



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Inaugurated on November 14, the Fouzderhat-Bayezid Link Road in Chattogram has already become a vital thoroughfare for Dhaka-bound vehicles to exit Chattogram.

KARNAPHULI RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

30 years on, work yet to begin for lack of water supply

In a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw the office of the plot owner's association, the only structure there, in ruins due to neglect. The brick roads gave way to innumerable potholes, while the area resembled a forest with trees taking over it.

SIFAYET ULLAH
The Karnaphuli Residential project, one of the oldest and major housing projects undertaken by the Chattogram Development Authority in south Chattogram, is still without any water supply, 30 years after its inception.

As such, the much-publicised project has already turned into a ghost area as plot owners are yet to begin construction of any structure there due to water shortage.

CDA took the project in 1992-93 fiscal at a cost of over Tk 12 crore, aiming to ease the growing strain of population on the port city by constructing houses outside the city with promises to provide utility connections as soon as possible.

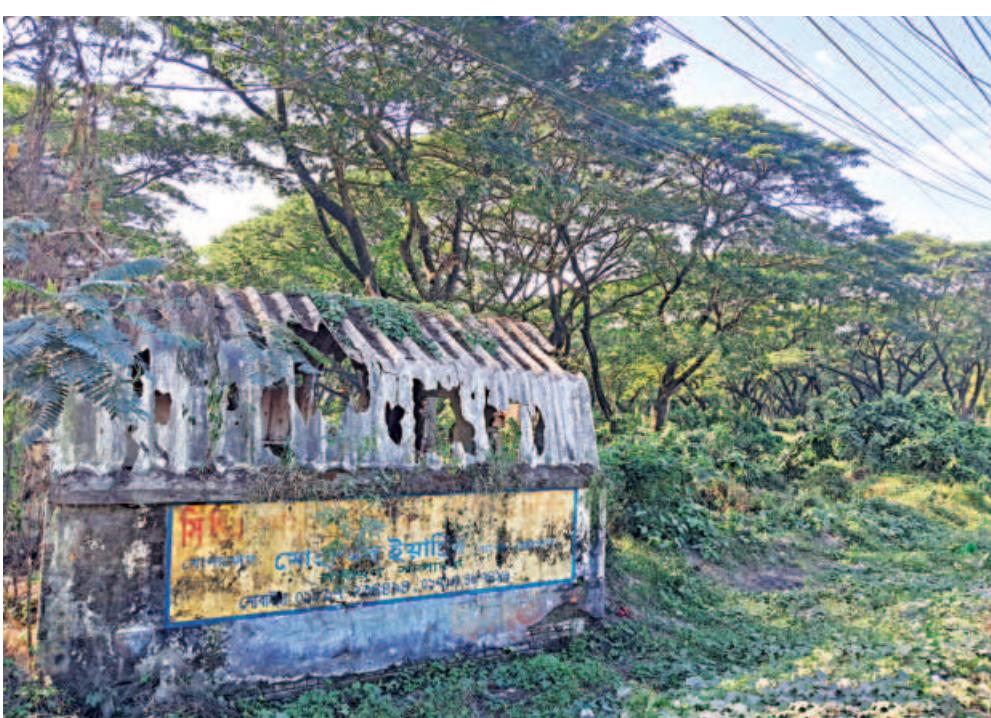
Initially, CDA allocated 519 plots on 50 acres of land to residents, most of them middle-income people.

In a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw the office of the plot owner's association, the only structure there, in ruins due to neglect. The brick roads gave way to innumerable potholes, while the area resembled a forest with trees taking over it.

Abu Mohammed Yahya had bought a plot there with a dream to build a house. He passed away 17 years ago without being able to see the dream become reality.

"My father's dream remained elusive as CDA could not keep its promise," said Yahya's son Zia Habib Ahsan. "We have repeatedly got in touch with CDA but they don't pay heed to our request," he alleged.

Mohammed Yesin, a plot owner, said, "We are now helpless and have no other way to buy another piece of land as our money is stuck with CDA. When are they going to develop this housing project?"



According to the plot owner's association, at least 50 plot owners have already passed away.

Zia Habib Ahsan, also senior vice-president of the association, said, "On behalf of the plot owner's association, we requested Chattogram Wasa to supply water. They also gave us assurance."

CDA spokesperson Kazi Hasan Bin Shams claimed that they verbally requested CWasa to supply water to the residential project.

Since it was founded in 1959, CDA has undertaken 11 housing projects in the port city, but failed to complete half of those,

including Anannya 2, Karnaphuli and Silimpur residential projects due to fund crisis, inappropriate plans and indifference.

"We failed as the plan was inappropriate," said Shams, also CDA chief engineer.

Meanwhile, there may be light at the end of the tunnel after all.

The recent Bhandal Jhuri Water Supply Project (BJWSP) in south Chattogram may solve the water crisis.

Mahabubul Alam, director of BJWSP and superintendent engineer of CWasa, said, "We got a request to supply water to the residential area and have enlisted it through the project."

NEW MARKET AREA

A never-ending gridlock

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The port city's New Market area has been a traffic menace for decades, making the daily commute a constant struggle for



This photo was taken in the New Market area around noon yesterday.

residents.

The gridlock on Station Road in the city's New Market area, leading to Kotwali Police Station via New Market and then to Lalidighi and Anderkilla, is persistent. Vehicles coming from the Kazir Dewry area to New Market move at a snail's pace all through Jubilee Road, leading to the worst 1.5 km stretch of Teen Poler Matha to New Market intersection.

