

Bridge modern, road primitive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The bridge on Mohim Khal, a canal in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona, is used by about 10 thousand inhabitants of 20 villages to communicate with the district and upazila headquarters.

But after one of the approach roads to the bridge, in Nalchhapra village, washed away about four years ago, the authorities did nothing to repair it.

The villagers ultimately came up with a makeshift solution and made a bamboo footbridge to at least cross the concrete bridge on foot. Years have gone by, but the plight of the villagers does not seem to move the authorities concerned.

Abdul Quddus Babul, chairman of Nazirpur Union Parishad, said people of Nazirpur, Lengura and Kharnoi unions need to use the bridge on Nalchhapra-Ranigaon road for their day-to-day affairs and to reach hospitals in the upazila or district towns.

But they have been suffering immensely as the makeshift bamboo footbridge is not strong enough for movement of any vehicle, he added.

The approach road to the bridge, built in 2004 by World Vision Bangladesh, was



The makeshift bamboo footbridge that the villagers made after the approach road to the bridge, on Mohim canal in Nalchhapra village of Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila, was washed away in flash floods about four years ago.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

washed away by flash floods originating beyond the border with India, said locals. But without any restoration work conducted on the road, no vehicle can cross the

bridge now. As a result, the villagers have to travel more than double the distance to reach Kalmakanda upazila town, which is originally 12 kilometres away, they also

said. Nalchhapra village resident Mujibur Rahman said transporting agricultural goods have become difficult and expensive

without a proper bridge while even crossing the bamboo footbridge on foot gets extremely risky especially during the monsoon.

The situation over the years is getting worse as a huge crater has developed at the foot of the bridge and near the bamboo pilings of the footbridge, said Jamshed Ali from the same village.

Kapati Ghagra, head teacher of Nalchhapra High School, said about three hundred students of three schools on both sides of the bridge risk their lives to cross the bridge when the schools are open.

She also said that since flash floods occur in the area every year, a well-designed proper bridge should be constructed at the spot to relieve locals of further sufferings.

Contacted, Imran Hossain, sub-assistant engineer of Local Government Engineering Department in Kalmakanda, said they had once built the approach road to the bridge in 2015-16 fiscal year, but that too was washed away by flash floods in the following year.

"We made a proposal for constructing a 50-foot bridge at the site. It is yet to get approval," he added.

Trees chopped down without forest dept approval

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Eleven trees have been cut down inside the Ajmeriganj Upazila Health Complex in Habiganj without any approval from the forest department. A contractor has cut down the trees in the name of building a gate, causing outrage among hospital authorities and locals.

Abdul Khaleque, range officer of Ajmeriganj forest office said, "I wasn't informed about the cutting down of the 11 trees in the Upazila Health Complex. There was no discussion on this issue in any meeting."

Under the upgradation project of 31-bed Ajmeriganj Upazila Health Complex to 50-bed, a contractor named World Enterprise Construction Limited got the job of constructing the building. Work on this project worth about Tk 16 crore



is at the final stage.

Mirajul Islam, the contractor's manager, said the contractor had asked him to cut down the trees to make the gate of the hospital bigger. Besides, he knows nothing. When asked, contractor Moniruzzaman Mizan said, "The

permission to cut down the trees is not mine, but of the health engineering department."

When the assistant engineer Monirul Islam of that department was contacted on his mobile, he did not receive the call.

Ajmeriganj Health Complex Officer Dr Md Iqbal Hossain said he is currently in Dhaka. He is not aware if any approval was given for cutting down the trees. Because he joined this hospital on May 20.

He added that if the trees need cutting down, the approval of the forest department is required. In that case, there is no documentation in our office that the health engineering department and the contractor have taken approval.

Mirajul Islam, an employee of the contractor, showed the reporters a paper. Former health officer Sudarshan Sen, who signed the agreement on May 5, said that if

the guardroom and waiting area and part of the gate are enlarged, it will be better visible and more convenient. The layout has given keeping this in mind. For this, three trees need to be cut. In the interest of the hospital, the contractor will cut down the trees and hand them over to the hospital. For the time being, the trees did not seem valuable. Akashi, Pahari jam and arjuna trees. Whose circumference is 2 feet 6 inches. However, the height of the tree was not mentioned. The papers have the signatures of the contractor and the engineer in addition to the health officer.

Former Upazila Health Officer Dr Sudarshan Sen and said that the health engineer and the contractor had agreed to cut down the trees with the approval of the forest department.

"I don't know if they got approval," he said.

People suffer as bridge collapses in Gopalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A footbridge on Bairan river at Gopalpur municipality in Tangail has recently collapsed, causing sufferings of the local people.

Hundreds of people and light vehicles used to ply on the risky bridge every day. However, no casualties were reported as it collapsed on the early hours on June 11, said Asadul Hoque Masum, a local resident, who witnessed it.

Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) constructed the bridge at Konabari Bazar and Kali Temple point on 1992 in order to facilitate the movement of the local people to the local markets. However, the soil under the pillars on one side of the bridge washed away during last year's prolonged and devastating flood, locals said.

The railing of the bridge had also collapsed before where bamboos were in place to prevent accidents, they said.

The bridge was also declared risky about six years ago, said Zoynal Abedin, a local rights activist.

Although local people had been demanding that the damaged bridge be repaired but nothing was done in this regard, he said.

Rakibul Haque Chhana, mayor of Gopalpur municipality, said he has already visited the spot after the old bridge collapsed.

