



HATIRJHEEL-BEGUNBARI INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Work goes on in full swing keeping issues unresolved

TAWFIQUE ALI

Implementation of the Hatirjheel-Begunbari integrated development project is going on in full swing despite some obstacles, project officials said.

The army engineering corps, implementing agency of the project, has started the work of sludge removal from the canal bed and sand-filling for peripheral road construction.

But problems are there because of the 15-storey BGMEA building in the middle of Begunbari canal, site for Hilton Hotel and extension of Sonargaon Hotel in the project area. Besides, there are some problems with land acquisition and handover.

Project officials said the work of sludge removal started more than two weeks ago. Around 2,000 workers have been engaged. Work on the peripheral road is also going on.

Prof Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), who leads an expert team to carry out a feasibility study for detailed designing of the project, said they have completed the layout plan of the project.

"We'll accelerate the implementation work before monsoon," said Prof Rahman. "We'll remove sludge from the lakebed as much as possible before the monsoon sets in."

"Alignment of the peripheral road in between Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Tongi Diversion Road, behind BIAM building, is completed," he said. "We will be able to complete 50 to 60 percent work of the peripheral road by next two months."

He said laying of diversion sewer pipelines would start once the embankment and soil settlement of the peripheral road is

done.

According to the project officials and experts concerned, BGMEA building is the biggest obstacle to the project implementation. While the authorities have demolished part of the unauthorised extension of Hotel Sonargaon, the issue is yet to be settled.

The government has to make an alternative arrangement to relocate the proposed site of Export Promotion Bureau from

the project area, they said.

Experts say all the unauthorised structures in Begunbari canal and Hatirjheel area will have to be removed and allotment of plots in the area must be cancelled to achieve the goals of the integrated project.

Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) earmarks Begunbari as a natural canal and a designated flood-flow zone, prohibiting any change to its character.

According to the project officials, sand-filling for embankment of the peripheral road has so far been done on around 900-metre stretch including southern fringe of Begunbari canal and both northern and southern fringes of the Hatirjheel.

There will be a two-way service road stretching between Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Tongi Diversion Road while there will only be a walkway on the lake's northern fringe (demolish-

ing unauthorised extension of Hotel Sonargaon).

Footpath, two-way service road, one-way high-speed road and lakeside walkway will be constructed on both banks of Hatirjheel starting from Tongi Diversion Road towards Rampura, explained an official.

The approximate total length of the peripheral roads along the banks of Begunbari canal and Hatirjheel is 11 kilometres.

There will be a walkway from

Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue to Tongi Diversion Road along Panthapath on the northern fringe of Begunbari canal.

A total of four 6-foot diameter sewer pipelines will be installed to carry domestic and industrial sewage to a treatment plant to be set up in the eastern fringe of the city.

Prof Rahman said they have tried to affect the least number of structures in the way of implementing the project in 295 acres area. Of the total, 175 acres of land belong to the government.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) approved the project on October 8 last year.

The project aims at enhancing water retention capacity and adequate flow of storm water in the entire stretch of the wetland, easing waterlogging and traffic congestion problems with a peripheral road and restoring environment in the canal area.

The total project cost is Tk 1,473.68 crore including Tk 1218.68 crore for Rajuk component (land acquisition and lake development), Tk 175 crore for LGED component (peripheral road), Tk 77.97 crore for Dhaka Wasa component (sewer system) and Tk 1.92 crore for Buet study fees.

Eleven kilometres of roads and footpaths, 14 kilometres of walkway, a 320-metre bridge and a 250-metre overpass will be built.

Engineering corps of Bangladesh Army is playing the key role in implementation of the project. The army will carry out implementation of all three components of the project, said an official. The project is expected to be completed by 2010.



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Work goes on in full swing as the Hatirjheel-Begunbari integrated development project takes off more than two weeks ago.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We all should change our food habits and increase our daily consumption of potato."

-- Gen Moeen U Ahmed

Said at the inaugural ceremony of a weeklong potato feast organised by Radisson Water Garden Hotel, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"Now the question is do you enjoy enough independence to deliver justice?"

-- Sheikh Hasina

Awami League Chief
Said at the special court set up for barge-mount power plant case, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"I don't think anyone of this trip would feel like travelling in this train again if things go on like this."

-- A foreign ministry official

Told a reporter after the first journey of Dhaka-Kolkata train as the total checking took five hours, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Please sir, may I have some rice?"

