consume time. They also affect concentration and physical health. Hours spent travelling each day leave many students mentally exhausted before they even enter the classroom. Weather conditions further complicate matters. Heavy monsoon rainfall, waterlogging and road closures frequently disrupt transport across the capital, causing students to miss lectures, examinations or important presentations despite careful planning.

There Is No Universal Answer

As Bangladesh’s private universities continue expanding into purpose-built campuses, the demand for affordable student housing is likely to increase. Universities can help ease this transition by expanding residential facilities and working with surrounding communities to encourage reasonably priced accommodation for students.

For now, there is no perfect solution. Whether a student chooses the convenience of living close to campus or the familiarity of home, the right decision is ultimately the one that best supports both their education and their well-being.