

MOULVIBAZAR DISTRICT

Over 437km of rural roads in disrepair

Floods, lack of funding leave locals stranded

MINTU DESHWARA

More than 437 kilometres of rural roads across Moulvibazar have fallen into complete disrepair, leaving thousands of residents isolated, local economies crippled, and vital transport routes severed.

The roads, managed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), have been left in various stages of disrepair, with many stretches developing large potholes and some areas losing all of the original surface.

According to LGED officials, the roads were severely damaged during four floods in 2024. Before repairs could begin, persistent



road is worsening daily due to the movement of light, heavy, and goods vehicles," he said.

Truck driver Md Jasim said if repairs had been carried out after the flood waters receded, the situation would not have deteriorated so badly. "Due to the delay, the Bhanugach road has worsened. Driving through the potholes means daily car repairs. Vehicles now move slowly and unevenly," he added.

Kohinur Akhter, who travels on the Tarapasha road, said she works at a government primary school and commutes daily by auto-rickshaw. "The shaking caused by the potholes makes travel unbearable, yet I am forced to use the road. It is getting worse

by the day," she said.

LGED estimates put total infrastructure losses from the floods at over Tk 1,000 crore, with damage to rural roads alone accounting for more than Tk 600 crore.

The worst-hit upazila is Rajnagar, where 99km of roads have been damaged. The road leading to Tarapasha Bazar, located in a haor area, has become nearly impassable.

In Kulaura, along the Hakaluki Haor, 66km of roads are in poor condition. Prolonged submersion during the monsoon has left these roads riddled with potholes and erosion.

Similar conditions prevail in Juri and Barlekha upazilas.

In Kamalganj, residents expressed frustration over the dire state of the Adampur road.

"The situation has disrupted transport links and cut off access to essential services in many villages," said Mifta Mia, a resident of Adampur.

Contacted, Ahmed Abdullah, executive engineer of LGED, Moulvibazar, said some urgent repair work on damaged bridges and culverts was carried out under the 2023-24 annual development allocation.

"However, no funds have been allocated specifically for roads affected by the floods. Work will commence once we receive the necessary approval and funds," he said.

heavy rainfall this year, coupled with runoff from upstream hill streams, further worsened the situation.

Shahidul Islam, a resident of Rajnagar upazila town, said the Tarapasha road was submerged under two feet of water for about two weeks last year. "Initially, the floodwater created small and large holes on the road, which gradually grew larger. The condition of the

Pvt sector, bigger budget vital for better

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Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher, nayeb-e-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, stressed the need for higher budget allocation and policies to support private sector growth.

He said pharmaceutical companies are forced to spend heavily on product promotion.

After he said so, a member of the audience protested, claiming doctors do not take the money.

In response, Taher clarified that he did not accuse doctors but maintained that companies spend significantly on promotion.

During the exchange, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, briefly left the stage. He later returned at the organisers' request to continue the session.

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said Bangladesh has topped the list of South Asian

countries in terms of social indicators but failed to make similar progress in health.

He said the demographic dividend cannot be utilised without greater investment in healthcare, adding that if BNP comes to power, they will allocate 5 percent of GDP to health.

He said the private sector should be freed from government control, promising "serious regulatory liberalisation," and urged businessmen to prepare for self-regulation.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, representing the interim government, said no decision is made without stakeholder consultation and that the government will ensure a congenial environment for private investment.

He noted that even the US, despite being a champion of liberalism, regulates its health sector.

"The government that comes next may deregulate, but no country leaves its health sector unregulated. We will regulate -- but

regulation will not be repressive," he said.

Joining virtually, Planning Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said there is a crisis of public trust in the country's healthcare system, leading many to spend huge sums abroad, which burdens the economy. He

pointed out that many large government-built infrastructures remain unused.

"In some places, there are buildings but no doctors; in others, there are doctors but no nurses or technicians. Coordination is necessary, and involving the private sector can help improve the situation," he said.

He also suggested considering private management for small healthcare clinics.

AM Shamim, general secretary of Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association, said they need approval from 18 agencies for licence renewal, calling it a form of "torture". He

urged simplification of the process.

Prof Md Abu Jafor, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said the private sector provides 70 percent of health services in the country and the government alone cannot strengthen the system.

Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, emphasised recognising the contributions of the private sector.

