



The Tinbigha Corridor — a narrow passage that connects the isolated enclave of Angorpota-Dahagram to mainland Bangladesh.

PHOTOS: S DILIP ROY

Trapped Within BORDERS

Life in Dahagram-Angorpota

S DILIP ROY

The sun rises, but the light of life seems to be stuck at the gate of the Tinbigha Corridor. This lament reflects the daily reality of the 23,000 people living in Dahagram-Angorpota—a Bangladeshi enclave surrounded by India's Cooch Behar district. Though it appears on Bangladesh's map, life here unfolds under the shadow of barriers, fear, and decades of state neglect.

Located in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat district, Dahagram-Angorpota spans 22.68 square kilometres and connects to the rest of Bangladesh through the Tinbigha Corridor—a 178-metre strip of Indian

kilometres to the mainland to sell their produce. As a result, they are regularly denied fair prices.

"To sell cows, we have to collect a token from the local union parishad," said 70-year-old farmer Badar Rahman. "Many times, tokens aren't available. We can't even go out with our own cows. We sell our products at 10–15 percent lower prices—and for cattle, up to 40 percent lower."

For people like Samiul Islam, who lives just 10 metres from the Indian border, danger is never far. The recent attempt by India's Border Security Force (BSF) to install barbed wire has intensified anxiety. "My land touches the border," said the 65-year-old. "When I go to work, I fear the BSF will take me. The BGB keeps watch, which helps, but now we farm in groups just to feel safer." His wife, Sabina Begum, added, "We didn't feel this scared before. Now, BSF patrols pass by our home day and night. We live in constant fear."

Beyond insecurity, essential services are severely lacking. Though the area has one hospital, there is rarely a doctor present, and no indoor treatment facilities. For proper care, residents must cross the corridor to reach Patgram Upazila Hospital.

"There are primary and secondary schools here, but no college, no technical institute, and no jobs for women,"



Farmers in Angorpota-Dahagram face difficulties working in croplands adjacent to the border, as Indian BSF frequently patrols along the zero line.

said 65-year-old retired teacher Reza Islam. "We must cross the corridor for everything—from healthcare to education. It's not just a gate we cross, it's a symbol of our constraints." He added, "The corridor may be open, but our lives aren't. Questions from guards, constant surveillance, and an invisible fear always surround us."

The Teesta River, which enters Bangladesh through this area, brings its own danger. Each year, erosion eats away farmland, pushing more people into poverty.

And yet, Dahagram-Angorpota is more than just a neglected outpost. With its unique geography, natural

beauty, and cultural richness, it holds potential for border tourism and agro-based industries.

"With proper planning, tourism, education, and small industries could transform this region," Reza suggested. "It would change not just our economy, but our lives."

For 21-year-old college student Maminul Islam, the struggle is especially personal. "I cross the Tinbigha Corridor every day to go to college," he said. "Despite completing training, I can't work online because BSF has blocked broadband internet cables from reaching our area. We're cut off from digital opportunities."

The Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) says it is aware of the security concerns. Subedar Jamil Hossain, commander of Panbari BGB Company Camp, said, "We are educating farmers so that no one crosses the border illegally. We are monitoring the area to ensure farmers can work without hindrance."

Dahagram-Angorpota was declared a union in 1985, and the Union Parishad started functioning in 1989. In the early days, the Tinbigha Corridor was open for just one hour a day. Over time, the hours increased until round-the-clock access began on September 6, 2011. Yet bureaucratic hurdles remain.

Movement still depends on permits, and lives are often dictated by corridor rules. "We are citizens of Bangladesh," said one resident, "but we spend every day under a permit system." It's an irony for people who live within the nation's borders, yet remain apart from its everyday rights and services.

Movement depends on permits, and lives are ruled by corridor restrictions. "We are Bangladeshi," said one resident, "yet we live under a permit system." In Dahagram-Angorpota, the flag may fly, but freedom is rationed—life unfolds in a limbo shaped by history, politics, and broken promises.

S Dilip Roy is a journalist at The Daily Star

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land. Opened 24 hours a day since 2011, the corridor was expected to change lives. But while the gate may stay open, opportunity often remains closed.

Most families here survive on farming and livestock. Cows roam nearly every yard, and fields are rich with crops. Yet due to the lack of local markets and traders, residents must travel about 20

Verses from the ROHINGYA CAMP

Mohammed Taher, a young Rohingya poet and teacher from the refugee camp in Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, uses education and writing as tools for change. A part-time Science and English teacher since the age of fifteen, he is now pursuing higher education through a Brac University-OSUN programme. His poetry, drawn from the struggles and hopes of his community, reflects a deep commitment to justice and storytelling. Actively involved in youth literary activities, Mohammed dreams of becoming an inspiring teacher—one who not only educates but also uplifts others through knowledge, empathy, and peaceful advocacy.

A Voice Unheard

I am a Rohingya youth,
Living in a camp that never means to be
home.
Days pass slow and unchanging,
Each one is blending into the next.

It is difficult here.
The air is heavy while waiting,
The roads are lined with uncertainty.
Sometimes, it feels like the world has
forgotten us.

I am a human too.
I feel, I dream, I hope,
Yet my rights remain distant.
Like the sky, I can see but never touch.



PHOTO: ANTSUR RAHMAN

Frustration grows within me,
Not just from hardship, from silence.
Why must I fight? For what others are
given?
Why is my voice unheard?

Still, I hold on.
Not the reason for it is easy, I must.
One day, I will step beyond these borders,
No longer a Refugee but as a free person.

Where is Humanity?

Gaza is burning. My people are crying.
In Arakan too,
We are slowly dying.
The world is watching, and they are dying.

Where is the word "Humanity first"?
We are Muslims, treated like dust.
No food. No peace.
No one to trust, children scream, mothers
pray.

Fathers bleed day by day.
Gaza and Arakan far but the same,
Different places but the same pain.
We did nothing, still we ran.

No homes, no rights, nowhere to belong.
I ask the world, with a broken heart,
Will you only care,
After we are torn apart?



PHOTO: STAR