

Chaktai Khal becomes big issue in city corporation polls

Promises to end sorrow of port city

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The Chaktai Khal (canal) issue dominates the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) election campaign. It is one of the major issues after the 'Third Karnaphuli Bridge' that comes up once again to the fore in the campaign to persuade the people to vote for the two major mayoral contestants in May 9 polls.

The Chaktai Khal is known as the sorrow of the port city.

Both Awami League (AL) backed Nagorik Committee candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) four-party alliance candidate Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin have already made a number of promises to relieve the city dwellers of grievances from the 5.6-kilometre canal if they are elected in the upcoming election.

Mohiuddin included the 'Chaktai Khal' issue in his 40-point election manifesto for the development of Chittagong to win the voters' supports.

He said "A sluice gate will be set up on the entry point of the canal to make it fit for plying boats again as well as bringing back the natural flow."

His main rival Mir Nasiruddin, who was mayor for over two years, alleged that Mohiuddin Chowdhury in his 10-year tenure as mayor has cheated the city

dwellers in the name of developing Chaktai Khal.

And Mir Nasir promises to bring back the natural flow of the canal and take steps for its development if he is voted.

No matter, many promises have already been made and many more will be made before May 9 election, the reality is that the fate of Chaktai Khal will not be changed much. And the sufferings of the people who live on the banks of the canal which flows zigzag through the prime locations of the city, will not end.

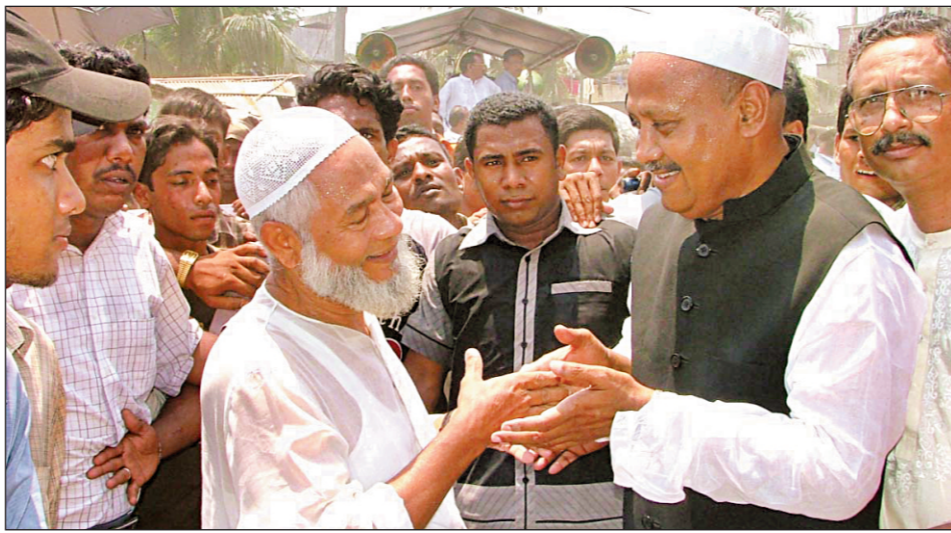
Illegal encroachment, erection of illegal structures and slums and random dumping of household wastes have caused an obstruction against the natural flow and release of water of the canal.

The CCC, very often, takes action and evicts encroachers but they come back in full force.

For the last few weeks, the grabbers have constructed many structures, mini slums and shops at the Chawk Bazar, Bakalia, Chaktai, Bohaddarhat and Khatunganj points of the canal but no one is there to take any action against them.

"As the city is caught up in an election fever, who will dare to annoy the valuable voters," said Ashrafur Islam, a banker from Bakalia.

The rainy season comes as a curse for around five lakh city dwellers living on the banks of Chaktai. Even a moderate shower during the monsoon causes inunda-



Awami League backed mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, top left, BNP backed Mir Mohammed Nasir Uddin, bottom, seek votes and Chaktai Khal, above.

tion in the adjoining areas. The people are worried again as another rainy season is about to come.

