

SAKHIPUR-SAGARDIGHI

Road left in BATTERED CONDITION

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

The Sakhipur-Sagardighi road has been in battered conditions for long, causing immense sufferings to its users.

As a result, commuters often fall victim to accidents while travelling through the road, filled with numerous large potholes.

The pitch, casting and bricks of the road have been worn out at many places and created numerous small and large potholes.

Large vehicles including goods-laden trucks often get stuck after falling into those potholes.

Mentionable, after completing construction of the Dhaka-Gorai-Sakhipur-Sagardighi road, this portion of the road was enlisted under Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED).

But a few years later, the road was taken under the supervision of Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

Local people as well as a number of transport workers said the road connects the Dhaka-Tangail highway at Madhupur via Sakhipur.



This important road, stretching from Sakhipur to Sagardighi in Tangail, is in an appalling state due to lack of renovation work for long, making it difficult for vehicles to cross it. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Pineapples, bananas, jackfruits, wood, bamboo, poultry feeds, chickens, eggs and even bricks and sand are transported to different areas across the country through this road.

Heavy vehicles, especially goods-laden ones, from several districts including Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and parts of Sakhipur use this important road to go to the capital.

Mostly pineapples, bananas, jackfruits, wood, bamboo, poultry feeds, chickens, eggs and even bricks and sand are transported to different areas across the

country through this road. Moreover, different other vehicles like passenger buses, ambulances, covered vans and other small vehicles use this road every day as it is the shortest way to reach the capital.

Locals said this situation has worsened during this ongoing monsoon as many large potholes have developed near Kachua market, Ghonarchala market, Sakhipur food warehouse area and Barachowna market.

Mamun Haider, a rights activist from Sakhipur, said a pineapple-laden truck got stuck on a large pothole near Kachua market area on August 16, creating long tailback on both sides of the road.

As a result, vehicular movements

remained suspended till the next afternoon, leaving thousands of its users in immense sufferings.

Vehicular movements resumed after RHD repaired the vulnerable spot temporarily, he said.

But surprisingly, within a week of the previous incident another cargo truck got stuck at the same place, creating huge traffic congestions, Mamun added.

Local traders Ismail Hossain, Saiful Islam and Mohammad Ali said various raw materials as well as huge quantities of fruits and vegetables, produced in the region, are transported to different parts of the country through this road.

Sometimes they have to count additional money for goods

transportation due to bad condition of the important road, they claimed.

They also alleged that despite repeated pleas for long no steps has been taken so far to develop the road condition.

Trucker Shafiqul Islam said different valuable parts of their vehicles often get damaged due to the battered condition of the road.

Anwar Hossain, RHD sub-divisional engineer in Mirzapur region, said process of preparing the Development Project Profile (DPP) is already underway to upgrade the Sakhipur-Sagardighi road to three lanes.

Repair work has already been started at different places to reduce the suffering of its users," he added.

Check wastage of public funds

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We've brought down inflation over the last four months, and I think the inflation rate will also decline in the outgoing month," he added.

Mannan said the PM also underscored the need for averting wastage and unnecessary expenditure of public funds. "But, necessary expenditure should have to continue, otherwise, the economy will not move forward," he said quoting the Prime Minister as saying.

The premier also directed all the concerned executing agencies to complete those projects with a high priority which are nearing completion or have witnessed up to 90 percent implementation rate.

Referring to the joining of the New Development Bank (NDB), an initiative of BRICS, Sheikh Hasina

said the NDB has opened up a new window for Bangladesh as the country would now be able to take loans from the bank apart from other lenders like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, AIIB, and IsDB.

"This is the sign of our enhanced capacity, and now we'll be able to take loans from where we'll get better outcomes through negotiations," she added.

Pointing to the project related to the modernisation of hospitals, the PM asked all concerned including the health ministry to ensure infrastructure, necessary manpower and equipment.

"Scarcity of manpower, machinery and equipment is not at all acceptable...," Mannan said quoting the premier.

College girl stabbed

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family about the issue, for which he got angry.

As the girl left for college yesterday, Riyan began hurling brickbats targeting her head when she was near Samad School intersection, the victim's uncle said.

"He then stabbed my niece in her head in the company of some 10-12 cohorts," he quoted witnesses as saying.

