



The Rayerbazar sluice gate at Hashem Khan road in the capital, where water from the Hazaribagh canal is also pumped out to the Buriganga second channel through a temporary water pump. This used to be the meeting point of Rayerbazar and Hazaribagh canals. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Western embankment de-links canals from rivers

FOURTH REPORT on DHAKA CANALS

HELEMUL ALAM

Once there was a network of waterways linking rivers and canals across the capital. If anyone wanted to visit Narayanganj or any other places from Gabtoli through the waterways, it was very much possible.

But the network in most parts of the city has stopped due to the construction of the flood protection embankment in the western part of the city.

During the construction, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) did not keep the mouth of the canals that linked with Turag and Buriganga rivers open or constructed any of the sluice gates bigger for boats to cross.

The city had over 50 canals which were not only inter-connected, but also had a link with Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Turag and Balu rivers, surrounding the capital.

But a good number of them started to die and the rowing of boats stopped since the construction of the embankment almost cut them off from the rivers.

The 36km embankment started from Tongi to Killarmore in Lalbagh and the 3.8km flood wall cum road stretched from Killarmore to Postogola (Buriganga bridge-1). But the road constructions from Jatrabari to Tongi via Sayedabad, Maniknagar, Rampura, Kuril Biswa road and Airport road has cordoned off the 136 square km areas, which are considered as the benefited areas of the embankment.

A storm water pumping station at Rampura bridge, constructed in 1993, also became a barrier for the boats plying in canals, which fell under the area.

Since construction of the Rampura storm water pump station, rowing of boats continued only from Rampura bridge near the Rampura TV station to the eastern part. But the waterways from the western and middle part of the city also came to a stop.

The canals including Hazaribagh, Rayerbazar, Ramchandrapur, Katasur, Gabtoli, Kallyanpur main canal and its branches,

Dhanmondi, Razabazar, Kathalbag, Paribagh and Begun Bari had lost its navigability and link.

The construction of box culverts and roads exaggerated the situation and many canals are now alive only in names, while many disappeared.

"Back in 74/75, boats carrying goods would dock at Begunbari canal, which stopped completely after a regulator pump at Rampura was constructed," said Azizur Rashid Babu, a Moghbazar resident.

Since construction of Tongi

During a recent visit it was found that there was a temporary Wasa pumping station from where the water of Hazaribagh came at the point but there was no sign of Rayerbazar canal.

BWDB Chief Engineer (central zone) Abul Kalam Azad said the embankment was constructed between 1992 and 2003.

He said under the project three storm water pumping stations were constructed at Goran Chatbari, Kallyanpur and Dholaikhal and 54 sluice gates were constructed.

Prof Emeritus of Brac University

in 1989, approved by the cabinet of the then government where it was also mentioned to consider about the environment, he said.

Nishat said it was also recommended to keep the mouths of the canals open and keeping sufficient gates during the embankment construction. But the planning commission at that time approved to construct small sluice gates to reduce expenditure, he said.

Nishat, one of the key members who prepared the management principals, said they had requested the then government to not to go for the embankment, but rather consider road networks.

If they would have considered, the design would have been changed, which would have saved the marshy lands on the western part, he said.

There is Balu river on the north-south side of the eastern part of the city, Turag and Bongshai rivers on the northwest side of the western part, and Buriganga is on the southwest and Shitalakhya is situated at the southeast, said Nishat.

He said that probably in the Mughal era, a link was made between Balu and Turag rivers through Tongi canal. There was a river route surrounding the capital and people would enter through different canals.

In the developed countries, they



A sluice gate of the western flood protection embankment (Beribadh) in the capital's Nawabganj area. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Diversion road, built in the 80s, boat

movements also reduced, he said.

During a recent visit to the embankment it was found that most of the 54 sluice gates were not properly maintained, and at many points there was no sign of sluice gates.

The ones that were operative were found in a bad condition as the mouths of the gates were almost blocked due to encroachments and continuous garbage dumping.

Contacted, a Wasa official said that they have so far cleaned four sluice gates a few months back and are planning to continue the cleaning works.

"The Rayerbazar canal had a link with Buriganga before the embankment construction and small boats used to ply there," said Anowar Hossain, an elderly resident of Rayerbazar.

Hazaribagh canal also had a link with Buriganga and confluence with Rayerbazar canal at (now) Rayerbazar's Hashem Khan road.

