

SAIDPUR AIRPORT

Flights face risk as runway design faulty

Short turning distance blamed for two recent mishaps

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Aircraft of three airlines operating regular internal flights to and from Saidpur airport face risks due to shorter than required safety distance at the turning between the runway and the taxiway.

Lack of adequate rescue and fire fighting equipment adds to the situation.

After landing on the runway, an aircraft proceeds through it and then uses the taxiway to reach the parking spot.

The safety distance between the runway and the taxiway for internal flights should be at least 500 feet but it is only 300 feet at Saidpur airport, said sources of the airport and the airlines concerned.

Consequently, aircrafts, especially big ones, face difficulties while taking turn at the end of the runway before entering the taxiway, they said.

On September 4, a wheel of Dash-8 Q-400 aircraft belonging to US-Bangla Airlines skidded off the runway while taking turn to enter the taxiway.

As the airport does not have adequate rescue arrangements, Bangladesh army with their rescue equipment reached the spot and dragged the aircraft onto the runway.

On July 13, an aircraft of the same type belonging to Bangladesh Biman dashed a small electric pole, causing fracture of a wheel.

"Flights operation to and

from Saidpur airport is risky due to its design faults and limitations. I pointed out the matter in my speech in latest session of Jatiya Sangsad last month, asking the authorities for immediate solution," said Golam Mostofa, lawmaker for Nilphamari-3 constituency, who was a victim of September 4 mishap at Saidpur airport.

Government owned Bangladesh Biman and private owned US-Bangla Airlines and United Airways regularly operate passenger flights in Dhaka-Saidpur-Dhaka route.

The first two airlines use 74-seated aircraft and the third one use 64-seated aircraft.

Important people includ-

ing lawmakers in the northern region, foreign investors in Uttara EPZ, foreign engineers and technicians in Barapukuria coal mine and Modhyapara hard rock mine frequently use the flights.

But the airport suffers from acute staff shortage, in addition to its infrastructural problems and inadequate rescue and fire fighting arrangements.

Shahin Ahmed, manager of the airport, said, "Our higher authorities are well aware of the situation. Process is on to turn it as an international airport equipped with all modern facilities for promoting trade and tourism, especially with neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan."



PHOTO: STAR

The turning between the runway and the taxiway of Saidpur airport in Nilphamari district is not spacious enough for big aircraft like this one -- Dash-8 Q-400 run by US-Bangla Airlines.

TANGAIL BY-POLLS

Symbols distributed among candidates

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

Symbols were yesterday distributed among four candidates contesting the Tangail-4 (Kalihati) by-polls slated for November 10.

Returning Officer Mohammad Alimuzzaman allocated the symbols to the candidates at his office at 11:00am.

Awami League candidate Hasan Imam Khan (Sohel Hazari) got "boat," while Krishak Sramik Janata League candidate Abdul Kader Siddique "gamchha," Bangladesh Nationalist Front candidate Aatur Rahman Khan "television," and National People's Party candidate Imrul Kayes "mango."

The candidates and their supporters attended the symbol distribution programme.

The parliamentary seat fell vacant after AL leader Abdul Latif Siddique resigned from parliament on September 1 over his remarks on Hajj made in US last year.

Latif Siddique was also expelled from the AL and the cabinet for his remarks.

Boiler blast kills one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A man was killed and two others were injured in a boiler explosion at a rice mill in Vangura upazila of the district.

The victim, Gonesh Chowdhury, 50, was a worker of the rice mill at Ashtomonisha village of the upazila.

Md Abu Zafar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Vangura Police Station, said the boiler exploded at around 5:00pm yesterday at the rice mill of Ujjal Hossain of the village.

Gonesh died on the spot while Abdul Latif, 60, and Romesa Khatun, 40, were injured, the OC said.



PHOTO: STAR

Ten-kilometre Alipur-Khajura road in Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali remains virtually unusable, thanks to the indifference of the authorities concerned.

