

## Roundtable on "Drainage: A Menace for Chittagong"



ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD and DWAIAPAYAN BARUA

In an effort to bring the drainage and consequent waterlogging issues into media focus, The Daily Star Chittagong bureau organised a roundtable titled "Drainage: A Menace for Chittagong" at its conference room on August 14.

Abul Momen, adviser to the editor of The Daily Star in Chittagong, briefed about objectives of the series roundtable on Development of Chittagong. He said The Daily Star Chittagong Office will seek views on different problems and make endeavour to highlight development issues and prospect of Chittagong.

People of Chittagong always got assurances regarding development in different sectors. But, they had very little in reality. Social workers could not play their expected role as the political leaders have failed to do much for betterment of the region. The government officials, who come here for only job purposes, hardly seem own the city that also affect the development process. As an absentee landlord is always bad for the land, bureaucrats with absentee attitude contributed a little to the expected development of Chittagong. Previously, the officials posted even at the upazila levels stayed there with family members taking part in social and cultural activities. Close interaction with the local people helped them develop mentality of owning the locality and people they were serving for. Unfortunately, this practice is hardly seen now.

encroachments on drainage channel, silt-load in the drainage channels, hill cutting and denudation of hills, indiscriminate dumping of solid wastes, absence of flood retention basin, flood plain and tidal flooding and cyclonic surges have to be addressed for development of efficient storm water drainage system. Very little importance was given to planning and implementation of storm sewers in the port city when primary, secondary and tertiary drains had varying sizes with no relationship with the catchments they served. Around one-third of the city went under water during monsoon while southern part got inundated during high tide even without a rain. Yes, we do have solution to the problem. We have the answer Implementation of Drainage Master Plan 1995 and DAP (detailed area plan) proposed guidelines.

With the increase of population and the vehicular traffic new roads and lanes were constructed while the number of canals remained as a long forgotten area where budgetary allocation was always poor.



Prof Emeritus Jamal Nazrul Islam

Why it could not be? I think practice of accountability should be developed among the concerned organisations, be it government or non-government one, to make the projects they take success. The greed for money and though of economic gains must have contributed to the bad practice of filling the water reservoirs in the cities like Chittagong.

People easily can make a good amount of money when they allow construction on filled up ponds, drains and parts of canals after encroaching them using power and neglecting their needs for healthy drainage.

Sultan Mahmud, former chief engineer, Chittagong Port Authority (CPA)

Failure to involve CCC might be a cause behind non-development of drainage system following the master plan. CCC disowned the CMMP '95 from the very beginning since it was prepared without much involvement of the organisation



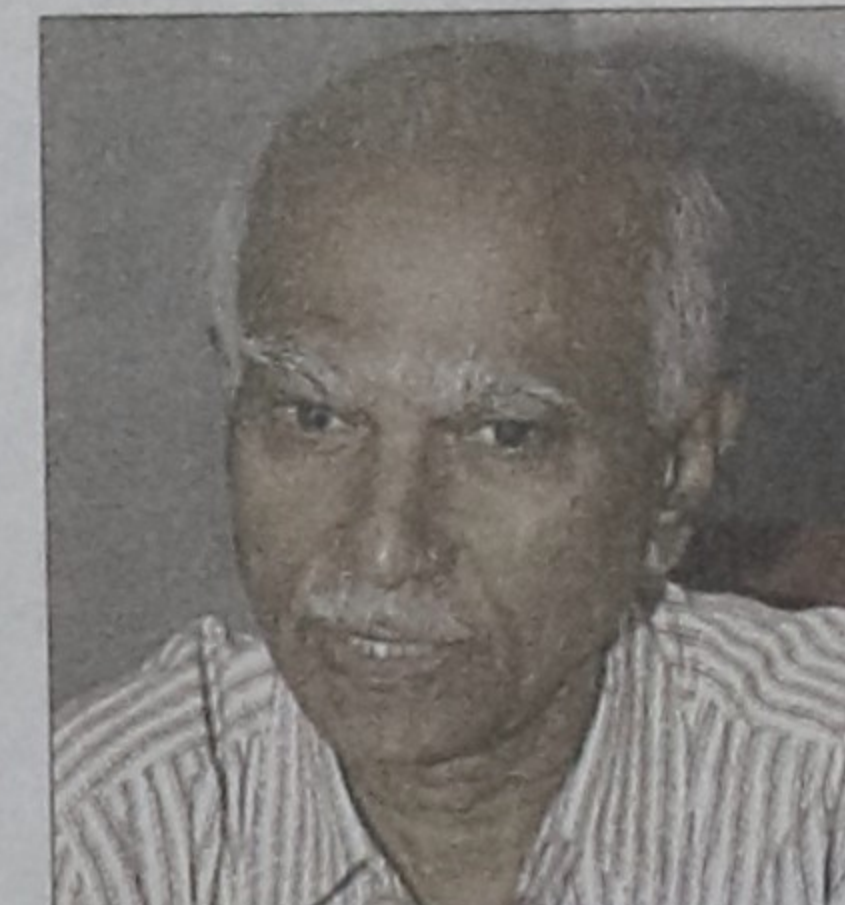
Prof Md Sikandar Khan, president of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), Chittagong chapter

It is unfortunate that even the owners of CDA plots are constructing buildings defying the building code rules in the CDA developed area. I found building constructed with such a higher plinth that it blocked water passage and created waterlogging even in the posh Chandgaon Residential Area. CDA plans should have instructions for maintaining a fixed plinth height (base level) for all the buildings of a same locality and for developing sufficient external outlets or outfalls for water passage.

