



Rail communication between Sylhet and Chhatak has been suspended for about a year after floods damaged several kilometres of the line last year. Farmers in Chhatak are in trouble as they cannot send their produce to Sylhet city by rail. The railway authorities say the repair work is likely to begin in December. The photo was taken near Chhatak town recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Two bridges side by side, but of no use

S DILIP ROY

Two newly constructed bridges over a canal in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila have remained unfit for movements due to lack of approach roads on either side of both the structures.

As there are no approach roads, connecting both the bridges, people of several villages under Tushbandar union are being deprived of getting any benefits from the unplanned bridges, villagers alleged.

Local residents said over a thousand people from Bairati, Chilakhal, Chikarbar and Matabpur villages have to cross the Bairati Canal to go to their destinations, including the local union parishad (UP) office and Kaliganj upazila headquarters.

Earlier, they used to build a bamboo-made makeshift bridge over the

canal on self-help basis to ease their communication problem, especially during the rainy season, villagers said.

Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief constructed the two separate bridges, close to each other, in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

But the two newly-constructed bridges brought nothing for the people living in the nearby areas, locals said.

Farmer Abu Bakar said thought construction of a concrete bridge was a long-cherished demand for the villagers, they are yet to get any benefits of the two unplanned bridges.

Recently villagers put a bamboo-made platform on one side of one of the bridges so that people can get into the bridge and cross it, he said.

This is nothing, but waste of

government money, Bakar added.

Abbas Ali, a resident of Bairati village, said despite getting two new bridges over the Bairati Canal, they are still suffering like before as neither of those of any use.

Besides, lengths of the two newly constructed bridges are too short, compared to the measurement of the canal, he said, adding that the water flow through the canal is being obstructed due to unplanned construction of the bridges.

Both the bridges may collapse if a major flood occur in the surrounding areas, Abbas said.

According to Lalmonirhat BADC, construction of the 98-foot-long and 15-foot-wide bridge, spending Tk 79.47 lakh, was completed in June 2022.

While, Disaster Management and Relief Ministry built the 50-foot-long and 14-foot-wide bridge at a cost of Tk 70

lakh in May this year.

Tushbandar UP Chairman Nur Islam said the engineers can say whether the bridges are unplanned, but the truth is those are of no use.

It is quite difficult to make the two bridges usable without constructing the protection walls and connecting roads, the UP chairman added.

Kaliganj Upazila Project Implementation Officer (PIO) Mohammad Ferdous, however, said the bridges have been built according to the plan.

The connecting roads of the bridges have been washed away due to the recent flood, the PIO said.

Lalmonirhat BADC Executive Engineer Altaf Hossain said the approach roads, which damaged during the flood, will be repaired soon.

## Trees on 50 acres lost in 5yrs

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Shuvo Sandhya Beach in Barguna's Taltali upazila has been facing serious erosion by the Bay for the last couple of years.

Due to continuous erosion by the Bay, nearly 50 acres of forestland close to the beach and about 60,000 trees have already been washed away in the last five years.

Meanwhile, due to destruction of the natural beauty of the beach, the number of tourists has decreased significantly in the recent years.

Shuvo Sandhya Beach was built on the shores of the Bay of Bengal in southwest of Taltali upazila headquarters in 2010. Later, forest department planted over one lakh trees of different species, including Jhau, on 125 acres of land in an attempt to protect the nearly 6 kilometre-long beach from being washed away by the tidal surges.

But due to tidal surges caused by the rough waves of the sea, the beach area as well as vast forestland are gradually decreasing every year.

Since 2018, at least 60,000 trees on nearly 50 acres of forestland on the beach area have either been washed away or died due to continuous erosion by the Bay.

Moreover, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built a brick road, which connects the beach, to facilitate tourists' movement, but a major portion of the road has already been lost to the sea.

During a recent visit to the beach area this correspondent saw hundreds of dead trees are lying scattered across the beach.

Abu Hena Mostafa, a student at Patuakhali Science and Technology University, said there were many types of trees, especially a beautiful Jhau garden, when he first came here in 2015.

But, due to continuous erosion by the Bay the beach has lost its attraction now, he added.

Moniruzzaman, Range Officer at Taltali Forest Department, said afforestation was started by planting 12,000 Jhau trees in 2013-14 fiscal year.

Later, large gardens were developed by planting various mangrove species of trees along the beach in to prevent soil erosion.

But the erosion has washed away at least 60,000 trees in the last five years. He said they have a plan to plant 50,000 more trees on the beach.



PHOTO: STAR

## Ship carrying 3,000 cars ablaze off Dutch coast, crew member dead

REUTERS, Amsterdam

A fire blazed on a ship off the Dutch coast with nearly 3,000 vehicles on board yesterday, killing one member of the crew and injuring several others, the coastguard said.

