

RISKY BRIDGES ON FANAI RIVER

People suffer as LGED, WDB trade blame

MINTU DESHWARA

A total of six bridges built on Fanai river, flowing through the southern part of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, have either collapsed or partially broken down allegedly due to unplanned dredging of the river.

Finding no alternative, more than one lakh people of several villages under the upazila have been compelled to use those risky bridges on different rural roads for nearly two years, risking their lives.

Contacted, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) authorities in Moulvibazar, alleged that the bridges have been completely damaged due to the re-dredging of the river in an unplanned way by Water Development Board (WDB).

On the other hand, the WDB authorities claimed that LGED constructed the unplanned bridges without taking into account the proper measurement of the river.

According to the LGED authorities, a 40-feet-long bridge on Palgaon-Mukundapur road in Rautgaon union was constructed under the Bridge Culvert Construction Project of the Department of Disaster Management at a cost of Tk 22 lakh in 2011-12 fiscal.

In 2018-19 fiscal, another bridge was constructed on Bhabanipur-Helapur road under the same project, spending about Tk 33 lakh.

Meanwhile, LGED constructed the other four bridges -- on Hashimpur-Laxmipur road, Bhabanipur-Nortan-Tilasijura road, Mukundapur-Kabiraji road and Gutguti-Kabiraji road -- at a cost of about Tk 30 lakh in 1997-98 fiscal.

In 2021-22 fiscal, WDB re-excavated about 40 kilometres of the Fanai, spending Tk 17 crore.

However, before the re-excavation work was completed, heavy rain from the upstream caused landslides that damaged the bridges, according to WDB.

During a recent visit to these areas, this correspondent saw the bridge on Palgaon-Mukundapur road had collapsed due to the landslides.

Locals placed a makeshift bamboo platform on the collapsed part for movements, but major accidents can happen at any time.

Only CNG-run auto-rickshaws and motorcycles were seen plying the other five vulnerable bridges.

Out of the six bridges, two bridges collapsed over a year ago.

Although LGED hung signboards on

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This bridge on Hashimpur-Laxmipur road in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila has partially collapsed due to alleged unplanned dredging of the Fanai river. PHOTO: STAR

Evercare Chattogram replants amputated hand successfully



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Evercare Hospital Chattogram has successfully replanted an amputated hand of a patient.

During a press conference at the hospital yesterday, Dr Rivu Raj Chakraborty, a trauma surgery specialist, said the right hand of Mokarram Hossain, 42, was severed in an attack by criminals in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar on January 11.

Local police sent Mokarram, driver of a CNG-run three-wheeler, to the hospital along with his severed hand.

"With the consent of the patient and his family, we decided to perform a quick surgery," Dr Rivu Raj said.

The bones, blood vessels, nerves and muscles of his hand were attached through an 11-hour surgery, he added.

It was a very time-consuming and complicated surgery which require advanced technology and management, he said, adding, "We are glad that we could conduct the surgery successfully."

After the surgery, the patient was kept under proper observation and he was able to go home after eight days, the physician said. While talking to reporters at the conference, Mokarram said, "I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr Rivu Raj and his team. My family and I are very satisfied with the management and overall services of the hospital. I am now doing well and can move my wrist now."

Dr Rivu Raj's team members, cardiovascular surgery specialist Dr Md Sanaul Haque Sarkar and the patient's relatives were also present at the press conference.

It was a very time-consuming and complicated surgery which require advanced technology and management.

DR RIVU RAJ CHAKRABORTY
A trauma surgery specialist

NAJIRGANJ-DHAWAPARA ROUTE

Ferry service limps due to poor facilities

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Although ferry services on Najirganj-Dhawapara route, connecting Pabna and Rajbari districts through the mighty Padma river, kicked off on January 1, it failed to attract travellers and bring any fruitful result for lack of necessary facilities.ccc

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) used to operate small utility ferries on the same route for nearly 25 years. But the service was irregular due to lack of RHD's expertise.

Recently, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) took charge of the route and started operating k-type ferries. But the operations began without arranging necessary facilities, including construction of a terminal, an alternative pontoon (ghat) and road widening works.

Trucker Abdul Kader, who was carrying poultry feed from Sirajganj to Madaripur, said travelling through Najirganj ferry ghat reduces at least 150km path, but sometimes they have to wait for hours to board on a ferry.

"Although ferries are available here, ferry service is delayed for lack of sufficient vehicles," he said.

Jahidul Islam, a BIWTC official at Najirganj Ferry Ghat, said in order to operate a ferry it needs at least 10 heavy vehicles or trucks on board.

Sometimes, they have to wait for hours to get sufficient vehicles for ferry operation.

"Currently, two k-type ferries are operational on the route every day, but most of the times none of those get sufficient vehicles," he said.

