

Historic Mekenzi Road lies in dilapidated state



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The dilapidated condition of the historic Mekenzi road leading Kalaigaon town with several nearby places has not only piqued residents and locals, but also exposed negligence on part of the government's high pitched slogans of development.

Credited with being the oldest road of undivided Darrang district, which was once constructed by the British sometime in 1860, Mekenzi Road links Kalaigaon town with [Paneri](#), Bengbari, [Hatigarh](#) and several northern tea gardens of [Udalguri](#) since the 19th century.

Originally, the road was the only link from Rangamati Ghat beside the [Brahmaputra](#) with the tea gardens situated in the northern area of present-day [Udalguri](#) district. A decade back, the road was divided in two parts. The portion from Rangamati Ghat to Kalaigaon was renamed [as](#) KR Road (Kalaigaon-Rangamati) and the remaining part remained [as](#) Mekenzi Road.(The road was surveyed and constructed by British engineer Mekenzi).

Though under the supervision of the State PWD, the condition of the surface communication link is presently so pathetic that people hardly walk on it, not to speak of vehicular traffic,the road has lost all its sheen.

The river [Noa](#) had breached the road at several places near Kalaigaon town and road connectivity to and from Kalaigaon town has become a difficult proposition for several thousand people living in 80 nearby villages, namely Bhehguri, Sagunbahi, Rupatol, Balipara etc.

Though the road distance is only 17 kms from Kalaigaon town to Bengbari, it is bizarre that people's voice to repair the same has not reached the government's ear since the last 12 years.

In 2004, the PWD repaired the road with World Bank funding. Not

surprisingly, the construction was of very poor standard. Moreover, flood [waters](#) damaged the road that same year. Since then, not a single piece of pebble has been laid [over](#) the road in the name of repair and maintainance.

It is not to be mentioned here that the road happens to be the lifeline of ruralites residing in 80 nearby villages. On their part, the villagers produce a huge amount of agricultural products like rice, cabbage, ginger, chilly etc. They also supply seasonal vegetables throughout the year. Obviously, the poor road condition has been posing a big hurdle to the farmers in sending their produce to the nearby markets.

The haggard people of greater Kalaigaon area have [over](#) the years been demanding the State Government for early repair of the road, though their collective pleas have not been taken seriously by the powers that be [over](#) the past 12 years. Several organisations have earlier resorted to submit memorandum to the [Chief](#) Minister and BTC [chief](#) for the road's immediate improvement. People also staged dharna several times [over](#) the issue, but neither the [state](#) Government nor the BTC authority has taken any measures to address the problem.

Shajid Khan

Recipient of The Annual Colosseum Awards 2014 & 2015 (by The Assam Tribune group), Shajid Khan is an Independent journalist based in Assam. He has contributed numerous political, socio-political stories for bountiful national,international as well as Assam based publications including The New York Times,Firstpost,The Telegraph. He also pens down analytic commentary on print and web based publications.

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