

Box culverts choking city's lifelines

FROM PAGE 3
 up canals and constructing storm drainage and sewerage lines.

Segunbagicha, Dholai Khal 1 and 2, Debdholai, Dhanmondi and Paribagh canals have been narrowed down for building box culverts. These covered water passages remain clogged due to lack of maintenance.

Part of Dholpur canal was filled up for constructing a road while the rest was turned into a box culvert. A portion of Hazaribagh canal was filled up for a road, while the other portion is still open for water flow, said an official of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Wasa constructed the box culverts in the 90s and early this decade, said officials of two city corporations and Wasa.

According to Wasa, a total length of box culverts constructed on different canals is 10.5km.

Architect Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said construction of box culverts is completely wrong. These culverts remain clogged, as these are not cleaned up, resulting in water stagnation, he said.

Prof Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, in a presentation last year, said a box culvert is a hydraulically most inefficient flow channel and suggested removing them and returning the canals to their earlier state.

Construction of box culverts usually results in gradual reduction of the flow as sedimentation continues due to a lack of regular maintenance, he explained.

Box culverts are suitable only for places where fresh water flows

through them and maintenance work is done regularly, he said, adding that unfortunately, waste water including human excreta goes through the box culverts of the city and the maintenance works very irregular.

An expert who worked in the drainage circle of Wasa for long said once there was a 200km canal network in the city and one could easily go to Sadarghat by boat from Gabtoli using different canals.

He said these box culverts not only destroyed the network but also have become a headache for Wasa since they cannot clean them properly.

Most of the portions of the box culverts remain filled with solid waste which reduces water carrying capacity, he said. "If the authorities concerned clean the box culverts properly, the water logging problem of the city would reduce dramatically."

DHOLAI KHAL 1, 2
 The DCC turned Dholai Khal-1 and Dholai Khal-2 into box culverts during the 90s.

Dholai Khal-2 used to flow into the Buriganga from Dayaganj Bazar via Sutrapur, Gendaria, Dayaganj, Wari and Shahar Dhaka Mouja while Dholai Khal-1 originated from Dholai Khal-2 and emptied into the Buriganga near the second Buriganga Bridge, said a Wasa official.

DEBDHOLAI CANAL
 It had links with Dholai Khal but DCC had turned it into a box culvert in 2004-2005.

Mir Hajirbagh resident Faruk Hossain recalled that Debdholai canal had links with Dholai Khal and the Balu river through canals in Trimohoni. "The canal was around 100 feet wide even around 17 years ago. It was gradually encroached upon. Many Mir Hajirbagh residents constructed buildings on it," he said.

DHOLPUR CANAL
 Wasa constructed a box culvert from Syedabad Bridge to Maniknagar Pukurpar and a road was built from Maniknagar Pukurpar to Rajarbagh on the canal in the 80s.

Mohammad Babul, a resident of Maniknagar said the canal was turned to a pipe drain as a road was constructed from Model School to Manik Nagar Pukurpar, which is connected with Sayedabad road.

The water of the canal was very clean around 20 years back and people used to catch fish there, he said.

GOPIBAGH CANAL
 The canal had a link with the jheel (a reach of an old river channel bed) behind Bangladesh Bank in Motijheel, said

sexagenarian Jahangir Alam, a resident of RK Mission road. The canal was turned to a road in the 90s, he said.

The jheel was huge and had a link with Segunbagicha and Arambagh canals. Many people used to come to Motijheel using boats, said Mokhles Mia, a boatman of the jheel, which now exists like a pond behind Bangladesh Bank.

Still many are using the pond as a short cut and to save 10 to 15 minutes to go to Motijheel from Kamalapur spending Tk 2, he said.

"We 11 boatmen are involved with the boats on the ponds who can earn collectively Tk 4,000 to Tk 4,500 per day. Earning was better when there were canals and jheels in the area and even people from far off places like Postogola would come here by boat," said Mokhles, who is involved with the profession for the last 50 years.

Most of the part of the jheel was filled up in the 90s, where buildings and roads were constructed, said a former Wasa official.

SEGUNBAGICHA CANAL
 Iqbal Habib of Bapa said there used to be a jheel at Matsya Bhaban. The jheel also had a link with Ramna lake. The 2.8km Segunbagicha canal originated from there and met with the jheel behind Bangladesh Bank.

