

Historic Sher Shah Road in bad shape

ATIUR RAHMAN, Jessore

The 3,500-mile long historic Sher Shah Road which passes through Jessore is now quite unfit for use.

Lack of attention, maintenance and repair work by the concerned department has led to this situation.

Nearly 500 years ago, Emperor of Delhi, Sher Shah constructed this longest road connecting Delhi with the then Bengal.

According to a historical account, the original name of this road was Sher Shah Road. It was constructed under his behest in 1540 and named as 'Sharak-e-Azam'.

During the reign of East India Company, the original name of the road was changed into Grand Trunk Road. But it was well-known in its original name. Farid Khan Sur was the actual name of Shar-Shah.

Once the road was considered as the symbol of Bengali history and tradition. A number of growth centres were developed on both sides of the road after crossing Delhi. Emergence of Benapole, Navaron, Sharsha, Gadkhali, Jhinkercha, Jessore, Bagherpur, Narikelberia, Sharsina, Beruil Palita, Nohata, Mohammadpur Boalpari markets in Bangladesh portion of greater Jessore still testify how important and busy was once the road.

Documentary evidences also prove that the emperor got a number of inns on both sides of the road all the way from Delhi to Dhaka via Jessore for ease of the travellers.

But in course of time, following continued negligence

of the government to preserve the work, all the inns were damaged.

It is now difficult to recognise which was the Sher Shah Road or the Grand Trunk Road whatever the nomenclature.

It is a pity that the portion of the road from Benapole to Jessore town is now called Jessore Road, from Jessore town to Chowrasta (crossing) the road is known as Narail Road and from there to Nohata, it is called in the original name as Sher-Shah road.

During the fag end of the British rule in 1945-46, a plan was taken to modernise the road but it was dropped following the partition of India in 1947.

Attempts were made to reconstruct the road in the earstwhile East Pakistan. In 1956-57 and in 1968-69 plans were chalked out to construct the road but in vain. Ultimately it was shelved. In 1978, under the personal initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Jessore, the road was to again taken up and its HBB was completed upto Narikelberia under Bagherpara upazila in the district. Thereafter following change of the DC the project went unheeded.

Particularly during the rainy season when this road becomes full of knee-deep mud and morass, people of the area find a diversion to avoid the situation. Governments have come and governments have gone, but Sher Shah Road remains unchanged.

If anybody of this new era wants to see how was the development work under the Muslim rule in India, he need not go to the museum. Let him come over here and enjoy the historic road which still exists.



Noted singer Fakir Alamgir leads a procession of Risij Shilpi Gosthi, a leading cultural organisation of the country, at Bhanga upazila in Faridpur district recently. The procession was brought out in protest against series of bomb attacks at Jessore, Paltan and Ramna in the capital by the 'fundamentalists'.

Bid to save irrigation project in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

In a bid to protect the Meghna-Dhanagoda Irrigation Project from the devastating erosion by the river Meghna, a 2 km riverbank protection project is being implemented in Matlab upazila involving Tk 15 crore.

State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Maya inaugurated the work on the project at Mohanpur in Chandpur on Friday.

Water Development Board is implementing the project, which is expected to be completed by June 15.

Under the project 3.30 lakh geo-textile bags, containing 250 kg sands each, will be dumped along the riverbank from Dashani to Ekhlaspur for making a protection-wall.

Speaking on the occasion, the state minister said the government would do everything possible to

save the Tk 300 crore project.

He said the present government is trying its best to save towns and human habitats from erosion.

The Water Development Board (WDB) engineers said geo-textile bags were used to protect Chandpur town from river erosion and the attempt was very successful. Cashing on the success they are now using the same technology to save the Meghana-Dhanagoda Project.

Presided over by Executive Engineer of local WDB Abdur Rob Mia the function was addressed, among others, by Superintending Engineer Mohammad Abdul Malek and local elites.

Later, the state minister visited the project site and advised the engineers concerned to visit the project regularly so that the work could be finished in time.

