



# The misfortune of Ichamati

River on the verge of dying due to pollution, encroachment

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SIFAYET ULLAH

Seventy-year-old Akbar Ali was born on the bank of the Ichamati. In his childhood, many boats used to ply the river, while fishers could also make a living out of it.

But gone are the days, thanks to pollution, encroachment and sand extraction. Ichamati, one of the main freshwater rivers in Chattogram, is now on the verge of extinction.

According to data from Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), Ichamati, which originated from Rangamati' Kawkhali, falls into the Karnaphuli near Chattogram's Rangunia upazila.

BWDB built 3 hydrometric stations on the 37km long and 32m wide river for irrigation.

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Tayen Kumar Tripura, executive engineer of BWDB, told The Daily Star that traders are constantly extracting sand from this river illegally, resulting in the erosion of its banks.



During a recent visit to this area, this correspondent found that enormous piles of trash are dumped into the river at various points.

Rojarhat stands on the banks of the Ichamati and works as the primary point of pollution, where wastes are dumped indiscriminately. Recently, the Rangunia municipal authority has removed 400 trucks of waste from this point.

Md Shahjahan Sikder, mayor of Rangunia Municipality, said, "Due to the dumping of waste in Ichamati river, it is getting polluted. The long-standing practice of dumping waste in rivers must be changed. A plan has been taken to enhance the beauty of the river.

Signboards have been put up, warning people not to litter."

Aliur Rahman, general secretary of Chattogram River and Canal Protection Movement, said rivers are being polluted by businesses, households and sewage every day.

"The harm caused to the rivers by plastic waste is indescribable. We must have a thorough strategy in place to stop this," he added.

According to the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995, river encroachment and pollution are criminal offences.

Contacted, Mofidul Alam, director of the Department of Environment in Chattogram region, said, "Due to the shortage of human resources, we cannot always take prompt action against the polluters. However, we continue to carry out regular inspections to keep the rivers free from pollution."

"Dredging of the river is required to keep the water flowing... we have already verbally informed the higher authorities in this regard," said BWDB executive engineer Tayen Kumar Tripura.

## When a little goes a long way

Mehedi Hasan Dolon, a cop changing community through personal initiatives

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Nur Islam, 45, residing in the port city's Pahartali area, had lost both his legs in a train accident, pushing his life and family into uncertainty.

Just at the brink of losing all hope, he met with a police constable, Mehedi Hasan Dolon, who emerged as a guardian angel in his life. With the help of a few friends and well-wishers, Dolon managed a second-hand battery-run rickshaw for him which changed Nur Islam's life completely.

Now Nur Islam can earn a living driving the battery-run rickshaw.

This isn't a one-off instance. Dolon has put a smile on several faces by changing their lives through his initiatives. Dolon is now working at Chattogram Range Office in the port city.

When Dolon joined the Bangladesh Police in 2016 as a constable, he had the vision to support his family financially.

But after joining the force, negative comments and attitudes from the public about root-level policing upset him continuously, encouraging him to do something exceptional to redefine his new identity.

And with this desire, he started to aid the people in need around him.

In his six-year career, Dolon helped around 500 people in Bandarban, his hometown Laxmipur and Chattogram by taking support from others.

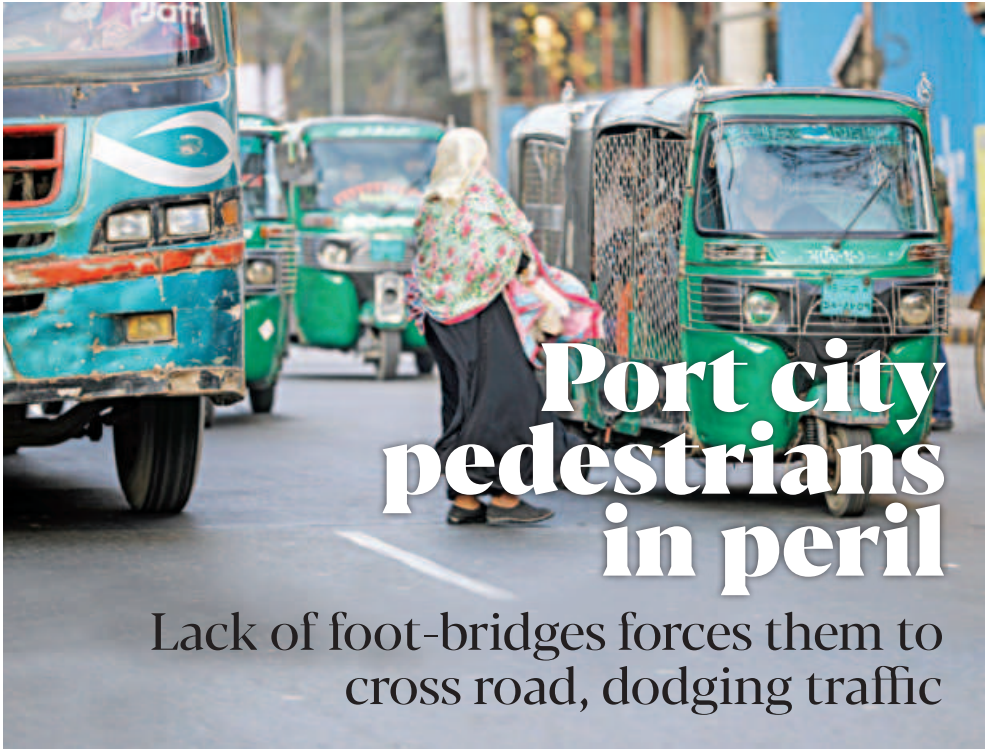
He has installed two informal institutions titled "Humanitarian Schools" for underprivileged children in Bandarban and the port city's Jhawtala area. In the two schools, around 110 students are studying and the police constable has been bearing the cost of books, papers, and other items.

