

‘Life seemed better under union parishad’

The plight of DNCC wards 52, 53 under zone 6

In July 2017, Dhaka North City Corporation took 18 wards under its wing, which were previously under the union parishad system. It divided the newly added wards into 5 zones. While this move came with a promise of development for these wards, the reality after five years is way far from that. They remain as backward as they used to be, if not more. The Daily Star explored the plight of these neglected wards in a five-story series. Today we look into wards 52 and 53 under zone 6.

Shamim Hossain, a youth of Chondalvog area, said, “Our standard of living is significantly lower than Uttara, though it’s just a few kilometres away.”

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

If anyone visits the capital’s Uttara area, they will find some attractive wide roads, surrounded by high-rise buildings, like the ones we see in a modern city. Expensive cars and other vehicles regularly pass through these roads.

But just a few metres ahead, when they reach Ranabhola Bazar after crossing Sector 10, they will be astounded to see the same city in such a disarray.

Ranabhola Bazar, which was previously under Harirampur union, became a part of Dhaka North City Corporation in 2017, but is yet to see any development.

While visiting wards 52 and 53 (under zone 6), these correspondents were having trouble realising that these areas are part of the capital. Residents living in that area are completely deprived of civic amenities.



ROADS IN RUINS

In a recent visit, these correspondents found that the roads in Baunia area under ward-52 were dilapidated, filled with numerous potholes.

The situation deteriorates during monsoon when the entire area goes under filthy, foul smelling water. The same scenario was found while visiting ward-53, which stretches from Dharangartek intersection to Nayanagar Chairman Bari Mor via Tetultola area. The road from Ranabhola Bottola to Nayanagar Chairman Bari Mor through Bamnartek also resembles the poor condition of the newly-added wards.

Bamnartek’s roads are mostly made of earth. When it rains, the roads go in ruins, making it more difficult for vehicles to travel on them. According to residents, this increases the risk of accidents.

Patients who need to go to hospitals become the worst sufferers, they said.



Ayesha Siddiqua, a Bamnartek resident who is currently pregnant, stated that she recently fell from an auto-rickshaw and was severely injured while on her way to see a doctor. Many of the residents of the area shared similar ordeals.

POOR DRAINAGE, MOSQUITO MENACE

Locals alleged that due to absence of a proper drainage network and sewage system, roads often get muddy or submerged in knee-deep water even after a short spell of rain. Besides, as there is no designated garbage disposal area, waste spreads to different places during this time.

As a result, the localities become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, making residents vulnerable to dengue fever.

Abdul Mazid, a resident of Nalbhog area, said, “Despite our initial high hopes, the situation has remained unchanged even five years after our area became a part of DNCC.”

“Elections come, we cast our votes, we see new councillors, but our conditions remain unchanged,” he added.

SECURITY CONCERNS

Though a large number of residents live in these areas, there are no sufficient street lights along the roads. As a result, people are afraid to step outside after dark.

Residents of Badaldi, Uludaha, Chandura, Mandurah, Sholati, Dalipara, Ahalia, Pakuria and Balijuri areas shared similar experiences.

NO WATER SUPPLY

Residents of ward-53 also alleged that there is shortage of pure drinking water as Wasa does not provide services in their locality. So, they have no choice but to drink water from shallow tube wells, which are mostly contaminated

with iron. Often, people suffer from different waterborne diseases due to this.

Shamim Hossain, a youth of Chondalvog area, said, “Our standard of living is significantly lower than Uttara, though it’s just a few kilometres away.”

“What I can’t fathom is that we used to have some sort of development activities in our localities when we were under the union parishad. Our condition worsened when we integrated with the city corporation, although it was supposed to improve,” he added.

NO PLAYGROUND

Contrary to the tall claims of city authorities building a playground in every ward, there’s not a single field or open space for children in wards 52 and 53.

Shariful Alam of Dolipara under ward-52, said, “Buildings in this area are being constructed without any proper planning. As a result, it’s eating up all the open spaces and playgrounds for our children.”

COUNCILLORS’ TAKE

Contacted, councillors of the wards expressed frustration and said they are under pressure from people, as the constituencies did not see any development work since their inclusion under DNCC.

Md Farid Ahmed, councillor of ward-52, said, “I have already constructed three new roads, and installed street lights in some areas, but could not continue further development projects, due to insufficient budget.”

Md Nasir Uddin, councillor of ward-53, said, “I have already informed higher authorities to provide me with sufficient budget. We are hopeful to start developing new roads, along with drainage systems soon.”



A village of crabs, in Dhaka!

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was early morning. The sun had not yet risen, and most of Dhaka was still sleeping.

However, it was peak business hours for some residents in Uttara’s Nalbhog area.

There was a kilometre-long line of parked trucks on both sides of the road. Small baskets full of crabs, which came from farms in different coastal regions of the country, were being unloaded from the trucks.

