



Mindless hill-cutting is causing ecological imbalance in Chittagong. The authorities have taken steps to stop such acts, but all the efforts went in vain. The hills at Foujdarhat bear the testimony of destruction. PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

# CU runs on whims

## 23 per cent teachers are on leave, some have engaged themselves in NGO activities or work as part-timers at private universities

ATAUL GANI SUMON

The academic activities of Chittagong University (CU) students are being seriously hampered as on an average 23 per cent of the teachers remain on different long and short-term leave throughout the year.

Many of these teachers reportedly engage themselves as part time teachers in different private universities or other institutes during the leave.

Due to this non-availability of teachers side by side with hampering education also hinders the timely publishing of examination results of many departments that leads to an increasing session jam at the university.

According to sources, at present over 133 teachers out of 567 are on leave.

Many of them who went aboard for study did not return even after their leaves ended and are staying there without informing the university authority.

Of the teachers now on leave, the highest number of 35 are from the Science Faculty while 30 from Arts Faculty, 25 from Commerce Faculty, 20 from Social Science Faculty, 13 from the

Environmental Science and Forestry Institute and 5 teachers each from the Law Faculty and Marine Science Institute.

In the Arts Faculty, teachers enjoying leaves include two of Bengali Department, five of English Department, one of History Department, two of Islamic History and Culture Department, seven of Philosophy Department, four of Fine Arts Department, two of the Arabic and Islamic Studies, two of Orientation Language and three of Journalism Department.

In the Social Science Faculty over 20 teachers are now on leave. Of them, the highest number of 11 teachers is of the Economics Department.

The rest include three teachers from Sociology Department, one from Public Administration Department, two from Anthropology and three from Political Science Department. In the Commerce Faculty above 25 teachers out of 100 are enjoying various long and short time leave.

They include two teachers of Accounting Department, seven of Management Department, six of Finance Department and seven of Marketing Department. In the Science Faculty more

than 35 out of 175 teachers are on leave. Of them, 10 are from Physics Department, eight from Chemistry Department, seven from Mathematics Department, seven from the Zoology and the Botany Department while two from each of the Microbiology and the Bio-Chemistry Department.

Above 18 teachers out of 40 of the Marine Science Institute and the Environmental Science and Forestry Institute are also on leave. They include 13 from Environmental Science and Forestry Institute and five from the Marine Science Institute.

Following this, different departments of the university, particularly the newly opened ones like Journalism, Biochemistry, Soil Science, Anthropology, Geography, Microbiology and Computer Science departments are now facing a serious teachers' crisis.

When contacted Vice Chancellor Prof AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury told the Daily Star, "Many of the teachers going abroad on study leave for higher education very often do not return while many go on short term vacation to engage themselves elsewhere as part-timers or in NGO

activities."

Prof Nuruddin said, "We made circulation for some of posts lying vacant due to absence of teachers in the name of enjoying leaves. But response from qualified and experienced teachers was not much for lack of facility offers."

When asked about his plan to address the problem, he referred to his limit of capacity in this regard. Some students said many of the teachers are involved in NGO activities and do not take classes sincerely. "They are always busy with their farms and consultancies to make money. How could they find time to teach us something?" questioned a resented MBA student seeking anonymity.

"But they are drawing monthly salaries just in time," he added. Seventy per cent of the money allocated for the university goes for the teachers.

The VC is learnt to have asked the heads of all the departments to publish the results of examinations as quickly as possible.

But the departments seem to have no headache in this regard, students said adding, "for the lack of the sincerity of our teachers we are hanging over here for years."

# Chaktai Khal 'sorrow of Ctg'

## Drainage system of the port city remains a constant threat for years

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

With the rainy season knocking at the door, the fear of water logging and inundation of low-lying areas have again gripped the people of the Chittagong city as re-excavation of sewers and canals to drain out water remain neglected for years.

The drains of the city filled with tons of mud, silts and garbage remain as a constant threat throwing the city dwellers into a nightmarish experience even after a little downpour.

