

Faulty R&H design has doubled their miseries

30 families face eviction again for Shahjalal Bridge-3 approach road in Sylhet

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Shahjalal Bridge-3 on Surma river on Dhaka-Sylhet-Sunamganj highway on the outskirts of the city was completed long ago, but it is not yet ready for use only due to change in design of the northern approach road by the Roads and Highways Department (R&H).

This has not only inflated the cost

from Tk 45 crore to Tk 50 crore due to delay but is going to displace at least 30 families for the second time.

Allegations have it that the R&H changed the design of approach road to protect interests of some rich landowners at the cost of the poor 30 families at Sheikhpara.

Work on the approach roads could not be started even in two years after expiry of the deadline for

completion of the project.

Work on the 261-metre bridge on the Sylhet bypass road with nine kilometre approach roads on both sides began on August 14, 2000 and was scheduled to be completed by August 2003. There has not been any work for about a year and construction materials are being stolen from the site, sources said.

The R&H had acquired some

lands and evicted about 30 poor families near earlier.

The evicted families built houses nearby. Now the R&H Department wants to acquire their lands, saying that the design of the northern approach road has been changed.

The affected families are now protesting the decision.

However, officials at the District Land Acquisition Office does not agree with the R & H, saying the same people can not be evicted twice. The R&H Department should not change the design once approved, which evicted some people from their ancestral homes.

Sources at the District Land Acquisition Office said they have sent the files to higher authorities in Dhaka, with a comment that the R & H proposal is not justified. They told The Daily Star that the same people can not be evicted twice. The stalemate on construction of the approach road has been created due to "faults" by R & H officials, they alleged.

Refuting the allegation, an R&D official said higher authorities in Dhaka finalise design. But he failed to explain the cause for change in the design. "We are trying to resolve these at an earliest".

Meanwhile, people at Sheikhpara at a press conference at Sylhet Press Club recently alleged that the R&H Department changed the design to protect lands of some rich people. They have sought intervention by Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, lawmaker from the area (Sylhet Sadar constituency).

In a memorandum submitted to the Deputy Commissioner, they also alleged that the R&H Department officials changed design only to earn illegal benefit by saving lands of some influential people.

The changed design will affect about 100 families, they claimed.

In 1999, the R & H authorities acquired some lands for the northern approach road on the bank of Surma river, making many families in Sheikhpara homeless. Again, after a year, it acquired more lands for widening the road.

Months ago, the R&H again decided to acquire more lands for protection embankment for the approach road, they alleged.

They also sent memoranda to the Communication Minister and the Land Minister.

Earlier, when they were evicted first, they were given only Tk 12,000 per decimal where as the market value was Tk 1.5 to Tk 2 lakh in the city suburb, they alleged.

They also demanded probe into the matter.

The press conference was addressed by, among others, Tukerbazar Union Parishad Chairman Shahid Ahmed, Abdul Malik Member, Haji Nozir Hossain, Md Fokhor Uddin, Jahir Uddin.

Wrong planning damages Tk 1.4 cr rubber dam project in Sherpur

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Jinaigati (Sherpur)

Netrakona: Last week's flood has badly damaged of the half-done Karagao Rubber Dam-cum Project on the hilly Someshwary river at Ainakuri in Jinaigati upazila in Sherpur district.

Strong current of the river has also damaged the project office, Ainakuri market, Kangsa Health Complex and several educational institutions in the area. The Ainakuri High School building is now threatened as the soil has been washed away.

LGED (Local Government and Engineering Department) officials in Sherpur seeking anonymity said the destruction has been caused as the dam is being constructed at a wrong site with a wrong plan and design.

The original plan was to set up a

50-metre rubber dam and construct one kilometre embankments on both sides of the river in the upstream and in the downstream of the dam site.

Instead, a 35-metre rubber dam is being built and construction of embankments have been abandoned, they said. The reduced size has choked the river, increasing its fury this year, they said.

LGED started the Tk 1.40 crore Karagao Rubber Dam Project work in 2003 under a 'Small-holder Agriculture Improvement Project' (SAIP) to provide irrigation to 940 hectares of land in Jinaigati and Shreebardi upazilas.

Once completed, it will also improve road communication in the two upazilas.

The project was scheduled to be completed in May last year but only 45 per cent work was completed till

be advent of monsoon this year, the LGED sources claimed.

But much of the work was been washed away by last weeks flood, they said. The loss is yet to be determined, they added.

This correspondent visited the dam site and nearby areas and talked to local people.

Based on the experience about behaviour of the Someshwari river, they had suggested construction of the dam one kilometre downstream from where it is being built, but it was ignored, they said.

The Ainakuri High School, Nachonmohuri Dhakil Madrasa, Ainapur Kowmi Madrasa, Ainapur Junior Girls High School, Ainapur Health Complex and Ainapur Bazar are now threatened with erosion, they said.

The locals said lawmaker from the area Mahmudul Haque Rubal,

Executive Engineer of Sherpur LGED and Jinaigati upazila Nirbahi Officer visited the spot after the flood but did not say anything.

Former lawmaker from the area, Mohammad Kurram, when contacted, said he along with some elderly people in the area had suggested the authorities to set up a 50-metre rubber dam and construct embankments near it to protect it. The river's behaviour is unpredictable and causes massive damage almost every year, he said. But our suggestion was not accepted, he said.

Mohammad Jamal Hossen, Executive Engineer of LGED in Sherpur, said the rubber dam project was damaged due to strong current of the river. He refused to say anything about alleged change in its design and site selection.