Potholes make journey on 10-km road risky

Locals put up red flags on damaged portions

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

People of 10 villages under Kalapara upazila of the district are suffering greatly as the 10-km-long Alipur-Khajura road is in very bad shape due to lack of renovation. Movement of vehicles has stopped due to the potholes caused by heavy rainfall in the area for the last several months.

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built the road in 2005 on a flood control dam owned by the Water Development Board (WDB), but there has been no maintenance since then.

Thousands of people of Alipur, Hatempur, Nauripara, Khajura, Fasipara, Malepara, Sharifpur, Bahamakanda, Mongthoypara villages, including school students, use the road to communicate between Kuakata tourist spot and Kalapara upazila town. Fish are also carried to ice-plants along the road.

Md Nasir Uddin, a local resident, said about 4-km of the road has been badly damaged due to rainfall and lack of maintenance. Recently, the sluice-gate on Khajura canal suddenly went down and the road has become totally unfit

for use. Locals have placed red flags on the damaged spots to warn people, he added.

Md Khalilur Rahman, a teacher of Hatempur Government Primary School, said students face trouble while going to school. "We have asked the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to repair the road as soon as possible," he added.

Contacted, Md Abul Khayer, executive engineer of WDB in Kalapara, said "We have already seen the road and sluice-gate, and asked the authorities to take immediate steps for repair of the road," he added.

UP BY-POLLS IN SATKANIA

2 candidates allege intimidation by local lawmaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two union parishad (UP) chairman aspirants in Satkania upazila under the district yesterday alleged that the local lawmaker and police are threatening them to withdraw their nomination papers in the upcoming by-election for the post.

The post recently fell vacant after the local government ministry terminated the incumbent chairman Mozaffar Uddin as he is on the run for a long time and accused in numerous sabotage cases in the area.

The Election Commission declared October 28 as the election date.

Three local Awami League leaders Nurul Alam, Ramzan Ali and Moklesur Rahman Zaker are contesting for the chairmanship of Kanchana UP in Satkania upazila.

Ramzan Ali and Nurul Alam in a press conference at Chittagong Press Club yesterday alleged that local MP Abu Reza Mohammed Nezamuddin Nadvi, also a ruling AL leader, is creating pressure on them to withdraw their nomination so that his relative Moklesur Rahman Zaker get elected as UP chairman.

"After the election date was declared the MP asked us not to take part in it as his relative Moklesur Rahman Zaker is contest-

ing. As we declined to withdraw our nomination he threatened us to put on crossfire. But we did not yield and the MP is harassing us with the help of police," said Nurul Alam.

"Five adherents of Nurul Alam were arrested when they were returning from an election campaign on October 19. They were implicated in a concocted auto-rickshaw theft case," Ramzan and Alam said in a written statement.

"The Officer in Charge (OC) of Satkania Police Station is directly involved with this, taking side with the MP to keep us away from the election. We have informed the police superintendent, IGP, DIG, and

the Election Commission of the incidents but to no effect," goes the statement.

They demanded withdrawal of the OC from the police Station.

Contacted over phone, both MP Abu Reza Mohammed Nezamuddin Nadvi and OC Farid Uddin Khandakar refuted the allegations.

The MP said Ramzan Ali and Nurul Alam are trying to contest the UP election defying the decision of the district committee of AL.

The OC said, "I am not intimidating anyone with false case and arrest. The people arrested on October 19 are local criminals. Such drives and arrests will continue.

TORTURE ON HOUSEWIFE

Locals hand over dowry-greedy husband to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Aggrieved villagers beat up a man and later handed him over to the police for allegedly torturing his wife for dowry at Bishramgachi village in Palashbari upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The victim, Ranjina Begum, 28, is now undergoing treatment at Palashbari Upazila Health Complex.

Quoting witnesses, police said Shahjahan Mia, 33, of the village, also a garments factory worker in the capital, used to torture his wife Ranjina for dowry.