According to Bangladesh Live and Chilled Food Exporters Association (BLCFEA), Bangladesh exports more than 7,000 tonnes of crabs a year. Nalbhog area in Uttara is the place from where around 200 commercial companies operate their crab exporting business.

Previously, crab packing factories were built in various parts of the capital. However, because the airport is close by, the majority of this industry’s packing factories have been established in Nalbhog. As a result, it became known as the “Village of Crabs (Kakrar Gram)”.

The exporters association has approximately 200 members, with 60-70 of them actively involved in the processing of crabs for export from the area.

After unloading the baskets, the workers clean the crabs by separating male crabs from the females, said Rafiqullah, member of a crab-exporting firm.

He explained that after weighing, they process the crabs, and pack them into plastic or cardboard boxes. Then they become ready for shipment, and are sent to various countries.

These correspondents found crab farmers coming from Khulna, Satkhira, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Chattogram and Cox’s Bazar at the site.

According to Khairuddin Ahmed, chairman of BLCFEA, around 20 to 25 tonnes of crabs are exported from Bangladesh every day, amounting to more than 7,000 tonnes per year.

But Gazi Abul Hashem, a former chairman of the association, said, “We suffered losses during the Covid period because there was an export ban.”

“I was forced to shut down my business,” he added.

But the current chairman says the situation has improved now.

“As China has removed the ban on crabs imported from Bangladesh, around 15 to 20 companies have already gotten permission and started exporting crabs like before,” he added.



Watching planes their only entertainment

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

With a smiling face and curiosity in her eyes, six-year-old Anika stood beside a barbed wire fence and gazed up at the sky. Soon, an aeroplane took off with a loud roar.

A few minutes later, another plane touched down the long, grey runway surrounded by a wide carpet of green grass, causing the little girl to clap in delight.

This is a regular scene for residents of Dolipara area in Uttara, adjacent to the runway of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

It is one of the few means of entertainment for the children as well as for other residents of Dolipara under zone-6 of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). They flock to the area, keeping their eyes at the sky, just to see the planes fly.

In a recent visit, these correspondents found that there is no playground, or any other open space for the children in the locality. So, the residents have chosen the runway for their leisure activity.

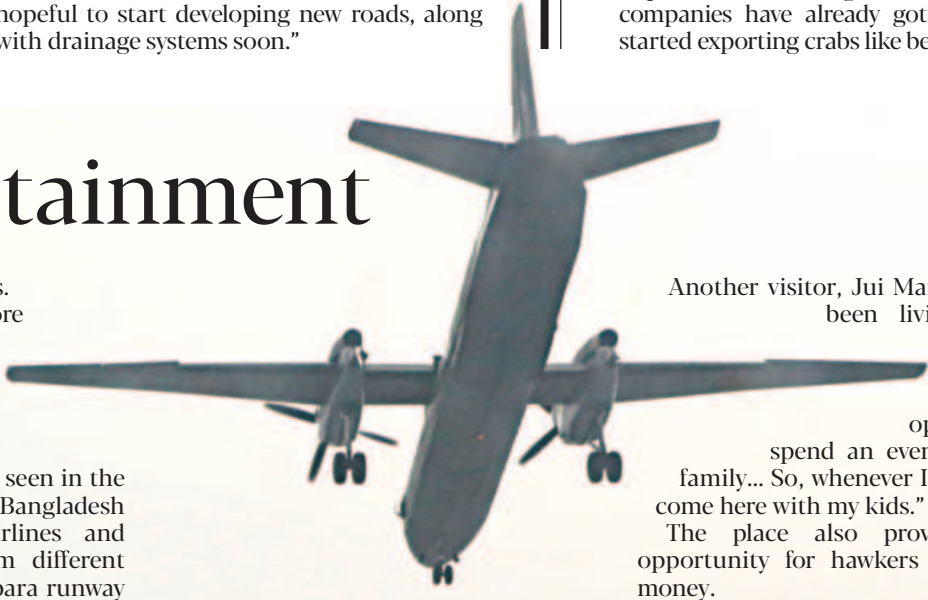
People were seen standing close to the fence, maybe just out of a sense of curiosity, or imagining what it might be like to fly in the sky in a blink of an eye. Many were busy

taking photographs and videos.

The sky becomes more interesting every day in the afternoon for the visitors, as most of the flights either take off or land during that time, they said.

Rows of large planes can be seen in the distance, including those of Bangladesh Biman, Emirates, Saudi Airlines and Turkish Airlines. People from different parts of Dhaka also visit Dolipara runway on weekends as well as on different holidays.

Masudur Rahman, Anika’s father, said,



Another visitor, Jui Mandal, said, “I’ve been living in Uttara sector-12 for seven years. There is no open space to spend an evening with your family... So, whenever I get a chance, I come here with my kids.”

The place also provides a good opportunity for hawkers to earn some money.

Md Liton, a vendor, said, “Almost 300 to 400 people usually come here to see the planes every day.”

“My daughter doesn’t have any place to play. So, I brought her here today to have a quality time...”

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

