



A view of the revived Sutibhola canal near Aftab Nagar.

## Sutibhola resurrected

A canal in Badda to be back into life by mid-October

TAWFIQUE ALI

Turning Sutibhola canal of Badda into its original state by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to facilitate city's circular waterways and storm water discharge is expected to be complete by mid-October.

Once reclaimed, the Sutibhola canal linkage will play a vital role in discharging Dhaka city's rainwater and improve quality of water in Begunbari canal and Hatirjheel, apart from facilitating transportation in circular waterways.

BIWTA Chairman Md Abdul Mannan Howlader said Sutibhola canal is an integral component of Dhaka's circular waterways.

"This will also facilitate transport of goods by country boats along Badda and Rampura canals from the rivers Balu and Shitalakhya," he said.

As part of the circular waterway project, BIWTA started excavation of Gazaria (Badda), Gobindapur and Rampura canals last year.

BIWTA, Dhaka Wasa and Dhaka district administration jointly started work on September 11 aiming to restore the earth-filled water body within 15 days. On completion of the excavation, BIWTA will hand the canal over to Wasa.

Although the officials concerned said they would be able to restore the earth-filled canal in

two weeks, it will take more time to complete. The BIWTA chairman said they have so far accomplished 25 percent of the work.

"We need 20 more days to remove earth and concrete drainage system built in the canal area," said BIWTA Chief Engineer Abul Kashem.

Waliullah Shikder, superintending engineer of Dhaka Wasa, said it would take around one

and finally fall into the river Balu through Sutibhola canal," said Shikder.

The BIWTA chief engineer said a one-kilometre stretch (Sutibhola) of the 10-km long Gazaria canal has been occupied by a private housing project. Gazaria canal flows through Shahjadpur and Badda and connects with Rampura canal.

"The canal reclamation move

forces. The government took the decision to reclaim the canal at a coordination meeting at the army headquarters last month.

Sutibhola is a component of the 24-kilometre Gazaria, Gobindapur and Rampura canals excavation work under the second phase of the circular waterway project.

Architect Iqbal Habib, member secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and involved in Bapa's campaign for Dhaka's canals restoration, said that Sutibhola canal has an immense impact on water discharge system of Dhaka.

It is a crucial canal linkage for circular waterways under multimodal transportation system of Dhaka and discharge of storm water, he said. "But enhancement of width and navigability of the Narai canal is equally crucial to achieve the objectives."

According to the BIWTA chief engineer, six excavators are engaged in the excavation work and that they have so far gone seven feet deep. The canal will be 20 feet deep from the existing surface and 50 feet wide at the bottom.

But the width will be around 120 feet at the top and a total of 1.40 cubic metres of mud will be removed. Estimated cost of the work is Tk 57 lakh, to be spent out of Tk 70 lakh allocated for 24-kilometre river excavation project.

The government of Japan will provide the fund for the project.

**"This canal will play a crucial role in city's drainage system and relieving the city from waterlogging. The rainwater will flow along the Begunbari, Hatirjheel and Rampura canals and finally fall into the river Balu through Sutibhola canal"**

month more to excavate the canal.

Sutibhola had been a natural canal and after reclamation, water from the river Balu will flow into the Begunbari canal through it.

"This canal will play a crucial role in city's drainage system and relieving the city from waterlogging. The rainwater will flow along the Begunbari, Hatirjheel and Rampura canals

has been possible simply because there is no opportunity for any quarters in the present context," he said.

Abu Sadeque, a resident of Rampura, said that the government could carry out any action in public interest if it just intends to do.

Official sources said the issue of reclaiming Sutibhola canal was raised at a meeting of joint



A portion of the Harun Mollah Road caved in turning it into a death trap for pedestrians in Mirpur Pallabi 12. The gaping hole lies open for weeks but the authorities are yet to take any step to repair it.

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Abidur Rahman, a resident of Tajmahal Road in Mohammadpur, stood in a queue for about two hours at a commercial bank in Karwan Bazar on Thursday. Apart from drawing money for Eid shopping, he went through extra hassle gladly to have new taka bills exchanging old and soiled notes worth around Tk 500.

"Going home for Eid means meeting a crowd of nieces and nephews after a long time. On the morning of Eid they all gather round me for selami. A new note always makes them extra happy and that is why this extra hassle," said Abidur.

Abidur explained the tradition of Eid selami, "Every young member of the family will get an amount of selami on the Eid morning. The youngest will get 5 taka and the oldest 100 taka, all in fresh bills."

Giving out Eid selami with fresh notes has become a custom in Bangladesh. The amount of selami varies depending on the economic background of different families.

During every Eid new taka bills become one of the hottest merchandises in the city. Dhaka residents pay extra to get them as per their need. Bangladesh Bank releases fresh notes right before every Eid to meet the high demand. People queue up at banks to exchange old and dirty bank notes for new ones.

Like every year BB has released fresh bank notes of various denominations of around 5.5 thousand crore taka this year. The commercial banks and Bangladesh Bank experienced a huge rush during the past few days with majority of the clients asking for fresh notes.