On Wednesday noon, the couple locked in an altercation over the issue, at one stage, Shahjahan started beating Ranjina mercilessly.

Hearing screams, neighbours went to the spot and rescued Ranjina. They beat up Shahjahan and later handed him over to the police.

A case was filed against Shahjahan under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said Mujibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Palashbari Police Station.

Land dispute leaves 40 hurt in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 40 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a land dispute at Maonpur village in Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj district on Wednesday evening.

Quoting locals, officer-in-charge of Jagannathpur Police Station Assaduzzaman said there had been a longstanding dispute between Soil Mia and Ashik Mia of the village over the ownership of a piece of land.

Both locked in an altercation over the issue the day before. As a sequel to that, supporters of the two, equipped with firearms and sharp weapons, locked in a clash at the village at around 7:00pm, leaving at least 40 people from both sides injured.

Two of them received bullet wounds during the clash. They were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital while the rest to Jagannathpur Upazila Health Complex.

None was arrested in connection with the clash as of filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday. Additional police have been deployed in the area to avert any further incident.

Patuakhali Mojar School

BY SOHRAB HOSSAIN WITH
ANDREW EAGLE

Although seven-year-old Sumon lives in a Patuakhali town shanty, to some extent he's lucky. The child has both parents: while his father, rickshaw driver Afjal Hossain, struggles to provide for the five-member family on his meagre income, Sumon's mother Nazma Begum contributes by working as a domestic help.

His parents' efforts, however, used to leave Sumon without anybody to care for him for long hours and with no productive activity to occupy him, Sumon would roam the streets. From lacking any opportunity for a formal education, Sumon's future didn't exactly look bright, despite his parent's efforts.

But fortunately for Sumon and others like him, in June 2014 seven Patuakhali college students decided to establish a school for any child in the town not yet pursuing formal education.

The Mojar School, originally situated in a leased shop on College Road in front of the Patuakhali Government College, opened its doors to 10 students, with enrolment rising in just over one year to the current 62.

"Our dream is to see a Bangladesh free of illiteracy," says Saiful Islam, one of the school's co-founders. Together with his friends he visited local slum areas to drum up enrolment. "Many of our students never attended any school," he says.

The school runs a

schedule of two daily shifts, from 7 to 8 am and 4 to 6 pm, explains Safiqul Islam, another of the institution's co-founders. Such class timings allow the college students to actively participate in tuition and other programmes.

"We also teach swimming, games and good behaviour, in the hope our students can become valuable citizens one day," says another co-founder Rezaul Karim Reza.

"To encourage regular attendance," admits fellow co-founder Imran Hossain Pial, "sometimes we treat the students with biscuits or chocolates. It makes school seem like great fun." While such gifts of sweets are often donated by socially-

minded denizens, the school's day to day costs are borne by the seven friends.

"We even save money from the change given to us by our guardians for our lunches," Safiqul says, "to run the school."

Ironically, the popularity of the school proved a significant obstacle, straining the limited accommodation. "Originally we stopped our activities," says Saiful, "but afterwards we understood it was better to conduct classes even on the road. It's not ideal but sometimes the students have to study while standing on the roadside, due to the lack of sufficient classroom space."

Yet despite such difficulties, the Mojar School is

positively impacting its student's lives. "I didn't know how to read and write," Sumon, now a student at Mojar, confesses, "But now I do. I feel great for being able to write my name and read books."

As a consequence of the school's influence, Sumon now hopes to become educated in order to better his family's practical circumstances.

Other students have similar backgrounds many laboured in simple activities such as paper recycling or as helpers in teashops and hotels. One girl, Lipi, excitedly tells this correspondent that she was learning many things at Mojar. "And we get free books, pens, pads and pencils for our study," she adds, joyfully.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Mojar School in Patuakhali town attend classes standing on two sides of the road as the school meant for arranging literacy programme for underprivileged children does not have adequate classroom.