

INSIDE DND EMBANKMENT

Unplanned settlement now poses permanent waterlogging threat

ABDUL KADER

A large swath of the area inside the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment faces permanent waterlogging because of unplanned urbanisation at the cost of proper drainage system.

Fifteen days after the heavy rains that left the area reeling under four to five feet of water, many low-lying areas are still waterlogged. Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) officials fear stagnant water might become a permanent feature of these localities.

Residents of Konapara, Basherpool and Dholla do not have to wade through logged water now, but East Boxnagar, South Boxnagar and several low-lying areas such as Bank Colony, Hajinagar, Barabangha, Dogaior and southern part of Matuail of Demra are still under knee-deep water.

Moreover, Shanarpar, Nemaikashari, Bagmara, Kadaltali, Rasulbagh, Jalkuri, Bhuigarh, Delpara, Lamapara, Tusharpara, Pathantali, Godhnail and Kadamtali of Siddirganj thana in Narayanganj district are also waterlogged.

M Jalil, a Jalkuri Khilpara resident, said: "Furniture at my home is still under water. We have been in serious trouble for the last 20 days. Although the authorities are

pumping water out, the situation seems to have changed a little."

The DND dam area goes under water every monsoon because of near absent drainage system, but this time around the situation became really bad because of record rainfall from September 12 and 15.

Wasa is still using four machines at Sarulia of Demra to pump water over the embankment round the clock.

Besides, about 10 pumps are in operation at Shyampur under Demra, said Rafiqul Islam, private secretary to the local lawmaker Salauddin Ahmed.

Narayanganj district administration sources said 17 pumps at Pagla and Panchabati are pumping out water with little result.

They said although most areas will be free of water in one week, some pockets will become permanently waterlogged.

About 43 shelter centers in four union parishads -- Fatullah, Kutubpur, Godhnail and Siddirganj -- were opened last month sheltering about 16,000 people. Most of them are still staying at the centers, said district administration sources.



Residents of the low-lying areas inside the DND embankment use boats to take them to and fro as the waterlogging still persists there.



RICKSHAW OFF LIMIT		
NAME OF THE ROADS	EARLIER DATE	NEW DATE
Rokeya Sarani from Mirpur-10 to Farmgate through Taltola, Agargaon	December 2004	31 May 2005
New Eskaton Road to Circular Road Bangla Motor-Moghbar-Mouchak-Malibagh-Rajarbag	December 2004	31 July 2005
Technical to Banani Sarak Technical-Mirpur 1-Mirpur 2-Kachukhet-Banani Sarak	July 2004	30 September 2005
Pagati Sarani Kuril-Badda-Rampura-Malibagh-Mouchak	March 2004	30 November 2005
Zahir Raihan Road Azimpur-Fulbaria-Tikatuli-Sayedabad	December 2004	December 2005
North South Road to English road Malibagh-Kakrail-Purana Paltan-Zero Paltan-Fulbaria-Sadarghat	July 2004	31 July 2006
Kalabagan to Azimpur Ruseel Square-Science Laboratory-New Market-Azimpur	17 August 2004	Uncertain
New Elephant road to Bhashani road Science Laboratory-Shahbag-Matsa Bhaban-Press Club	17 August 2004	Uncertain

STAR GRAPHICS

Rickshaw off-limit programme revised under fresh deadline

MIZANUR KHAN

Delay is making some city roads off-limit to rickshaws for political reasons has made the donors unhappy, prompting the authority to thoroughly revise the donor-funded programme under a fresh deadline set by them.

The Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB), implementation agency of the programme, fixed several dates to free eight main and link roads from rickshaws but failed to implement the decision under political pressure.

Now the World Bank (WB), which is funding the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), wants the government to implement the plan by July 2006, aiming to ease the city's severe traffic congestion.

A WB supervision team, which visited Dhaka last July and had several meetings with DTCB, expressed its dismay over the slow progress of the programme.

A source in WB said the bank, displeased with the failure of DTCB, has fixed the new deadline for the roads most of which were scheduled to be rickshaw-free by this year. "We do not want to see rickshaws

in these roads by the middle of 2006. And we want to see two of these roads rickshaw-free as early as possible," the source added.

The bank has warned that it would be the test for the government and if the decision is timely implemented the bank will continue to extend financial help to the government for the development of communication sector in the city, the source said.

