

# Potholes, cracks mark 20km Dupchanchia-Akkelpur road

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

The 20 kilometre road from Dupchanchia in Bogra to Akkelpur in Joypurhat district has remained in an awful condition for years, much to the sufferings of thousands of commuters.

The road serves as an alternative way for a large number of vehicles including buses and trucks from Bogra and Joypurhat districts via Hili land port in

Dinajpur district.

A good number of vehicles carrying paddy, rice and wheat to and from Dupchanchia Government Food Storage also use the road regularly.

It is of special importance as villages of Dupchanchia beside the road are famous for paddy production and traditional Gopinather Mela is held beside the road in Akkelpur upazila, said Babul Hossain, chairman of

Zianagar union parishad.

But due to lack of repair for around four years, the carpeting on the road eroded and cracks and holes developed in the long road, making vehicular movement highly risky.

Patients who need to go to the upazila health complex and other hospitals become the worst sufferers due to the dilapidated condition of the road, locals said.

Jahangir Alam, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department, Bogra, said, "The project for reconstruction of Dupchanchia-Akkelpur road will be placed in the meeting of the Executive Committee for National Economic Council very soon and we are hopeful of starting the reconstruction of the road after approval of the project and consequent budget allocation."



PHOTO: STAR

Dupchanchia-Akkelpur road in Bogra district has remained in an awful condition for long, much to the sufferings of commuters.

# What makes the Dinajpuri character?

BY ANDREW EAGLE

Initial observation: Deep night as the bus from Dhaka crossed Dinajpur District border. A few minutes later a woman needed to get down. It spurred discussion among the conductor and fellow passengers. Was she sure? Was it okay to leave a woman alone on a dark road?

She repeated the place name. It was right. She got out.

The bus moved forward. The bus stopped. The bus reversed. No, it couldn't be done. She was delivered to the safety of a late night barber's shop. And I wondered...

I'm not alone in anticipating that considerate temperament from people of the country's northwest. Simply mentioning Dinajpur is a kind of character reference.

This writer was determined to discover: What makes the Dinajpuri?

Observation: In Dinajpur town no rickshaw driver asked for more than the exact fare; one can't say that of all regional centres. Twice I was unexpectedly called back. "You paid too much," rickshaw drivers said. It has hardly happened elsewhere...

I asked The Daily Star correspondent Kongkon Karmaker his opinion; and he himself exhibits the admirable qualities one might associate with Dinajpur, albeit there's a bit of Borishaila in his blood.

He spoke of Hindu families preparing vermiculture for Muslims' Eid-ul-Fitr; of Muslims included in Durga Puja committees, with some performing arati dance in front of Durga Ma's pandal. The town's prominent temples confirm religious tolerance.

"Dinajpur has one of the highest percentages of Hindus nationwide," Karmaker says, "Disharmony is rare." The district is also diverse with ethnic minorities, principally the Santhals.

Perhaps in the villages was more to learn.

At Mahadeppur village in Biral upazilla, at a nameless shop in the row called Bashudev Supermarket, proprietor Sanatan Chandra Roy agrees, "People are good here. There's no conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Why I don't know. It just is so."

"What's in Biral?" proposes a customer. "Everything is here: betel, cigarettes and tea."

History agrees. The Dinajpur District Census Report of 1961 observed that Dinajpuris are "nostalgic to a degree, and unless they are very hard pressed they do not leave their homes."

"Few experience the pangs of hunger as our own countrymen do," wrote a Briton, Major Sherwill, about Dinajpur in 1860, "They may wholly abstain from labour for weeks or even months and still manage to feed and clothe themselves and their families. Their wants are few."

According to the Gazetteer land has been

more plentiful and population density less than other regions. Have these factors influenced an easygoing attitude?

"There is no district in Bangladesh as thanda [cool] as Dinajpur," says Md Fazul Haque at the Nurul Mudir tea shop in Biral's Taiabpur. The upazilla administration officer spent years in Khulna, which he liked, but "Dinajpur's people are best."

"People are occupied with their own business," he says, "Nobody intends to harm someone. We don't like conflict."

"At any Puja pandal," interjects shopkeeper Mozammel Haque, "for every four Hindus must be eight Muslims. Everyone enjoys. We are one."

"The land is good," he reflects, "That's why people are gentle."

"People are not much desperate so we don't quarrel," suggests farmer Sri Manmohan Chandra Roy of Andhar m u c h a in Chirirbandar upazilla.

Observation: Evening on

a narrow town road and there's overpowering music blasting from a red-light flashing amplifier, street-side. "Inconsiderate," is a first thought, but then I notice the street's other side: the long wall of Dinajpurgaol. Perhaps somewhere inside a prisoner was smiling from hearing the distant rhythms of their favourite Bollywood and Bangla dance numbers? Perhaps a birthday, knowing they weren't forgotten? It takes volume to conquer concrete.

Yet the Gazetteer mentions mass migration into Dinajpur, especially during Partition's upheaval. It lists famines. And news out of Dinajpur over the past several months is peppered with instances of violence. Surely such facts remind: every rule has exceptions.

