



Villagers in Dilpashra union under Pabna's Vangura upazila endure perennial suffering due to the absence of a paved road in the village.

PHOTO: STAR

No road for 20,000 villagers

Residents of Betuan village in Pabna's Vangura upazila have to walk miles to go to the upazila headquarters and other destinations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Over 20,000 residents of Betuan village of Dilpashra union under Pabna's Vangura upazila have to undergo perennial suffering due to the lack of a paved road in the village.

There are five primary schools, a high school, a college, two madrasas, 12 mosques, a temple, an Eidgah and a community clinic in the remote village but there is no road link with these institutions.

"Due to the lack of road communication, we have to go to school traversing the residences of others, fields and canals in the village. When it rains, we often do not go to school," Md Rubel, a fourth-grader, said.

Due to the absence of the road, villagers have to go to the upazila headquarters and elsewhere on foot, they said.

"Due to the lack of road communication, there is no vehicular movement in the village. Villagers often go to upazila headquarters or other areas of the upazila on foot. It takes one hour to one and a half hours to reach the main road," said MdHumayun Kabir, a resident of the village.

"When most of the rural areas are getting rapidly changed due to the development initiative of the government, Betuan village remains backwards because of the absence of road communication," Humayun said.

Hasina Khatun, an elderly woman of the village, said that although the male

members of the village can move to other places crossing hurdles, it is the women who suffer the most.

Out of desperation, the villagers started filling up a canal in a bid to establish road communication on their own. However, the local administration foiled their attempt as it is an illegal act to fill up the government canal.

"There is no scope to fill up a waterbody in this way. Although the villagers need a road badly, we cannot allow them to fill up a canal for road communication. Public representatives in the area are trying to solve the long-standing problem of the village," the UNO added.

Ashok Kumar Ghosh Prono, the chairman of Dilpashra Union Parishad, however, said that over 20,000 people living in the village have been immensely suffering for many years due to the lack of road communication.

"As there is not enough land in the village for road communication, we are facing difficulty to implement any project. We have already discussed the matter with the local lawmaker. We are trying to establish road communication in the village giving utmost priority," the chairman also said.

Not always going

FROM PAGE 1

Corporation (DSCC) allocated Tk 6.2 crore in 2016-17, Tk 6 crore in 2017-18, Tk 7 crore in 2018-19, Tk 11.6 crore in 2019-20, Tk 2.97 crore in 2020-21, and proposed Tk 4.9 crore in 2021-22 for the fund.

Sources say the funds often end up in the pockets of well-off individuals.

Minu Rahman has been the councillor in the capital's Arambagh twice. She visited her children in the US at her own expense in mid-2019. But in March this year, she got Tk 2 lakh from the discretionary fund of DSCC for the medical treatment of her husband Mizanur Rahman, former vice-president of Motijheel Awami League.

Several months before receiving the fund, she became a member of DSCC's standing committee for social welfare, which is supposed to look after the underprivileged constituents.

In March this year, Nargis Mahtab, councillor of Kalabagan and vice-president of Jubo Mohila League, got Tk 2 lakh for her daughter's treatment.

In her affidavit, Nargis mentions owning two katha of land on Free School Street in Kathalbaghan. This correspondent found a seven-storey building there. Her office is on the ground floor.

On the other end of the spectrum is Ali Hossain, a vendor of scrap metal in Lalbagh. He received Tk 1 lakh for the treatment of his daughter after she lost her right arm and leg by electrocution in

November, 2017.

He needed Tk 3 lakh to buy prosthetics for his 19-year-old daughter. "I applied [to the DSCC] for Tk 3 lakh but got Tk 1 lakh," he said.

"My daughter was in the ICU of Dhaka Medical College Hospital for six months and 22 days. I spent all my savings on her treatment," he said.

Records show Tk 3.06 crore was spent from the DSCC Mayor's Discretionary Fund between July 2020 and the first week of August this year. Of the amount, Tk 60.25 lakh was donated to councillors and members of Jubo League, Jubo Mohila League, Svechhasebok League, Awami League's ward and thana committees, and Tk 23.75 lakh was distributed among people who are not members of any political party.

The rest of the money was spent on constructing mosques, buying gifts for imams and muezzins and handing out cash to the poor who suffered during the Covid-induced lockdown.

The majority of the individuals, who received the donations, are residents of Dhaka-10 constituency. The DSCC mayor was a lawmaker from that seat.