Makeshift stalls, hawkers, and illegally parked vehicles occupying walkways and a significant part of roads add to this nightmare.

"It takes around half an hour to just cross half a kilometre. I often resort to walking, but it is still very difficult to pass as the walkways are always crowded by hawkers," said Shabnam Huda, a student at Government City College.

Polash Roy Chowdhury, a government service holder from Patharghat who has been compelled to take this road daily for the past three decades, echoed Shabnam.

Recently, the traffic department of

Chittagong Metropolitan Police has initiated various steps to combat traffic congestion across the city. Nevertheless, the scenario in the area remains the same.

The road—leading to the railway station, kitchen market Reazuddin Bazar, Chattogram office of Bangladesh Bank, development authority office, court building, and multiple reputed schools and colleges—is a very busy one, said NM Nasiruddin, deputy commissioner (traffic) of CMP south zone.

"There are over 400 markets along Station and Jubilee roads, making it a hub for wholesalers and retailers. Besides, New Market is also the last stop for buses. We have taken some steps, like closing the U-turn at Atmal to control the congestion, and it's helping," he added.

Regarding footpath encroachments, he said they have conducted several drives, but the occupants eventually returned to their old ways.

He advised setting up a holiday market to rehabilitate hawkers.

FOUZDERHAT-BAYEZID LINK ROAD

A step towards easing traffic woes

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Fouzderhat Bayezid Link Road, after being inaugurated on November 14, has become an important bypass road in Chattogram.

Chattogram Development Authority implemented the project at a cost of Tk 353 crore to ease traffic congestion in the port city and to provide an easy route for Dhaka-bound vehicles to exit Chattogram.

The six-kilometre bypass road, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been named Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Sarak, said Asad Bin Anwar, assistant engineer of CDA and the project director.

This road allows vehicles from Dhaka to move towards Rangamati and Khagrachari without entering Chattogram. Similarly, vehicles from the two CHT districts can move towards the Chattogram-Dhaka highway without entering the port city, he added.

The west end of the road begins in Sitakunda's Fouzderhat area, while the east end starts in the city's Bayezid Bostami area.

Asad Haider, a resident of the city's Sher Shah area, said he commutes to Sitakunda every day for business purposes. "Earlier, to get to work, I had to pass through gate-2 of Sholshahar and take the GEC intersection, which took two hours. Now, it takes 30-40 minutes to travel using this road," he said.

According to CDA sources, this project was undertaken in 1996 at a cost of Tk 40 crore. But the implementation repeatedly stumbled. Afterwards, on November 5, 2013, the project was initiated again.

Following this, in 2016, the cost was estimated at around Tk 320 crore. Then, in August last year, the project cost increased to Tk 353 crore, of which Tk 33 crore was ordered to be paid from CDA's own funds by the Ministry of Finance. So, CDA decided to collect tolls from this road.

However, the toll rate is yet to be fixed. Vehicles can move on this road without payment until the rate is finalised, Asad said.



Of damaged dyke and barren land

Farmers suffer as embankment 'breached' by shipbreakers lies unrepairs

SIFAYET ULLAH

About a decade ago, different shipbreaking companies leased a portion of the coast in Kumira union of Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila to set up yards, breaching a section of an earthen embankment.

However, with time, the businesses rounded off their operations, leaving various areas along a two-km stretch of the dyke open for saline water to enter arable land.

Through continued waterlogging, the land has now become uncultivable due to high soil salinity, forcing locals to leave their land barren round the year.

"Our land stays submerged in seawater during full and new moon every month. This has spoiled the fertility of my two-acre agricultural land where I used to cultivate rice and vegetables," said farmer Mohi Uddin of the union's Alakdia village.

Saltwater also enters through the breached portions of the dyke during natural calamities like cyclones, said locals.

Visiting various areas in the union last week, this correspondent saw salt water accumulated on cultivable land following Cyclone Michaung.

"The shipbreakers pulled us closer to destruction while the Water Development Board further exacerbated the condition by leaving the damaged dyke unrepairs," alleged Abdul Mannan, another farmer.

"We have sent formal letters to the authorities concerned, including WDB, but no initiative is being taken for the embankment's reconstruction," said Union Parishad Chairman Mohammed Morshed Hossain Chowdhury.

According to WDB, a two-km portion of the embankment was totally damaged. However, the yards in those areas have temporarily closed their businesses.

Meanwhile, Aslam Jabed, chief executive officer of the closed Asadi Steel Enterprise, claimed the dyke was damaged naturally.

"We leased the land from the government in exchange for a huge sum. We will not vacate the place if we are not paid," he added.

Wishing anonymity, a WDB official said the board is in a land-related conflict with the shipbreakers as it earlier constructed embankments on land that was leased to the companies by the upazila land office.

However, the board has sent a proposal to conduct a fresh study on a 4-km dyke in this union but it's still stuck in red tape, added the official.

Contacted, Tanjir Saif Ahmed, executive engineer of the WDB (Chattogram-2), said they are trying to reconstruct the dyke and have already informed the high-ups.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension of Sitakunda, Kumira is among the most salinity-affected unions in the upazila. However, no data is available on the affected farmers.

Habib Ullah, an official of the department, said, "Many have complained about soil salinity in the region and we regularly provide salt-tolerant paddy seed to farmers to help adjust salinity."