The fire began on Tuesday night on the 199-metre Panama-registered Fremantle Highway, which was en route from Germany to Egypt, forcing several crew members to jump overboard. Dutch broadcaster NOS said all the crew were Indian.

Rescue ships sprayed water onto the burning boat to cool it down, but using too much water risked its sinking, the Dutch coastguard said. A salvage vessel was hooked on to stop it drifting.

The fire might last for several days, Dutch news agency ANP reported, citing the coastguard. Smoke continued to billow from the vessel near the northern Dutch island of Ameland.

"The fire is most definitely still not controlled. It's a very hard fire to extinguish, possibly because of the cargo the ship was transporting," said Edwin Versteeg, a spokesperson for the Dutch Department of Waterways and Public Works.

The coastguard said on its website that the cause of the fire was unknown, but a coastguard spokesperson had earlier told Reuters it began near an electric car. Roughly 25 out of 2,857 vehicles on the ship were electric.

The International Maritime Organisation, which sets out regulation for safety at sea, plans to evaluate new measures for ships transporting electric vehicles next year in light of the growing number of fires on cargo ships, a spokesperson said.

"Electric cars burn just as much as combustion engine cars. When batteries overheat and a so-called 'thermal runaway' occurs, then it gets dangerous," said Uwe-Peter Schieder, master mariner and representative of the German Insurance Association.

"A chemical reaction in the battery produces gases which inflate the battery."

New rules under consideration could take years to implement, but may include specifications on the types of water extinguishers available on boats and limitations on the amount a battery can be charged, which impacts flammability.

## Politics can't be

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before the lower court concerned in 15 days after receiving the judgment of the lower court concerned.

The HC observed, "There are many ways and means to make money and amass properties through lawful businesses and other professions, but politics and politicians do not come within the purview of a profession to make a huge amount of money and properties in their name and in the name of their dependents."

"The politicians engage in politics with a view to sacrificing themselves for the people's welfare and the country and it is a kind of great sacrifice and dedication for the wellbeing of the people and the country," the HC judges said in the full text.

"Corruption affects people across all genders, ages and races and it hits poor and vulnerable groups the hardest. The people of the

## Modi's govt faces no-confidence

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Modi condemned the mass assault as "shameful" and promised tough action against the perpetrators.

Opposition parties have, however, disrupted the monsoon session of parliament which began last week, to demand a detailed statement by Modi on Manipur in parliament, followed by a debate.

As head of the government, he will have to respond to the no-confidence motion before it is put to vote.

The government has offered a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah, saying internal security is his ministry's responsibility.

## Labourer, wife found dead

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job and was out of work for some days. His wife had been suffering from a fever for a week and could not go to work," he told this newspaper.

"Recently, they were failing to pay the room rent," he said.

Titu, who lives in an adjacent room, said that his sister and brother-in-law lived in Gazipur. Jewel, who hailed from Kurigram, used to be a laguna driver there but he stopped driving as he didn't have a license.

"When my sister became pregnant, our family made a crucial decision to take her to a private hospital in Kishoreganj, prioritising her health despite our financial constraints. The hospital expenses amounted to Tk

country, particularly the responsible stakeholders, should set a positive example by showing that they are not only victims of corruption, but also the key players in the struggle against it."

"... If you want to create change in the world and if you want to make Bangladesh free from corruption and money laundering, take action."

Children are refreshingly truthful. The children must be taught to differentiate between honesty and dishonesty, the bench said. "Bad people help each other to silence critics and hide stolen wealth. It is time for those who expose them to work together."

"Citizens cannot sit idle by waiting for the world and Bangladesh to change; each of us must be part of that transformation. No one can fight corruption for the Bangladeshis except the Bangladeshis," the HC judges said in the full text.

The violence began on May 3 after a court ordered the state government to consider extending special economic benefits and quotas in government jobs and education enjoyed by the tribal Kuki people to the majority Meitei population as well.

Shashi Tharoor, a leader of the main opposition Congress party, said the government must invest time to answer questions about Manipur.

"Everyone knows that Manipur has witnessed horrendous loss of lives in violence, sexual assault and displacement. How can this not be the main agenda?" Tharoor told Reuters.

63,000.

"We could manage a little more than half the amount and Jewel paid the rest after taking a loan," Titu said.

Titu came home after 12:00am early yesterday and asked his wife whether Jewel and Nasrin had eaten or not. When he went to check on them, he found their door closed.

"As there was no response, I saw both of them hanging from the ceiling fan through a chink in the door. I informed the police immediately," he said.

The bodies, which were recovered around 3:00am, were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the OC.

## It's a 'violation' of diplomatic norms

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Alom observed the election at different centres freely. He also did not face any untoward incident, or lodged any complaint, until the end of voting. Other candidates also did not make any complaint about any violence or other irregularities, he said.