Saidur Rahman, secretary of the Health Services Division, said many unused medical facilities can be made functional by involving private actors.

Md Mosaddeque Hossain Biswas, president of Bangladesh Medical University, and Prof Md Shahinul Alam, vice chancellor of Bangladesh Medical University, also spoke, among others.

The event was moderated by Bonik Barta Editor and Publisher Dewan Hanif Mahmud.

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primary healthcare centres in every ward to provide awareness, prevention, and treatment services, alongside 100 to 150 bedded hospitals in each city corporation zone.

It also recommended establishing Zonal Health Offices, modelled on the Civil Surgeon's Office, to oversee hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, GP chambers, diagnostic centres, family planning, vaccination, and other public health initiatives.

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The declaration also called for an effective referral system linking primary healthcare centres to secondary and tertiary facilities for timely treatment of complicated cases.

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and superstitions through

awareness campaigns.

Other recommendations included reactivating government and non-government reproductive health call centres, establishing adolescent and women-friendly healthcare centres in educational institutions, and involving youth in awareness initiatives.

Financial measures proposed included more allocation in the national health budget for urban healthcare, lowering the price of essential medicines, introducing health insurance schemes for the ultra-poor, and providing subsidised diagnostic services for marginalised communities.

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driving healthcare reform.

He emphasised that

lasting change comes not

from short-term incentives

but from civic responsibility

and collective action,

urging the youth to extend

their activism beyond their

own rights to include the

well-being of the elderly.

On urban health

specifically, he admitted to

structural gaps compared to

rural healthcare. "The

rural health structure is

very well-organised.. But

in cities, where more than

seventy million people

live, the structure for

primary healthcare is not

as systematic as in rural

areas."

He noted the

government's plan to

introduce ward-based

GP units in cities to

provide a structured entry

point for urban primary

healthcare, in line with

the Dhaka Declaration's

recommendations.

Dr Rahman also

emphasised equity and

safety, highlighting the

critical role of women

doctors in both rural

and urban settings, and

called for ensuring their

protection and dignity

alongside patients'.

Ipas Bangladesh

Country Director Dr Syed

Rubayet said, "Sexual

and reproductive health

services and rights are

highly stigmatised and

a neglected issue. We all

probably know that sexual

and reproductive health is

a fundamental right, but

there has been widespread

indifference towards it."

He admitted that past

and current efforts remain

inadequate and stressed

the urgent need for

stronger action.

Edward Cabrera, first

secretary (development-

health) at the High

Commission of Canada in

Bangladesh, said the skills

and advocacy learned by

youth volunteers will shape

the leaders of tomorrow.

He called on health

professionals, government

bodies, and development

partners to keep

supporting volunteer-

led models to strengthen

SRHR across the country.

Our concept

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of Management Sciences highlighted how British Orientalism reshaped Hindu and Muslim identities in South Asia through literature, language, and education.

Drawing on Edward Said, she called for a "secular critical" approach – resisting all hegemonies while building a humanist, inclusive future.

"We have good rules, but the real problem is implementation."

Mirza M Hassan of BRAC University called for reimagining democracy to combine representative systems with direct forms such as citizens' assemblies and referendums.

Prof Maslee Bin Malik said debates on Islam, democracy, and modernity have lost relevance amid global crises like Gaza, which expose failures of Western democratic ideals.

Prof Alex Taek Gwang Lee of Kyung Hee University urged rethinking history beyond Eurocentric models, citing Gaza as evidence of European humanism's collapse.

Meanwhile at another session titled "New Political Dialogue: Transformation in South Asian Politics", speakers said Bangladesh's democracy is under threat from entrenched elites, weak institutions, and flawed political parties.

They also said politics has become dominated by oligarchs and business interests. Badul Alam Majumder, a member of the National Consensus Commission, said, "Politics has become

Support Desk

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and communication development organisation SoMaSHTe, was attended by leaders of journalist associations and representatives of legal aid groups, Unesco said in a statement.

Journalists facing harassing lawsuits or other professional challenges can now seek legal and advisory assistance through the hotline +8809617356868.

The Desk will collect information, connect journalists to legal aid organisations, and, when required, link them with services available in their districts or regions.

"Unesco is committed to safeguarding press freedom and ensuring