

KUSHIYARA RIVER

Unrepaired dam leaves locals in peril

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Every monsoon, as the Kushiyara River swells, the people of several villages across Moulvibazar Sadar upazila brace for the inevitable -- floodwaters creeping into their homes, submerging roads, and washing away their livelihoods.

At the heart of this crisis lies the Kushiyara River Protection Dam, a structure built in 1970 but now standing in a vulnerable state, breached repeatedly for over the past two decades.

Due to the breaches, homes, roads, markets, schools, other establishments, and vast stretches of cropland get submerged under water.

Despite patchwork repairs and desperate pleas from residents, a lasting solution remains out of reach.

For years, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the local union parishad have attempted partial fixes, yet these have done little to resolve the issue.

Local residents, who have suffered immeasurable losses, demand that the authorities take immediate steps to renovate the dam completely.

"During every monsoon, the dam gets breached several times, followed

by flooding across different areas of the upazila. Crops get washed away repeatedly, causing significant losses to farmers, while residents also go through a lot of sufferings," said Swadhin Mia, a resident of Hamarkona village in the upazila.

"This situation has been persisting for



the past 21 years. Despite repeated visits by local leaders and government officials over the years, nothing has changed yet," he added.

Since the dam is not listed with the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Moulvibazar, no formal project has ever been initiated by BWDB to repair it. While parts of the dam were later paved

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HEATHROW POWER OUTAGE

Biman flight forced to return to Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight was forced to turn around midway and return to Dhaka yesterday after a power outage disrupted operations at London Heathrow Airport.

According to a statement by Biman, the flight BG 201 departed from Dhaka at 8:42am on its way to Heathrow, making a brief stop at Sylhet Osmani International Airport at 9:06am.

The aircraft, a Boeing 787-9, continued its journey from Sylhet at 10:46am, but was turned back before reaching London due to the unexpected power failure at Heathrow, causing significant delays and operational difficulties at the airport, Biman said.

With 267 passengers on board, including the pilot and crew, the flight returned to Dhaka at 11:5pm.

According to a BBC report, Heathrow Airport was to be closed all day yesterday following a fire at a nearby electrical substation that supplies it with power.

Heathrow, Europe's busiest airport, warned of

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2 killed, 21 injured in Bogura road crash

UNB, Bogura

Two people were killed and 21 others injured when a truck hit a pedestrian before crashing into a human haulier on the Sherpur-Dhunat road in Bogura's Sherpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Harun or Rashid, 52, and Hanif, 35.

Hanif and the injured were day labourers travelling to Kusumbi village in Sherpur upazila to harvest potatoes from Dhunat upazila.

Sub Inspector Tofazzal Hossain of Sherpur Police Station said the truck first knocked down pedestrian Harun. About 200 yards later, it rammed into the human haulier near Ranabirbala Bashir Pagla Shrine, overturning the vehicle carrying the labourers.

The accident killed Harun and Hanif on the spot and left the others injured, he added.

The human haulier was carrying 17 women and five men.

Bakhtiar Uddin, warehouse in-charge of Sherpur Fire Service, said the injured were taken to the Upazila Health Complex. SI Tofazzal said police seized the truck, but the driver managed to flee.

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The joy of holidaymakers often gets marred during Eid holidays due to severe gridlocks and other issues on the road, but authorities are optimistic that this year's journey to the northern districts will be smoother, even with ongoing construction works in Sirajganj.

The 22-kilometre stretch of highway between Sayedabad and Hatikumrul Intersection -- located on the western end of the Jamuna Bridge -- houses seven bridges and flyovers. However, currently construction work is ongoing at Sayedabad Bridge, Jhaoil Bridge, Hatikumrul Intersection, and Konabari Intersection, raising concerns about traffic congestion.

Among these, Hatikumrul Intersection is the busiest, serving as a crucial junction for vehicles heading toward various northern districts. As such, smooth vehicular movement remains a big concern due to the ongoing construction work.