Another report from Moulvibazar

says: Vast tracks of lands in the district stand threatened due to erosion by rivers Manu and Kushiara.

The mighty rivers have already devoured over a hundred villages in Rajnagar, Kulaura, Barolekha, Kamaiganj and Sreemongal upazilas, displacing and unspecified number of people.

The erosion-hit villages are Abdullahpur, Zahidpur, Kashimpur, Rashidpur, Tanpur, Sherpur, Bahadurpur, Moharajpur, Kanakpur and Sampasi.

Besides, more villages in the upazilas are in danger due to continued erosion by the two rivers, which also cause frequent floods during monsoon due to their loss of navigability.

Meanwhile, some homeless people have taken shelter in their relatives' houses while some others on embankments.

Sirajganj JCD leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A local leader of main opposition BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was arrested in Sirajganj town on Friday.

Police arrested Sayed Mohammad Arju, joint secretary of district unit of JCD, from in front of Mousumi Cinema and sent him to jail.

Sirajganj JCD president Nazmul Hasan Rana and general secretary Rashedul Hasan Rajan condemned the arrest and demanded immediate release of Arju.

Poverty alleviation schemes

UNB, Bogra

Local Government Engineer Department is implementing a number of poverty alleviation projects under City Poverty Alleviation Programme at a cost Tk 100 crore.

The projects are being implemented in three city corporations, Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi and eight municipalities Barisal, Bogra, Gopalganj, Hobiganj, Kushtia, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and Sirajganj through UNCHS with financial assistance from UNDP.

Meanwhile, works on area survey and problem identification of the projects have been completed, officials said.

The projects are aimed at poverty alleviation by empowering the poor.

DAG assigned for Jibran Tayeebi Murder Case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The government has assigned a deputy attorney general (DAG) for 'speedy' trial of the sensational Jibran Tayeebi Murder Case.

The Solicitor Wing of the Ministry for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs through a notification on April 25 appointed Deputy Attorney General Mohammad Faruq to move the case for the government.

Previously appointed lawyers will also work to co-operate and assist Mohammad Faruq.

With this the Public Prosecutor (PP) for the case has so far been changed for the fourth time. The case is under trial at the court of Sessions Judge Md Ishaq Mia.

Jibran Tayeebi, an Indian citizen who was with a shipping company in Chittagong, was shot dead in Agrabad area.

Seminar on arsenic pollution

BSS, Comilla

A seminar on arsenic pollution was held at Comilla Diabetic Hospital Auditorium recently under the auspices of the district Rotary Club.

The seminar was presided over the Assistant Governor Rotarian Sheikh Habibur Rahman. Rotarian Shahjahan Ali, Governor Rotarian Hasan Moni and Rotarian Iftekharul Alam took part in the seminar.

Keynote paper was read out by the Chief Engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department, M Kadiruzzaman. Representatives from Different NGOs, social welfare organisations and Rotary Club members attended the seminar.

Firearms enter thru' Netrakona border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Illegal firearms are now entering the country from neighbouring India through different border points in Netrakona district.

Saree, sugar, salt and motor parts are among the common items that are smuggled into the country from India. But now small firearm is added to the list.

According to competent sources, the entire frontier area of the district has become a safe route for the smugglers and in maximum cases tribal youths are being used as bearers of firearms.

Local people said once these smugglers used to smuggle only essential goods like sugar, salt, clothes, onion, egg and rice, but

now they brave to smuggle small arms under cover of salt and sugar into the country.

Recently two foreign-made revolvers were recovered in Pachgong border area under Kalmakanda upazila in the district.

On suspicion border force BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) challenged two tribal youths coming from India. But the youths managed to flee leaving a bag they were carrying. BDR personnel later found the two firearms inside the bag.

Local people said gunrunners have become active ahead of next general election. They said muscle-men, who are usually hired by some political leaders to influence polls results, may use the firearms during the next election.

Erratic power supply causes havoc in Brahmanbaria

BSS, Brahmanbaria

Erratic power supply and frequent load shedding in seven upazilas of Brahmanbaria district have been causing untold sufferings to people.