Ainun Nishat, a water resources

and climate change specialist, said Dhaka was built on the eastern bank of the Buriganga. It is called old Dhaka now, which gradually spread to the east and north side as the portions were highlands, he added.

He said Adabor in Mohammadpur and Kallyanpur (which are now residential areas) used to come under water regularly till 1987. "I saw big boats even in the 70s near Lazz Pharma at Russell Square. There were big boats near Rampura TV station in the 80s also," he said.

Nishat said the embankment was constructed in haste after the 1988 flood and was reconstructed after demolishing the old one.

The BWDB traditionally controls flood without protecting the waterways, fish routes and water bodies, but now it has started to think about those, he said.

The 11 guiding principals of flood management were prepared

Sundarbans movement 'independent'

Nat'l Committee responds to PM questioning its source of funding, to hold press confce tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports yesterday again urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to scrap the Rampal power plant project, hours after she expressed her firm commitment to building the power plant.

The Committee has long been protesting the setting up of the plant, saying that it will pose a grave risk to the Sundarbans.

"We want to clearly say that the movement to protect the Sundarbans has thrived in years as an independent and spontaneous movement, which is based on scientific data and analysis and our social responsibilities," it said in a statement.

"We still hope that the prime minister will cancel the anti-people and anti-environment project by recognising interests of the people and out of her commitment to the country, instead of slandering

the movement," it mentioned.

The statement from the Committee came after the prime minister raised questions about the sources of power and money that she said worked behind organising road-marches towards the site.

The Committee also said on the one hand BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had created confusion over its movement by organising a press conference, but on the other hand Hasina is now trying to discredit the movement, taking an advantage of her [Khaleda's] statement, adding that it will hold a press conference tomorrow on the statements of Hasina and Khaleda and the new development.

On Wednesday, the BNP chief in the press conference termed the coal-fired power plant "anti-people" and "unprofitable" and urged the government to pull back from the project for the sake of the country's ecological balance.



Nazrul's death anniversary observed

CITY DESK

The 40th death anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was observed yesterday with due respect.

Nazrul, popularly known as Bidrohi Kabi (rebel poet), through his poems had inspired the people to fight against all kinds of odds and injustice and repression during the colonial rule, reports UNB.

Nazrul's songs and poems were also a source of inspiration for the freedom fighters during the country's Liberation War in 1971. On August 27, 1976, the poet passed away in the capital at the age of 77 after suffering from a long ailment.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations

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WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL Trial campaigners against relocation

Want ICT to stay at Old HC building

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighters and war crimes trial campaigners yesterday demanded withdrawal of a recent Supreme Court letter to the law ministry seeking relocation of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) from the Old High Court building.

They also demanded that the government revive ICT-2, which remained non-functioning since September 15 last year, and hold trial of organisations and Pakistani army men allegedly involved in war crimes in 1971.

The building has a historical value, and it should be turned into a museum afterwards, like elsewhere in the world including the place where the Nuremberg trial was held, they said.

Their demands came at a press conference, "Resist the Conspiracy to Delay the Trial of Genocide", at Liberation War Museum, organised by Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee. The letter asked for the relocation within October 31.

Acting president of the committee Shahrir Kabir said they would announce protest programmes if the SC did not back off from its decision.

In the August 18 letter, the Supreme Court asked the ministry to give the Old High Court building back to SC's possession because the SC "lacks adequate space for its judges and staff". The government set up ICT at the Old High Court building on March 25, 2010. Later, ICT-2 was set up on March 22, 2012 and another portion of the building housed the Chief Prosecutor Office.

Haroon Habib, secretary general of Sector Commanders Forum, said the ICT building had become a part of the country's history; it could not be used for other purpose.

Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, wife of martyred intellectual Alim Chowdhury, said the building should be preserved as a historic structure.

"I gave testimonies before the tribunal. It's involved with

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EMBANKMENT AT A GLANCE

- Constructed between 1992 & 2003
- 3 storm water pumping stations
- 54 sluice gates
- 36km embankment
- 3.8km flood wall cum road
- 136 sq km areas cordoned off
- SHORTCOMINGS**
- Small sluice gates
- Lack of boat crossing facilities
- Lack of maintenance
- Many points missing sluice gates
- Gates blocked due to encroachments, garbage dumping



Family members of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam place a wreath at the grave of the poet beside the Dhaka University Central Mosque on the occasion of his 40th death anniversary yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

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