

Move to restore 7 Mirpur canals

Demarcation begins: Excavation and widening to follow

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Dhaka Water and Sewerage authority (Wasa) in collaboration with the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office in Dhaka and National Housing Authority (NHA) is demarcating seven natural canals in Mirpur in a move to restore them.

A large area in Mirpur remains waterlogged as five of these canals - Rupnagar main sewerage canal, Housing canal, Baishakti canal, Journalist Colony canal, Kalshi canal and two others - running through lands belonging to the NHA or the DC's office had been encroached on by laying narrow sewerage pipes.

Samsul Alam, a shop keeper at Kazipara bus stand said, the Rokeya Sarani area goes under water during rain because of the narrow sewerage pipes. When we open the covers of all manholes the water goes down within an hour.

"The waterlogging would not take place if the canal were there", Shamsul said.

Zahirul Alam, chief of drainage wing of Dhaka Wasa, said Wasa with the help of the DC's office and NHA was demarcating the canals.

Upon completion of the demarcation and obtaining the official authority to maintain these seven vital canals for the improvement of drainage system in the Mirpur area, Wasa would evict encroachers and start restoration of the canals through excavating and widening them by January next year, Alam added.

Asked if the Wasa has the legal right to evict the plots under the private housing estates, Zahirul said the NHA agreed to give a map of the area with demarcation of the canals.

The housing estate would cancel the plots they leased to the people, he added.

During a visit to the area, this correspondent found that a



A natural canal in Mirpur. It was supposed to be filled up with putting the drainage pipes (inset) underneath the soil.

number of private real estate firms choked up the Rupnagar canal by filling it up with mere 60-inch-diameter concrete pipes laid underneath.

The canal, falling on the Turag River in the town protection embankment area, has been converted into a narrow underground sewerage pipeline all throughout Eastern Housing Estate.

"A 60-inch concrete pipe cannot serve the purpose of a 60-foot-wide canal. Converting these canals into narrow pipelines is decreasing the drainage

capacity," said Zahirul Alam, Dhaka Wasa drainage wing chief. "We should maintain the canals not only for ourselves, but also for the next generation. People should come forward to help maintain a smooth flow of the canals," Alam added.

Locals feared that without restoring the canals, waterlogging situation in Mirpur would not improve.

They complained that the remainder of the Rupnagar canal from Road 23 to Road 33 is rapidly being encroached upon by influential people in absence of

vigilance by law enforcers. The NHA zone office said they had lodged cases with Pallabi Police Station against the canal grabbers.

Officials at Pallabi Police Station, however, said since the NHA authorities did not mention any name of canal grabbers in the case, it is very difficult for them to go in action. Due to that, they had to release three persons they had apprehended on charge of illegal canal filling.

The Housing canal, falling on Rupnagar canal through Kazipara, Monipur and section 2

of Mirpur, has also been converted into an underground sewerage line from Kochukhet old market to Avenue 3 of Shalbari.

The Baishakti canal that runs through Navy camp and falls onto the River Turag at Manikdi, has been filled up for cultivation and for setting up of slums.

The Kalshi canal on the eastern edge of Alakdi village has been filled up and replaced with underground concrete pipes. This canal runs by the eastern side of Mirpur section 11 kitchen market and falls onto the Turag.

Poverty is not always main cause of child trafficking

A foreign consultant tells the Star City

MOON MOON SULTANA

Poverty is not always the main cause of child trafficking in Bangladesh. A major reason is dysfunctional families, which fail to provide protection to the children. Child marriage is another leading cause behind the problem.

John Frederick, a social worker and a freelance child trafficking consultant who recently visited Bangladesh, made the observations in an interview with Star City.

Frederick started his career as a social worker in Juvenile Court in the United States in the early eighties. He started working on trafficked, abused and sexually exploited children and women in South Asia back in 1987. Since then he has been living in Nepal and working as freelance consultant.

He visited Bangladesh last month as the chief facilitator of a workshop on reintegration of street children jointly organised by the Ministry of Social Services, Department of Social Services and United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

Following is the excerpt of the interview:

Star City: What are the leading causes of child trafficking, child prostitution and violence against women in South Asia?

Frederick: Well, you people always say poverty, poverty and poverty. Poverty is not the main cause; it contributes to these social problems. You cannot say poor parents are bad parents. There are other problems and a major contributor is dysfunctional family. Such families fail to provide protection to the children -- may be the father is drunkard or there is a step-mother in the family, for example. Child marriage is another leading cause behind child trafficking and the situation in Bangladesh is worse in comparison to Nepal.

