

A road that has never been paved

1 lakh residents from 20 villages use it for daily commute

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The 25-kilometre earthen road connecting Mahipur Bazar to Anantapara Bridge in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila has never been paved since Bangladesh's independence.

Approximately 1,00,000 residents from 20 villages in Mahipur, Dhulasar, and Dabulganj unions rely on this road daily, including several thousand students from at least 12 educational institutions, as well as individuals commuting to banks, health complexes, offices, markets, and police stations.

Over the decades, the road has seen minimal maintenance.

While a two-kilometre section



Almost every footpath across the port city has largely become inconvenient for pedestrians due to illegal occupation and delayed development works. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

In Ctg, footpaths not for pedestrians only

ARUN BIKASH DEY

If one randomly walks through a footpath on any road in Chattogram city, they will almost always find the footpaths not suitable for walking, with those being largely occupied by vendors, hawkers, or even parked vehicles.

For instance, while walking on the footpath beside a diagnostic centre on KB Fazlul Quader Road, scores of motorcycles of medical representatives are often seen parked, in utter violation of rules.

The situation there remains the same from evening to midnight.

"We have to walk on the road amid risk as we cannot use the footpaths due to motorbikes illegally occupying the space for parking," said Rashed Hasan, a pedestrian on the road.

Not just this footpath; in fact, almost every footpath across the port city has largely become inconvenient for pedestrians due to illegal occupation and delayed development works.

Visiting some of the major thoroughfares in the port city, including Nawab Sirajuddaula Road, Momin Road, Telipotti Road, OR Nizam Road, SS Khaled

Road, KC Dey Road, Jamal Khan Road, Chittagong College Road, and Abdus Sattar Road, this correspondent observed that vendors, hawkers, shops, beggars and others continue to occupy the footpaths, making it an arduous task for pedestrians to walk merely 200 metres without any sort of interruption.

In Nawab Sirajuddaula Road, shops of steel furniture were seen to occupy a section of the footpath beside Chawkbazar Post Office by keeping almirahs for painting and finishing works, preventing pedestrians from using the footpath.

"We are compelled to avoid this portion of the footpath to avoid getting paint sprayed on our clothes or inhaling paint particles," said Shipra Nandi, a resident of Chattogram College East Gate area, who was seen passing by the footpath carrying groceries from Chawkbazar kitchen market.

Echoing her, Kamal Uddin, a banker, said such illegal occupation of footpaths has been going on for years, but nobody ever looked into the matter.

At six points on the same road -- including Dewan Bazar, Deedar Market, Jainab Colony, and Room Ghata -- this

correspondent observed footpaths to be illegally occupied in some way or other.

It furniture shops, grocery stores, or street vendors, everyone seems to want a piece of the footpath.

Flower shops were seen taking up the footpath along Cheragi Pahar Intersection on Momin Road. In Chawkbazar's Telipotti Road, sanitary items were seen kept on the footpath.

Riaz Uddin, a student of Chittagong University who was passing by Telipotti Road, called upon authorities concerned of Chattogram City Corporation and traffic department of Chattogram Metropolitan Police to take strict measures to free the city's footpaths from illegal occupation.

Contacted, CMP commissioner Hasib Aziz said they have plans to conduct drives soon after Durga Puja to free the footpaths for pedestrians.

Sheikh Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, chief executive officer of CCC, said, "Executive magistrates regularly conduct drives against illegal occupiers of footpaths, but they keep returning within a few days. Nonetheless, the drives will continue."

from Mahipur Bridge was once laid with bricks, these have deteriorated due to rains, floods, and heavy traffic.

During a recent visit, this correspondent observed the road in a dire state, resembling ploughed land with ankle-to-knee-deep mud throughout its length due to the monsoon. Students were seen walking barefoot to school, struggling to keep their trousers above their knees as they navigated the mud, leaving their clothes and stationery stained.

Farzana, an eighth-grader at Tarikata Dakhil Madrasa, said, "We often attend classes with our clothes smeared with mud. The road also gets slippery after rain."

Md Fazlu Gazi, chairman of Mahipur Union Parishad, emphasised the need for urgent renovation, citing inadequate funding from the union.

Dhulasar UP chairman Abdul Rahim echoed him.

LOED engineer Sadekur Rahman said the road will be paved as soon as funding is allocated.

Man duped of Tk 17 lakh in insurance scam

FROM PAGE 3

The person then asked the complainant to pose as a relative of the deceased and provided another WhatsApp number, allegedly belonging to the bank manager of Alliance Bank. "Anna Harrison" instructed Nuruzzaman to forward a pre-written message to this bank manager.

Later, the complainant was given the contact of a supposed legal adviser,

with whom he then communicated. The so-called legal adviser told him that in order to claim the insurance money, Nuruzzaman had to send him \$76,000.

"Anna Harrison" also provided a payment slip to Nuruzzaman showing she had paid this dollar amount herself to the supposed legal adviser, according to a press release signed by Deputy Commissioner Taleb Rahman.

Subsequently, the alleged bank manager informed the complainant that two luggage bags containing \$5 million in insurance money had been handed over to a shipping company for delivery to Bangladesh. As proof, a video was shown.

The bank manager then asked for Tk 1.85 lakh for insurance and delivery costs, which the complainant deposited

into a Dutch Bangla Bank account in Uttara. On October 3, someone claiming to be a customs officer from Dhaka airport called and informed Nuruzzaman that his two luggage bags were being held by customs.

The caller demanded Tk 4.07 lakh to release the bags, which Nuruzzaman transferred to an Islami Bank account. Following further instructions from the customs officer,

Nuruzzaman paid another Tk 11.75 lakh for income tax and duties to a different Islami Bank account.

Despite making these payments, the fraudsters continued to demand an additional Tk 10.50 lakh.