The canal has lost its original depth due to constant siltation and rampant dumping of garbage and waste over the years. It has now a depth of only five feet from its original depth of 20 to 25 feet 20 years ago. Huge money has been spent in the name of its excavation.

The areas along the canal where people suffer most are Chawk Bazar, Bakalia, Katalganj, Kapashgola, Bohaddarhat, Chandgaon, Patharghata, Chaktai, Khatunganj, Asadganj, Firingee Bazar, Sholoshahar and Muradpur.

The canal has a catchment of 6.5sqm. The catchments absorb 8.5 crore cft water in monsoon while its water releasing capacity is only 1.4 crore cft per hour. The remaining 7.1 crore cft of water mainly cause deluges, CCC sources said.

The Ministry of LGRD approved a Tk15 crore project for the CCC to excavate and concrete the canal bed two years ago to cope with the inundation in the future. But, the city corporation has so far received a very scanty amount and could do little with the task, sources said.

"Fund shortage has constantly kept us helpless to start development and remedial works," one official seeking anonymity said.

the week that was

Pay income tax regularly

Speakers at a seminar titled 'Income tax on salaried person: its scope, procedure, problems and means' urged the people to pay income tax regularly for the benefit of the country.

"The government is being deprived of huge revenue every year for lack of proper knowledge about the income tax policies," they told the seminar at the Chittagong University on Saturday.

CU Bureau of Business Research (BBS) in association with M/S J Abedin and Company, Chittagong organised the seminar. BBS Chairman Professor Amol Bhusan Nag presided.

BITAN Chairman Engineer Sirajul Islam in his presidential speech at the ceremony briefed about the aims and activities of the organisation.

He said that BITAN started its journey as a volunteer organisation offering computer and English language training to educated and unemployed women since its registration with the NGO Bureau in May 2003.

So far 68 women completed training courses while 15 are receiving training at BITAN with the financial assistance of some Bangladeshi youths staying in the USA.

Baby Hasan, Sitara Rahman of CWE and renowned Chartered Accountant Haradhan Dey also spoke at the ceremony conducted by BITAN Programme Manager Sheuli Mahmud.

Jobbarer Boli Khela ends, reliving rich heritage

Marmasing, Didar retain championship title

ABDULLAH-AL MAHMUD

Jobbarer Boli Khela, the century-old traditional wrestling competition of the port city, was held with its special characteristics and charms here on Monday.

Forty wrestlers took part in the competition. The defending joint-champions Marmasing Tripura, 26, of Khagrachhari and Didarul Alam Didar, 26, of Cox's Bazar retained the championship title jointly for the second time.

It once again swayed the Chittagong people with merriment side by side with reminding

them of a rich cultural heritage.

A prominent local merchant Abdul Jabbar Sawdagor of Andorkilla Badorpati Road of the city introduced the wrestling with a view to inspiring and organising the local youths for the anti-British movement in 1909 (Bengali year 1316).

Since then the descendants of Abdul Jabbar with the support of local people and the administration organise the competition titled "Abdul Jabbar Memorial Wrestling Competition" at Laldighi Moidan on Baishakh 12 (the first month of Bengali year).

The "Bolis" (wrestlers) gather



The Baishakhi Mela (fair), left, was held on the occasion of the Jobbarer Boli Khela while two wrestlers, above, battle for retaining championship.



Visitors at the portrait exhibition of Nasir Ali Mamun at Fulki, a children's educational institution, in the port city. Bibartan organised the exhibition.

STAR PHOTO

Vice Chancellor Professor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury and Pro-Vice Professor Muhammad Shamsuddin were present as chief and special guests respectively. Chittagong Taxes Bar Association member KM Joyal Abedin presented the keynote paper. Member of Taxes Tribunal, Bench-1 in Dhaka Ali Ahmed and BBS Director Professor Showkatul Meher also addressed the seminar.