Star City: What do you mean by rehabilitation and reintegration in case of abused children?

Frederick: Rehabilitation is

healing that starts from rescuing the trafficked children, ensuring their security and health care. Reintegration incorporates the arrangements of helping the abused persons going back to life.

Another thing is life skill training, the practical sense to communicate with people in the society and how to take care of emotions. For example, you were a prostitute by profession. You get married to a person and some times the person may willingly or unwillingly insult you indicating your past life. Life skill training is very important in this case to cope up with different adverse situation.

Star City: What are the possible ways of solving these social problems?

Frederick: Social problems are universal. Well, we will have to work and push directly to the stakeholders to find the solutions. Bangladesh needs to change its social service system. Developing a social system is a new idea, its like developing a medical system. And you know it is a long process. It would take at least 15 years.

Besides, Bangladesh needs professional social workers who will work directly with families, communities and society. It has to become a profession in Bangladesh. You cannot say that an NGO worker is a social worker.

I see Bangladesh government is very interested in developing social workers and that is a good move. And you have dedicated and knowledgeable government and NGO officials which is rare in other countries even in India.

We should work in two levels to address the social problems rather than hammering always on public awareness. But I do not believe in public awareness too much. Have public awareness changed trafficking?

Media itself can play the key role in raising public awareness. You do not need to spend a lot of money on public awareness.

We will have to work at family

level to strengthen its protection power and secondly, the state has its own responsibility to give protection to the children through quick prosecution process.

Another good way is to incorporate social problems in national curriculum. Sri Lanka places a very good example in this regard. In school curriculum, Sri Lankan students are taught every sciences of sex. They discuss openly about these issues.

Star City: What are the challenges you are facing working in the region for a long time?

Frederick: Lack of conceptual clarity among the donors is a critical problem here. The donors think in global terms. Helping the donors to understand problems locally is very important. Another big problem is donors' short-cycle projects. Short-term projects are good for immunisation but not for childcare.

There is also scarcity of adequate research. If you want to know the reasons of the problems, you will need study and research. However, I think Bangladesh leads in South Asia in research compared to India.

Rickshaws

FROM PAGE 21
reduce the number of unauthorised rickshaws in the capital.

He said the police alone cannot tackle the problem. DCC has to be more active in reducing the number of unauthorised rickshaws in the city.

Conducting regular drives and seizure of unauthorised rickshaws also create some problems to the police as they have to arrange dumping space for the seized rickshaws and carry those rickshaws to the dumping ground.

"It's a costly programme and we don't have money for managing rickshaws," he said.

Women commuters

FROM PAGE 21

The ordeal of the women commuters of the lower income group is tougher than the white-collar office goers. They cannot afford the buses with ticket counters. They travel by the run-down local buses.

"In the local buses women are hassled in many ways. When we get on a bus and get down the helpers touch or push us unnecessarily. If we have to stand in a packed bus that is very uncomfortable," said Shahana, a garment worker.

But male passengers are not always hostile towards females. Some are quite chivalrous towards women.

"It is true that sometimes the bus is too crowded for a woman to get on. But many male passengers are quite helpful. They give space while boarding a bus and offer seats if a woman is standing," said Munmun, a working woman.

"I heard about the BRTC bus service for women. I saw the buses in Azimpur but never rode one. I do not even know the timetable of the buses," she said.

According to sources at BRTC, at present there are three such buses. The routes are - from Khilgaon to Gulistan, from Mirpur to Gulistan and from Narayanganj to Dhaka. The one from Mirpur to Gulistan is

a one-way service.

Asked about the scanty bus services, Subhashish Saha, deputy general manager, BRTC, said subsidy is needed to increase the number of buses and bus routes as the existing routes are operating on loss.

"At present we have three buses for women on three routes. Two buses under the Motijheel Depot are incurring a monthly loss of around Tk 1 lakh each and the one-way bus in the Mirpur-Gulistan around Tk 50,000," he said.

"In 2005, we had 12 buses for women passengers but due to the recurring losses we had to shrink the service to three buses. At present we need a substantial amount of subsidy to revive the service," he said.

"The main reason for loss is that we get women passengers in the office time only. In other times we do not have enough women passengers. Many women travel with a male relative. So they also do not ride these buses. On the other hand, male passengers sometime get into the bus forcefully," he added.

"Now we are thinking that whether the buses can be run in the office hours only. That will help the women office goers and reduce our losses," he said.

