

Boro Maath being shrunk by 'cattle, fish farm'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

People call it "Boro Maath" because the 25-acre field is the largest of all playgrounds in Dinajpur town.

But crooks were on the prowl to change the geometry of the historic ground, where one of the largest and exquisite Eidgahs in the country is located. Besides, the offices of the deputy commissioner (DC) and the superintendent of police of Dinajpur district are just a stone's throw from the ground.

Taking advantage of a reduced human traffic during the months of Covid-19 lockdown, a contractor firm has encroached on a circular structure, made on almost one-third of the playground.

The structure, made for holding Dinajpur Trade Fair, organised annually by Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DiCCI), lied abandoned after the event was cut short on March 26 when a lockdown was enforced across the country.

Instead of removing the structure after the fair was cancelled, Monta Decorator, the contractor firm of the

fair, started to use the entire area of the fair to rear poultry, cattle and fish. They even built a large water reservoir at the site for their fish farm.

Locals alleged that while the large area of the playground remains occupied by the abandoned structure, the areas around the structure become hotspot for drug addicts and dealers at night.

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Sanowar Ali and Rubel Islam, identifying themselves as caretakers of the site, employed by Monta Decorator, barred this correspondent from entering the site when he went there on Monday.

The caretakers, however, admitted that the firm has constructed a large water tank inside the fair site for cultivating fish.

Around 50 cows and over 100 ducks, belonging to locals, were also being reared there, they also claimed.

Jewel Islam, a local, said the structure made for the fair has turned into an eyesore.

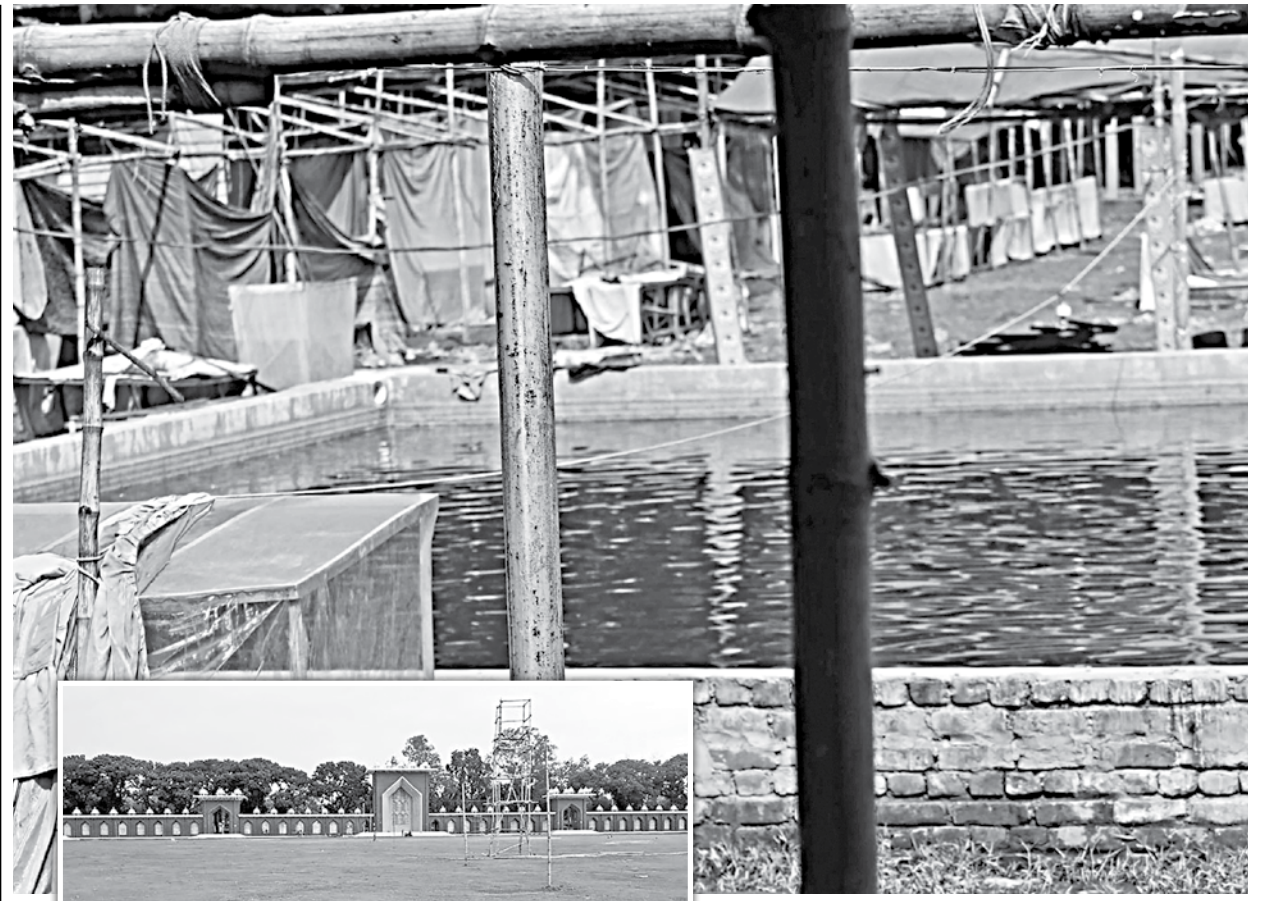
He also said that the fair ended seven months ago and the structure should have been removed by now.