"We want justice for this attack on my daughter," demanded the victim's

mother.

Mosleh Uddin, officer-in-charge of Laxmipur Sadar Model Police Station, said no written complaint was filed till 9:00pm.

"We have asked the victim's family to file a written complaint. We are trying to arrest those involved."

Contacted, Mohammad Mahabubul Karim, principal of Laxmipur Government College, said, "We have already sent a team of teachers to the hospital to look after the girl."

Macron may visit Dhaka

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the three capitals are coordinating to finalise the schedule for the visit.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is also due to hold a bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which was initially scheduled for September 11.

"However, as the French side expressed its eagerness for President Macron's visit [to Dhaka], we are working on alternative options," a diplomatic source in New Delhi told this correspondent yesterday.

"If everything goes well, the French president will visit Dhaka and meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. However, he will be here only for a few hours," a source in Dhaka said.

A foreign ministry official said Hasina invited Macron to Bangladesh during her Paris visit in November 2021.

"This is a reciprocal visit of the

French president," he said, adding, "France is now paying attention to improving relations with countries in the Indo-Pacific and Bangladesh is a key country in the region."

France-Bangladesh relations have witnessed a significant boost over the last several years, and the bilateral trade between the two countries is worth over three billion Euros.

Bangladesh's first-ever satellite, Bangabandhu 1, was made by the French company Thales.

During the PM's 2021 visit to France, the two countries signed a letter of intent on defence cooperation, while also sharing a common vision for a free, open, peaceful, secure, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The two countries also agreed to further develop the defence and security component of their partnership through capacity building

Life expectancy rate

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If the world were to permanently reduce these pollutants to meet the World Health Organization's guideline limit, the average person would add 2.3 years to his or her life expectancy, according to the data collected till 2021.

Fine particulate matter is linked to lung disease, heart disease, strokes, and cancer.

Tobacco use, by comparison, reduces global life expectancy by 2.2 years, while child and maternal malnutrition is responsible for a reduction of 1.6 years.

Asia and Africa bear the greatest burden yet have some of the weakest infrastructure to deliver citizens timely, accurate data. They also receive tiny slices of an already small global philanthropic pie.

For example, the entire continent of Africa receives less than \$300,000 to tackle air pollution.

"There is a profound disconnect between where air pollution is the worst and where we, collectively and globally, are deploying resources to fix the problem," said Hasenkopf.

While there is an international financing partnership called the Global Fund that disburses \$4 billion annually for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, there is no equivalent for air pollution.

"Yet, air pollution shaves off more years from the average person's life in the DR Congo [Democratic Republic of Congo] and Cameroon than HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other health threats," the report said.

and potential technology transfer.

There were also talks about France providing Rafale aircraft to Bangladesh, though nothing has been finalised on the matter yet.

France is also eager to strengthen connectivity in South Asia in order to facilitate exchanges between Europe and Asia. It is actively engaged in supporting developing countries like Bangladesh in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

A French Navy ship made a goodwill visit to Chattogram in early July this year and engaged in a joint exercise with the Bangladesh Navy.

During that time, French Ambassador to Bangladesh Marie Masdupuy told The Daily Star that the ship's visit signifies France's political commitment to supporting Bangladesh and recognises the country's importance in the Indian Ocean region.

Rights groups, activists face legal hassles

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"I was picked up by the Detective Branch on the afternoon of May 11, 2019, from Mymensingh. I had been called by the complainant to his madrasa to collect the bill for some website development I did for him. When there, he offered the payment in dollars, which seemed odd to me, so I refused," narrated Kaium.

"When I came out of the madrasa, I was suddenly accosted by the DB who accused me of owning black-market dollars," he continued. They alleged that Kaium had committed identity theft and received the payment as a result of blackmail.

He was in custody for three days before being produced before the Mymensingh Judge Court on May 14, 2019. He was released on bail on July 3 that year, Kaium said.

"Police said that I was arrested in Trishal and the case was filed with Trishal Police Station, whereas I was in Mymensingh," Kaium said.

The state and ruling party obstructed the work of at least 65 percent grassroots human rights defenders, a survey conducted by the Centre for Governance Studies recently found.

One in five had been harassed by law enforcement agencies, according to the report, which surveyed 50 rights defenders from 36 districts.