-- Aslam Mia

A day-labourer at Bahirchakra in Netrokona
Said to an OMS dealer at Rajur Bazar when he came to buy one kg rice by selling a cooking pot but was refused as no rice was left by the time his turn came, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"We have shown enough tolerance since religious sentiment is linked with it. But it would be wrong if anyone considered it as a weakness of the government... We will become tough if needed."

-- Maj Gen (Rtd) MA Matin

Home Adviser
Said at a press briefing, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"This country has laws for torture against women. But aren't men also tortured? Shouldn't there be laws for torture against men?"

-- Maolana Syed Md Rezaul Karim

Chamonal Peer
Said at a press briefing, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo

Compiled by Durdana Ghias

Bands hard hit by hardships

DURDANA GHIAS

Walking by the narrow lane of Haji Osman Gani Road in old Dhaka one will spot a few shops displaying an array of cornets, trumpets and rattles hanging from the walls.

Side drums and beat drums stacked up neatly in showcases while drumsticks hanging from a pin on the wall.

These shops belong to the few remaining bands still representing the regal past of Dhaka.

Big trumpets hanging on shops' signboards greet customers with a view to obtaining an order for arranging a band performance to celebrate their important events.

There was a time when this lane was flanked by many band outlets where customers flocked round the day to hire them for an imposing demonstration of loud music using drums, cornets and trumpets.

Manjur Hossain, owner of Dhaka Band Party, one of the oldest bands in the city, was sitting on a bench in his shop waiting for a customer when this correspondent approached him.

"Even a decade ago there were at least ten shops in this alleyway but now only three are left," said Manjur while sipping morning tea.

Some of his co-workers were sitting idle in the shop.

During the days of the Nawabs bands were a customary feature in the wedding parties and other royal occasions.

But with the advent of modern ways to celebrate weddings, like video camera and jam session by local groups, the tradition of arranging bands is on the wane.

Manjur is in this profession for the last thirty years. His shop once belonged to his grandfather Band Master Lalu Mia

during the Nawab's period, to his father in the Pakistan period and now to him after the independence.

"When I started this profession there were plenty of orders. A few years ago we used to get 20 orders a month but now we have orders for 4/5 days only," he said.

However, in recent times a fashion of hiring bands for wedding parties has started among the residents of posh areas like Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmondi.

"But in most cases they hire the bands of police or BDR. It is a matter of status for them," said Manjur.

With the waning demand the earning of these bands plummeted drastically and many of them find it difficult to survive solely on it.

"In previous times it was

possible to run a family even with an earning of Tk 500 a month but today one can hardly think of it," said Md Ibrahim, proprietor of Bangladesh Band Party and grandson of Band Master Kalu Mia who once owned this shop.

Around ten years ago the bands had around 100 to 150 fulltime players but now they have only a few as many of them left the profession because of meagre living and uncertainty.

"Now I have the mobile numbers of only 20 who can be contacted when we have an order. But they are also engaged in other jobs to cope with the soaring prices of essentials," said Ibrahim.

Many of the former band players now maintain their families by pulling rickshaws, running tea and betel leaf stalls or groceries.

Playing band at the meetings and processions of political parties were a big source of income for them but with the imposition of the state of emergency this source has also dried up.

Md Shakil, a band player working under Ibrahim, said even a year ago he used to earn around Tk 4,000 a month which could sustain his family.

"But now I earn only Tk 2,000 a month which is barely any amount in this market of soaring prices where I have to buy firewood at Tk 7 a bundle and edible oil at Tk 100 per litre.

"Besides, we cannot perform at meetings of Khaleida and Hasina which kept us afloat around two years ago.

"So I do whatever job I get to sustain my family -- starting from the work of day-labourer to those of cook and decora-

tors," he said.

But the owners cannot do lowly jobs because of their social position and other reasons.

"I am one who can't leave this profession for something else because this is the only thing I have learnt," said Manjur.

Asked about the musical instruments Manjur said he still uses the instruments dating back to the time of his grandfather Lalu Mia.

According to Ibrahim the business suffered a big blow after the August 21 grenade attack as people are now afraid of revelry and merry-making.

"Many of my customers cancelled orders in the last minute this Pahela Baishakh due to fear of not getting permission to arrange the programme because of emergency," he said.

However, some quaint traditions of old Dhaka still demand the existence of these bands. The players are still seen accompanying the Borjatra or bridal party during wedding ceremony and celebrating circumcision or Musalmani.