Trade of mugged mobiles

FROM PAGE 21

"He [the hustler] offered me a 'big discount' on the phone since I was its original owner," he added.

According to sources, most stolen or snatched cellular phones are collected and stockpiled at different slums in the city by organized crime rings.

Nazmul Hussain, a business owner at Bangabandhu stadium market, said, "Muggers usually keep in touch with local contacts who trade second-hand sets. These people collect and keep the cellular phones in local slums."

"The slums usually also have a small mobile phone repair shop with a group of technicians, spare parts and accessories. The phones are cleaned up and their covers are replaced so that they look almost new. Later, most sets are packed into suitcases and usually sent to the different selling points," he added.

The buying process of these phones is also just as tricky. The traders usually sit with their suitcases closed and consider a number of things before displaying their stock to anyone.

Abdul Motin, a seller of such phones, said the sellers have to be extremely cautious in picking their customers and complete the whole transaction secretly.

"We do not sell the phones just to anyone. We look for people who would pay well and

would not bother us afterwards," added Motin.

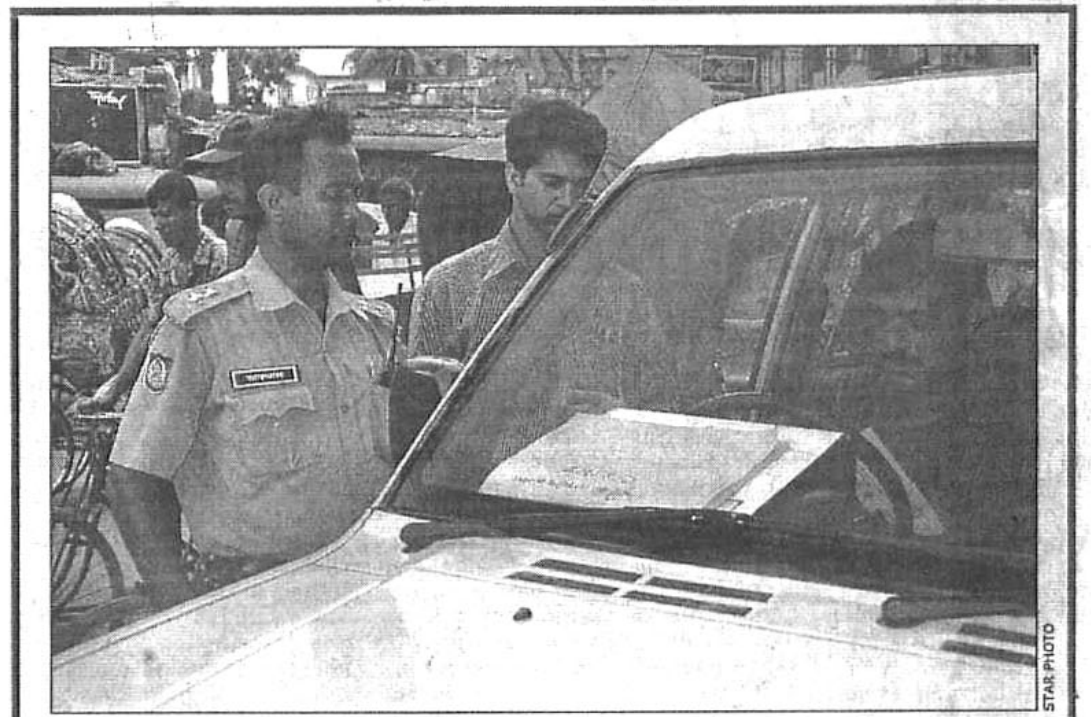
"The customers have to approach us and then we ask them of their preferences and budgets. We display our booty only when we sense a deal is about to be struck," he said.

According to Jamal Hossain, owner of a cellphone shop at Uttara, the underground cell phone market has become a huge business in the city where traders are swindling people out of money by selling bootlegged and refurbished cell phones that are in fact malfunctioning.

"Stolen and malfunctioning cell phones are being sold there after being tampered with by technicians. These phones hardly last for more than six months," Hossain pointed out.

Varieties of brands and models of these kinds of cellphones are being sold at the underground markets for bargain prices -- usually at prices much lower than that of the genuine and brand new ones.

"The phone sets that we sell in here usually do not cost more than Tk 2,000 because they are mostly second hand sets. We, basically, offer people the opportunity to buy cellphones at really cheap prices. This is what drives hundreds bargain hunters to flocking to these markets," said Jayanto Bishwas, a trader at Baitul Mukarram market.