Saying that he likes fish, poultry and cattle farming, Montazul Islam, proprietor of Monta Decorator, gave assurance to this correspondent that he would soon relocate his farm.

Mizanur Rahman Patwari, convener of the fair and also a member of DiCCI executive committee, was taken by surprise when this correspondent contacted and raised the issue of the structure that is being used to encroach on Boro Maath.

He said verbal instruction to remove the structure was given to Montazul Islam a long while ago.

When the attention of Mahmudul Alam, the DC of Dinajpur, was drawn on the matter, he said necessary steps in this regard would be taken after consulting with leaders of DiCCI.



A fish tank was made encroaching on Boro Maath, home to the iconic Eidgah. Inset, in Dinajpur town.

PHOTO: STAR, COLLECTED



The three-storied trauma centre building in Habiganj's Bahubal upazila lies unused for six years.

PHOTO: STAR

Built in 2013, trauma centre unused

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Construction of the trauma centre in Habiganj's Bahubal upazila was completed in 2013 but it is yet to be opened due to lack of electricity and gas connections.

As a result, road crash victims are being deprived of getting medical treatment. Especially serious patients are the worst sufferers.

According to the Health Department, the government launched a project named 'Physical Development' to develop 10 trauma centres on six national highways aiming to provide rapid treatments to those people injured in accidents on highways.

Construction of a 10-bed trauma centre was started near Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Bahubal Upazila Health Complex area spending Tk 3.18 crore. It was scheduled to complete construction work of the three-storey building on October 30, 2012. But it ended at the end of 2013.

In January 2014, the Public Works Department (PWD) sent a letter to the Health Department to accept the building. But the health department did not accept it as there is no gas and electricity connection.

On March 22 in 2013, Habiganj Palli Biddut Samity sent a demand note to PWD to pay Tk 48,120 for electricity connection.

Habiganj PWD then received the demand note and deposited the money. It then sent two letters to Habiganj Palli Biddut Samity for the power connection on May 26 in 2014 and January 29 in 2015 respectively.

But Palli Biddut Samity later demanded an additional Tk 6 lakh for power connection, said an official of Habiganj PWD, wishing anonymity.

Afterwards, they did not make any progress in this regard except informing the higher authorities, he said.