Main features of development activities and land-use plan of any area should be displayed for public to help orderly and planned growth of the city.

Nasiruddin Ahmed Chowdhury, president of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE)

As an implementing authority of



Engineer Ali Ashraf, chairman of Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) Chittagong Chapter, and a drainage expert, considered flooding and waterlogging as the two main concerns and constraints for the planned development of Chittagong. He said, the issues like

drainage system CCC could have played a more pro-active role. Being a local government body comprising public representatives, CCC had more scope to create awareness among the city dwellers to refrain them from dropping solid wastes into the drains and help keep the city clean. It could be more active in removing the garbage timely and go for waste management through setting up more garbage treatment plants.

Non-availability of fund and lack of support from the government could also be blamed for non-development of a proper drainage system in the port city.

Architect Bidhan Barua, member of Forum for Planned Chittagong (FPC)

Whatever is done people should be involved and wellinformed of it. In this respect efforts should be made to help grow civic sense among all and respect the provisions for drainage system while constructing a building.

Architect Zarina Hossain, director of Planning & Logistics of Asian University for Women (AUW)

The trend of constructing high-rise buildings was not there when CDA formulated the master plan in 1990. So, the construction of high-rises and the increasing volume of household featured a little in the plan. With the construction of highrises getting momentum now orderly growth of the city could be ensured only through strict monitoring by the authorities concerned at CDA. With the rapid growth of concrete structures water catchments are



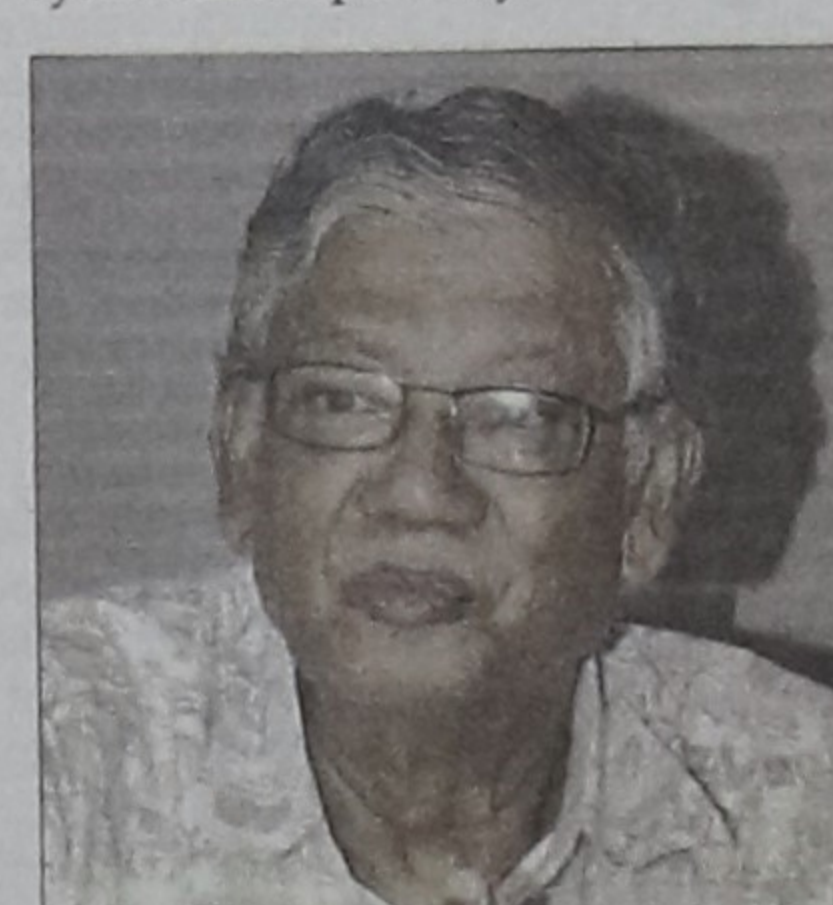
Engineer Shubhash Barua, member of Forum for Planned Chittagong

Alignment of the canals should be fixed before going for developing structure along them while roads should be constructed with provisions for sufficient drainage facilities.

With passage of time, different roads have been expanded but the size of the drains remains same as past.