The owners of industrial units are incurring huge losses due to frequent power failure.

Students are the worst sufferers, as they can not pay attention to their studies. Hospitals and clinics are also suffering.

Due to power failure, most of the roads in the town plunge into darkness for hours hampering smooth movement of pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

Besides, antisocial elements take advantage of the darkness in the town. Frequent fluctuation of

voltage is another problem faced by the power consumers.

Another report from Chuadanga says : Frequent power failure has become a regular feature in the district.

It fails particularly during the early night causing untold sufferings to the town dwellers.

Small and medium industrial units including saw-mills, ice factories paddy husking mills, oil mills, printing presses, studios, cinemas and hospitals are facing a lot of problems due to power outage.

Official sources said the supply of energy to Chuadanga comes from Khulna where power failure occurs due to load-shedding. Therefore, the local authorities have nothing to do, they added.

NEWS SNAPS

Traffic sergeant withdrawn

UNB, Bogra

A local traffic sergeant was withdrawn on Friday on charge of harassing two BBC newsmen.

The action was taken against Waaj Nabi as he harassed the two BBC men, including a foreign journalist, by holding their vehicle for a long time in Bogra town on Thursday.

Valuables worth Tk 50,000 looted

UNB, Bagerhat

Armed dacoits looted valuables worth about Tk 50,000 from a house at Madartola village in Kachua upazila of Bagerhat district on Saturday.

Locals said the bandits stormed the house of Amal Mondol and looted the valuables, leaving three people injured. The injured Noni Mondol, 45, Swapan Majumder, 32, and Bimol Mondol, 45, were hospitalised.

Power failure makes life miserable

UNB, Narail

Frequent power failure, fluctuation of voltage and load shedding made the civic life miserable in Narail town and its adjoining areas.

Productions in mills and factories are seriously being hampered due to the erratic power supply. Low voltage and fluctuation in voltage are causing serious damage to electronic appliances, radio, television and refrigerators. Examinees of the ongoing HSC examinations are the worst sufferers. Besides, activities in the hospitals and clinics are also being hampered due to power failure. It also caused problems in water supply to the city dwellers.

Jhum farming going on in Bandarban

UNB, Bandarban

With the advent of rain, tribal families of Bandarban hill district have started jhum cultivation.

They have been eagerly waiting for rainfall for the last 2/3 months to begin jhum cultivation after they burnt bushes on the hill of preparing land. The jhum farmers cultivate various crops like maize, sesame, cotton, marpha and various kinds of vegetable and spice on the hill after Pahela Baishakh depending upon rainfall. Local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said 16,000 acres of land would be brought under jhum farming this year. A jhum farmer said he spent Tk 15,000 for preparing five acres of land in the hill while he expects crops worth about Tk 50,000.

Three arrested for demanding dowry

UNB, Jhalakati

Three people were arrested from different parts of Jhalakati district in separate dowry-related cases on Friday.

Police said Mubarak Hussain, 32, husband of Beauty Begum of Chadkati in Jhalakati town and Hanif, 26, husband of Khadiza Begum of Tetulia in Nalchhiti upazila, were put behind the bars on charge of demanding dowry from their wives. Besides, police arrested Nuru Khalifa, 45, husband of Maksuda Begum of Bodnikati in Rajapur upazila, on similar charges. The arrested were sent to jail hajat.

Demand for diesel on rise

UNB, Bogra

Consumption of diesel has been shot up substantially in 16 northern districts in current IRI-Ri-Boro irrigation season mainly due to want of rain.

Padma Oil Company officials in Rajshahi informed that three companies Padma, Meghna and Jamuna through their eight depots have sold over 2.70 lakh mts of diesel till April this year. In last irrigation season till May 2000, these companies sold over 2.97 lakh mts of diesel in the northern region where usual monthly demand is 20 to 25 mts. Of the amount, 29,609 mts was used in the Baghabari 71-mwt Power Station. But this year, the station does not need any diesel as it is being run by gas. Officials hoped that in current months (May) 30,000 mts of diesel is likely to be consumed raising the total consumption to 3.00 lakh.

