

ASKAR DIGHI A pond without mentor



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Askar Dighi: The slum dwellers use water of the dighi for their domestic purposes.

ARUN BIKASH DEY
It looks like a playground at first sight but it's not. In fact it is a big pond totally covered with water hyacinths. It is a famous pond in the port city called Askar Dighi dug in British period.
One Barada Chakrabarty took lease of the dighi from the British Indian Railway in 1930.
After the death of Barada, his son Sadhan Chakrabarty sold the dighi to Abul Kalam Sawdagar in 1976. Then he sold it to Shawkat Hossain, a shipbreaker, in 1992.
"The dighi is one of the fewest tanks that still could escape from the grip of the greedy developers in the port city. We used to take bath in the dighi couple of years ago. Fishing competition was held regularly in the dighi even ten years ago. It is about to die due to negligence of the owner as well as the city corporation," said a local seeking anonymity.
"In 1960 when I was a child of six I saw

snails under its water," said Anil Sharma, a local. "We used to drink its water as it was transparent. The taste of its fish was so delicious that I can still taste it," he added.
The owner has built a slum around the dighi. The slum dwellers use its water for their domestic purposes, including taking bath, cooking and washing utensils. They also drink its water.
Besides, the sewerage lines of safety tanks of the nearby buildings have fallen to the dighi. As a result, all the wastes flow into the dighi, polluting its water.
Following the use of its water, the slum dwellers suffer from various water-borne diseases. It has also now become a safe breeding place for mosquitoes. Thousands of dwellers living in the Askar Dighir Par (bank of dighi) area have to suffer from severe mosquito-bites as well as mosquito-borne diseases.
"I have grown up in this city. I saw the dighi a beautiful one in my boyhood. But now I feel bad when I see it as the dirtiest

one," said Zafar Alam, Director of the Department of Environment (DoE), Chittagong.
Zafar said the DoE can go for action if the owner initiates to fill it up. It is duty of city corporation to clean it regularly, he added.
Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Chief Executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela), said according to Tank Improvement Act-1939 local government can acquire any tank if the owner does not manage it properly.
Dr Alok Paul, professor of the department of Geography and Environmental Study, University of Chittagong, said Askar Dighi is playing an important role in maintaining ecological balance. If it is polluted in this way ecosystem will be affected in the long run, he added.
He said the dighi is also a source of earnings for a lot of people. So Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and Chittagong City Corporation

(CCC) should take proper steps to save the dighi from pollution, he added.
When asked Shahinul Islam Khan, deputy chief town planner of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), said according to Detail Area Plan (DAP) Askar dighi will have to be rehabilitated and will be brought back to its previous form. It will be developed as a beautiful tourist spot. Everything will be done in cooperation with the CCC, he added. The action will be started very soon, he assured.
When asked, Mayor Manjur Alam said he heard that steps would be taken to clean the dighi and save it from pollution.
Locals said they have formed human chain and staged demonstrations in the port city several times to draw attention of the authority to save the dighi from pollution. They demand that the government take immediate steps to make Askar Dighi and the surrounding area a tourist spot.

KAPASGOLA ROAD EXPANSION Legal battle causes people's suffering

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY
Kapasgola road expansion work has remained stalled for nine months over a legal complication causing untold sufferings to the commuters as well as the residents of the localities.
Chittagong Developing Authority (CDA) is implementing a Tk 33 crore project titled 'Widening project of the Kapasgola Road (Gani Bakery to Bahodderhat intersection) from Chittagong College to Bahodderhat intersection.'
Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the project on November 30 in 2009.
ASA and AHTC are jointly implementing the project that started the construction work of the 2.25 kilometre road on March 28 in 2010.
Sources said 14 writ petitions were submitted to the High Court (HC) in 2009. The work has remained stalled for long as the HC ordered status quo on this project.
Expressing frustration about the project, ASA and AHTC officials said there is little scope to restart the construction work shortly as they are to wait for constituting a new bench of HC.
CDA Law Officer Md Elias Chowdhury told The Daily Star that they are keeping contact with the Attorney General's Office in Dhaka to expedite the disposal of the writ petitions.
One CDA official said the road belonged to Chittagong Roads and Highways Department (RHD) since 1954. RHD handed over the road to the Chittagong Municipality in 1962. According to the Revision Survey (RS) the road and its adjoining area were identified as government property. But in Bangladesh Survey (BS) some dwellers residing in the roadside registered the land as their own property.



Kapasgola road in bad shape as construction work remains stalled.

He said some of them had the registration in BS ledger. Through this registration they got the approval of their building design plans from the CDA, which happened for lack of co-ordination between the government institutions.
Of the petitioners, only one agreed to talk with The Daily Star on condition of anonymity. The petitioners said CDA is trying to grab their property where they have been living for long time. But CDA wants to evict them from there.
CDA did not come to solve the problem, he said, adding that they (CDA) come here only just to tell them to leave the place.
CDA Project Director Habibur Rahman

said Kapasgola Road is one of the busiest roads in the port city. Local people and commuters have been demanding expansion of the road from Bahodderhat intersection to Chittagong College area, he said. CDA started the work to finish it by June 2012 but they stopped it due to HC order.
Present dilapidated shape of this road is causing unbearable sufferings to the commuters as well as residents. Most of the commuters told The Daily Star that journey through this road is becoming very risky for them. It may cause a serious accident any time.
Vehicle-driver Kamal Uddin said the