Additionally, due to construction work on the Jhaoil Bridge and at the Konabari Intersection, the highway there has turned to a single-lane, disrupting smooth movement of vehicles.

On regular days, around 18,000 to 20,000 vehicles cross the Jamuna Bridge. However, during Eid, this number surges to nearly 40,000 to 50,000, often leading to long tailbacks on both ends of the bridge.

"Four-lane construction on the east side of the Jamuna Bridge in Tangail is complete, so we expect full-fledged four-lane service there from the start of the Eid rush," said Ahsanul Kabir Pavel, executive

engineer of the Jamuna Bridge.

"Although construction is still ongoing on the west side in Sirajganj, there is enough road space to maintain four-lane traffic," he said.

However, an on-site visit to the west end of the Jamuna Bridge revealed that multiple construction zones occupy a significant portion of the highway.

"It becomes difficult to maintain normal speed after crossing the bridge," said Md Abdul Aziz, a bus driver.

"At Sayedabad Bridge, two-

thirds of the road is closed due to construction. The problem worsens between Jhaoil Bridge and Konabari Intersection, where the highway narrows to a single lane," he added.

Imran Farhan Sumel, executive engineer of the Roads and Highways Department in Sirajganj, assured that construction work would be suspended during the Eid holidays to facilitate a smooth journey. "A portion of Jhaoil Bridge will be opened before the Eid rush begins, so single-lane traffic will not be a major issue," he said.

This correspondent observed that the construction work on Jhaoil Bridge was almost complete in some portions but not along the entire length of the bridge. Nonetheless, road congestion remains a concern. "Due to reduced road space, reckless driving and overtaking often lead to gridlocks and accidents," said Md Abdur Rouf, officer-in-charge of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station. "We will deploy additional personnel at key congestion points starting from the 22nd of Ramadan to ensure smooth traffic flow," he said, adding that travellers heading toward Bogura and Rangpur may face difficulties at Bhugati and Raiganj, where construction work has left limited road space.

Anticipating delays, many are planning to send their families home early.

"As a government employee, I can't leave before the holidays. Travelling with my wife and daughter after the vacation starts will be tough, so I'm sending them this Friday," said Md Rukunul Hasan, an audit officer from Pabna.

Like him, many are adopting similar strategies to avoid last-minute Eid travel hassles.



Fishermen prepare their nets to catch fish from the Sugandhya River in Babuganj, Barishal. The photo was taken recently.

Breaking fast, building bonds

Century-old mosque welcomes people of all faiths for iftar

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

At first glance, one might mistake it for a grand event -- rows of plates, glasses, water jugs, and an array of mouth-watering iftar items neatly arranged.

Some sit alone, others in groups, preparing their meals. This is the scene every Ramadan at the historic Anderkilla Shahi Jame Mosque in Chattogram.

For the past 25 years, this iftar gathering has brought together thousands of Muslim devotees. However, it is not limited to the Muslim community; people of all religions, races, and backgrounds are welcomed without discrimination.

Here, neither wealth nor profession matters -- only



the spirit of brotherhood and harmony. The Anderkilla Shahi Jame Mosque, a witness to Chattogram's Mughal past, was built by Shaista Khan in 1667 on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb to commemorate the Mughal conquest of the region.

According to sources, Maulana Saeed Muhammad Anwar Hossain Taher Jaber Al Madani, the mosque's Khatib since 1996, initiated the iftar gathering in 2001. Initially a small affair, it took its current grand form in 2008, pausing only during the pandemic in 2020.

Mohammad Hasan Murad, personal assistant to the Khatib, said, "Since the first

day of Ramadan, we have been organising iftar for thousands of devotees. The number grows as the month progresses, and in the last 10 days, we serve nearly 5,000 people under the Khatib's supervision."

Asked how such a large gathering is managed, he said, "Many people donate food for the God's blessings. We store these donations in two storerooms and prepare our iftar from them."

