

Student attendance drops amid erosion fear



A section of road on Juri River embankment in Moulvibazar's Kashinagar recently collapsed due to erosion. The road leads to several educational institutions in the area. Villagers said it is worrisome as students have to use the eroded road amid risk.

School attendance took a hit due to growing anxiety among students and their parents, after about 70 feet of the river embankment collapsed in front of Kashinagar Government Primary School recently.



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The school, established in 1962, currently has 75 students.

"The embankment is the only way to reach the school. Student attendance has dropped considerably after it collapsed recently. With the annual examinations ahead, absence of students may affect their results," said headteacher Swarti Rani Debnath.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that two bamboo groves continue to hold the remaining soil on the eroded portion of the road. Several sand-filled geo-bags were placed there to prevent further damage.

Raihan Ahmed, a student of the school, said fear grips them as they have to go to school and return home using the road daily.

Shahidul Islam, a resident of the village, said they are also facing difficulties to take their agricultural produce to local markets by crossing the embankment in its present state.

"About 10-15 days back, a portion of the embankment collapsed due to erosion, despite some renovation works done recently," said Prabhat Chandra Nath, a retired health inspector and a resident of Kashinagar village.

According to the Water Development Board, the renovation work for a 110-metre stretch of erosion prone Juri River embankment in Kashinagar area was supposed to start in June 2022 and complete by June this year.

A contractor company in Brahmanbaria -- Hassan City -- got the job at a cost of around Tk 2 crore. The work, however, has yet to begin, and the deadline has been extended till June 2024.

"The delay in work is due to a shortage of space to keep construction materials. But we will be able to finish the work within the extended period," said Sajjad Hossain, a representative of the contracting company.

Jasim Uddin, assistant engineer of BWDB in Juri upazila, said about 3,000 sand-filled geo-bags will be needed for the embankment preservation work. "The contractor provided less sand in geo-bags. They have been asked to fix the bags' weight and start renovation work soon," he said.