bad shape of road is the cause for accidents and instrumental damages to the vehicles. They have to change parts of vehicles frequently, he added.
"Life is just hell here," said Md Alamgir Ali, a resident of Kapasgola road.
"Our home is full of dust, causing respiratory problem to our children and elderly persons," he added.
Demanding an early solution to the problem, Rabiul Islam said both sides should come forward to find a solution.
"We do not want to see any delay in this regard and we want CDA to restart the work in full swing after the court verdict," he added.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

the week that was

Hawkers' assoc AGM held
The 20th annual general meeting (AGM) of Chittagong Newspaper Hawkers' Multipurpose Cooperatives Association (CNHMCA) was held in the port city on Monday.
The AGM approved budget of over Tk 7.11 crore for 2010-2011 and supplementary budget of Tk 12.92 lakh for 2009-2010.
Senior Hawker Nur Nabi was present as the chief guest at the meeting.
Manir Ahmed, Mostafa Khokan, Nurul Alam, Hossain Ahmed, Sunil Chandra Nath, Abul Bashar and Jainal Abedin spoke at the meeting.

'Addaru Sammilan' ends
Speakers on Friday called upon all conscious people to bring back the traditional form of chitchat (Adda).
They said once political, cultural and progressive movements of the country were initiated through 'Adda'. Country has got many famous poets, artists from these kinds of meetings.
Now the nature of the Adda has changed. Silly matters become subject of the Adda.
They were addressing a festival titled 'Chattagram Addaru Sammilan' organised by 'Cheragi Adda' at Cheragir Moor in the port city.
To come out of mechanical behaviour of present social system, Cheragi Adda arranged the conference. Abul Momen, resident editor of The Daily Prothom Alo, inaugurated the event as the chief guest.
Dramatist Pradeep Dewanjee, poet Swapan Dutta and Prof Faujul Kabir spoke at the inaugural meeting.

House rent hike protested
The tenants at a rally on Monday protested the increasing of house rent, violating the existing rules and law.
Citizen Movement against Uncontrolled House Rent organised the rally in front of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) followed by a human chain programme. The representatives of different professional groups spoke at the rally.
The speakers said the owners have been increasing the house rent without following any rules. They even torture the tenants if they refuse to meet their demand.
They urged the government to update and amend the "House rent control ordinance 1991."
Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Vice President Omar Kaiser, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) General Secretary Nazim Uddin Shyamal, Raozan Upazila Chairman Ehsanul Haider Chowdhury Babul, Chittagong Metropolitan Journalists' Union Vice President Mustafa Nayem, Chowdhury Farid, Samaresh Baidya, Tapan Chakrabarti, Chittagong Press Club (CPC) Joint Secretary Mohsin Chowdhury and Hasan Ferdous.

Children's festival concludes
A two-day long children's festival concluded at Chittagong Silpakala Academy in the port city on Tuesday.
Act Plus arranged the festival while Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor Mohamad Manjur Alam inaugurated the festival as the chief guest.
Chittagong Press Club (CPC) President Abu Sufian, M Elahi Shimul, Faysul Aziz and Act Plus Executive Director Anindya Tito were present as the special guests with Sazzad Bin Khaled in the chair.
Mayor called on all to take care of children as they are future of the nation and help them grow up as good citizens.
Painting competition, poetry recitation, country song, and drama competition were held in the festival.
Around 1000 children participated in the competition.

'Raise awareness about AIDS'
An information sharing seminar on HIV/AIDS was held to raise awareness among the workers about HIV/AIDS was held at a city hotel on Saturday.
National Co-relation Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) in collaboration with International Labour Organisation (ILO) organised the seminar.
Speakers said the seminar will create awareness among the workers about HIV/AIDS in the port city.
Dr Wazedul Islam Khan presided over the seminar while Industrial Minister Dilip Barua was present as the chief guest at the seminar. Siddiqui Rahman moderated the seminar.

People united for war criminals
State Minister for Environment and Forest Dr Hasan Mahmud at a meeting said the people are observing the month of victory with a hilarious mind as the recognised war criminals have been arrested and their trial begins.
He was addressing a meeting in the port city on Saturday on the Dock Workers' colony premises.
He said the evil forces will not be succeeded to obstruct war crimes trial as the people are now united for the war crimes trial.
Muktijuddher Bijoy Mela Parishad-2010 organised the meeting to celebrate the month of victory.
Freedom fighters Enamul Haque Chowdhury, Abul Quasem Chisty, Abdus Salam, Sheikh Manik, Emran Gazi and Quamrul Alam Jatu spoke at the meeting.

'Ctg to be destination of pilgrims'
Mayor Manjurul Alam said Chittagong will be turned into the destination of pilgrims of all religions.
He said this while he was speaking at a function in the port city on the occasion of celebrating Christmas at the Catholic Church on Saturday.
Mayor said Jesus Christ is one of the great men sent by the God for the welfare of human being. He is very respectful to the Muslims. He said the Christmas celebration is not only the event of the Christian community.
He said Jesus spread the idea of humanism despite repression on him. Jesus established an ideology against hatred, injustice and violence, he added.
He greeted Bishop of Chittagong Diocese, Patrick D Rosario, CSC for his appointment as Coadjutor Archbishop at Dhaka Arch.
Former mayor ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury, Awami League lawmakers MA Latif and Nurul Islam BSC also greeted Rosario as well as the Christian community.