Garments workers demand compensation

Leaders of Bangladesh OSK Garments Sramik Federation at a meeting on Friday expressed deep shock at the death of two workers in Chittagong and workers at the Spectrum Garments collapse in Dhaka. They also demanded punishment to the persons responsible for the loss of lives and compensation and rehabilitation of the victims' families.

Organisation President Emdadul Islam presided over the meeting at its Dost Building Office. Federation leaders Nurul Alam, Abdur Razzak, Mohammad Mizan, Md Dulal, Khorshed Alam, Amena Begum and AK Mahmud spoke.

BITAN's certificate distribution ceremony

The certificate awarding ceremony of Bangladesh Information Technology Advancement Network (BITAN) was held on its Chandgaon office premises on Saturday.

Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs (CWE) President Monowara Hakim Ali gave away the certificates among the successful participants as the chief guest.

Addressing the ceremony Monowara stressed learning computer and English and called upon the participants for engaging themselves in vocational work.

20 vessels penalised

The magistracy of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) in separate raids in last two weeks from April 7 to April 23 has penalised 20 foreign and national flag carriers for polluting environment along port channel and creating obstruction to smooth vessel movement.

Mohammad Munir Chowdhury, the first class magistrate of CPA, conducted the raids with the assistance from Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) from Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge point to the river estuary at Patenga.

Of the vessels, MT Salam-1 and MT Seal, two flag carriers of Panama and Sierra Leon, were fined and cautioned for polluting the river Karnaphuli by dumping wastes and emitting black smoke.

Communication fair held

Jukta, an organisation of Dhaka, organised an extraordinary exhibition styled 'Communication Fair: Women Rights Materials' at the British Council auditorium here on Sunday.

About 600 materials like poster, leaflet, newsletter, booklet, book, tea-shirt and audio-video were put on the show.

Noted writer Begum Mustari Shafi inaugurated the exhibition as chief guest. British Council, Chittagong branch manager Simon Hunt and executive chief of Jukta, Nishat Jahan Rana also addressed the function.

A dialogue on 'The role of government and common people in curbing violence against women' was held with Jasmine Sultana Paru in the chair. Senior journalist Muhammad Idris, Sitakunda pourasava chairman Abul Kalam Azad, Kumira UP chairman AFM Mafizur Rahman, Professor Md Jahangir, Hossain Shahid Mufti, Saifuddin Babul and Sourav Barua spoke it.



here from different areas, particularly from the far-flung coastal areas and offshore islands in Chittagong and adjoining districts on this day. The event helps them as well as the spectators, particularly the elderly ones, remember a history of unique tradition and 'nostalgia.'

Marmasing, a cop of Razarbog police line in the capital, clinched the champion's title for the third consecutive time since his very first appearance at the competition in 2003.

On the other hand, Didarul, a wrestler from Omkhali under Ramu upazila in Cox's bazar, became the champion in the competition for the fourth time.

Didarul, a small businessman, also won the championship title

(jointly with the then defending champion Siddique Boli of Ukhya) in 2001. He also retained the title in 2002 and lost it to Marmasing in 2003 before regaining it for two consecutive years in 2004 and 2005.

Apart from the two champions, 38 other wrestlers fought in 19 bouts.

Of them, the bout between two elderly wrestlers - Ayub Ali, 55, of Rangunia Rajanagar and Mafiz, 52, of Hathazari, was the most exciting one. Ayub Ali, won the bout.

The participants like elderly Ayub Ali, Mafiz or young Abdul Gafur talked about the people's love and compassion for the competition as well as tradition.

Abdul Gafur, a youth from Gandamara of coastal Banshkhalia upazila, was seen to bring something out of his mouth after winning the bout.

Gafur said that it was a "Tabij" (paper having Quranic verses inscribed on it). His mother gave the Tabij asking him to hold it between the jaws during the bout.

A two-day 'Baishakhi Mela' was also held as usual centering on the wrestling competition.

The fair continued for more than three days as the vendors from different parts of the region opened their makeshift shops since Saturday, one day before the formal opening of the fair, to wind up after the official closure of the event.