If the number of canals and drains could not be increased as per growth of population of the city, the drainage system of the city would collapse. Chaktai Khal (Chaktai canal), the backbone of the sewerage system of the city, has now become the 'sorrow of Chittagong'.

The Chaktai Khal along with four other canals Jamal Khan Khal (canal), Mirza Khal, Hizra Khal and Chattersway Khal drains out the rain water as well as the sewer water from most of the city area.

A medium scale downpour creates water logging even at the outset of the rainy season and floods vast areas of the city causing a huge damage to the properties as a portion of the canal is filled up.

Without having any major excavation for around two decades, the Chaktai Khal and its attached ones started causing inundation and water logging in the mid eighties.

The projects earmarked for re-excavation of Chaktai Khal, were partially implemented.

A project of Tk. two crore was taken up by Chittagong City Corporation about three years back. Under the project 4935-metre Chaktai Khal was supposed to be excavated and made brick-soled with silt-traps at regular intervals and around 4 kms of it was to be renovated with 'retaining walls' on both the sides.

But the project had fallen flat and the equipment such as dredging machines are now lying idle. Misappropriation of the project money was also reported in different dailies.

Earlier, an initiative for re-excavation and renovation of the canal was taken under a World Bank financed project Environmental Development Project in 1989. Under the project an excavation work was done spending some Tk66 lakh during the tenure of Mayor Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury.

Later, during the tenure of Mayor Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, another renovation and re-excavation project was taken to be implemented under the supervision of a committee comprising representatives from all parties.

Under the project about 1200 metres of the canal stretching from Bahodderhul to Dhunirpole (to the east of Chawk Bazar) was re-excavated with a width of 52ft and depth of 8 ft and retaining walls were built on both the sides of the said portion. About two hectares of land were recovered from the encroachers and illegal occupants that provided 4 ft wide paths on each side of the canal there. The project of Tk. 3 crore ended in 1995 leaving the rest 3795 metres of the canal from Dhunirpole to Khalerpole without renovation.

Since then no initiative was taken for renovation or re-excavation for the next three years and the said renovated portion of the canal had also been silted up to three feet while condition of the rest, needless to say, worsened. Eroded soil, loosen earth from the illegally cut hills, garbage and other sewage were carried and deposited to the canal continuously.

Having no retaining wall, the brink and sides of the canal also slid and collapsed, tons of garbage and husks thrown from the local poultry farms, rice mills and sawmills started filling up the canal in an alarming rate. Encroachments on both the sides from Dhunirpole to Khalerpole (a stretch of around four kms) hindered the flow of the drain water through it.

Moreover, a huge pile of logs, bamboos, mud at the outlet of the canal and rising up of the bed of the river Karnaphuli, the canal flows into further worsened the situation. The rise of river-bed along with two other said factors virtually blocked the flow of water through the canal.

With the latest project taken in the middle of the year 1999 reportedly falling flat, the situation and suffering of the people living there has further aggravated by now. As water getting into the different godowns of the commercial hubs of Khatunganj and Chaktai, it caused huge loss to the businessmen and untold suffering to lakhs of local people and became a common phenomenon of every year. There won't be any exception in the coming rainy season also, local people said.

In absence of proper re-excavation and renovation Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) removes deposited soil and mud from its bed spending lakhs of taka every year to maintain the mere flow of the canal. But this 'effort' goes in vain.

Moreover, as the canal does not have any brick-soled bed, some dishonest contractors got ample scopes for practising fraudulence to remove less soil and mud than they agreed to.

According to a highly placed source, to maintain the drainage system, CCC requires around Tk. 30 lakh a year. "If the canal is properly renovated and excavated, besides saving the city dwellers from inundation and water logging, it would save around Tk. 15 lakh from the money spent for maintenance of the drainage system every year," a CCC official told The Daily Star preferring anonymity.

"But the re-excavation and renovation of Chaktai Khal alone won't be sufficient, unless the deposition of mud and piles of logs and bamboos are removed from the outlet of the canal and the river Karnaphuli, he added.

"However, the part of the canal at the junction and the Karnaphuli are under the control of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA)," he said, "besides, dredging and removal of silts and mud from those points would cost around Tk. 1 crore which CCC would not be able to spend every year." Sources in CCC suggested that CPA could take some initiative in this regard considering the suffering of the people.

