



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Pages turning to dust

Khulna Public Library overlooked, ignored

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

A library of almost six decades, with a collection of 1,27,000 books. An average of 150 readers every day, intently studying with pin-drop silence in the spacious reading room.

But what are they reading? That is where the shock comes in. A divisional library so rich, but readers are only there to study job guides -- revealed a recent visit by this correspondent to Khulna Divisional Government Public Library.

Immamul Haque Masuk, a BL College graduate and job-seeker, goes to the library to prepare for job examinations. He is accompanied by his 10 friends from Muigunni area every day.



However, 14,000 of them are missing, and 8,000 are severely damaged.

The number of general readers has dropped to a great extent, which made way for job seekers to come and fulfil their purpose in the library. The library has 210 registered members who are authorised to take books home.

Not even one reader on average has done that in quite a while.

The library authorities too are stocking different job examination books to accommodate this, as confirmed by Md Ahsan Ullah, principal librarian and deputy director.

"Otherwise, we'll lose the remaining readers as well. Job-seekers are currently the main beneficiaries of the establishment," he said.

Anwarul Kadir, former professor of Government Sundarban Adarsha College and a civil society leader, told this correspondent about the library building's dilapidated condition, with no foreseeable effort of renovation.

"The window glasses are shattering. The roof leaks when it rains."

"The building was declared risky 10 years ago by the public works department. The design doesn't allow a vertical extension. The authority has to come up with a solution,"

added Kadir.

The crises don't just end here. The library is severely understaffed. Thirteen out of 28 posts of officers and library staffers are currently vacant. There is no proper server network for its operations, coupled with poor internet connection. Scanners and copy machines are also out of order, making the entire establishment almost dysfunctional.

Meanwhile, the original rich collection continues to rot away.

The books are not stored properly, making way for chances of damage. During the visit to the library, this correspondent found piles of books stacked messily, with a thick layer of dust on top.

This correspondent saw hundreds of torn books scattered on the floor, while writings of many books almost faded away.

A book titled "Baruni Baran" was seen in the middle of a book shelf, completely unreadable. As this correspondent tried to make sense of the book, it was seen that the book was published in 1964 from Kolkata.

Another book, "Baspio Baborohider Proti Upodesh", was at least over a century old.

"We have repeatedly informed the higher authorities about the problems. They are considering demolishing the old building and constructing a new nine-storey building with modern facilities," said Ahsan Ullah.

Once again, trees fall victim to dev

RHD cutting down 622 trees for road expansion



ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

More than one hundred trees have already been cut down and several hundred more are in the process to embrace the same fate. It is the situation of a portion of Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway.

The Roads and Highway Department have been cutting the trees to expand the road from Shikalbaha Y Junction to Patiya Bypass stretching around 20 kilometres.

During a recent visit, it was seen that the workers were busy cutting trees in Shikalbaha, Manasa Intersection and Badamtol Intersection in Patiya upazila. Mainly rain trees were dominating among the other trees.

However, locals are not happy with these activities. They said cutting down trees started around one month ago. Over 100 trees have already been cut down in a five-kilometre area between Shikalbaha and Badamtol.

Abdur Rahim, a local in the Manasa area, said many of the trees cut down were 50 to 60 years old.

"These trees give us shade and wind and make the environment of the area cool and calm," he added. "Hundreds of birds have made their nests in those trees for years and as the trees are being cut down, the birds are also losing their shelters," he said.

Mizanur Rahman of Badamtol area echoed him.

According to sources, a Tk 65-crore project started in March this year and is scheduled to be completed in March next year. The two-lane road would be expanded from the present 18 feet width to 38 feet. To start the work of the project, RHD applied to the forest department for cutting down a total of 1,084 trees in the project area.

Contacted, Shafiqul Islam, divisional forest officer of Chattogram (south zone), said RHD did not seek any permission from them for cutting down the trees initially.

