



(1) Baistake (2) Ramchandrapur (3) Confluence point of four canals (4) Beribadh (Hazaribagh) Sluice gate (5) Segunbagicha (6) Ibrahimpur (7) Baunia (8) Khilgaon-Basabo (9) Hazaribagh

PHOTOS: ZAHED KHAN

# Dhaka city canals in death throes

Although it is almost impossible to fathom, canals have been a significant part of the capital's landscape. Even in the late 70s and early 80s the city was blessed with the flowing waters of over 50 canals. But not anymore. Almost half of the canals are gone. And the last remaining 26 are struggling for their survival too, due to unabated encroachments, mindless dumping of solid wastes and sheer negligence of their lawful protectors. The Daily Star reports how we are choking the canals to death, when they are such a vital aspect for the city's lifeline. The first report of the series is published today.

HELEMUL ALAM

The canals in the capital, which were once so lively with fresh water flow and aquatic biodiversity, are now in death throes due to unabated encroachments and pollution.

Most of them have lost all of its life saving matters, including water stream, and water quality.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has got both the mandate and programmes to protect the canals but the sorry states the canals are in now, give no reflection that Wasa has done its part.

Even though keeping the canals, box culverts over canals, storm water drains and surface drains clean is the mandate, improper maintenance had made the canals vulnerable and they have lost their width, depth and eventually the water-carrying capacity.

Partly because dumping of waste and partly owing to the absence of proper

waste management by the two city corporations in some areas, the canals take the brunt of the haphazard garbage dumping.

Sludge cleaned up from the storm water drains and surface drains by the Wasa and the city corporations are often kept in open and not removed from the spots, thus those falling back to the drains during rains.

Due to the lack of canals, still a third of the city area is not under the coverage of drainage system of Wasa.

The Wasa had earlier taken initiatives in line with a decision of the last caretaker government to recover 26 out of 43 canals from encroachers.

However, the initiatives have not yielded proper success. Besides, once the recovery drive is over, many of the canals again get encroached due to lack of excavation, proper demarcation and monitoring, experts say.

A list of 43 canals was prepared by a committee formed in 2004 to come

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO ON CANALS



forward with recommendations to identify, recover and reopen the canals. The committee also identified 26 canals under Wasa as recoverable, says an official.

However, the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), which prepared a map of drainage canals of Dhaka city in 2007-2008, mentions 50 canals. Five additional canals on the list are Kuril-Boaliya, Khilkhet Boaliya, Koshaibari-Boaliya, Boaliya-Bowfar, and Kashibari-Uttara Railway Boropit canals.

The other canals which are not under Wasa are Char Kamrangir Khal, Begunbari-Meradiya-Gajariya, Dakkingaon-Nandipara, Rajarbagh-Nandipara, Nasirabad-Nandipara, Nandipara-Trimohoni and Boufar (Boualiya) canals.

During a recent visit to a dozen of city canals it was found that the cleaning activities of the canals were not done properly and in most cases the works were done only to remove the surface level garbage. Wasa does not even clean all mouths and adjoining areas of sluice gates.

### SEGUNBAGICHA CANAL

The Wasa started cleaning the Segunbagicha canal around four months back, but during a visit at different parts of the canal on May 12, solid waste was found at many points including on the western side of Maniknagar Wasa Bridge.

Even a big chunk of sludge kept after cleaning the canal near Anondo Bazar Bridge at Manik Nagar around one

month back was still there leaving a chance of dropping the sludge again to the canal during rain.

Encroachment near the Maniknagar Wasa Bridge shrunk the canal at East Manik Nagar.

Mohammad Babul, a resident of Manik Nagar said Manik Nagar was a marshy land in 1970s and only 13 buildings were there.

Solaiman Hossain, resident of Manda, said as there were no facilities to manage household garbage, all the residents who live on the two sides of the canals dump it there. He said the garbage of Mugda Bazar is also being dumped here.

There is a dust bean which is around half a kilometer away from their area for which no one wants to go there to dump their garbage, he said. "We have requested the city corporation many times to make a door-to-door garbage collecting system like the other areas but

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### SORRY STATE OF CANALS

Losing width, depth, water-carrying capacity

Being encroached, filled with garbage

City corporations, Wasa unable to keep canals, box culverts over canals, storm water drains, surface drains, clean

### WASA'S RESPONSIBILITY

350km of large-diameter concrete storm-water drains

10km of box culverts over canals

65km of canals for city's storm-water drainage

### DNCC, DSCC

3,500km feeder drains (open and small diameter pipes) to drain water to canals, wide diameter storm water drain

# Vast land slipping away from original owners

Govt denying ethnic minority and Bangalees 1,842 acres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is a land of 1,842.3 acres, or 7.5 sq km, sprawling in southern Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha.