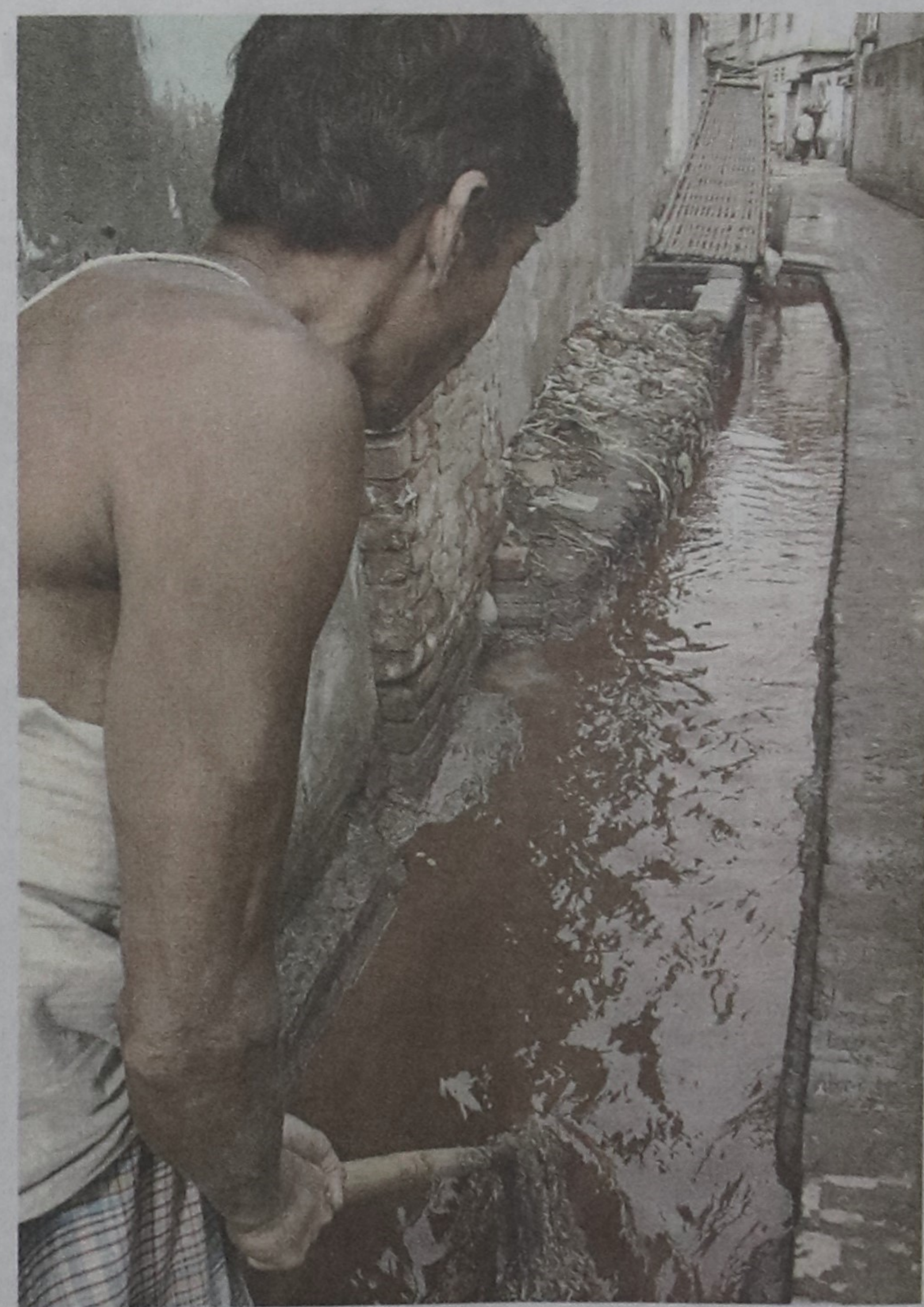
According to the tradition, the circumcised boy's maternal grandfather presents him yogurt and fishes for the occasion while a band from his paternal grandfather's house goes to the place to bring the boy home performing loud music all the way.

Abul Hossain, a resident of Lalbagh and an old customer of bands, came to a shop to hire a team for the circumcision ceremony of his grandson.

"As a paternal grandfather it is my status symbol and matter of pride to send a band to the maternal grandfather's place," said Abul, who still strives to uphold the cherished traditions of old Dhaka.



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A worker removing solid waste from a drain of a tannery at Hazaribagh. Most of the factories in the area do not have any effluent treatment plant (ETP) and toxic water from these units flow down to the Buriganga, polluting the city's lifeline.