



The photos taken over the last four years show how a factory owner systematically occupied the Turag in an industrial scale near Dhour Bridge in Bhadam mouja and finished building the spinning mill. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ/RASHED SHUMON

In the 2014 photo, a river demarcation pillar and dredging pipelines for filling river foreshore are seen in Birulia near Mirpur embankment. A recent photo shows the pillar almost under soil. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



The photos taken over three years show how land grabbers occupied the Turag's foreshore following the incorrectly placed demarcation pillars by the authorities concerned. The Turag just north of Birulia Bridge is merely 100 feet across now. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Time to declare Turag dead

FROM PAGE 1
official custodians are supposed to save the 38km river stretch from Kholamora to Teramukh across Ashulia and Tongi.
A 2009 landmark High Court judgment delineated detailed measures on how to recover the ailing rivers from land grabbers and save them from pollution. The judgement ordered the administration to demarcate the boundary of five dying Dhaka rivers -- the Buriganga, the Balu, the Turag, the Shitalakkhya and the Dhaleshwari.
This became the death warrant for the rivers. Demarcation pillars were set up along the river banks during the lean flow of dry season waterline excluding a roughly estimated 2,500 acres of river foreshores and wetlands.
It lured hundreds of fresh grabbers to start gobbling up the excluded river areas with massive earth filling.
The entire stretch of the foreshore wetlands of the Turag, between Dhour Bridge and Shinnirtek along the river embankment road across Birulia, has been indiscriminately filled up with sand dumped by dozens of dredgers around the clock. Barely five years ago was this area was part of the river flow.

The Daily Star has seen three satellite images of three sites of the Turag, one with Uttara-16 and Savar across the river, one with Uttara-18 and Savar across the river, and Diabari and Kaundia Ghat across the river, where the river has been choked by grabbers. The widths of the river there are around 30 metre.
The river widths across Mirpur, Birulia, Goranchatbari and Ashulia are also about 30 metre.
Today, claimants on the foreshore wetlands include concrete mixture plants, sand traders, real-estate developers, plant nursery owners, recreation clubs, private universities, mosques and Nou Sramik (river transport workers') League, a pro-Awami League body.
Some half-hearted and ill-equipped eviction drives failed to complete any eviction of major encroachers.
KAMARPARA BRIDGE
A land claimant occupied 1.34 acres of the Turag near Kamarpara Bridge in Machhimpur mouja of Tongi with concrete pillars and heavily reinforced retaining walls.
None of the half a dozen authorities designated to protect rivers, wetlands and environment stopped this river occupation.

It required a High Court order on July 24, 2014, for the BIWTA and Gazipur and Dhaka district administration to act. On August 26 that year, the district administration authorities and BIWTA jointly embarked on a three-day drive to remove the huge earth filling.
But they called off the drive mid way.
They had said that they could not procure the right equipment nor could they move tugboats and pontoons loaded with bulldozers and excavators up the river because of several low clearance bridges.
After keeping quiet for a couple of years, the land claimant erected the fencing again and got the encroached area covered with plants and trees to make it look like an ordinary piece of land.
DHOUR BRIDGE
There were two similar incidents of encroachments near Dhour Bridge.
Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) on March 10, 2014, "equipped" with 10 men with six sledgehammers came to evict a gigantic under-construction spinning mill and a huge wall on a 9,292-square metre designated flood-flow zone of the Turag near the bridge in Bhadam mouja.

All they could do was to knock a hole in the wall. The factory owner promised he on his own would bring down the rest and the demolishing team left satisfied.
The factory owner then obtained a High Court stay order on the eviction for four months and finished building the factory.
Rajuk did nothing.
An unidentified claimant on the other side of the river had filled a huge chunk of the river and wetland near Dhour Bridge in Bhakral mouja choking the river.
The BIWTA and the Gazipur district administration carried out an eviction drive but this too was a mere show as the ill-prepared and ill-equipped BIWTA team could only remove some timber and concrete pillars of a wall.
BIRULIA BRIDGE
The story of unhindered river grabbing is the same on both sides of this bridge. Grabbers took advantage of the river boundary pillars that excluded its foreshores.
Half a kilometre north of Birulia Bridge, an unidentified encroacher filled nearly an acre of the river around three years ago. No eviction drive was carried out there ever.
It now stands as a land with plan-

tation and fencing with an ownership claim of a real-estate developer.
WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY
SM Alam, deputy commissioner of Gazipur, said, "The river encroachers come back immediately after being evicted and we don't have adequate manpower to constantly guard against that."
"But at present, there is no incidents of grabbing in the Turag," he claimed.
Rajuk chief town planner Md Sirajul Islam said they could not prevent earth filling of wetlands and river foreshores as demarcation pillars set up by the district administration authorities excluded the foreshore, an action that offered the river grabbers the chance for grabbing.
The BIWTA in some cases issued licences to use the foreshore that, in a way, encouraged and smoothed the way for land grabbers, he said.
"We have too little logistic support and manpower to safeguard the river wetlands," he said.
Kamrul Hasan Sohag, deputy town planner of Rajuk, said they just served around 20 notices and filed two complaints with police against the encroachers of Turag river wetlands.
They did not go for filing cases against them or carrying out eviction

drives, as "the higher authorities did not instruct them to do so," he said.
Gulger Ali, BIWTA joint director and port officer of Dhaka River Port (Sadarghat), said none of the existing businesses on the river foreshores had BIWTA licences.
Why don't they evict the river grabbers then?
Because faulty demarcation pillars had not been rectified yet, he said.
They have found nearly 1,000 pillars set up at wrong locations along the Turag and the Balu and the issue has been kept unresolved since 2012.
He claimed that there were cases of encroachment into the Turag river only at four places along the embankment stretching from Shinnirtek to Dhour Bridge and that, "There are no other incidents of encroachments on the Turag beyond the existing demarcation pillars."
When he was told of specific incidents near Kamarpara Bridge and in Birulia, he stood his ground.
Pressed further on why they do not protect the foreshores on the basis of a map jointly prepared by the BIWTA and district administration in 2006, he said, "We can do that only if the shipping minister asks us to do so."