Toufiq-E-Elahi, a senior assistant vice president of Trust Bank Limited, said, "Everyone who withdrew

## Fresh notes still remain the hottest Eid selami

from their account during the past few days wanted fresh notes. This is a common request during every Eid. This year we faced around 40 percent extra demand for new notes."

Most clients are asking for fresh notes of smaller bills. The demand for two and five-taka bill is higher than this year's supply. Ten and 20-taka notes are also in great demand and their supply is quite well, the banker said.

Elahi however mentioned that there is no supply of fresh 50-taka bills.

The tradition of fresh notes for Eid selami also boosts illegal trade of bank-note exchange in the city. Operating at Gulistan, Nawabpur Road, Sadarghat,

New Market and some other places the fresh note traders also saw a huge rush of customers.

Tattered and torn bank notes can easily be exchanged for new ones through these vendors for a certain amount of commission.

"Many people come to us just to avoid the hassle at the bank. Who would want to go to a bank just to exchange a tattered 2 or 5-taka note?" said Kalam, a bank note changer near Gulistan underpass.

"My transactions usually take place mostly with people who just stop by on their way. But during Eid many people come from a long way to make the exchange," he added.

Hailing from Tangail, Kalam has been involved in

this business for the last 16 years. His work starts every day at around 9:00am standing in line at the Bangladesh Bank counter where he exchanges bundles of old bills for new ones.

The vendors usually charge 10 to 20 per cent commission from the customers. During Eid exchange rate increases. Transaction rate also depends on the quality of the bills.

"If it is too worn out I make a good profit. If it is burned or shredded to pieces it is even better for me," Kalam said.

For a slightly worn out 10-taka bill, Kalam's offer is Tk 8. For a badly burned 50-taka note he returns Tk 35 to 40. If it is a 100-taka bill, then he can profit as much as Tk 25.



Fresh bill dealers doing brisk business at Gulistan as Eid nears.

## 'Unblinking eyes' to keep watch on prisoners, hooligans

Dhaka Judge's Court likely to have CCTV cameras

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A sophisticated system of video surveillance is likely to be installed at the Dhaka Judge's Court to closely observe the activities of prisoners.

Police say the cameras will be their 'unblinking eyes to keep a close watch on the prisoners' movements and conducts there.

"These will be our watchful, unblinking eyes," said a senior official concerned at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). "They are the next best thing to having police officers stationed at every potential trouble spot."

The decision was taken after a woman prisoner became pregnant at the court prison recently, sources said.

"That was the last straw," said an on-duty security officer at the court prison. "Many unlawful and unsocial activities are taking place in the court area. Something needs to be done about this," he said.

Initially closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras will be placed in the court prison to observe the prisoners, their conducts inside the prison and their interactions with visitors.

Sources at the Judge's Court said the project is still in pretty early stage. But they are hopeful that it will take off soon.

Gradually the whole court area will be brought under the scrutiny of the surveillance cameras, they said.

The cameras will not be used covertly, but will be deployed in a highly visible way and possibly signposted. They will help the crime busters tackle anti-social behaviours on the premises of the city's most busiest law court.

The cameras would telecast live pictures from inside the

court premises back to a control room where the images would be scanned in real time for troublemakers and hooligans.

Similar surveillance technology will see its way at major city intersections across the capital city to monitor conducts on the street under an ambitious plan from the police authorities.

"The [judge] court has been virtually ridden with awkward and unwarranted incidents for years," said a lawyer at the court requesting anonymity. "Especially in recent times, there have been clashes, bombings, fights and whatnot. The place badly needs a security overhaul."

According to court frequenters, hooligans and ruffians have always enjoyed unrestricted access to the court premises. Lawyers, judges and visitors say they find it awkward and uneasy to be around such shady characters lurking around them.

Policemen say they have to

stay extra careful and more watchful when they bring the accused for trials.

"There are suspicious people almost everywhere on the court premises all the time. You never know what might happen in all the chaos," said a police officer.

According to sources, there are no checkpoints in the entrances to the court area. Anyone with 'anything' can get inside the court premises without the slightest interruption.

"We do not have any checkpoints to search the visitors. But when we find somebody suspicious, only then we search them manually to make sure that he is not a threat to the security of others," said a police officer at the Judge's Court.

According to sources, the court area suddenly went under a state of tight security measures after the dreaded series bombing of 2004. Both uniformed and plainclothes police officers flocked around

the entry and exit points with metal detectors to ensure security.

Unsurprisingly, the measures faded away in time.

However, recent incidents of bombings and clashes on the court premises have highlighted the lack of proper security measures at the Dhaka Judge's Court.

"After the recent bombing incidents in the court area, there have been rising concerns about the security of general people in the court area," said Monzurul Islam, a member of the Dhaka Lawyers' Association.

"Installation of security cameras at the court will undoubtedly be a boon for everyone including us lawyers, judges and general visitors. The place badly needs a security refurbishment," he said.

There are also plans to build archways in the main entry and exit points to the court premises to set up checkpoints, sources said.



Unwanted visitors and hooligans have become a threat to the atmosphere on the court premises.