The WB supervision mission in its July visit approved the new date to pull out all non-motorised vehicles from some main and link roads by July 2006.

According to the plan, a part of Mirpur Road stretching from Kalabagan to Azimpur and from New Elephant Road to Bhashani Road (Science Laboratory-Shahbag-Matsya Bhaban-Press Club) were supposed to be rickshaw-free by August 17.

But the government did not evict rickshaws from these two roads because of political reason, said an official at DUTP. "We could not implement it for political pressure. It has been delayed because of a verbal order from the Prime Minister's Office," he added.

As the government has already passed three years of its five-year

term, now it does not want to make rickshaw-pullers unhappy considering the next general elections.

Asked about the pressure, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, city mayor and chairman of DTCB, denied the allegation and said the decision was delayed because of the devastating flood.

"If we pull out rickshaws from these roads they will become unemployed. And just after the flood it will be an inhuman move to evict them," said Khoka, also a top-level politician of the ruling BNP and influential policymaker in the coalition government.

The deadline for these two roads has been changed for five times.

A source in the DTCB said Sadeque Hossain Khoka at a meeting of the coordination board on August 9 decided not to go for the implementation of the decision before September because of the countrywide devastating deluge.

Communications ministry is also learnt to have given objection saying that the plan might make the government unpopular.

The mayor also asked the coordination board not to stop plying of rickshaws on the other six main and link roads under the programme.

These roads include Rokeya

Sarani (from Mirpur-10 to Farmgate through Taltola, Agargaon), New Eskaton Road to Circular Road (Bangla Motor-Moghbar-Mouchak-Malibagh-Rajarbag), Technical-Mirpur 1-Mirpur 2-Kachukhet-Banani road, Pragati Sarani (Kuril-Badda-Rampura-Malibagh-Mouchak), Zahir Raihan Road (Azimpur-Fulbaria-Tikatuli-Sayedabad) and North South Road-English road (Malibagh-Kakrail-Purana Paltan-Zero Paltan-Fulbaria-Sadarghat)

Sources said the new deadline came for these roads to be rickshaw-free in the wake of the slow progress and a request from the government.

It was earlier decided that the Rokeya Sarani would be made rickshaw-free by next December but now the new date has been shifted to July 31 next year. The Technical-Banani road will now be freed from September next year.

Pragati Sarani, according to the new plan, will be rickshaw free from November 30 next year, Zahir Raihan Road by December next year and English Road by July 2006.

JIRANI KHAL

Ancient canal ends up in encroachment

SULTANA RAHMAN

Encroachment chokes the northern end of Jirani Khal an ancient canal that carries volumes of water from eastern Dhaka. The canal, part of the capital's natural canal network, streams into the Dholaikhal canal and forked in multiple directions through Dhalpur where Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) built a workshop for its mechanical department after independence.

The southern end of the canal in Dholpur is networked with Dholaikhal, but the DCC built a box culvert at that spot.

"Box culverts are now discour-

aged as they are not environment-friendly. Still, we had to do that, as we cannot go against the DCC," said a senior official with the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

Water from Shegunbagicha and its adjoining areas flows through the Shegunbagicha box culvert into the Jirani Canal. The situation worsened as parts of the canal ended up in indiscriminate landfills by private developers.

The northern end of the canal, which meanders through Manda, Nandipara and Trimohoni, leads to the Balu river and connects to the Norai Canal.

"Much of eastern Dhaka depends on the canal for water

disposal. The shrinking of the canal slows the water flow in monsoon leading to waterlogging," another Wasa official said.

The DCC last year constructed a road, filling up the Maniknagar part of the canal, although it inserted an underground pipeline for water to flow through. But a Wasa official says the pipeline was not enough for the large volume of water.

Local traders built shops around the Manda Bridge on the canal. A social welfare organisation has also set up its office on the shored-up stretch of the canal.

Locals alleged an influential man, Fazlur Rahman, fashioned a yard for his home out of the filled-

up part of the canal near the Kadamtala Bridge in Dakshinagan, while the DCC is building a road filling up the western part of the canal in Adarsha Nagar.

"I filled up a small part of the canal as the canal was drying. The government now wants it back. I will leave it without hesitation," Rahman said.

DCC Chief Engineer Idris Mian told Star City: "We construct roads for public convenience." Wasa did not file any complaint when the DCC planned to construct a road network, he said, adding: "For free flow of water, we have installed underground widen pipelines."