Meanwhile, on June 23 in 2013, the then executive engineer of PWD wrote a letter to the Jalalabad Gas Company asking for a demand note for gas connection. Since then, all sorts of new gas connections have been suspended across the country. As a result, the gas connection to the trauma centre has become uncertain.

Sherpur Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Ershadul Hoque Bhuiyan said a number of people, who faced road accidents on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in the previous years, died for not getting treatment.

If any accident occurred on the highway, it took more than one hour to reach Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. Some injured people died on the way due to delay in reaching the Hospital.

If the trauma centre is operational, the people on the highway will receive immediate medical treatment, said the OC, adding that so it is very important to open the centre as soon as possible.

Tofazzal Sohel, coordinator of Sankhubdo Nagorik Andolon Habiganj unit, said windows and inner instruments of the building are getting damaged due to negligence.

Habiganj Deputy Civil surgeon Dr Mukhlesur Rahman said the centre is yet to become operational as there is no gas and electricity connection.

Shut down

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Following a meeting with the owners of private hospitals on August 9, Health Secretary Abdul Mannan said all private medical colleges, hospitals and clinics must apply for licences - either to renew them or get new ones - by August 23.

The announcement came after the much-talked-about Regent Hospital scam involving Covid-19 tests came to light during the first week of July.

Talking to journalists yesterday, the DGHS boss said they had issued licences to 6,067 private healthcare establishments. Of those, 2,130 were hospitals, 3,856 diagnostic centers and 81 blood banks.

About the death of a senior assistant superintendent of Police (ASP) Anisul Karim in Mind and Hospital in the capital recently, Prof Khurshid said, "They [the hospital] said they got licence from the Department of Narcotics Control. But they must be authorised by the DGHS to provide any mental healthcare. That's why we have shut it down."

COVID-19 DEATH TOLL KEEPS GROWING
Covid-19 death toll in the country rose to 6,127 as the health directorate reported 19 deaths in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

The death rate is 1.44 percent of all confirmed cases in the country - 4,25,353, according to a statement from the DGHS.

As many as 1,733 infections were recorded in the same 24 hours, it said.

Bangladesh is now 22nd worst affected country in the world in terms of the number of coronavirus cases, according to worldometers.info.

On March 8, the DGHS reported the first three cases in the country. It reported the first Covid-19-caused death on March 18.

Against 14,524 tests conducted in those 24 hours at 114 labs, the positivity rate was 11.93 percent, while the overall positivity rate was 17.12 percent.

Meanwhile, 1,715 Covid-19 patients recovered in the same 24 hours, raising the total number of recoveries to 3,43,131. It was more than 80 percent of all confirmed cases, according to the press release.

Among the deceased, 16 were males and three were females.

All of them died in hospitals. Seven of them were aged between 51 and 60 years while the rest were above 60 years old.

As of yesterday noon, 2,521 patients were undergoing treatment in general beds while 273 in ICU beds hospitals dedicated for Covid-19 treatment across the country, added the press release.

Post-Covid world needs

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priorities: halting climate change, tackling wealth inequality, and preventing mass unemployment as artificial intelligence threatens to wipe out jobs.

Yunus told the Thomson Reuters Foundation's annual event, Trust Conference, that COVID-19 had shown up the weaknesses in the global economy and society.

But he added: "When you hit the darkest part you come up with the brightest ideas."

"Why don't we throw away all the old thinking? We have to be outrageously bold ... to adopt things which were never adopted before."

Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 with Grameen Bank, a microfinance organisation he founded in 1983 to provide loans to poor people who cannot access mainstream banks - an initiative that has since inspired similar programmes worldwide.

The 80-year-old economist told the online conference that a post-Covid future should be built on social businesses - enterprises dedicated to

tackling social and environmental problems through commercial means.

People are not "money-making robots" and collective interest, not maximising profits, should be the driving force for business, he said.

Yunus said the pandemic had had a particularly devastating impact on people in the informal sector who make up 70% of workers in countries like Bangladesh and often have no savings.