Once there were 20 villages in the area, 15 populated by ethnic minorities and five by Bangalees. But between 1955 and 1956, the then Pakistan government acquired all the land, by displacing the villagers, to set up a sugar mill.

The deputy commissioner's (DC) office acquired the land for then Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation, which established Rangpur (Mahimaganj) Sugar Mills between 1954 and 1957. The original land owners were given only Tk 8.07 lakh for the vast land. Later in 1962, the DC office, on behalf of the land

owners, signed an agreement with the corporation.

The deal stated that 1,842.3 acres of land was acquired for cultivation of sugarcane by the mill authorities. If the land is used for farming any other crops but sugarcane in the future, the corporation shall surrender the land to the government (the DC office), which will later restore the land to its previous condition.

However, the agreement was violated as the mill authorities have leased out most of the land for cultivation of crops like rice, wheat, mustard, tobacco, and maze.

According to the Gobindaganj upazila land office, 1,502 acres of the total 1,842.3 acres was leased out and used for farming the abovementioned

crops. A letter of the office, dated June 28, 2015, says only 92-97 acres of the total land was used for cultivation of sugarcane in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The evicted families brought the issue to the attention of the ADC (revenue) of Gaibandha in March 2015. And after investigation, the ADC (revenue) found the allegations true.

However, instead of going by the agreement, the DC office on May 10 this year proposed to the authorities concerned to turn the entire land into a special economic zone.

The 61-member Sahebganj-Bagdafarm Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee, a platform of victim families, created in 2014 to recover the land, has protested the move.

On July 1, the mill authorities, Gobindaganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer, and police went to the land where 2,000 landless families had built houses and asked them to move out. Later the mill authorities assaulted the protesters and sued at least 19 of them.

Demanding their rights, the Committee formed a human chain in Gobindaganj on July 10.

Thousand of ethnic minority people and Bangalees have been demonstrating for getting their land back.

(Note: The story is based on a keynote speech presented by researcher Pavel Partha, during a discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday, and supported by official documents.)

**DISCUSSION**  
Speaking at the discussion, rights activists said the state machineries in

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Speakers at a views-exchange meeting on ethnic minorities' rights at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Science-based TV show starts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To inspire school going children to the science-based education, a new TV show named Science Rocks is going to be telecast on Channel i from tomorrow morning.

After two popular programmes -- most notably English spelling competition "Spelling Bee" and general knowledge competition "Bangladesh First", Champs21.com, the pioneer e-learning portal in Bangladesh, is hosting the programme with Doze Internet as the sponsor.

Senior officials of Champs21.com and Doze Internet yesterday at a programme in the capital's The Daily Star Centre revealed the details about the show which is designed for the school children and based on scientific experiments and facts.

Channel i will telecast the show at 11:05am every Friday. Each of the episodes will be uploaded to Youtube and the viewers can also watch the show on www.Champs21.com/scieneceroks.

The content of the programme will be suitable for third to eighth graders; and they will learn about simple experiments that can be carried out at home using available ingredients like vinegar, egg, water, baking soda.

Experiments like turning egg into a bouncing ball or

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Jyoti Agarwala, head of Doze Internet, speaking at the inauguration of the new TV show Science Rocks at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. On his right are Mohammad Jahangir Alam and Faiyead Ahmedul Hye.

PHOTO: STAR

# HOME BOSS' INDIA VISIT STARTS JULY 27

## Counter-terrorism top agenda

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Counter-terrorism cooperation and bilateral issues will top the agenda of talks during the Bangladesh home minister's two-day India visit from July 27, according to sources in the Indian home ministry.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, who will be accompanied by home ministry Senior Secretary Mozammel Haque Khan and Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque, will have talks with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh.

This will be the first high-level bilateral visit between the two countries since the July 1 terror attack at a Gulshan cafe and the July 7 attack near Sholakia Eid congregation in Kishoreganj.

The two sides are expected to discuss ways to expand counter-terrorism and security partnership in the backdrop of the two attacks in Bangladesh.

India has rallied firmly behind Bangladesh in the latter's fight against terrorism and has been in touch with the top political and security establishment in Dhaka since July 1.

During the meeting between the ministers, India may raise the issue of signing a counter-terrorism cooperation pact with Dhaka following the terror attacks in Bangladesh.

# MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

## Verdict on acquittal of Tarique today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver a verdict today on an appeal against the acquittal of BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman and on another of his friend Giasuddin Al Mamun against his conviction and sentence in a money laundering case.

The HC yesterday fixed the date, as it concluded hearing on the appeals on June 16.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case in 2009 for siphoning the money to Singapore

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