If CPA takes such initiative, many would be interested to come forward to dredge those points at cheaper rate to have earth and soil free of cost, they added.



Chaktai Khal main outlet of the city

PHOTO: STAR

# Extortion : Police is protagonist

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Thousands of vehicles that ply to and from Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, and other parts of south Chittagong had to go through an ordeal everyday.

The popularly abbreviated name of this routine ordeal is 'Token System Extortion'. A section of police, traffic police indeed, are allegedly the protagonists in this

dishonest highway business. Reports have it that, they extort over Tk. One lakh daily as 'token' money from vehicles of 17 routes. They dare not to do this even under clear sunlight.

For the 'victim' drivers on the routes, the two most vulnerable spots are the 'entrance' of Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge and the 'Monosar Tek' intersection in Patiya. All transports including

bus, truck, microbus, minibus, pickup, jeep and tempo had to have their clearance (token) from the on-duty policemen by paying money. The tokens are of different categories 'daily', 'weekly' and 'monthly'. The extortion rate differs on the basis of this category.

However, some sources said transport drivers are generally required to collect two types of tokens compulsorily by paying fixed

minimum amount of Tk.200 for 'Highway Token' and Tk.300 for 'Red Token'. These tokens are considered as visas of the drivers to get pass the 'blockade' of police.

Sources said, extortion money is being realised everyday at the northern entrance of Shah Amanat Bridge by some cops on duty there by turns. Usually smaller vehicles fall victims to token extortion here, as they use this bridge to avoid the heavy rush and jam on the Kalurghat Railway Bridge.

It is learnt that even the vehicles having legal and proper documents are also compelled to collect token paying Tk.200, while the transports without such documents need to collect compulsorily the 'Red' token worth Tk.300 at this point of Shah Amanat Bridge.

Besides, the vehicle that plies irregularly through this bridge had to pay extortion of Tk.200 to Tk.500, sources said. In 'Monosar Tek' point under Patiya upazila, the drivers are to collect tokens worth Tk.200 from the district sergeant, sources said.

However, the extortion in terms of volume of money is the highest from microbus services that ply to and from Bahaddarhat Terminal in Chittagong and Chokoria Terminal in Cox's Bazar. Some few hundred microbuses use this route everyday.

Meanwhile, on-duty cops of Patiya, Chandanaish, Satkania, Lohagara and Chokoria thana, and of Chunati, Harbang, Baniarchhara check posts also allegedly extort Tk. 500 to Tk.5000 from vehicles commuting everyday on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway.

Sources alleged that the drivers who refuse to pay token money, are harassed by policemen. Police often threaten the drivers of implicating in false cases, they added.



PHOTO: STAR

Computer classes began at Saint Scholastica's Girls High School in the city on May 30. Teachers and the managing committee members of the school were present on the occasion.

# Of Chittagong Dialect

MOHIT UL ALAM

Perhaps no regional language is farther from Bangla than the Chittagong dialect. It is so different from Bangla that linguists have often wondered whether it originated from a language other than Bangla. But Dr. Enamul Haq has documented that Chittagongian dialect has derived from Bangla, though in much deviated form. Non-Chittagongians find this dialect very difficult to follow, and they fret about the intonation, saying that when they hear the dialect it seems to them as if somebody is shaking a can full of marbles close to their ears. Sometimes they resent everything Chittagongian because of the strange dialect.

Chittagongians, in their turn, feel comfortable with their dialect and don't like to speak in Bangla unless they are forced to, though educated middle-class by and large now speaks in Bangla, and does try to speak it without the local accent. Majority of the Chittagongians are shy about speaking in Bangla because the gap between the native register and the dialect is so wide that speaking in Bangla is like learning a new language. Chittagongians, therefore, speak Bangla with the accent of the dialect. Actually people from other districts speak with accents too, but their dialects being closer to Bangla in speech patterns, the oddities do not sound unpleasant. But does Chittagongian dialect sound unpleasant? As any conscious person knows no dialect can be either all sweet or all sour. It is a given thing, just a reality, and so is the Chittagongian dialect. So people with

ears for fresh sounds find a rich music in the Chittagongian dialect too.

It is said that the speech pattern in an area changes every ten miles. The Chittagongian dialect is not spoken the same way everywhere, and, in fact, four major variations of the dialect may be noticed. As Chittagong lies from north to south like a mango leaf, the dialect likewise varies from north to south. In the north, that is the Mirersara-Sitakundur range, people speak with a strong Noakhalian tilt for which they are often teased as Noakhaliens. Non-Chittagongians often complain that Chittagongians indiscriminately consider all people from outside Chittagong as Noakhaliens. The people of Hathazari and Fatikchhari speak the dialect with short aspirated accents while people in the south, in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf, speak with a slightly lingering deflection. People who are original domiciles of the city have a distinct pronunciation mode, which sounds funny to other Chittagongians, as they utter 's' as 'sh' and not as 'sh'. For example, they would say 'Subidha' in place of 'Shubidha' which means advantage. For the phrase, 'until now' the Chittagongians in general say, 'ehono', but they would say, 'ebo'. In these various ways they provide a lot of fun to others.

The ancient city dwellers are mainly to be found in Patherghata, Firingee Bazar and Enayet Bazar. In the past, many families in these areas had members who were sailors, and many were Khalasis, and they made fortunes. The renowned Dobash family is one such. One of its members, the late

Abu Taher Putu (Putu Bhai) made his name as a footballer in Pakistan time. A life-long bachelor, Putu Bhai drew everybody close to him by his endearing personality. He had a very old servant who suddenly died last year. Putu Bhai was busy looking after the last rites for the burial of the dead. As soon as he interred his servant, he came back home with a severe pain in the chest. He died in the same evening, leaving nobody any chance to do anything for him whatsoever.

The Chittagongian folk songs have made very creative use of the dialect. Two maestro singers, Syam Sunder Vaishnab and Shefali Ghosh did not only sing Chittagongian songs on national media but also took them to far off places in the country. Non-Chittagongian may dislike the dialect, but they love the songs. Vaishnab and Ghosh were an invincible pair and always sang in duet until Syam Sunder died a couple of years ago. They rendered the songs with enough dramatic postures and verve, thereby stealing the hearts of thousands. The most popular Chittagongian song is of course the one sung in adoration of the river Karnaphuli and the sampan, the prime boat of the area, 'Fan chhodo chhodo dheu tuli, Lusai paharattun namiyere jargui Karnaphully.' (The Karnaphuli is gliding down from the Lusai hill in little waves). Other popular songs are mostly love songs making a nostalgic mention of the lost heroic days: "Hasti Durai jargui damal maliniro mahale." (the hero is rushing toward the bed chamber of his beloved riding an elephant).

The Chittagongians show their wit and humour when they speak freely in dialect. The two most baffling words they are gia ('g' is pronounced as in 'Gear') and fanlar. Gia is a word that establishes phallic communion. It is used as a pronoun for a wide range of nouns. Look at its flexibility: A asks B, "Are you eating gia?" B answers, "Yes I'm eating gia." Got the joke! The other word fanlar means 'it seems' or 'I think'. The father might ask his son: "If you took Chemistry rather than English, you would fanlar do well." The suspicious wife might whisper into her husband's ears, "you fanlar see another woman!"

The Chittagongian also love to use slang and obscenities while they are in a friendly atmosphere. Sometimes people at the upper echelon betray this habit. This is about a former minister from Chittagong, whom I won't name but who could not speak without using a four lettered word. One day the Prime Minister, who was his political colleague for a long time, tried to admonish him mildly. The Prime Minister said, "I heard that you always speak in slang even as minister?" The Chittagongian minister, unfluffed, said, "Who (then the four-lettered word coming) told you that?"

The Chittagongians prefer to use proper names with a deflection. So, Ali becomes Aillya, Selim becomes Selimyya, and Moin becomes Moinyya. As long as you don't mind, it doesn't matter. And if you mind, you can also call your friend's name in a similar manner, it'll not matter either.

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