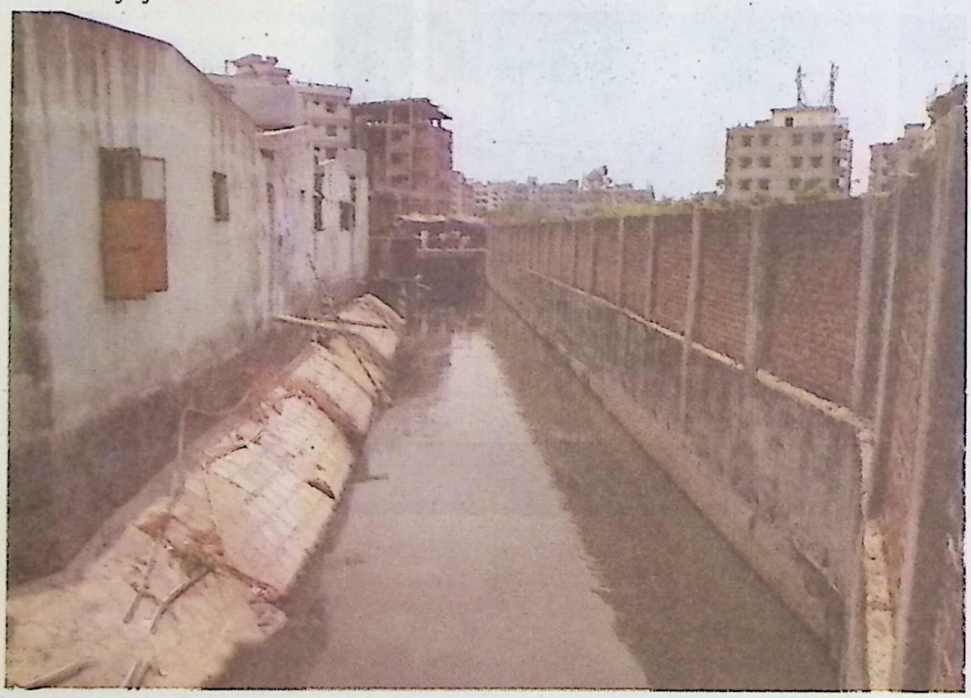
The Death of Canals

Canals in Dhaka, the vital link between the existing water bodies in a densely populated area, have fallen victim to acute neglect which has hindered the free flow of rain and flood water during monsoon. The use of these watery channels as a place of waste disposal has eliminated the possibility of this water being used for drinking and irrigation.

Immediate attention must be paid to these dying water bodies to make the people of the city free from the imminent threat of water-logging in the rainy season. Though many factors are responsible for the near death of the canals of Dhaka city, relevant authorities with the active co-operation of the dwellers must come forward to initiate a raid, like the much discussed raid against adulteration, against all sorts of encroachment, landfill etc. We must save the canals if we want to see a safe and healthy Dhaka.

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Extrajudicial Killing

The story "Disband or Reform?" correctly concludes that RAB should be reformed, but it misses the most important point regarding extrajudicial killing. The blame does not lie entirely with RAB but with the highest level of government. The decision to use "crossfire" comes from the political leadership, not from RAB itself. It is also a reflection of the failure of our law enforcement and judicial system which is failing to mete out punishment to the most dangerous criminals. This is why "crossfire" started as an act of desperation to stem the tide of crime. Over the last few years crossfire was used against most dangerous criminals who would go free if arrested. Local people celebrated after these criminals were eliminated. But there is the danger that the same guns will be turned on innocent people. We are now seeing this through the killing of some students last week. Some political quarters are trying to use RAB as their hired goons. So, instead of calling for RAB to be disbanded, Human Rights Watch should take the government to task so that these killings may stop.

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A Social Evil

Hardly a single day goes by without news reports of women being tortured and often murdered for dowry. I was shocked when I read in the Daily Star newspaper that a girl named Fuljan was brutally tortured by her husband and in-laws because she was unable to pay dowry. When will such evil acts stop? Dowry is one of the disgraceful social norms of our country. Dowry spreads its poisonous tentacles from the lower class to the upper class of people. But the demand for dowry is different according to social circumstances. Lower income people demand dowry openly and often physically abuse the unfortunate girl whose father is unable to pay up. The upper class people demand dowry in a more subtle way often calling it a gift at the time of the wedding ceremony. Many Fuljans are being tortured and even murdered in every corner of the country in the name of dowry.

I would like to request the concerned authority to act firmly to prevent such malpractices. We should also mobilize social opinion against this practice.

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