Though the canals became more important after the jheels and water bodies got filled up, roads were constructed on many of them by setting up box culverts, he said.

The canals were also filled up in the name of expanding Motijheel, Iqbal said.

The Segunbagicha box culvert was constructed near Shilpakola Academy to Kamalapur Stadium (Bir Shreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium) and from there the canal remained open. Some part of the canal also mixed with Arambagh canal which was also turned to a box culvert.

"We saw boats plying before independence and the canal had links with Gopibagh and other major canals like Manda," said Mohammad Shahid, a resident of Fakirapool.

DHANMONDI CANAL
 The canal started from Dhanmondi Lake and had a link with Begunbari canal which was turned to a box culvert in the 90s.

Three adjoining canals -- Razabazar, Kathalbagan and Poribagh -- met with Dhanmondi canal near Panthakunja and fell into Begunbari canal (Hatirjheel).

There were paddy fields beside the canals and people used to catch fish there. The entire field would come under

water during the rainy season, said Amir Hossain Mondol, a resident of Razabazar.

KATHALBAGAN CANAL
 Kathalbagan canal originated from near Panthapath crossing and used to flow into Begunbari canal near Sonargaon hotel.

The canal was turned to a box culvert in the 90s.

"There was a railway bridge near Sundarban Hotel on Sonargaon Road and we used to jump from the bridge to the canal even in the 70s while taking baths," said Mojibor, a resident of Kathalbagan.

RAZABAZAR CANAL
 The canal was turned to a pipe drain and a road was constructed in the 80s.

"Everyone would take baths in the canal during the rainy seasons as the canal and the adjoining paddy field would be filled with water," said Mohammad Babu, a resident of the area.

PARIBAGH CANAL
 The Paribagh canal started from behind Bangladesh National Museum and had a link with the Begunbari canal near Sonargaon hotel.

The canal was turned into a box culvert in the 90s.

RAYERBAZAR CANAL
 The canal used to flow through the flood protection embankment (Beribadh) into Turag river via Jafrabad and Sultanganj. It also given way to the construction of a road in the 90s.

GABTOLI CANAL
 The canal started from Mirpur-1 to Beauty Cinema Hall of Gabtoli and fell into the retention area of Wasa in Kalyanpur. It was filled up to construct plots by local influential in the 90s.

IBRAHIMPUR CANAL
 The canal originated from north east corner of Tejgaon Old Airport and mixed with Bounia canal. Box culvert was constructed at different parts of the canal in the 90s.

MOHAKHALI CANAL
 The canal originated from Nakhhalpara and mixed with Hatirjheel via Mohakhali Bus Stop and Niketan. Part of the canal was turned to a box culvert in Nakhhalpara in the 90s.

SHYAMPUR-KADAMTOLI CANAL
 Once 1.28km long, Shyampur-Kadamtoli canal was also filled up partially; the DCC built a road there in the 2000s.

Contacted, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon said the box culverts have already been built and it is not possible to turn them into canals again as it will make a huge chaos in the area.

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Inu seeks help to fight

FROM PAGE 3
 would be formed against terrorism.

He said Bangladeshi youths were not with terrorists and that among the lakhs of university students, including seven lakh in private ones, only 68 were missing.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia, as the special guest, said the Kalyanpur militants took training in different areas on being recruited one year ago and had created panic in social media giving time and dates of probable attacks.

The present problem is of a social, national and global nature, he said. He talked of people extending assistance, including during the Kalyanpur raid, and urged to not panic as police were ready to put their lives on the line to fight terrorists.

Stating that North South University will have to establish surveillance at all places inside it to ensure security for students, Vice-Chancellor Prof Atiqul Islam said prayer rooms already contained CCTV cameras.

He mentioned of uncertainty over possibilities of a research contract in Bangladesh involving US \$50-200 million, NSU, Nasa and four universities.

The daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarowar, Bangladesh Islamic Foundation Director General Shamim Mohammad Afzal and Ekattor TV Managing Director Mozammel Haque also spoke as special guests.

Bangladesh Betar Director General Nesar Uddin Bhuiyan presided over the programme.

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