He said informal sector workers should be recognised as entrepreneurs and called for the creation of "social business micro-entrepreneurial banks" to help them get back on their feet.

Social businesses could also be a solution for flawed healthcare systems whose failures had been exposed by the pandemic, Yunus said.

He criticised "selfish" rich countries buying up the production of Covid-19 vaccines, but warned that the pandemic could only be defeated together.

"If you keep one person unprotected, nobody's protected," he said.

SELF-DESTRUCTING WORLD
Yunus said it was also time to rethink

the world's "urban-centric" economy which forces many people to seek work hundreds of miles from their homes.

In an age of modern technology, he questioned why many businesses, including call centres, could not be built in village areas.

The economist said he did not understand everyone's eagerness to rush back to a pre-COVID era.

A world where about 1% of the population owns 99% of the wealth is a ticking time bomb and will "explode in anger, dissatisfaction and political upheaval", he said.

"Why do you want to go back to that world? That world was a terrible world," he added, alluding to climate change as well as the growing wealth gap.

"That world was like we (were) riding a big train, rushing to our death ... We want to go back to ride that train again?"

Yunus called instead for a "world of three zeros" - zero net carbon emissions, zero wealth concentration, zero unemployment.

"This is the time to do it," he said.

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Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)
(Consulting Services for Environmental and Social Management)
- Firms selection)

Bangladesh Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I

Assignment Title: Environmental and Social Management Consultancy

Reference No.: SP-06

The Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh has applied for financing from the World Bank for implementing the Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the Consulting Services of Environmental and Social Management.

The broad scope of consulting services ("the Services") include carrying out the tasks mentioned below along the Jhenaidah- Jashore National Highway segment and Bhomra-Satkhira-Navaron National & Regional Highway segment.

1. Update the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) prepared for 'Phase - 1: Jashore-Jhenaidah (48.5 km) National Highway' of the Program based on the final alignment and detailed engineering design;
2. Prepare the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for investments proposed under 'Phase - 1: Jashore-Jhenaidah (48.5 km) Highway';
3. Conduct a Strategic Environment and Social Assessment (SESA) applicable for the entire WeCARE Program across the multiple phases to be implemented by RHD and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) as well as the sections of the highway which will be widened with funding from Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB).
4. Conduct an ESIA and prepare the ESMP for Phase - 3 activities to be implemented by RHD (58 km long Bhomra - Satkhira - Navaron Highway);

Expected date for commencement of the services is April 2021 and the tentative duration of the entire assignment is about 24 (Twenty-four) months. A draft TOR can be found at the following website: (www.rhd.gov.bd; www.cptu.gov.bd; or can be obtained at the address of the undersigned given below).

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) under Road Transport and Highways Division, Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, Government of Bangladesh now invites eligible Consultancy Firms to express their interest in providing the specified Services. Interested consulting firms should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The qualifications and experiences for shortlisting are:

1. Experience in conducting ESIA conducting for infrastructure project;
2. Experience in preparing and implementing RAP for infrastructure project, preferably in Bangladesh;
3. Experience in conducting SESA for infrastructure project, preferably in South Asia Region;
4. Availability of appropriate skills among in-house staff; and
5. Experience in development partner's funded similar projects.

The attention of interested International Consultants is drawn to the Section III, Para 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016 and updated in August 2018," setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Short-listed consultants would be given an opportunity to enhance their qualification by associating with other firms in the form of association or sub-consultancy. However, if firms would like to form a JV, that must be done at this EOI stage. After short-listing, firms would not be allowed to form Joint Ventures.

A Consultancy Firm will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address of the undersigned given below during office hours from 9:00 AM to 17:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time (BST).

Expression of Interest (EOI) must be delivered in a written form to the address of the undersigned (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) by 14:30 PM (BST), December 21, 2020.

The client will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firm(s) in connection with the preparation or delivery of the EOI. The Executing Agency reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without assigning any reason.

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