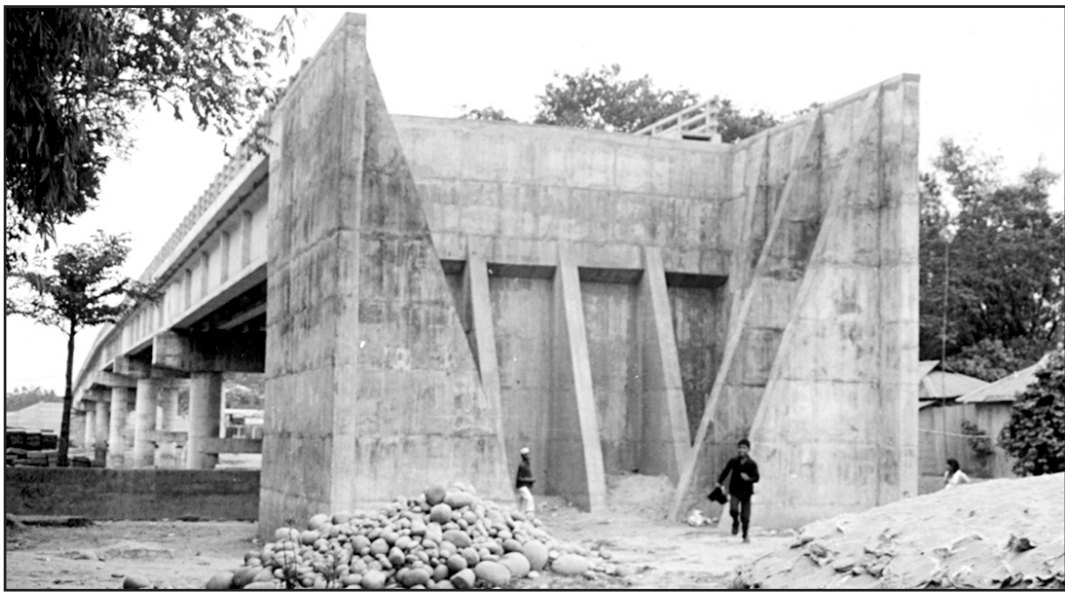


PHOTO: STAR

The approach roads to Shahjalal Bridge-3 on Surma river on the outskirts of Sylhet city is yet to be constructed as the R&H Department has changed the design twice, threatening about 30 families with eviction for the second time.

Road named after journalist Shamsur Rahman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

A road in Sarsha upazila has been named after Shaheed Journalist Shamsur Rahman at a meeting held at Paksia College ground yesterday.

Following its naming, work on the two-and-a-half kilometre road stretching from Pakshia to Shalkona was inaugurated by former lawmaker and BNP information and research secretary Mofiqul Hasan Tripti. The construction cost of the road was estimated at Tk 60 lakh.

Azizur Rahman presided over the meeting while BNP leaders Khairuzzaman Modhu, Abul Hasan Zahir, Union Parishad chairman Masudur Rahman Milon, journalist Saha Kiron Kumar Kochi, brother of late journalist and Jano Kantho staff reporter Shajed Rahman Bokul, Ruhul Quddus, Abdul Mannan and Bozlor Rahman spoke on the occasion.

Journalist Shamsur Rahman was killed by assailants on July 16, 2000.

Daily Star Readers' Club formed at Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The Daily Star Readers' Club was formed at a meeting held at Bandarban Press Club on Wednesday aimed at creating enlightened citizens.

The Daily Star Readers' Club coordinator Rafi Hossain presided over the meeting. It was addressed by Bandarban Superintendent of Police (SP) Iqbal Baharin, The Daily Sachitra Maitri editor Osman Gani, Bandarban Press Club president Badsha Miah, Engineer Kew Hla Khoy, Bandarban Government College assistant professor Monaim, Bandarban Government College lecturer M Kamrul Alam Chowdhury and Bandarban Government High School teacher Dr Shishir Mallik.

Khulna JCD president expelled for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Abu Hossain Babu, president of Khulna district Jatiyabadi Chatra Dal (JCD), has been expelled from the party for extortion and tender manipulation.

The expulsion order by the central committee of the party was issued from Dhaka Wednesday evening.

According to a press release signed by JCD central Publicity Secretary Oman Faruque, Abu Hossain Babu has been expelled for "anti-party activities such as tender manipulation, toll collection, land grabbing, occupation of a sawmill and telecom shop and connection with underground parties".

The expulsion order was approved by the central president of

JCD Azizul Bari Helal and General Secretary Shafiqul Bari, the press release said.

Abu Hossain Babu was one of the eight persons accused in a criminal case filed on June 23 with Rupsha thana for occupation of a sawmill and a telecom shop at Senerbazar in the upazila on June 27.

He was warned of disciplinary action several times earlier by the party's central leaders for involvement in anti-party activities and committing crimes during last two year after he was made the district JCD president.

Abu Hossain Babu could not be contacted as he is absconding to avoid arrest in the June 23 case.

Dengue in Khulna: Steps taken by KCC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Health Department has taken emergency measures to prevent spread of dengue following detection of a dengue patient in the city on Thursday.

The dengue patient is a school-boy named Enamul Shikder. He was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) in a critical condition, according to physicians.

Khulna civil surgeon (CS) Dr Hame Jamal told this correspondent all upazila health complexes have been asked to take necessary steps to check spread of the disease.

Health officials have been asked to begin a mass awareness campaign in the regard.

Meanwhile, the Conservancy Department of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) has launched a mosquito eradication drive in the city.

Sources in KCC said, 10 fogger machines, three spray machines and a motor van are used for spraying pesticides in all the city wards.

According to KCC health officer, there is no dearth of medicine including larvicide.

A separate cell for dengue patients has been opened in KMCH.

12x3

15x3