A quarter of them were obstructed by the ruling party, while one in 10 had been harassed by intelligence agencies, said the report titled "Who defends the defenders? The predicament of human rights activists in Bangladesh".

Human rights organisation Odhikar has been accused of running "a distorted report" on the May 6, 2013, police action on a Hefajat-e-Islam rally in the capital's Motijheel.

The verdict in the case filed 10 years ago is scheduled to be delivered on September 7.

"The organisation never ran such a report. The police filed the case but have not submitted any evidence showing that Odhikar published any such report or list," said the organisation's lawyer Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan.

"They have shown a list of 61 supposedly deceased people, which they got from the computers of Odhikar seized by the police. But this was just a draft document. In fact, the list itself says that the majority of the names are yet to be confirmed [as deceased]," he continued.

While arguing on the matter in court on August 24, the lawyer pointed out that the investigation officer only probed eight people out of the 61 to see if they were dead or alive.

While the organisation is dealing with the trial, its registration as NGO was scrapped last year.

The reprisal against Odhikar is primarily for their liaison with the United Nations Working Group of Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance, experts working in the field alleged.

This UN body collects names and cases of victims of enforced disappearances and raises the issue with member states and asks for investigations.

The UN body itself wrote to the government and termed the court case "a smear campaign".

The Centre for Governance Studies survey also found that three human rights defenders became victims of enforced disappearances for their work while 12 were assaulted.

The Centre for Governance Studies itself has been operating under increased scrutiny, said its Executive Director Zillur Rahman.

The police took the organisation's staffers in for questioning at least twice, he alleged. "There are no specific charges. They are investigating our ties with our donors, and are using the probe to intimidate," claimed Zillur.

Engineer beaten up

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authorities of the matter. Legal action will be taken as directed by superiors. We have CCTV footage of the incident."

Contacted, however, Rakibuzzaman Ahmed, also the organising secretary of district AL, said he was unaware of the incident.

"The attackers must take responsibility for the incident. As the election approaches, some are trying to tarnish our image. The matter needs to be looked into."

Speaking on the matter, Nescro (Rangpur region) Chief Engineer Mokhleshur Rahman said, "We've informed the matter to the Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed. If he does not take the necessary measures in this regard, we will take action."

HSC exams in 'abandoned' classrooms

AZIBOR RAHMAN, *Jhenidah*

More than 1,300 examinees from different colleges are appearing their ongoing HSC examinations at Government Mahtabuddin Degree College in Kaliganj upazila amid risk life as numerous cracks have developed in all the 16 classrooms of its old academic building.

According to the college authorities, the institution was established on 596 acres of land along the Jashore-Jhenidah road in 1966, while the risky old building, comprising of 16 classrooms, was constructed in 1968.

The college has a total of 2835 regular students, 68 teachers and 16 employees.

Although there are two more buildings, including an administrative building, at the college compound, those are not sufficient compared to the number of students the institution has.

While talking, a number of teachers and students said all the 16 classrooms in the old building have developed numerous cracks.

Plaster often falls off the walls and ceilings of those classrooms, while the iron rods got rusted due to lack of renovation work for long, they alleged.

Moreover, the college playground often remains waterlogged while the classrooms get flooded when it rains heavily.

Besides, hundreds of regular students of the institution remain in constant fear while attending their classes in the dilapidated classrooms.

Sulata Biswas, one of the HSC examinees, said the authorities concerned should make alternative arrangement for holding the exams as the classroom are too vulnerable.

One of the regular students Arafat Hossain said they cannot move freely during the rainy season as the college ground remains waterlogged for long.

Sazzad Hossain, a lecturer at the college, said the old ramshackle building is completely unfit for running any academic activities.

Mentionable, the ongoing HSC exams that started on August 17 and will continue till September 25.

Contacted, Acting Principal Monoj Kanti Biswas, also secretary of the examination centre, said after being informed, Jhenidah district administration declared the dilapidated building abandoned.

They also forwarded a proposal to the authorities concerned for constructing a new building there.

They were compelled to hold the HSC exams in the ramshackle building as there is no other alternative, he added.



Young boys ferry cattle on a boat in a flood affected village in Morigaon district of Assam, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP