



Box culvert on Segunbagicha canal.



City corporation cleaning a box culvert in Segunbagicha.



Box culvert on Dhanmondi canal.



Box culvert on Paribagh canal.



Last remnants of a jheel behind Bangladesh Bank.



Box culvert on Dayaganj canal.

PHOTOS: ZAHED KHAN

**SECOND REPORT on DHAKA CANALS**

**CONCERNS**

- Remain clogged for lack of cleaning
- Construction results in gradual flow reduction
- Increase sedimentation
- Hydraulically inefficient
- Need regular maintenance works
- Suitable for places with fresh water flows

# Box culverts choking city's lifelines

HELEMUL ALAM

One of Md Aslam's favourite pastimes was to spend time with his father near the bank of Dholai Khal. The father and son duo used to sit together in the afternoon, enjoy fresh air and watch boats gently glide over the canal.

"It was a huge canal even in the 70s," recollected an excited Aslam, a businessman in the capital's Dayaganj area. "I even saw boat races with my father. I used to sit on his shoulder and count the boats," he smiled.

There was also a ghat (landing spot) near the Dayaganj Noor mosque where many boats would come with goods, he pointed towards the spot.

But the plying stopped in the middle of 80s and 90s as it was turned to a box culvert, Aslam sighed.



Gopibagh canal turned to a road.

Many joined Aslam and expressed exasperation as it is extremely difficult to recognise the canal anymore, not even a fleeting glimpse of the once mighty Dholai Khal remains. Just a railway bridge at Dayaganj bearing a sign of the

canal stands alone. Md Sohrab Hossain, a resident of Dakkhin Mushindi, recalled that the canals had a fresh flow of water till 1975 and they used to catch fish there. As the canals were interlinked and used to flow into rivers, people

could travel by boats easily, he said. "We used to jump into the canal from the bridge," said a nostalgic Shafiqul Islam, a resident of Gendaria.

Around a dozen of the city's canals have either been filled up entirely or turned into box culverts to construct roads, aggravating the waterlogging problems.

The concept of box culvert came after the 1988 flood when most of the city came under waterlogging. A high powered committee of the government, formed at that time to mitigate the problem, submitted a report in 1989. After that in the 90s the construction of the box culverts and roads on the canals started significantly.

Roads were constructed in Rayerbazar, Razabazar, Kathalbagan, Gopibagh, Shyampur Kadamtala and Maniknagar, filling

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TIMELINE	
CANALS	CONVERTED TO
Dholai Khal-2	● Box culvert 1990s
Dholai Khal-1	● Box culvert 1990s
Debdholai	● Box culvert 2004-2005
Dholpur	● Box culvert 1980s
Gopibagh	● Road 1990s
Segunbagicha (partial)	● Box culvert 1990s
Dhanmondi	● Box culvert 1990s
Kathalbagan	● Box culvert 1990s
Razarbazar	● Pipe drain 1980s
Paribagh	● Road 1990s
Rayerbazar	● Box culvert 1990s
Gabtol	● Buildings 1990s
Ibrahimpur (partial)	● Box culvert 1992-93
Mohakhali (partial)	● Box culvert 1990s
Shyampur-Kadamtoli (partial)	● Road 2000s
Ramchandrapur (partial)	● Box culvert 1990s

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## Inu seeks help to fight terrorism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's fight against militancy was to protect religion, democracy and society, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu said yesterday.

"Now, the situation in our country is grave. Everyone must choose a side. Our government's side is that of righteousness...We have to uproot the terror and the factory where the terror grows otherwise it will not be possible to control terrorists," Inu said. "Our government's only aim is to curb militancy, not to subdue the opposition parties," he replied to a question at a views-exchange meeting Bangladesh Betar organised in the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

It was a part of a government campaign against the backdrop of two terrorist attacks in July and Tuesday's block raid when nine suspected militants were shot dead in the capital's Kalyanpur.

Inu sought people's cooperation, saying committees



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## British Council temporarily closes offices in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

British Council has temporarily closed its offices in Bangladesh in order to review its security procedures and hopes to reopen them once new security measures are in place, it announced yesterday.

Barbara Wickham, director of British Council Bangladesh said, "We recognise that people in Bangladesh are increasingly concerned about safety and security in public places.

The safety and security of our staff and customers is always our top priority... During this temporary closure, our Customer Services will be responding to queries through email bd.enquiries@britishcouncil.org."

## ACC to track graft money having terror link: Iqbal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will trace the trail of money, which is acquired through corruption and sent to terrorists, its chairman, Iqbal Mahmud, said yesterday.

He made the announcement while reiterating that fund raised through corruption is used for militancy. "We'll track down the destinations of the corruption money. No matter whether it is transferred to my account, or yours, or the militants', we'll find them," the ACC head told an opinion sharing meeting with educationists.

The participants discussed the Strategic Work Plan of Anti-Corruption Commission 2016-2021, at the organisation's headquarters in the capital.

Iqbal Mahmud said, "I firmly believe greed is the root cause of militancy... [from which] only the teachers could save the country." "The only way to combat the greed is education,"

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## BNP briefs diplomats on anti-militancy platform plans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While explaining its plans to form a platform with political and social organisations for forging national unity against militancy and terrorism, BNP yesterday avoided a question from foreign diplomats on whether its alliance component Jamaat-e-Islami would be in it.

"We told them that it is nothing but an electoral tie with the Islamist party," a BNP leader told The Daily Star following the meeting at Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

Meeting sources said the diplomats comprised those from the USA, UK,

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## Instigators of militancy must face music

Nahid tells madrasa teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday directed alem and madrasa teachers to maintain communication with the students intensely to prevent them from being misled in the name of religion.

The alems (Islamic scholars) should make rigorous efforts to build public awareness at grassroots level against militancy by delivering religious sermon with proper explanation of Islam, the minister said.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion titled "Role of Alems to Combat Terrorism" organised by Islamic Arabic University of Dhaka at Krishibid Institution, Bangladesh, where principals or senior teachers of some 1,270 Fazil and Kamil madrasas under the



university were present.

"You (madrasa teachers) should keep your students under close surveillance. If you can notice anything suspicious in any student, you must inform that to guardians and law enforcers," Nahid said.

Alems have to take the pioneering role to educate people with proper explanation of Islam, said the minister.

He emphasised on building a social movement and resistance against militancy, terrorism and misinterpretation of Islam.

There are some unscrupulous teachers who in many cases provoke students to be involved with militancy, they must be identified and terminated, the minister said.

University Grants Commission

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President Abdul Hamid speaks at a deputy commissioners' conference in Bangabhaban yesterday, urging the DCs to take concerted steps in the light of the government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and militancy. He also asked them to serve people avoiding all forms of influence from individuals, groups and political parties.

PHOTO: PID

### STAR WEEKEND

in other news...

The Star Weekend has an array of interesting articles for you. This week our spotlight is on the International Tiger Day, and why this year it is twice as important for us since the agreement of the Rampal power plant has been finalised. We have another very interesting story on how Humayun Ahmed has left behind characters for the youth of any day and age to look up to and idolise. Don't forget to grab your copy of the Star Weekend, tomorrow, Friday!

**THE TIGER'S LAST STAND**

Bengal tigers in the Sunderbans are the only tigers in the world that live in the saline swampy environment of mangrove forest. Due to poaching and habitat destruction, the number of these endangered big cats has been reduced to one third in Bangladesh in the last ten years. Besides, the construction of coal-fired Hampa Power Plant will even increase the threat of extinction of these tigers and their habitat, the Sunderbans, an owl. Read the article at page 8 and find out how about what lies ahead of the Sunderbans, the last sanctuary of Bengal tigers.