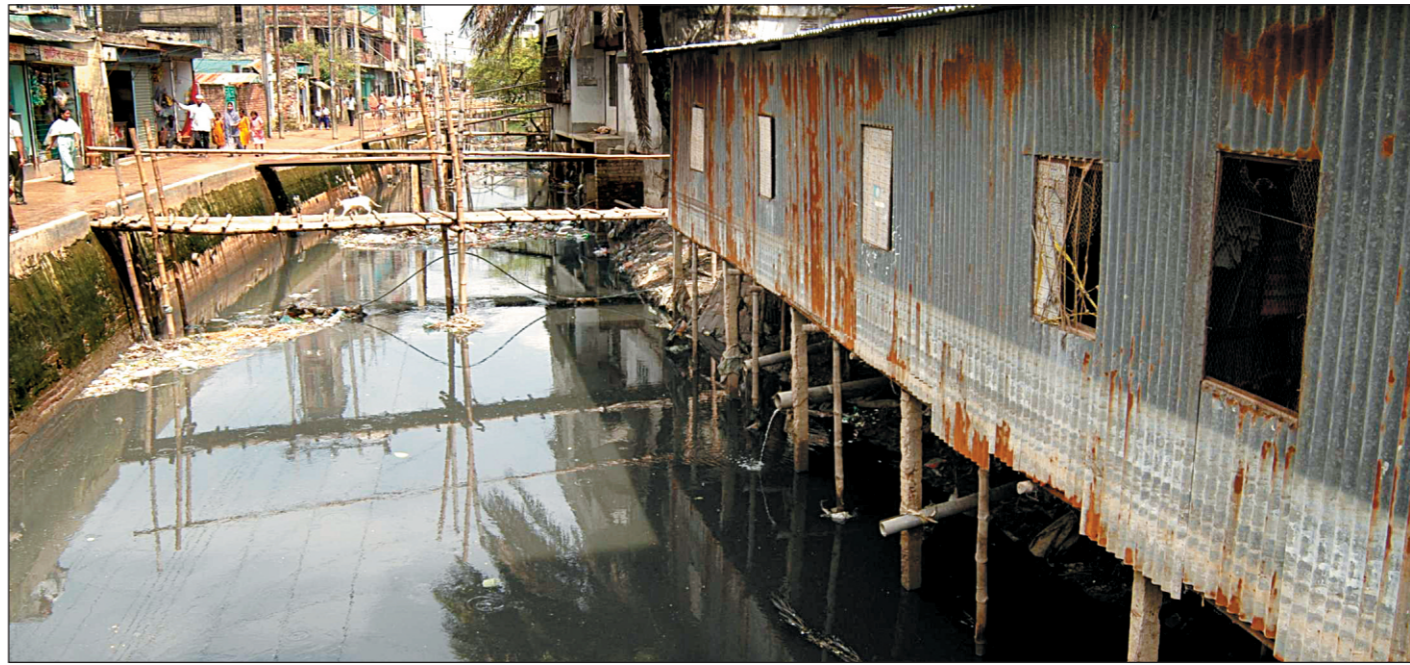


PHOTO STAR

Fixing of meat price by DCC protested

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) has protested Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) fixing of retail price of meat before Ramadan.

CAB in a press release has said this will only legitimise price hike by meat vendors. The DCC fixed retail price of beef at Tk 100 a kg, mutton at Tk 140 and buffalo meat at Tk 80 per kg at a meeting with the meat sellers

Sunday.

Last Ramadan, the DCC fixed price of beef at Tk 90 per a kg, but the price eventually increased to Tk 100 to Tk 120. And the same would repeat this year, the CAB feared.

Consumers are also vexed at the new price setting. "We can now buy beef at Tk 90 a kg. But with the new price tag, prices will increase," said Mustafizur Rahman of Khilgaon.

"Price setting by the DCC also goes against the free market policy. A taskforce formed to

curb price hike could not fix prices of essentials for this reason," said a high official of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

"The DCC should have consulted with the CAB before setting price since it concerns the consumers. The DCC should not ignore consumers," said Quazi Faruque, general secretary of the CAB.

The DCC should rather look after meat quality by enforcing slaughtering of cattle at the DCC-designated slaughterhouses in presence of veterinary doctors, said the CAB press.