Shahinul Islam Khan, Town Planner of Chittagong Development Authority

The guidelines CMMP '95 provided for developing the drainage system was to be implemented within one and a half years time. But, it could not be done in last 13 years. Construction of only a single primary canal, Mirza-Chaktai Connecting canal along CDA Avenue (from Sholoshahar gate no. 2 to Bahodderhat), could have saved a huge area under Panchlaish and Chandgaon police stations from



Shishir Dutta, executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts

Activating the local government bodies further and coordination among the authorities concerned can help present the city dwellers a proper drainage system. Community participation is needed to make any development pro-people. Regards for the provisions of urban aspects should be there during property development.

Present State of Drainage System

As there is a lack of proper drainage system, rain-induced inundation and waterlogging are wreaking havoc in Chittagong frequently.

There is a master plan providing guidelines for developing drainage system over 92 square miles of the city under 10 drainage areas. The master plan titled, Chittagong Storm Water Drainage and Flood Control Master Plan 1995, proposed for developing the drainage system in five phases within the plan period of 1995-2015.

Regrettably, eight years have been elapsed since gazette publication of Drainage Master Plan in 1995 with no visible progress in its implementation. Urgency of developing a planned drainage system was strongly felt and the government also put great emphasis on the matter after a rain-induced devastating landslides and inundation left some 127 people killed alongside huge losses of properties here on June 11 last year (2007). Series of divisional coordination meetings were held at Chittagong Circuit House where development of drainage system got the impor-



Shahrir Khaled, general secretary of Chaktai Khal Excavation Action Committee

Many of the primary canals had their bed-level higher than that of secondary canals following them. Construction of roads and high-rise buildings with foundation of higher height caused the surrounding areas to go under water during the rain. Besides, narrow sluice gates hinder passage of water in different canals. Some of the canals have sluice gates almost half of their volume causing inundation and waterlogging instead of removing the menace.

But, other than launching a massive crackdown on the perpetrators of hill cutting and encroachers of Chaktai Khal a very little progress could be made in developing the drainage system before another rain-induced inundation and waterlogging caused huge losses of properties in the port city on October 15 and 16 the same year (2007).

Following this CCC took up a project of Tk 5 crore to renovate and re-excavate the city drains that was continuing till date.

The government, however, included the waterlogging issue in its development programme for Chittagong at a cabinet meeting at Chittagong Circuit House on August 13.

The meeting decided to take up a Tk 95 crore project for developing drainage system to rid the port city of waterlogging. It observed that at least 50 per cent of Tk 220 crore earned from Chittagong Port Authority could have helped CCC go for immediate implementation of the project. The meeting also actively considered construction of two sluice gates to drain out the excessive rainwater into the Karnaphuli following a study report conducted by Water Development Board and Institute of Water Modelling in consultation with CDA. The report is scheduled to submit in September.

Under the drainage master plan, the city is divided into 12 drainage areas as follow:

1. Drainage Area No 1: Firingee Bazar, 60 hectares of land (Kazi Nazrul Islam Road, Iqbal Road and Patharghata)

2. Drainage Area No 2: Sadarghat-80 hectares of land (Railway Station, Reazuddin Bazar, Sadarghat Road, Abhoy Mitra Ghat, Enayet Bazar) Nandan Kanan etc.)

3. Drainage Area No 3: Agrabad Commercial Area, 192 hectares of land (Agrabad Commercial Area, Commerce College, Pathantooli Dhaka Trunk Lane, Madarbari Etc.)

4. Drainage Area No 4 a: Nasir Khal, 315 hectares of land (Sheikh Mujib Road, Karnaphuli Market, Halishahar Road (P) Bangladesh Bank Colony and Agrabad CDA R/A etc)

5. Drainage Area No 4 b: Mohesh Khal, 3046 hectares of land (Fakirhat, Saltgola, Rampura, Halishahar Housing Estate, Nasirabad, Pahartali, Foy's Lake and Foudjerhat etc)

6. Drainage Area No 5a: Chaktai Khal, 500 hectares of land (CDA building, CRB, Chaktai Khal, Sirajuddowla Road, Sarson House, Nur Ahmad Road and Circuit House etc.

7. Drainage Area No 5b: Mirza & Bakalia Khal, 2180 hectares of land (Chaktai Diversion Khal, Rajakhali Khal, Karnaphuli Bridge Road, CDA Avenue, Part of Nasirabad Industrial Area, Chittagong Girls College and Sulak Bahar Road etc

8. Drainage Area No 6: Patenga, 2240 hectares of land (whole area between FM Sowdagar Road and Seamen Hostel, New Mooring in the north to the southern tip of Patenga

9. Drainage Area No 7: Shital Jharna Chhara & Noa Khal, 2264 hectares of land ( Part of Nasirabad Industrial Area, Bayezid Bostami Shrine, Khawza Road, Chandgaon R/A, Abdul Karim Road and Bakalia.

The rest three drainage areas, including the 12th one, are on the other bank of the river Karnaphuli.

Shahrir Khaled, general secretary of Chaktai Khal Excavation Action Committee

going under knee-deep to waist-deep water even after a medium downpour.

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