Hope or danger?

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In a first, Trump yesterday delivered the Republican Party's weekly radio address. The remarks are the opposition party's response to the president's weekly radio address.
While President Barack Obama focused on his signature health care programme, Trump urged listeners to vote Republican down the ballot.
"I'm asking for your vote and your help in electing a Republican majority in Congress, so that we can finally change this broken system and make America great again. And when I say great, I mean great for everyone," Trump said.
He added: "This is not just a campaign, it's a movement. It's a once in a lifetime chance to take our government back from the donors and the special interests, and return the power to you, the American people."
Trump has tense relations with Republican leaders, many of whom withdrew their endorsement after comments surfaced in which he boasted in explicit terms about groping women.
On Friday both Trump and

Clinton campaigned in the US rustbelt, a region where blue-collar voters that were once reliable Democrats may be swayed by Trump's promise to repatriate jobs from Mexico and China.
Clinton spoke late Friday in Cleveland, Ohio, a state that Obama won in 2012 but where she trails Trump in opinion polls by around five percentage points.
She was introduced with a show-stopping set by rapper Jay-Z and his even more famous wife Beyonce, who sang songs of empowerment wearing a version of Clinton's trademark pantsuit.
"The world looks to us as a progressive country that leads change," Beyonce declared. "I want my daughter to grow up to see a woman lead our country. That is why I'm with her."
Clinton portrayed her campaign to become the first female US president as the next step in the civil rights struggle.
"We have unfinished work to do, more barriers to break, and with your help, a glass ceiling to crack once and for all," she declared, to

loud cheers.
"DARK VISION"
Clinton earlier visited Detroit, Michigan, where supporters booed when she attacked Trump's "dark vision" of an America mired in poverty and failure.
"When I hear my opponent talking about America I don't recognise it," she declared, touting her own "confident, optimistic, inclusive" agenda.
Trump has run one of the most aggressive and populist campaigns in history, browbeating his Republican primary rivals into submission before tearing into Clinton.
Trump campaigned in Hershey, Pennsylvania, hoping to shatter the "firewall" pollsters once thought Clinton enjoyed in Democrat-leaning states.
"I want the entire corrupt Washington establishment to hear the words we're about to say. When we win on November 8 we're going to 'drain the swamp'," he said, as the 13,000-strong crowd took up the chant.
Trump predicted that Clinton will be prosecuted after an FBI inquiry

into her inappropriate use of private email when she was secretary of state, and vowed to tear up current US free trade deals.
"We're gonna win Pennsylvania big," he said. "And by the way, I didn't have to bring J-Lo or Jay-Z. I'm here all by myself," he added, mocking Hillary's celebrity event.
'AS CORRUPT AS THEY COME'
"Hillary is about as corrupt as they come," declared 27-year-old welder Logan Sechrist, who came to Hershey with his pregnant wife to hear Trump's jobs plan.
"I think honestly we need somebody who's a businessman and not a politician," Sechrist said. "The country's falling apart."
Zach Rehl, a 31-year-old Marine veteran, said previous Republican candidates failed to support factory workers whose jobs have been shipped abroad under global trade rules.
"This thing hits people at home," he said, predicting that election night in Pennsylvania would be "pretty close."
Some Clinton supporters have a

similar feeling.
"It's nerve-racking that Trump's gotten this far," said Rachel Zeolla, 27, at a Clinton rally in Pittsburgh.
A Pennsylvania polling average compiled by tracker RealClearPolitics gives Clinton a 2.6 percentage point edge in the state.
Pennsylvania, Michigan and perhaps Ohio were once seen as low hanging fruit for Clinton, guaranteeing her victory even if she doesn't pick off a prize like Florida.
Friday also brought a fresh crop of press scandals, which may or may not affect the race.
The Associated Press reported that Trump's Slovenia-born wife Melania took paid work as a model in the 1990s before obtaining a legal US work permit.
And the Wall Street Journal alleged that the National Inquirer tabloid paid for exclusive rights to an ex-Playboy model's account of a 2006 affair with Trump, then quashed the story.
Both candidates headed yesterday to Florida, a must-win for Trump and a last chance for Clinton to stem his recovery.

DMP yet

FROM PAGE 1
Asaduzzaman Mia said at a programme at Police Staff College in the capital's Mirpur yesterday.
Meanwhile, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night alleged that the government was not allowing her party to hold a rally marking November 7 as the government "fears" the party, reports UNB.
"We'd observed November 7 in the past. We've planned to hold a rally this time as well, but they [the government] don't want to allow us to do so. Though they held a rally there [Suhrawardy Udyan], we can't do it as they fear us and our rally," she said.
The BNP chief came up with the remarks while exchanging views with district unit leaders of Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal at her Gulshan office.
She said the government would not be able to keep people confined to their homes and gag their mouths for a long time. "We'll be out there on the ground. We'll surely hold our programmes together with people."
On Friday, BNP leader Rizvi Ahmed said they had sought permission from police to hold a rally in front of the party's Nayapaltan office to mark the "National Revolution and Solidarity Day" on November 8.