Ashrafur Islam, another truck driver, said sometimes they have to



A goods-laden truck struggles to board a ferry due to this narrow road that connects the pontoon at Najirganj Ghat in Pabna's Sujanagar. PHOTO: STAR

wait for five to six hours.

But as there is no parking facility, they are forced to park the vehicles on the narrow road connecting the ghat, he said.

If four to five 5 trucks are parked on the road, it badly hampers vehicular movements, he added.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw only 20 to 25 vehicles can cross the river on ferries every day due to lack of necessary facilities.

Moreover, about 25 BIWTC staff were found working on either side of the newly inaugurated route.

BIWTC Manager Shafayet Ahmed, also in charge of Najirganj-Dhawapara ferry service, said, "For smooth ferry operation, two pontoons (ghats), one in low and the other in high water level, are required."

Besides, vehicles often struggle to reach the spot on time as the road, connecting the pontoon, is narrow.

Meanwhile, many passengers, who were travelling to Rajbari from Pabna, alleged that an influential syndicate have been forcing them to travel on small boats at double cost.

"I often need to go to Rajbari for professional reason and if I take the ferry, it costs me Tk 30." "But when I reach the ferry ghat, men of the lease holder often forces me to travel on boats, spending Tk 70," Sirajul Islam of Pabna's Sujanagar upazila said.

Contacted, Kazi Shajahan, one of the lease holders of the ferry ghat, said boats are there to carry the passengers in case the ferries are unavailable.

"We've take lease of the ghat for a year," he added.

ROHINGYAS, HOST COMMUNITY
USAID announces \$75m assistance

UNB, Dhaka

The USAID has announced an additional USD 75 million in humanitarian assistance to help Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and members of the host community to meet ongoing needs that have been exacerbated by the increasing costs of food and fuel.

With this new funding, USAID will work with the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) to provide critically needed food and nutrition assistance, infrastructure maintenance, disaster risk reduction, and logistics support, said a press release.

This new funding will provide assistance to nearly 600,000 people. The food and nutrition assistance includes electronic vouchers for staple and fresh foods at designated distribution sites as well as support to feeding programmes for malnourished children six months to five years of age, and pregnant and lactating women, it said.

A better world for the children

Global campaign 'Generation Hope' launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to tackle economic inequality by ensuring fair funding to prioritise children's rights and well-being, Save the Children, in partnership with child-rights organisation Breaking the Silence, launched the global campaign "Generation Hope" yesterday.

The campaign will be implemented nationwide for the next five years. Generation Hope, which was launched at hotel in the capital, is a global flagship campaign of Save the Children that focuses on accelerating action to address the connected crises of economic inequality and climate emergency to create a better world for children.

Dr Ian Fry, United Nations special rapporteur, joined the event virtually as a special guest.

Tasmima Hossain, chairperson of Breaking the Silence; Onno van Manen, Save the Children Bangladesh's country director; Dr Shamim Jahan, deputy country director; and Iftekhar Mahmud, Prothom Alo special correspondent, among others, spoke at the event.

Eight more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, three of them from outside Dhaka.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue cases rose to 523 while total number of deaths this year is six, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Some 48 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, added DGHS.



Water is being drained out using shallow machines from a beel at Katakali village in Jashore's Monirampur upazila. PHOTO: COLLECTED

DELAY IN DRAINING OUT WATER

Boro farming on 57 beels faces setback

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Boro farming on 57 beels (waterbodies) is facing a serious setback in Jashore's Keshabpur and Monirampur upazilas due to a delay in draining out water from the low lands by influential fish enclosure owners.

As a result, hundreds of farmers in the eastern part of the upazila are in fear that they may not be able to plant Boro saplings in time this season.

Farmers alleged that although they have paid the water drainage bill in advance, owners of the fish enclosures are reluctant to drain out the water during the high time of the ongoing Boro season.

Of the 57 beels, 27 beels are in Keshabpur and 30 in Monirampur upazila.

After monsoon, stagnant water of all the 57 beels are drained out through eight sluice gates at Katakali and Mangalkot in Monirampur upazila.

The drained-out water of the beels falls into the Srinadi river through Pathra Canal.

Farmer Habibur Rahman of Pathra village said according to the agreements, owners of the enclosures will drain out the stagnant water of the beels within the Bangla month of poush, so that farmers can prepare the low lands for Boro cultivation.

This season the enclosure owners are demanding Tk 1,200 from the farmers for draining out per bigha land, but such condition is not included in their agreements, he alleged.

Even though farmers have already paid Tk 26 lakh as electricity bill, the closure owners are neither returning their money back nor draining out the water timely, they alleged.

Mahiruddin Biswas, present of Water Drainage Committee, said they have set

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 27
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:35 12:30 4:15 5:46 7:15
JAMAAT 6:10 1:15 4:30 5:50 7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION