

Clogged up canals keep city waterlogged

SULTANA RAHMAN

As waterlogging disrupts life even after a splash of shower in the capital, authorities in charge of clearing sewage say encroachments on different canals obstruct normal flow of water leading to severe water stagnation in Dhaka.

A network of 26 canals that used to form the natural drainage system for Dhaka city has disappeared or shrunk drastically over the last four decades, they said.

The disappearance of the canal network has not only aggravated the city's drainage problem apart from depriving the city of its natural beauty, it has also blocked the regular recharge of groundwater beneath the city, which leads to the alarming fall of groundwater table every year.

Among the city canals, Dholai Khal once was an important navigational route for country boats in and out of destinations within the metropolis but has now disappeared due to wrong policies of the city administration to construct roads by filling up canals.

The canals had their outlets to the Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Balu and Turag rivers. Segunbagicha Khal extending from Shahbagh to Jirani Khal used to form the main drainage channel of central Dhaka along with Begunbari Khal extending from Dhammendi Lake to Trimuhoni via Rampura before emptying into the Balu river.

I b a r h i m p u r canal, Kathalganj-Rajarbagh canal and Gopibagh canal together with other small canals of the city have lost out to either illegal encroachment or acquisition for construction of roads, box culverts or underground drains.

A study of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) on the causes of waterlogging reveals that



The canal in Loharpool, Ganderia, as seen in 1988 (right) along with other canals have disappeared not only aggravating the city's drainage problems but depriving the city of its natural beauty and blocking the regular recharge of groundwater. These canals have also been lost because of wrong policies of the administration to construct roads by filling up them up.

Shahjahanpur khal is causing drainage problems in Malibagh, Mouchak and Shantibagh areas under Zone D.

In Zone E, encroachments on Shahjadpur khal stand in the way of flushing out of waste waters from Kuril, Pragati Sarani and adjoining areas. Sluice gate on Shahjadpur Khal constructed by the WDB is another cause of water stagnation in the zone.

Encroachment on Begunbari Khal by Shalbolla piling is responsible for waterlogging in Zone F. Inundation is caused in the areas adjacent to Hatirjheel Khal due to the closing of Rampura gates during high water level.

In Zone G, encroachment on Mohakhali khal is causing drainage problems in Nakhalpara, Arjatpara, Rasulbagh and Shahinbagh areas.

The Kalyanpur pump regulating pond is getting filled up in Zone H.

Encroachments on the Kalyanpur Khal and its six branches are causing waterlogging in Taltala, Agargaon, Kazipara and adjacent areas. The DCC constructed a wholesale market on the canal after dumping garbage.

Encroachments on the Ibrahimpur Khal in Zone I cause water stagnation in Uttara and Banani. In Zone J, encroachment on Diabari Khal by the developers is aggravating waterlogging there.

In Zone K, the filling-up of low-lying areas by Rajuk and private developers for housing projects is an impediment to the natural drainage.

The Wasa managing director told Star City that not only Wasa but the prime minister herself is giving priority to recover all the filled up canals. "We have taken a strong position to recover the canals and other water bodies and to implement the plan we need integrated actions by the other utility services."

unplanned urbanisation coupled with encroachments on the outlet canals have destroyed the city sewer network.

Most outlets have either died or become clogged up as the canals have been occupied by private developers and public and autonomous bodies like Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

In most cases, big structures have been constructed on the

outlet canals. Construction of sluice gate by the Water Development Board (WDB) and sealing of manhole covers during road carpeting are also responsible for waterlogging.

The drainage problem will become more acute if the 'unplanned' development of eastern Dhaka proceeds further, Wasa warns.

To overcome the waterlogging problem, Wasa has recommended that the drainage chan-

nels should immediately be cleared of all encroachments. It stressed an immediate halt to the unplanned urbanisation and dumping of solid waste inside the outlets and rehabilitation of the existing drainage channels.

The study prepared by Dhaka Wasa Managing Director ANH Akhtar Hossain has already been sent to the higher authorities for proper action, sources say.

The whole of Dhaka city's sewer network has been divided

into 10 divisions and the study pointed out the causes of waterlogging in all the zones.

The study says encroachment on Katasur Khal is the main cause of waterlogging in Rayerbazar area (Zone A). Occupation of the Ramchandrapur canal is also responsible for waterlogging in Islambagh, Nawabganj and Hazaribagh areas.

In Zone B, a more than 30-meter wide-open channel Dholai khal has been replaced with a 2.5-

metre box culvert. Narrowing of the canal has led to waterlogging in the BUET, Bakhsibazar, Hoseni dalan, Nimgali, Nazimuddin Road, Bangshal, KA Road, Agha Sadek Road, Gendaria, Postogola and Faridabad areas.

As manhole covers of sewer links have been sealed by the DCC under its Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Wasa cannot do its maintenance work, says the study.

Encroachments on Segunbagicha Khal at Maniknagar and Manda have caused waterlogging in Zone C. Waterlogging has become a permanent feature in Shantinagar, Inner Circular and Middle Circular roads, Arambagh, Fakirerpur, Gulistan, Zero point, Motijheel, Dilkusha and Saidabad because of encroachments on the canal.

Major encroachment on the Jirani Khal goes unchecked and the choking up of the



Many roads in Gulshan-Banani diplomatic area are left in tatters after the heavy rains stripped the roads off their smooth structure.

DCC in dearth of funds to repair damaged roads

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Repair of city roads damaged by torrential rain last week seems uncertain as Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) lacks adequate funds.

DCC Chief Engineer Idris Miah said they need more than Tk 500 crore to repair the damaged roads. "But we do not have the money," he said. DCC sources however confirmed the exact figure at Tk. 465.71 crore.

With weeks of severe floods and the heaviest downpour in Dhaka in more than half a century that started on September 13 and continued for a week, much of the city went underwater.

The prolonged stagnation of rainwater has left 609 of 2,289

kilometres of city roads severely damaged along with 171 kilometres of drains and 9.63 kilometres of footpaths.

Most roads in different areas including Bashabo, Khilgaon, Motijheel, Jurain, Badda, Banani, Mirpur and Mohammadpur are now in a shabby state. They are seen pockmarked at numerous places as they remained under water for at least three days.

Ditches developed in different places lead to traffic hazards. To add to people's woes, quagmires are created in some areas. Roads seem off-limits to almost every type of vehicles, as it is risky to commute through them.

A large ditch filled with rainwater near Toyota building in Motijheel caused a CNG driven

autorickshaw to overturn last Saturday leaving two passengers injured.

"I shudder at the thought of stepping onto these shabby roads," said Alimul Haque of Rampura. "The jerks are unbearable no matter what mode of transport you take."

Tahera Begum who commutes regularly to Sayedabad said it takes almost twice the time for her to reach home as the roads in the area are filled with huge holes.

It has become difficult for pedestrians to walk as potholes filled with water sometimes act as death traps. They also create severe traffic jams, as the movement of vehicles is very slow.

The DCC chief engineer said

they had already submitted a project concept paper (PCP) to LGRD and cooperatives ministry for repairs on city roads. "In the meantime, we have begun temporary repairs from our own funds."

A new PCP will be submitted to the LGRD for consideration tomorrow.

"We are filling up the ditches with a finishing of asphalt concrete mixture," he said stating that it would be a temporary relief. "We can begin permanent repairs only when we receive funds from the government."

The DCC chief engineer also said the government is looking for an international donor as large sums of money would be needed for road repairs.

Movie makers want stringent anti-piracy law

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association (BFPDA) demands amendment to the Copyright Act 1994 to check video piracy as the existence of the film industry is threatened due to absence of stringent rules against such piracy.

BFPDA recently submitted draft rules against video piracy to the information ministry as asked by the ministry. The rules seeking amendment to the law were approved by the cabinet and supposed to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS).

However, the implementation of the proposed rules is delayed until the winter ses-

sion of the JS in November, said Ashrafuddin Ahmed Uzzal, general secretary of BFPDA.

"Video piracy of films is destroying the local film industry as the video pirates target good social films which are usually seen by families at home. As a result, producers are losing interest to produce good social films," said Uzzal.

The existing copyright law has provision of only Tk 500 fine and maximum six months jail term for any person convicted for video piracy. "This is not enough and we have proposed a fine of Tk five lakh and five years imprisonment in the amendment. This will help reduce video piracy of good films," the BFPDA general secretary said.

The Film Industry Protection

Council (FIPC) which was formed early this year to implement a 12-point charter of demand also includes a demand to make stringent law against illegal video and CD piracy of Global Bangla films.

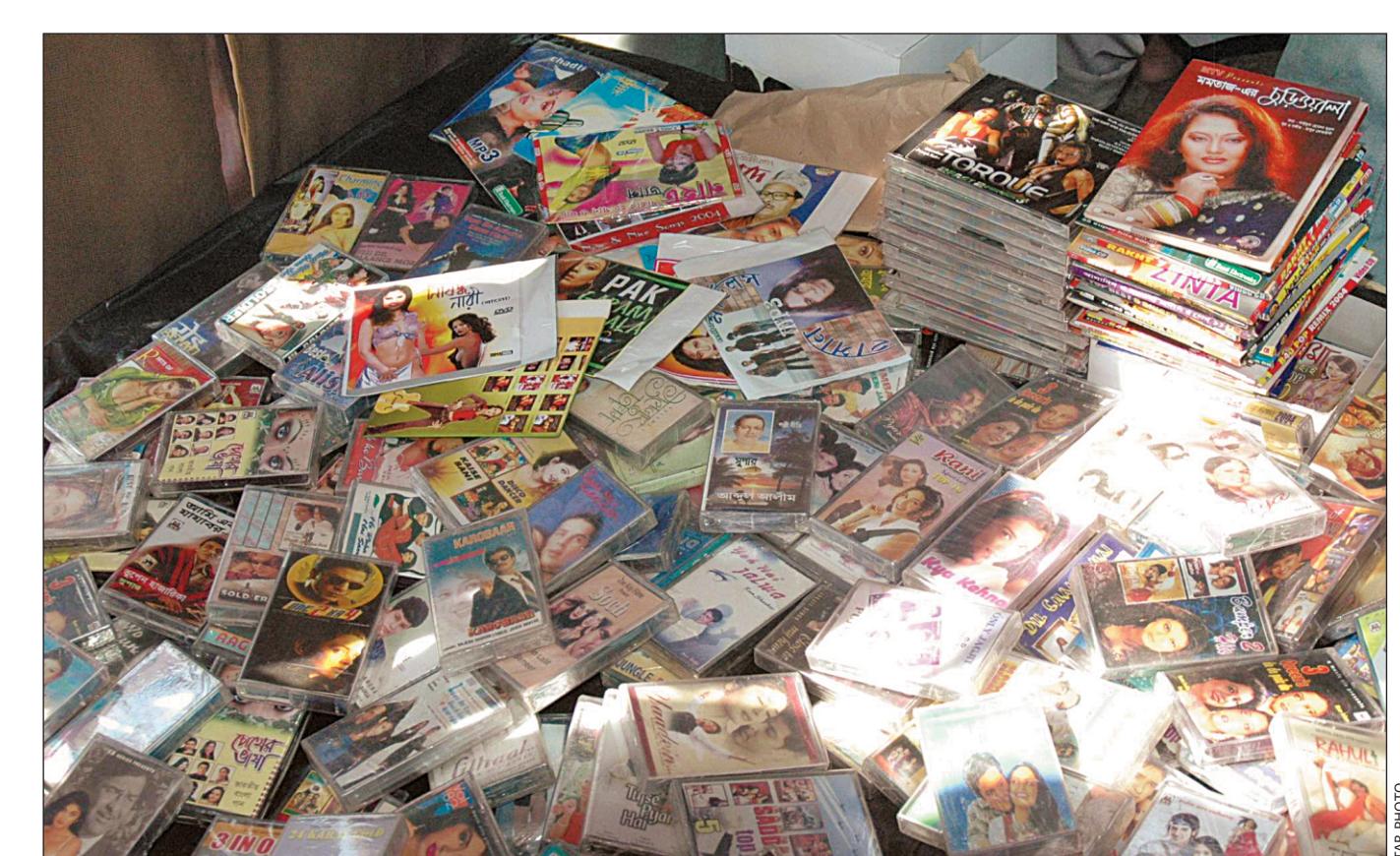
The FIPC suggested formulating video piracy law within the framework of Intellectual Property Act with the provision of five years' imprisonment and Tk five lakh fine for piracy and screening the pirated films in television and cable TV channels.

Film producers and distributors think that video piracy is one of the predicaments of the film industry. "Due to video piracy cinema goers can watch a film before it is released. They don't need to go to cinemas," said a distributor.

A producer said the government also incurs huge revenue loss from duty on cinema tickets as people don't go to cinema due to video piracy.

The cinema industry is now passing a critical time with cinemas closing down one after another. Already Gulistan, Molika, Jyoti, Roopmal, Tajmahal and Moon in the city closed their business and Modhumita, Lion and Shabistan are planning to close down.

"Now it is tough to profit Tk 20 lakh from a super hit film after running for a year," said Uzzal. "Because of government policy the Tk 100 crore industry is unable to attract audience and fails to generate more income for the industry people."



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