

# 12 Govt Primary Schools: Expansion work stalled for 3 years



The expansion work of at least 12 government primary schools in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj has been stalled for over three years now. Despite starting the work in 2021, the progress has been slow. In some schools, only one or two floors were completed, with roof installations. On the other hand, in several cases, the contractors abandoned the sites entirely. Photo:Star

The expansion work of 12 government primary schools in Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj, under the Fourth Primary Education Development Project (PEDP 4), has been stalled for over three years now.

People have alleged that the delays have happened due to the contractor's negligence and lack of adequate supervision from the authorities. The project completion timeline also remains uncertain.



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The project, which began in 2021, aimed to build additional floors in 14 government primary schools across Madhabpur upazila. While the work at Sakushail and Mantala Government Primary Schools was completed, the 12 other schools are still facing an uncertain situation.



Photo: Star

Each school was allocated a budget of Tk 60 lakh, with the total budget amounting to Tk 8.4 core for all 14 schools.

The project was awarded to two contracting firms -- Bengal Traders and M/s Golam Faruk, both owned by Abul Kalam.

Despite starting the work in 2021, the progress has been slow. In some schools, only one or two floors were completed, with roof installations. On the other hand, in several cases, the contractors abandoned the sites entirely.

For example, at Chaumuhani Government Primary School and Shimulghar Government Primary School, contractors left the worksite multiple times without notice. Currently, at least 50 percent of the expansion work remains unfinished.

At the beginning of December, the contractor's workers returned with a truckload of sand, claiming they would resume work and complete the project soon. However, they disappeared a few days later, without further updates.

The following schools are still waiting for the completion of their upward expansion work -- Shahpur, Uttar Khadki, Shimulghar, Auliabad, Rasulpur, Puraikhola, Khatura, Bulla, Surma, Uttar Bejura, Noapara Tea Garden, Madhabpur Model, and Chaumuhani government primary schools.



Miftaul Islam, a 5th-grade student, said the construction of the new building is still unfinished, forcing them to hold classes in the old building, where classrooms are overcrowded. Their discomfort has worsened due to the cramped conditions, especially during intense heat in the summer.

A headmaster of one of the schools, requesting anonymity, said, "I have repeatedly requested the contractor to expedite the construction of the new building. We are facing significant difficulties holding classes in the dilapidated old building and the makeshift tin-shed rooms. Moreover, there is a risk of accidents, and the students are unable to engage in sports activities because construction materials are left scattered on the field."

Akhter Hossain, the headmaster of Madhabpur Model Government Primary School, said he visited the upazila engineer multiple times. However, the engineer has been postponing the issue, claiming he will call the contractor when needed, but no progress has been made, he said.

Contacted, Abul Kalam, the contractor, said the work had been delayed due to rising material costs. He, however, assured that the work had resumed and expressed hope that it would be completed soon.

Upazila Engineer Aminul Islam Mridha, who recently joined the project, said, "The project's timeline of nine months has long passed. The security deposit period has ended, and the contractor has already raised a bill for the work completed so far.

"I have just started my investigation into the project, and it is disheartening to see this situation. Unfortunately, all I can do at this point is urge the contractor to resume work," he said.