According to Forest Materials Transport (Control) Rules 2011, taking permission from the forest department is a must for cutting trees, said Shafiqul. "When we informed them, they sought permission to cut down a total of 1,084 trees in the area last month."

"As it is a development project related to public interest, we have given them the permission to cut down the trees on the condition that they would plant trees on both sides of the road once the works of the project are completed," he said.

Suman Singha, executive engineer of RHD (Dohazari subdivision) in Chattogram, said it was necessary to cut down trees for the expansion of the road. "Initially we thought to cut down 1,084 trees but now we have decided to cut down 622 trees," the official added.

"We will plant trees three times more than the number of fallen trees on both sides of the road once the works of the project are completed," he said, answering to a question on the adverse impact on the environment due to the cutting down of trees.

Asked, environmentalist Prof Dr Idris Ali said cutting down this many trees altogether would have an adverse impact on nature, especially in balancing the ratio of O2 and CO2 in the area.

Steps should have been taken to balance the development project and conserving the environment at the same time as per the guideline of experts, he said.

The crises don't just end here. The library is severely understaffed. Thirteen out of 28 posts of officers and library staffers are currently vacant. There is no proper server network for its operations, coupled with poor internet connection. Scanners and copy machines are also out of order, making the entire establishment almost dysfunctional.



"It's not possible for us to buy all the job-help books. So, coming to the library is always the better option. I can also read several magazines," said Masuk.

Labonno Mondal, also a BL College graduate and job-seeker, who has been visiting the library regularly for one and a half years, echoed him.

The library -- a two-storied building of 31,000 square feet -- stands at the corner of Boyra College intersection on the city's Upper Jashore Road.

Established in 1964 and upgraded to the status of a divisional public library in 1982, the establishment's catalogue shows that it currently has 87,000 Bangla and 38,000 English books in stock.

The unwelcoming gates of Barishal

Construction of city gates left incomplete for 7 years

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The unfinished city gates at the two ends of Barishal city have been around for a long time as a symbol of the authority's unplanned constructions.

These gates also pose an obstacle for the expanded Barishal-Dhaka highway if vehicle traffic increases after the inauguration of Padma Bridge.

According to the engineering department of Barishal City Corporation, on June 11, 2015, a work order was given for construction of the gates in Goriarpur and Shaheed Abdur Rob Sernbiabat Bridge areas of the city.

A construction company was given the job at a cost of Tk 2.74 crore for the Goriarpur area. The work was supposed to be completed in March 2018. But the construction work stopped only after 33 percent completion.

On the other hand, approximately Tk 2.36 crore was allocated for the other gate's construction on the slope of Shaheed Abdur Rob Sernbiabat bridge. Not



PHOTO: TITU DAS

It has been seven years since the construction work of the two gates at the entrance and exit of Barishal city has been left incomplete. Meanwhile, authorities continue to blame lack of funds as the reason for the delay. This photo was taken in Barishal's Goriarpur area yesterday.

A field bereft of its purpose

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

For the last three years, a field in Ruknakanda in Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila has remained completely unusable, denying children the opportunity to play.

Moreover, concrete electric poles, meant for infrastructural development of the locality, have been kept piled up on it all these years.

Locals have long been demanding removal of poles, but to no avail.

They said almost 200 electric poles were kept on the Ruknakanda ground beside Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road for three years now.

"Till this date, locals are unaware of who is responsible for this incident," said Abdul Kalam Azad, secretary of

Sramik League, Douhakholia union unit.

Md Habibur Rahman, ward secretary of Awami League's Douhakholia union unit, said, "Now bushes have grown up making the ground unfit for use."

Locals also alleged that they informed Abdullah Al Noman, the residential engineer (RE) of the Power Development Board (PDB) in Gouripur, but no action has been taken yet.

As the field is next to the mosque, locals used to perform their Eid prayers there. They said with Eid approaching, they have no choice but to perform prayers blocking the Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road to accommodate such a large congregation.

Md Abdul Qaiyum, chairman of