Because regardless, in Dinajpur you'll find it: that helpful, sincere majority - a little more tolerant perhaps, a little more peaceful perhaps... Exactly why, I'm unsure.



PHOTO: STAR

Temple Boro Kali Mandir at Dighoin in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

# Teacher jailed for maligning Pahela Baishakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A mobile court in Satkhira yesterday sentenced a school teacher to one year's imprisonment for his objectionable remark about the traditional way of celebrating Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year.

Bishnupada Pal, executive magistrate of Satkhira district administration, handed down the punishment to Zahidur Rahman, an assistant teacher of Baladanga Government Primary School in Satkhira Sadar upazila, for his write up in Bishakh, a magazine published by Satkhira district administration marking the Pahela Baishakh 1422.

Zahidur, son of Abdur Rashid, is a resident of Brahmashasan village under Shyamnagar upazila in the district.

"The district administration handed Zahidur over to the police after his conviction for one year. Besides, he was shown arrested in a case for alleged subversive activities and the investigation officer sought his 10-day remand in connection with the case," said Emdadul Haque Sheikh, officer in charge of Satkhira Sadar Police Station.

Ashraf Hossain, district primary education officer of Satkhira, said Zahidur will be suspended after the copy of the conviction order reaches the office.

Meanwhile, educationists, teachers, political leaders and journalists under the banner of Sachetan Nagarik Samaj yesterday formed a human chain in front of Satkhira Press Club in the town demanding legal action against the people involved with the publication of the objectionable article against the centuries-old culture of celebrating Pahela Baishakh.

# Sangrai festival concludes in Bandarban

TAMANNA KHAN AND SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Bandarban

The traditional Sangrai festival of indigenous people in Bandarban formally came to an end yesterday through Jalkeli (water splashing).

The festival began on April 13 with Shakree Puja (honouring elders). On the second day, the indigenous people went to the Sangu riverbank in a procession with Buddha statues. The procession, started from Ujani Para Bouddha Bihar, was accompanied by beats of traditional drums to celebrate 'Buddha Snan'.

Under a small makeshift shed on the sandy bank of the Sangu, Buddhists gathered and performed rituals by bathing the Buddha statue at Ujani Para Buddhist Temple.

Jalkeli also called 'Moitree Rilong Poye' in Marma language started on Wednesday at Puraton Rajar Math.

In this event, two boats full of water are placed on the ground for the boys and the girls to splash water at each other.

# Youth held with pistol

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rapid Action Battalion members in a drive arrested a youth along with a pistol and a magazine from Joypurhat town early yesterday.

The arrestee, Nazmul Haque Badhan, 28, son of late Jahirul Haque, is a resident of Zigatola area in the capital.

Being tipped-off, a team of Rab-5 of Joypurhat camp conducted a drive at a house in Bishwaspara area of the town around 1:20am and arrested Badhan along with a 7.65mm pistol and a magazine, said Major Rahim, commanding officer of the camp.



PHOTO: STAR

Injured bKash officials Milon Roy and Rafikuzzaman at Nilphamari district hospital.

# Muggers injure 2 bKash officials in Nilphamari

Bid to snatch Tk 15 lakh foiled, three criminals held with pistol

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Locals caught three muggers with a pistol when the criminals were trying to snatch Tk 15 lakh from two bKash officials after injuring them at EPZ intersection of Sangolshi village in Sadar upazila on Nilphamari-Saidpur road yesterday noon.

Milon Roy, 25, sales distribution officer of bKash, and Rafikuzzaman, 28, supervisor, were going to Jaldhaka on a motorbike from bKash distributor Messer's Mobile Mart at Kalim More of Saidpur municipality in Nilphamari district to provide loading service to their agents, said locals and police.

With Tk 15 lakh collected from different agents on the way they reached EPZ intersection at Sangolshi village when three motorbike riders intercepted them.

One of them shot with pistol the left hand of Milon Roy who was carrying the bag containing the money.

Despite injury, Milon clutched the bag hard, foiling the muggers' attempt to snatch it.

At one stage of scuffle, the bKash officials and the muggers fell on the road and Rafikuzzaman tightly held the mugger with a pistol.

The mugger sharply bit the right hand fingers of Rafikuzzaman but the latter continued holding him tightly.

Hearing scream of the bKash officials, a good number of locals came in, caught the muggers after a long chase, and beat them up severely.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the criminals to Sadar Police Station.

The arrestees are Ahsanul Habib, 24, of Rajbari village, and Salimullah, 23, of Nasarotpur Chirirbandar village of Dinajpur district, and Mamun, 22, of Bagjana Khoddapara village in Joypurhat district, said Shahjamal Pasha, officer in charge of Sadar Police Station.

The injured bKash officials were admitted to Nilphamari District Hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Barangakhola Government Primary School in Manikganj Sadar upazila attend classes under the open sky as the schoolhouse was badly damaged by a storm on April 8.

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