"So the way a handful of diplomats have presented a last-minute isolated incident of one centre, never reflects the peaceful nature of the election. While giving a quick response, they did not give importance on the objectivity of their assessment," he added.

The missions issued the statement on July 19, and two people were arrested in connection with the attack before that. The Election Commission and the government took instant steps, he said.

The joint statement did not mention the arrest, which is a shortcoming, he said.

"Even then, in the statement these diplomats have called for legal actions, which is unwarranted and unnecessary," the state minister added.

Once Shahriar read out his briefing before the diplomats, four to five of them tried to explain their intent.

"They [diplomats] said they did it to assist the election process of Bangladesh as part of their continuous engagement with us," Shahriar said.

He said that Bangladesh officials made a counter argument that

it is clearly written in the Vienna Convention that the ministry of foreign affairs is their first point of contact regarding any issue.

"We have no objections if they talk to the media regarding any issue, but they should inform the matter first to the foreign ministry," he added.

He said that article 41 (1) of United Nations Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 states that without prejudice to their privileges and immunities, it is the duty of all persons enjoying such privileges and immunities to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State. They also have a duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State.

Article 41 (2) says that all official business with the receiving State entrusted to the mission by the sending State shall be conducted with or through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the receiving State or such other ministry as may be agreed.

"We will inform the respective capitals about our displeasure. We will urge them to ensure that no one from their missions gets involved in such activities in the future," he added.

Asked about whether such move of Bangladesh will affect relations, Shahriar said, "Not at all."

He added, "Friendship and effective relations go ahead even after these types of events. We have cordial relations, trade, and people to people contact with all these countries."

According to him, some ill attempts by some quarters are

underway centring the election, and sometimes they are a result of overenthusiasm.

In the past, one ambassador made comments that were not in agreement with the position of his capital, he said, adding, "We summoned the ambassador and after that highest-level visits were exchanged."

Asked about whether Bangladesh's reaction was a delayed one as many diplomats have been making comments about election and human rights issues for many years, Shahriar said they took steps whenever such incidents happened.

It is a continuous process and the briefing to the 13 missions was not an "abrupt incident," he said.

Khorshed Alam, foreign secretary of the Maritime Affairs unit of the foreign ministry, was present at the meeting with the envoys.

Mohammad A Arafat, the winner of the Dhaka-17 by-polls, attended the meeting briefly to share his election-day experience with the diplomats.

### US EMBASSY RESPONDS

US embassy spokesperson Bryan Schiller yesterday said, "As we have said many times, we support Bangladesh's goal of holding free, fair, and peaceful elections. To that end, we joined with other foreign missions to condemn the violence against Hero Alam and to call for a full investigation and bringing the perpetrators to account. We note that a number of arrests have been made in the case. Such violence has no place in the democratic process."

Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute, a US think tank, agreed.

"Evidence is emerging suggesting this is indeed a political purge," Thomas said on Twitter, which is being rebranded as "X".

China remained tight-lipped for weeks about the fate of Qin, who has not been seen in public since June 25 when he met Russia's deputy foreign minister Andrey Rudenko in Beijing.

## China refuses to say why foreign minister

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spokeswoman Mao Ning referred journalists to a state news agency article and declined to offer any further information.

"Xinhua has already published information. You can refer to that," Mao said.

Asked how she evaluated Qin's brief stint as foreign minister, Mao said she was "probably not the right person to answer that question".

"I don't think it's appropriate for me to pass judgment," she said, insisting that China was "releasing normal information" concerning Qin's position.

Pressed repeatedly by journalists to provide more details on Qin's fate, Mao said decisions made Tuesday by China's top lawmaking body and the president were "very clear".

"I suggest you all refer to that. I don't have any additional information," she said.

"China's diplomatic activities are all advancing steadily," Mao added.

Any reference to 57-year-old Qin had been removed from the website of China's foreign ministry by yesterday.

A search for his name yielded no results and previous articles about his diplomatic appearances showed a message saying the page "does not exist or has been deleted".

But his name did appear on other Chinese government websites, including the State Council, the Ministry of Commerce and state media outlets.

Asked about his disappearance from the foreign ministry website, Mao said: "Information on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is updated according to relevant management regulations."

Qin has been replaced as foreign minister by top diplomat Wang Yi. The foreign ministry had dodged

questions on Qin for weeks, after previously saying "health reasons" were to blame for his absence.

State media gave no reason on Tuesday for his dismissal but one expert said Qin's "digital erasure" suggested he had fallen from grace.

"If he were a comrade in good standing who had fallen ill I am not sure that would be happening," China analyst Bill Bishop wrote in his Sinocism newsletter.

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