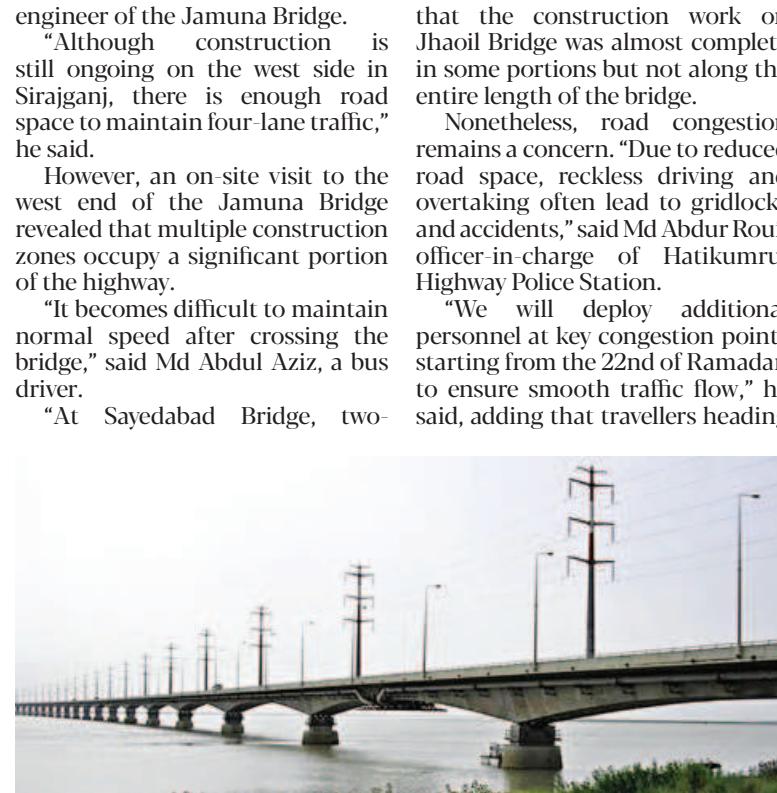
"It's open to everyone. People from all religions participate, fostering unity and harmony," he added.

Chef Abul Hossen, who leads the cooking team, said, "A team of 12 cooks and 30 assistants prepare nine items for iftar every day, working from the morning."

Fazlul Karim Manik, a businessman from New Market, said, "I come here every year. Poor and destitute people, alongside distinguished guests, all break their fast together, seeking blessings from the Almighty."

JAMUNA BRIDGE

Authorities gear up to prevent Eid travel hassles



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3 cops withdrawn after assault on journo in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Three policemen have been withdrawn from duty following an assault on journalist MA Salam Biswas in Badarganj upazila of Rangpur.

A probe committee, led by an additional superintendent of police, has been formed to investigate the incident.

The officers -- ASI Robiul Alam, and constables Al-Amin Hossain and Mojibur Rahman of Badarganj Police Station -- were closed yesterday, said Rangpur Range DIG Aminul Islam.

Salam Biswas, Badarganj correspondent of the national daily Amar Desh, sustained injuries to his hand and leg and was admitted to the upazila health complex.

The incident occurred on March 19, about 100 yards from Badarganj Police Station.

Salam was recording a dispute among police officers near a pickup van when Constable Al-Amin ordered him to stop. Upon refusal, officers allegedly assaulted him, dragged him inside the station, and beat him again.

A video shows Al-Amin threatening to beat Salam if he didn't stop recording. Later, local

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Hizb-ut-Tahrir member held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested a member of the banned outfit Hizb-ut-Tahrir during a procession in the GEC area of the port city yesterday.

The arrestee, Abdullah Al Faiyaz, 24, is the son of Abul Bashar from Hathazari upazila. He is a BSc student in Cyber Security at International University Kuala Lumpur, said police.

Panchlaish Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moinuddin Solaiman said a group of Hizb-ut-Tahrir members brought out a procession after Juma prayers near Well Park Hotel in GEC, demanding the establishment of a caliphate in the country and protesting the attack on Palestine.

"Police chased and detained Faiyaz from the spot," he added, saying legal action will be taken in this regard.

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