"Previously Tk 3 crore was allocated for constructing a new bridge in place of the vulnerable bridge on the river," he said.

Works to construct the new bridge will start as soon as possible, the Mayor said adding that now a bamboo bridge will be constructed temporarily for the movement of the people.



Caught in the cycle

Women of Pirojpur suffer due to lack of income opportunities

HABIBUR RAHMAN

"Without his income, we are powerless," says Nasima Begum, 30, a resident of the Kholpatua village in Pirojpur, when speaking about her husband, a day labourer. Nasima was married off at the tender age of 13, after finishing her primary education. Now, she is the mother of three children and is struggling to bear the cost of five family members.

Due to a lack of income sources, the women of Pirojpur are denied access to education, forced into child marriages, and lack the economic mobility required to attain some semblance of independence.

"I have tried looking for a job so many times. But because there are no opportunities for women, I am forced to rely on my husband financially. My mother also had a similar situation where even though she wanted to help my father, she could not find any income generating activities," says Nasima, adding, "My parents were forced to marry me off at the age of 13 because they could not bear my expenses. Now my daughter, who is in the seventh grade, will also have to face a similar situation."

Such is the tale of the women of Pirojpur, a coastal district. They suffer silently. They are forced to choose between child marriage and their survival.

The men of Pirojpur earn their livelihood by either fishing or working as day labourers. The income is only enough to help their families survive the cruel grip of poverty.

"My parents got me married at the age of 14 when I was a student in the seventh grade. They couldn't continue funding my studies," says Arifa Begum, 18, from Uttar Kalaron village of Indurkani Upazila.

The disparity in economic power also leads to women being unable to make critical household decisions.

"As we don't have any earnings, any suggestion we make is rarely given any weight by our husbands," shares Fazila Kajal, a housewife from Kalaron village in the Upazila.

"If we were provided with adequate training on skills that can help us become economically



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Housewife Nasima Begum, 30, from Kholpatua village of Indurkani Upazila, Patuakhali and her three daughters. Due to a lack of income sources, women of this coastal are denied access to education and proper health facilities and the girls are often forced into child marriages.

independent, or even support from the government to help us establish our own businesses, such as cattle farming, we could start earning money by ourselves, and help by contributing financially to our families," says Ayesha Begum, a local housewife.

Lucky Begum, a Union Parishad member from the Chandipur union in the Upazila, said that half of the area's population comprises women.

"While in most cases, men are the ones supporting their family, this puts all the burden on one member of the household," she says. "The government should try and provide opportunities for women. Otherwise, we'll continue to repeat the same cycle. And when providing these opportunities and facilities, the government needs to ensure that it is done transparently so that no form of funding or facilities can be misused illegally," she continues.

Howlader Moazzem Hossain, Chairman of Indurkani's Pattashi Union Parishad, said, "The facilities in place are inadequate. The government should reach out to these women and help mobilise them through various programmes. The voices of the local women need to be heard and be taken into account when facilitating economic

opportunities for them."

Khaleda Akter Hena, Organising Secretary of Pirojpur district unit of Mahila Parishad, stated, "We cannot move forward without strengthening half of the population economically. If we talk about this on a national scale, then why not here as well? We have to make sure we truly maintain the motto of 'Leave no one behind' and ensure that the women of Pirojpur are also provided with the opportunity to stand on their own."

An important part of the process of helping these women, as well as the locals of Pirojpur in general, is to create opportunities for them to be self-sufficient. The people living in these areas need to be consulted on what kind of programmes and facilities can help them. The local government and administration should allow social audits led by locals to ensure that their concerns are being addressed through the programmes established.

The government has to ensure access to information regarding income opportunities, such as loan facilities, training, entrepreneurship development, etc.. Union Parishad Digital Centres should be leveraged as the medium through which the local people can be informed about relevant services and opportunities.

Police launch 'Mask Up' campaign in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

While the government is preparing to shut the country down for at least a week from tomorrow, in its attempt to contain the coronavirus transmission, Pabna police administration on Thursday launched a mass awareness campaign to protect residents of the district.

As the virus continues to wreak havoc in bordering districts with alarmingly high rates of infection and death, Pabna police has launched an awareness campaign titled 'Mask Up'. Members of police, aside from their routine work, have been taking position at different locations in Pabna to disseminate health guidelines on how to prevent the virus by wearing face masks properly, washing hands and maintaining social distancing.

The information is also being displayed on various mediums including placards, festoons or banners at the locations. Muhibul Islam Khan, superintendent of police (SP) in Pabna, said the police administration has launched the special campaign to create awareness among people as the situation is deteriorating fast.

"The situation is really critical. So we all need to make ourselves properly aware of the pandemic. Under the circumstances, in addition to their routine duties, the members of police from 11 police stations in Pabna will take part in the 'Mask Up' campaign to build awareness among people," the SP added.

As part of the campaign, police will also distribute masks to those who cannot afford one.

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Ref. Memo No. 46.00.0000.064.15.092.18-2025 Date: 17/06/2020

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of the following work described below:

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of scheme	e-TID No.
01	MONI/GOB/2021/01	Construction of Pouro Bhabon Type B, at Monirampur Pourashava.	590804

1) This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

2) To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

3) The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to **26 July 2021, Time: 13.00.**

4) Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and also from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Shaikh Sayadul Haque
Executive Engineer (In-charge)
&
Chairperson
TEC

Monirampur Pourashava, Jashore
Phone No. 01715218171

GD-1271