The Daily Star could not find out the identities of the beneficiaries of the DSCC mayor's discretionary fund.

"Local MPs or politically influential people often recommend names of individuals and the mayor gives them money from the fund,"

said a DSCC official.

"There are no rules specifically stating who will get the money and what will be the criteria," said a former chief accountant of a city corporation, adding that the predecessors of the current mayors also arbitrarily used the social welfare funds.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

Section 75 of the Local Government (City Corporation) 2009 Act says that on special purposes, upon the sanction of allocation by the government, a mayor could carry out emergency work in public interest without causing hindrance as much as possible to the regular work and spend from the funds allocated for the corporation.

Section 11 of the sixth schedule says rules can be formed on the "Custody, investment, operation, regulation and application of corporation fund; establishment and maintenance of sinking funds [a special fund to pay off loans] and other special funds".

But no rules have been formulated on the Mayor's Discretionary Fund.

The current DSCC mayor took an initiative to formulate a policy on the fund on October 27 last year. A draft was placed at a board meeting, but it was not finalised, says officials of the Social Welfare and Slum Development Department of DSCC.

Contacted, DSCC Chief Accounting Officer Munan Howlader said the corporation's budget and expenditure are done as per the law.

He hung up the phone when faced with further questions about the funds.

According to documents, DSCC Secretary Akramuzzaman on different occasions signed the office order on disbursement of the fund. He did not answer the phone or reply to the texts sent by this correspondent.

Wishing anonymity, a DSCC official said, "We have nothing to do. We only carry out orders."

Tofail Ahmed said the city corporation is supposed to provide services not disburse money.

"Why do city corporations give out cash to people? It's not a relief organisation," he said, adding that section 74 and 75 of the act clearly state how the money should be spent.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Atiul Islam said, "We give money after thorough scrutiny.... One or two errors may have taken place. Many people come to me crying for help. It's not easy to refuse them."

He added that the discretionary fund was created in accordance with the act. DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh could not be reached over the phone.

In reply to a text, he told this correspondent on September 28 to contact the public relations officer. Questions were sent to the officer in writing that very day.

On October 25, DSCC Public Relations Officer Abu Naser told The Daily Star that the local government act has given the mayor the power to create a discretionary fund.

East Bengal can't remain united

FROM PAGE 12

tension on its border with Pakistan for long. In an interview on French TV, she said, "I feel I am sitting on a volcano." "India will do everything to prevent war," she added.

Questioned on the possible breakup of Pakistan, she said, "I don't think any country in its right mind would want its neighbour to disintegrate. We have enough problems of our own besides having a weak neighbour. But it is our assessment that East Bengal

can't remain united with Pakistan ever again in the same way as it has been."

WORLD PEACE COUNCIL FOR INDEPENDENCE

World Peace Council stood for independence of Bangladesh, Lucio Luzata, a member of the presidential committee of the council, said at a press conference today. He informed that the Council had formally condemned massacres perpetrated by the Pakistani Army against unarmed civilians in East Pakistan.

ON THE WAR FRONT

Mukti Bahini today blew up one Pakistani Army jeep by exploding a mine in the Jashore district. In this action 3 enemy soldiers were killed. Another group of Mukti Bahini raided the Pakistani Army position in the Rasikpur area and killed 15 enemy soldiers. They also destroyed 5 bunkers of the enemy.

Mukti Bahini encountered Pakistani troops at Shahbazpur in Pabna district today killing 3 and injuring 3 enemy soldiers. On the same day, Mukti Bahini killed 3 enemy soldiers in an ambush in the Kajaldighi area.

Mukti Bahini fired today on Pakistani troops resting in the Koteswar area of Cumilla district. In this action, 20 enemy soldiers were killed.

Mukti Bahini raided today Dakhingul Tea factory, a camp of occupation troops, and killed 13 enemy soldiers.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Libya FM suspended days before int'l conference

AFP, Tripoli

Libya's presidential council suspended Foreign Minister Najla al-Mangoush from her duties Saturday days before an international conference is to make a new push to restore stability to the war-battered nation.

The council opened an inquiry into alleged "administrative

breaches" by Mangoush, spokeswoman Najla Weheba told the Libya Panorama television channel.

The El-Marsad news website, which is close to eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar, said that the council accused her of taking foreign policy decisions without consulting it.

A decree from the council

said its vice chairman Abdulla Alali would head a commission of inquiry that would report its findings within 14 days.

The political infighting in Tripoli comes amid a new international push for fresh presidential and parliamentary elections to help stabilise the war-battered North African nation.

US Vice President Kamala

Harris is to join French President Emmanuel Macron and other world leaders at a conference in Paris on November 12.

Libya expert Emadoddin Badi linked the foreign minister's suspension to comments she made about the 1988 Lockerbie bombing in a recent BBC interview, and tensions between Libyan politicians over the elections.

An 'aide'

FROM PAGE 12

local correspondent.

Iqbal Hossen, who was arrested for placing the Holy Quran inside a puja mandap, the incident that led to communal violence in several districts, said Babu was among the instigators of the attacks in Cumilla, according to police.

Babu is known among locals as the personal secretary to the Cumilla mayor. Sakku, however, had earlier said he did not have a PS but admitted that Babu often accompanied him.

Apart from Babu, police earlier arrested two others -- Roman Hasan, joint secretary of Cumilla city Svechhasebok Dal and Rabibul Islam -- in connection with the cases.

2 men killed

FROM PAGE 12

Later on the day, Nazmul's brother Shamsul Haque filed a murder case with Kamalganj Police Station, naming 14 people and 4-5 unknown persons.

Tofael and Shahid were accused in the case lodged over the murder of local business leader Nazmul which took place on October 31.

Chasm

FROM PAGE 12

momentum for climate action" including "commitments on ending our reliance on coal, increasing climate finance, tackling deforestation and plans to cut emissions."

But experts say there is actually a glaring disconnect between what some called "inflated, rehashed pledges" and genuine progress on reducing fossil fuel emissions.

END OF COAL?

On Wednesday, for instance, COP26 president Alok Sharma announced: "A 190-strong coalition has today agreed to phase out coal power".

Khaleda home after 26 days

FROM PAGE 12

said her medical board has suggested taking her abroad for better treatment.

"The medical board this time too has suggested that she be taken abroad for smooth treatment and follow-ups. She needs good quality medical treatment," AZM Zahid Hossain, her physician, told journalists.

He said the BNP chairperson expects better treatment and she sought prayers from the people of the country for her sound health.

Speaking to journalists, Fakhrul said, "She is well now."

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on October 12. Her temperature had started fluctuating a few days before that.

After admission, she underwent several medical tests.

On October 25, AZM Zahid told reporters that a lump was found in her body and it was sent for biopsy. The

hospital later confirmed that the lump was non-cancerous.

Khaleda has long been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, as well as dental and optical issues.

She was infected with Covid-19 this April and underwent treatment at home. However, due to other health complications, she was admitted to Evercare Hospital on the 27th of that month.

She was kept in the coronary care unit and remained there for almost two months. She went back home on June 18.

The BNP chief was sent to jail on February 8, 2018, in a corruption case. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, on March 25 last year, she was granted temporary release on certain conditions. The term of her release has been extended four times so far.

Khaleda's family has appealed to the government for her to be sent abroad for medical treatment. However, there has been no response in this regard yet.

The three convicts are Nuruddin Sentu, Azanur Rahman and Mamun Hossain.

Convict Shukur has the right to seek a review of the apex court verdict and presidential mercy. He needs the full text of the SC verdict for moving a petition before it seeking review of the judgement.

Sabina, daughter of Abdul Malek Jhonu in Lahnagar village of Kushtia's Daulatpur, went to a neighbour's house to watch television at the night on March 25, 2004. The convicts abducted her while she was returning home. They took her to a tobacco field, raped and killed her. The following day, her father filed a case with Daulatpur Police Station in connection with the incident.

On February 4, 2009, the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Tribunal of Kushtia convicted and sentenced five accused -- Shukur, Sentu, Azanur, Mamun and Kamrul to death in the case.

In the meantime, convicted accused Kamrul died in jail, another defence lawyer Raghib Rauf Chowdhury earlier told The Daily Star.

Then the convicts filed separate appeals with the HC, challenging the trial court verdict.

In 2014, the HC confirmed their capital punishment. Later, the convicts filed appeals with the Appellate Division challenging the HC verdict.

New dinosaur

FROM PAGE 12

Cold Bone belongs to a group of long-necked dinosaurs called the sauropodomorphs, which includes the sauropods.

Some of the largest terrestrial animals of all time later evolved from this group, including diplodocus.

An international team of palaeontologists from Brazil, Portugal, Germany and Denmark have detailed the species in a study published in the journal Diversity.