Four flood control dams underway

UNB Chapainawabganj

Water Development Board (WDB) is constructing four flood control embankments in three upazilas of Chapainawabganj district spending 1,062 mts of wheat.

Officials said a 2.54-km embankment is being constructed alongside Sharjan-Fatehpur Road in Nawabganj sadar while a 3.93-km dam in Shibganj upazila a 7.79-km dam in Shibganj upazila and a 2.25-km embankment in Bholahat upazila. Upon completion of the dams, thousands of acres of land in Nawabganj sadar, Shibganj and Bhologanj upazilas will be protected from recurring floods.

Headmaster convicted

UNB, Bhola

A court in Bhola sentenced a headmaster of a school to one year rigorous imprisonment for fraudulently reducing his age in his SSC certificate.

The court also fined M Rustam Ali, headmaster of Lalmohon Collegiate Secondary School, Tk 1,000. The case history in brief: Rustam Ali reduced his age in his SSC certificate erasing the original one in an attempt to extend his tenure as headmaster of the school. On information, the Bureau of Anti-corruption investigated into the matter and filed a case against him on December 30, 1997. After examining the witnesses and records, the court handed down the judgement on Tuesday.

Touchstone smuggling: 7 held

UNB, Thakurgaon

Police arrested seven people, allegedly involved in magnet and touchstone smuggling, from a residential hotel in Thakurgaon on Sunday.

The arrested were identified as Tajul Islam, Jahangir and Mohammad Ali of Chandpur, Tofazzal Hossain, Mahiruddin and Alamgir of Dhaka and Mahatabuddin of Narsingdi. On information police raided Hotel Shah Jalal of the town at dead of night and nabbed them.

Publication ceremony

UNB, Chapainawabganj

The publication ceremony of a book entitled "The Role of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Language Movement" by Aji Kumar Das was held in Chapainawabganj on Tuesday.

Treasurer of Rajshahi University Dr Abul Fazal Haq attended the ceremony as chief guest while former MP Dr A A M Mesbahul Haq, RUTA President Dr Muhammad Mizanuddin and Deputy Commissioner Nurul Haq as special guests. Chaired by renowned educationist Prof Enamul Haq, the function was addressed, among others, by Dr Abul Kashem, Abdul Aziz, Mahtabuddin and Monim-ud-Doula Chowdhury.

52 uplift projects to be implemented

BSS, Meherpur

Meherpur municipality has taken up 52 development projects during this financial year at a cost of Taka 85 lakh.

According to official source, these projects will be completed by June next. The projects included construction and reconstruction of roads, footpaths, drain and RCC culverts and iron bridges.

Tea garden labourers' confce

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A conference of the tea garden labourers of the Juri Valley was recently held at Fultala Tea Garden under Kulaura upazila in Moulvibazar district.

Presided over by tea labour leader Amullay Bunarjee, the conference was attended by former UP chairman of Fultala Kalindar Roy and group leader of Bangladesh Tea Labourers' Union Sagar Ranjan Pattak Nayek as chief and special guest respectively. It was also addressed, among others, by Gopal Choubhe (Dhamai garden), Panua Bunarjee (Fultala garden), Khoka Ghose (Keramatnagar garden), Purnima Bauri (Kapna Pahar garden), Sanjit Kumer (Patharia garden), Anil Banarjee (Rashidabad garden), Gokul Chasha (Shilua garden) and Provat Chasha of the Tea Labour Union. Later, an 11-member committee for the Juri Valley of Bangladesh Tea Labour Union was elected with Poresh Banarjee (Rajki garden) as its President, Amullaya Bunarjee (Fultala garden) as Vice-president, Laxmi Prashad Kurnee (New Samanbhag garden) as General Secretary and Promesh Bauldas (Kapna Pahar garden) as Assistant Secretary. Labourers from 20 tea gardens under Vuri Valley attended the conference to discuss their problems.