Nuruzzaman, growing suspicious, contacted Dhaka airport customs and discovered that the entire scheme was orchestrated by a fraud ring.

In total, the syndicate

swindled Tk 17.67 lakh from Nuruzzaman. He then filed a case against several unnamed individuals with the New Market Police Station on Saturday.

During the arrest, nine cheque books from various banks, three ATM cards, two Visa cards, and two mobile phones used for the fraud were seized.

In primary interrogation, Aziz Molla confessed to his involvement in the crime, police said.

Unite for a prosperous

FROM PAGE 3

He called upon everyone, regardless of party affiliation, to stand by the

victims of the recent floods.

"We are all Bangladeshis. We are connected with

each other. There is no place for majority or minority in the country. Religious values should be used for the welfare of the country and people," said the president.

Primary registration

FROM PAGE 3

additional difficulties, the notice warns.

For this reason, the ministry requested prospective pilgrims to complete their primary registration by depositing Tk 3 in the bank by October 23.

Three funerals instead of one

FROM PAGE 5

Nupur's father, Nazrul Islam, from Dakhin Gidari village in Gaibandha, now mourns the death both his wife and daughter.

Runa Akhter's parents too were struggling to cope with the loss of their beloved daughter.

None of the family members were in any situation to talk to this correspondent.



Shrinking Soilmari

FROM PAGE 5

Phultala, Jolma, and others are facing similar struggles.

"The diminished state of the river is placing additional strain on already vulnerable communities, who have long struggled with increasing salinity and water shortages," said Monoranjan Mondal, convener of the Soilmari and Salta River Conservation Movement.

Iqbal Kabir Jahid, chief advisor of the Bhabanah Water Drainage Struggle Committee, added, "Unplanned dams, sluice

gates, brick kilns, and soil extraction are killing the river. If it's not saved, people will no longer be able to live in this area due to permanent waterlogging."

Abdur Rahman Tazkia, executive engineer of BWDB (Khulna division-I), said a plan has been submitted for the excavation of the river and its connecting canals.

"Two brick kilns have encroached on much of the river's land, and we will take action against them," he added.

Conversely, the population outside Dhaka has not been exposed to the virus as frequently, making them more vulnerable to infection.

Urbanisation outside Dhaka is also playing a significant role in the spread of dengue, as Aedes mosquitoes, the carriers of the virus, find suitable breeding conditions in these rapidly growing areas.

Prof. Bashar stressed

the need to intensify mosquito control measures across all cities to combat the spread of dengue. "The government must give equal attention to all cities to control Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

Dr. HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, explained the higher death toll in Dhaka. "Many critical patients from outside Dhaka are

referred to hospitals in the capital, contributing to the higher number of deaths here. Hospitals outside Dhaka are often reluctant to treat critical patients and send them to Dhaka instead."

Prof. Ahmedul Kabir, former additional director general of DGHS, recently advised that patients should be hospitalised as soon as they exhibit dengue symptoms such as nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, respiratory

issues, and fluctuating body temperature.

"There is no need for

referrals to Dhaka unless a patient is in a critical condition. Local hospitals are fully capable of managing dengue patients, and the journey to Dhaka can worsen a patient's condition," he added.

The government has opened separate dengue units in all medical college hospitals across the country to handle the surge in cases.



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Qualified female candidates are highly encouraged to apply.

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Fire breaks out at the Barishal hospital

FROM PAGE 5

including ICU patients, to the old building of SBMCH.

Among the evacuated patients was journalist Shamim Ahmed, who had been admitted to the stroke unit on the fourth floor yesterday. His daughter, Sharmin Ahmed, said, "My father is seriously ill and was unconscious. We struggled to move him down from the fourth floor."

She added that they decided not to return to the hospital and have since

admitted him to the local KMC clinic.

Scenes of panic unfolded outside the hospital as well, with many patients, some carrying oxygen cylinders and saline drips, rushing to escape the building.

On June 4, a fire broke out in the kidney dialysis section of the hospital, also causing a significant scare.

The recurrence of such incidents has raised concerns about the safety measures in place at the hospital.



Firefighters working to douse the blaze at Sher-e-Bangla Medical Hospital in Barishal yesterday, after a fire broke out at the hospital's medicine building.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Hit by train, trader dies in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

A 40-year-old fish trader, identified as Nur Nabi from Netrakona, was killed after being struck by a train in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar yesterday evening.

According to his colleague Jewel Kabir, Nur Nabi was crossing the road when he was hit by the train.

Locals rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he was declared dead.

Inspector Md Faruk, in charge of the police outpost at DMCH, said the body was kept at the hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Erosion upends lives along Khowai river

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Husen Mia, a farmer from Radhanagar village in Habiganj, is one of many who have lost everything to the Khowai river.

Erosion along the river has worsened lately, following recent floods. The river has swallowed everything within its path -- croplands, homes and even entire villages.

"The tide came a month back, and when the water receded, my house was gone," said Husen. He is now seeking refuge in a neighbour's house.

At least a dozen others echoed similar stories.

The river, originating in India's Atharamura Hills, flows through five upazilas in Bangladesh before reaching the Meghna. Every monsoon, floods cause severe erosion. At least 50 sites were affected this year, including Rajar Bazar in Chunorughat, Alapur in Shayestaganj, and Tegharia in Sadar upazila.

Sahena Banu, another Radhanagar resident, said, "Everything I had, including my home, was destroyed."

Meanwhile, a river protection dam near Tegharia is at risk. Locals fear that if the dam breaks, their entire village will be submerged.

Shamim Hasnain Mahmud, executive engineer of the Habiganj Water Development Board, said, "We are compiling a list of erosion sites and hope to start repairs if funding is secured in November-December."