He has also provided sewing machines to women, and mobile grocery shops to physically disabled persons to turn their fate.

"Several well-wishers have also joined me to support this endeavour," he said.

"Earlier, I used to beg for alms in Kazir Dewri area. But Dolon had given me a mobile shop to sell betel-nut which changed my fate," said Nazu Begum.

Dolon said when he started his humanitarian initiatives, he had no vision. "But now, I want to do something for them to change the community who are deprived of their basic needs," he said.



## Port city pedestrians in peril

Lack of foot-bridges forces them to cross road, dodging traffic

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Putting their lives at risk, pedestrians in different intersections of Chattogram city are compelled to cross the road by dodging speedy traffic, as most of these points do not have foot-over bridges.

Road crashes have been increasing day by day in the country, and according to experts, one of the reasons behind this is pedestrians crossing roads unsafely, in absence of foot-bridges. Chattogram city is no exception.

Visiting different areas of the port city and talking to locals, it was known that pedestrians have been suffering due to a dearth of foot-bridges in around 40 areas.

For example, Monwara Begum, a resident of Lalkhan Bazar area, takes her daughter to her school in Jamal Khan area, and so has to cross Lalkhan Bazar intersection every day.

"I accompany my daughter to and from school. To get a transport, we have to cross the very wide Lalkhan Bazar intersection," said Monwara. "It takes at least 15 seconds to cross, and vehicles zoom by very often when pedestrians are in the middle of the road."

"We have to take on this risk every day," she said. "I request the authority to build a foot-over bridge here immediately."

The city currently has 12 foot-over bridges at different intersections. One of these bridges, in Muradpur intersection, remains buzzing with pedestrians from morning to midnight since its installation in 2019,



according to Md Asad, who has been selling fruits there for a decade.

"Earlier, people had to suffer to cross the road," he said. "Now, they can do so safely."

Contacted, Mozammel Haque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association, said, "In our study, it was revealed that 9,951 people died and 12,356 were injured in 6,749 road crashes in the country last year."

"Most of the accidents occurred on highways, especially on Dhaka-Chattogram and Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highways," he said. "In city areas, the main reasons for accidents were lack of foot-over bridges and footpaths on busy roads, and vehicles racing to get passengers."

SM Abu Tayab, president of Nirapad Sarak Chai, Chattogram unit, echoed the same.

**CCC TO BUILD 38 FOOT-BRIDGES**

CCC has taken an initiative to construct 38 foot-over bridges, said sources in the city corporation.

The structures would be constructed under a project titled "Development of various roads including Airport Road and important infrastructure development under jurisdiction of CCC".

CCC Chief Engineer Rafiqul Islam said the project, worth Tk 2,491 crore, was approved in the meeting of Executive Committee of National Economic Council on January 4 last year.

"We expect to start the project work in two to three months," he added.

## Good news for adventure aficionados

Basecamp introduced at Foy's Lake Amusement World

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A basecamp for people of all ages, offering a thrilling experience for the residents, has been introduced at Foy's Lake Concord Amusement World in the port city.

Foy's Lake is situated at Pahartali covering around 336 acres of land having natural lakes and hillocks. The complex consists a dry park, water park, and resort. Now basecamp is the latest addition to the complex.

According to the officials, every year around 30 lakh visitors visit different parks of Concord group.

The packages of the basecamp, which was inaugurated on January 29, start from Tk 150 to Tk 3,000 depending on the client's demands, said the organisers.

Concord Entertainment Co Ltd and Basecamp Adventures Limited jointly introduced the outdoor activity camp inside Foy's Lake Concord Amusement World.

The major attractions of this basecamp are kayaking, archery, wall climbing, wood cabin, night trail, tree top activities, team building games



and many other outdoor activities with an aim to provide an adventurous experience to visitors, said officials.

Visitors can also now enjoy zip lining here.

Addressing a press conference at Foy's Lake, Shahriar Kamal, managing director of Concord Group, said, "To add a new dimension to the tourism sector in

the country, we've set up an adventure tourism project like basecamp. We have plans to add more features in the future."

Tamzid Siddique Spandan, founder of Basecamp Adventures Limited, Anup Sarkar, executive director (marketing) of Concord Group, and Mahbub Zaman, chairman of Basecamp Limited, were also present.



PHOTO: COURTESY