



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

It's a granary... it's a hut... no it's a post office!

Mud-made post office in operation for 40 years

While it looks like an age-old abandoned structure, waiting to be dissolved with time, it is the only way to receive official and registered letters for residents living within a six-mile radius.

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Looks are more than often deceiving, and this post office in Chattogram is proof of that.

In an era when letters have become almost obsolete, a 40-year-old post office — that too a structure made of mud — stands beside the Chattogram-Anwara-Banskhali Highway, still functional.

The Taylardwip Post Office, brandishing a small red post box on its wall, is a 50-foot long and 15-foot wide mud-made structure with a tinshed ceiling and walls made of clay and rice husk.

While it looks like an age-old abandoned structure, waiting to be dissolved with time, it is the only way to receive official and registered letters for residents living within a six-mile radius.

According to Amir Hossain, Taylardwip Post Office's extra departmental agent, it was built on land owned by the family members of former MP Sarwar Zamal Nizam.

"Since our childhood, we have borne witness to the mud-made structure, as our residence was nearby," said the 55-year-old.

Perhaps it's this history that makes Amir especially dedicated to the structure's maintenance. Because regardless of the air



of nostalgia attached to it, the post office has its woes as well.

"During last monsoon, water started leaking from the ceiling. There is no maintenance bill centrally allocated for the office. I tried to repair the wall on my own multiple times," said Amir.

"I am given only an additional Tk 15 for carrying official cost," said Amir, adding that he also bears the electric bill of the office from his own pocket.

He joined as the EDA in 2017. Every morning, the runner brings letters from the

Patiya Post office, which are later registered and distributed by office assistant Md Monir.

This correspondent found from the register that a total of 61 letters were received and delivered in December 2021.

Amir said post officials had attempted to build a modern structure, but the initiative did not see light due to a lack of land.

Contacted, Muhammad Abdullah, deputy postmaster general of Chattogram, said he had no knowledge of such an establishment.

"I have noted down the issue. Unfortunately, I am yet to visit the office. I will see to it personally," he said.

Wildlife boom at CU

Lockdown, awareness campaigns played key role

NAIMUR RAHMAN

The 2,100-acre Chittagong University (CU) campus is blessed with biodiversity. It's filled with wild animals, mostly due to its geographical location as little forests, massive trees and hillocks surround the entire campus.

According to researchers and CU's Department of Zoology, there are 90 species of snakes in the country, 36 of whom can be found at CU alone. In addition, more than 150 species of birds, 22 species of frogs, wild boars and approximately 368 species of insects have been discovered at CU so far.

Mohammad Forhadul Islam, lab assistant at CU and a wildlife rescuer, said, "To keep this area in tact, we must not cut down large trees and deep forest bushes so that wild fauna can live in a favourable environment."

The pandemic has had a crucial effect on this situation, as the university campus was shut down for a long period, he said. During this time, wildlife around the campus enjoyed favourable conditions to breed.

For example, a 12ft python was seen in broad daylight at the university's social science research institute. In the past, snakes of similar stature wouldn't get to live so long, as locals used to kill them without informing the authority.

"Squirrel and snake population is booming since they have had less predators and less human interactions on the campus," said Wahed Chowdhury, assistant professor of zoology at CU.

"Locals have become more lenient and aware of the significance of the flora and fauna due to our promotion of co-existence as well," he added.

"However, the number of Indian muntjac (a species of deer) has been decreasing due to poaching, while bird and fox populations are also on the wane for food and habitat shortage," he added.

However, some wildlife rescue teams are working on the campus to restore the balance. One of them is "Snake Rescue Team BD", which is working to save snakes and other reptiles.

The team has released over 2,000 snakes in campus adjacent areas over the course of the last two years. Arshad Nafiz, a member of the team, said, "We rescue reptiles and examine if it's venomous or not and release them in their natural habitat."



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Guliakhali beach to get a makeover

Guliakhali isn't your regular sea beach. As opposed to an expected sandy setting, its green grass beds, hundreds of small channels and trees give it a unique identity. During high tide, salt water flows through the canals combined with the fresh breeze coming in from the deep seas, which means tranquility is never too far away.

SIFAYET ULLAH

To preserve these natural bounty, the government has chalked up a special plan for the beach, which falls under Sitakunda upazila, by declaring it a protected area.

The government has issued a gazette notification in this regard on January 11.

Following this, a development project has been undertaken, under which restaurants, resorts, scenic wooden bridges, shopping complexes and parking spaces will be constructed in Guliakhali.

According to the Beach Management Committee, a 5km long, 24ft wide road will be constructed from Sitakunda to Guliakhali, while an international standard resort and restaurant will be built in the beach area.

A one-acre parking lot, a washing block and a mini shopping complex, as well as umbrellas, will be set up along the beach as well.

"The bridge will be constructed to ease travel during monsoon," said Md Shahadat Hossain, member secretary of the committee and UNO of Sitakunda. "The beach will be open to all without any entry fee," he added.

During a recent visit to the beach, 40km



from Chattogram city, hundreds of people were seen enjoying their time there.

"Cox's Bazar's development has flourished based on tourism. If Guliakhali becomes a tourist zone, the socio-economic conditions of Sitakunda will change," said Nasir Uddin Anik, a local resident.

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"But the natural conditions of the beach must be preserved, since we've come across many instances where natural beauty was destroyed due to lack of proper planning and rampant urbanisation," said Md Shahin Islam Khan, chief town planner of Chattogram Development Authority. "If the new infrastructures are built in an eco-friendly manner, it will carry a positive message for everyone."