A car belonging to a top government official parked at the Bata signal point of Elephant Road on Friday blocking a portion of the busy thoroughfare. In spite of repeated requests from the pedestrians the driver refused to budge. He did not leave the place even after a traffic sergeant filed a case.

Advertising, Bank & market timing

AD AGENCIES

Macomm
Dhaka. Ph: 9110351,
01715014988. Fax: 9110351.
Email: info@macommdbd.com
info@macommdbd.com

Benchmark Ltd
Ph: 8813648, 8812415
Ph: 9889917
Email: info@benchmark-bd.com

Frontline Communications Ltd
Suit 9/C, Azad Centre, 55
Purana Paltan, Dhaka.
Ph: 9564137, 9567611,
9557597. Fax: 9555184.
Email: frontline@dhaka.net

Adcomm Ltd
9395600, 9387665

Asiatic Marketing Communication Ltd
9392768, 9393303
Bijoy Adhikari
8053418
Grey Advertising Bangladesh

Ltd
8811541, 8827862, 9881689
Fax: 8811541

Interface Communications
9362624, 8351148, Fax:
8314306

Interspeed Advertising
8810675, 9891859

Mattrra
8317456, 9330157, Fax:
9330556

Media Comm Ltd
8861521 (9 lines)

Unitrend Ltd
9124380-4

A Positive Advertising Ltd
8856598-9, 8837751-2

Expressions Ltd
Tel: 8832728, 8832370,
8832280

Quantum Market Research BD Ltd
Ph: 9862162
email: info@qmrbd.com
www.quantumresearch.in

ART & CULTURAL CENTERS

Alliance Francaise De Dhaka
26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka. Tel: 8611557
Fax: 8616462.
Email: infoafd@afdacca.com

Bangla Academy
Dhaka University Area,
Dhaka. Tel: 8619577, 8619583,
Fax: 8612352. Email:
academy@citichco.net

Bangladesh Shishu Academy
Old High Court Road (Opp. Carzon Hall),
Dhaka-1000; Tel: 9550317, 9564128

British Council
5, Fuller Road, Dhaka
Tel: 8618905-7, 8618867-8
Fax: 8613375
Email:
dhaka.enquiries@bd.britishcouncil.org

German Cultural Center
House 10, Road 9, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9126525, 9126526, Fax: 8110712

Indian Cultural Center
H-25, Road-96, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212
Tel: 8850141, Fax: 8850142

Nazrul Institute
House 330B, Road 28 (Old),
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9114500, Fax: 9118051,
Email: nazrulinfo@citichco.net

Russian Cultural Centre
House-510, Road-7,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 9118531
Fax: 8113026,
Email: ruscult@accessnet.net

Shilpakala Academy
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9561709, 9562801-4

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
House 275/F, Road 27,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 8123115
Email: bf@bdonline.com

Cezanne Art Gallery
UAE Maitri Complex,
Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani
Dhaka
Tel: 8826578, Email:
cezanne@bangla.net

BANKS

Agrani Bank
9566153-54, 956616069,
9566074-75

Bangladesh Bank
7126101-20, Fax: 9566212

BRAC Bank Ltd
8824051-4, Fax: 8813543

Citibank NA
9550080, Fax: 9562236

Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd
9568537-39
Fax: 9561889

Eastern Bank Ltd
9558390-1, Fax: 9562364

First Security Bank Limited
9562878, PABX: 9560229,
Fax: 9561637

Grameen Bank
8011138, Fax: 8013559

Habib Bank Ltd
9555092, 9563043-5, Fax:
9561784

Islami Bank (Bangladesh) Ltd
95542402, 9563040,
9560099, Fax: 9564532

IFIC Bank Ltd
9563020, 9562060, Fax:
9562015

Jamuna Bank Ltd
9555141, 9570912-16,
Fax: 9565762

Janata Bank
9560000, 9560027-30, Fax:
9564644

Mercantile Bank Limited
9559333, 9560329
Fax: 9561213

National Bank Ltd
9563081-5, Fax: 9563953

NCC Bank
9561902-4
Fax: 9566290

Premier Bank Ltd
8015276, 8811417

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursdays
Ahsan Manzil-Thursdays
New Market-Tuesdays
Gausia Market-Tuesdays
Mouchak Market-Sundays
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesdays
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesdays
Eastern Plaza-Sundays
Farmview Super Market-Sundays
Multijudha Jadugar-Sundays
Dhaka Zoo-Sundays
Shishu Jadugar-Sundays