It would be about 200-250 feet wide in many places and many Akyab bound big sail boats would moor deep inside the Chaktai Khal. These boats would be laden with rice, salt, lime and clothes.

Chittagong along with Sylhet always had a record of very high rainfall and the town seldom flooded as Chaktai Khal would take care of all the rainwater. Besides Chaktai Khal there were twenty two medium and small sized khals or canals. All have died.

month later with the boatful of fine grain rice. When his boat entered the Chaktai Khal he would send his assistant Abbas to my nani to announce his arrival. Nana's precious treasure for nani would be the high quality beetle nut from Akyab. My daughter finds it hard to believe the sad story of Chaktai Khal.

The hill cutting and encroaching of Chaktai and others canals that started in the fifties continued unchallenged for next fifty years. Encroaching of Chaktai Khal and other





Chittagong was put on its death bed in the late fifties when its first industrial area, the Baizid Bostami Industrial Area was established. Pakistan started its journey to industrialisation and Chittagong on its journey to death. The town limits were extended to Baizid Bostami Dargah gate. Hills had to be flattened to construct factory buildings. That was the beginning. The rainfall washed down the loose soil from the cut down hills to Chaktai Khal and other canals. The canals silted fast, the depth of the canals were lost and the encroachers danced with joy as it was time for grabbing the filled sections of the canal. Some canals soon disappeared and the historic Chaktai Khal was reduced to a mere useless drain full of slush and filth instead of flowing water from Karnafully.

In the fifties we would go to our nanabari (grandfather) to see the big Akyab bound boats laden with different goods tied to our nanabari's big banyan tree in Bakalia. Few years back I took my daughter to show a five feet wide drain and,told her here lies the remains of once famous Chaktai Khal where I spent many days in my early childhood. Thank God my nana and nani did not live to see what happened to their Chaktai Khal from where my nana left for Akyab with his big boat laden with salt and other things bidding teary farewell to my young lovely nani (Grandmother). Nana would come back sometimes a

canals stopped now as there are no more left to encroach. Hill cutting continues. Housing facilities must be provided for the ever increasing population. The city area has increased to one hundred and twenty square miles. Hill cutting continues in full swing in Sholashahar, Baizid Bostami, Jalalabad, Nasirabad, Silimipur and Khulsi. It will continue for few more years until there will be no more hills to cut. Then some day some one will take his child to one of these places and say once there was a hill range in this area.

The people of Chittagong have cried many times. They cried because of the onslaught of the fury of nature and sometimes for what happened last Monday. The crying will not stop now nor in future unless all these hill cutting in Chittagong is stopped forever and Chaktai Khal restored to its original condition. The present Government talks about pulling down of many illegal structures. The task in Chittagong would be easier than that.

Already Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and his Advisor Major General (Retd) M A Matin have announced tough measures against the perpetrators. Everyone would like to think that they mean business this time and it is not just sabre rattling. In the meantime, let us pray for those who died on that fateful Monday.

(Professor, East West University, Dhaka)