



The land of this road by the banks of Taltola canal was previously a part of the water-body. But after a botched excavation, it was slowly turned into this road, which further narrowed the canal that was already plagued by waste dumping and illegal occupation.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ALMOST GONE

Once an important water-body, Taltola canal now struggling for survival

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Taltala canal, once a two kilometre-long vital waterbody flowing through Khulna city, is approaching extinction due to indiscriminate garbage dumping.

Today, the canal's bed is almost filled with garbage, grass, weeds and aquatic plants.

On top of locals throwing household waste into it, there are many illegal occupiers of the waterbody as well, the most blatant of which are cattle farms built on a portion of the canal.

There's around 25 establishments like them there, with not an inch of water to be seen on the surface.

In fact, if one didn't know it beforehand, they won't even be able to tell that it used to be an important water-body.

As a result of this, the canal has been unable to play any role in discharging water from the city.

Moreover, it has also become a hotbed of mosquito breeding.

Locals and experts said the canal will soon disappear completely if large-scale excavations are not carried out.

It already looks like a barren piece of land, choked by water hyacinth, bushes



and shrubs.

The canal starts from the opposite side Karim Nagar residential area on Sonadanga-Notunrasta road and merges with the Mayur river, which flows through the city.

Visiting the area last week, this correspondent found the once 60 feet wide waterbody reduced to a mere 25 to 30 feet.

One of the reasons behind this can be attributed to the construction of two roads by Khulna City Corporation on both sides.

Abdur Rahim (67), a resident of the area, said the canal's demarcation was marked ten to eleven years ago, while it was dug in 2015.

However, the excavation wasn't executed properly.

"While the works were going on, the soil was placed by the side of the canal.

Gradually, a road was created to move through the soil. Later, the city corporation built a road around 15 feet in width, which came to be known as Haji Abdur Rahman Road," he further said.

"Large boats used to sail through it. People even fished here," said local Abul Kalam.

"Today, the neighbouring areas get submerged because water can't pass through the canal. Even then, if the

canal was dug properly, there wouldn't be any waterlogging in Boyra, Chhoto Boyra and Karim Nagar areas."

People living in nearby villages once relied on it to transport goods to and from Khulna city, he added.

"The canal is so polluted that cattle or other animals get sick from drinking its water," said Roksana Begum of Karim Nagar.

"Those who illegally occupy it even put up signs and fences, pretending to own the land," a frustrated Roksana said.

According to KCC, an estimation process is underway to excavate the canal.

It was demarcated once in 2009, but it soon got occupied again.

Nuruzzaman Talukder, estate officer of Khulna City Corporation, said project worth Tk 823 crore is underway to reduce waterlogging and develop drainage system in the city.

He said the canal will be excavated with side walls on both sides under the project.

Once completed, there will be walkways on its both sides, the official added.

Regarding the construction of a road over the canal, he admitted to it and said, "It's common practice in Khulna city for people to build houses and other establishments on the banks of waterbodies in this manner. They don't even leave any space for roads."

"This canal is no different in that regard. If we did not build the road, then people would find it difficult to navigate the area. We had no choice but to do it this way," the official said.

Woes of 'Neel Kuthi'

Proposed archaeological site rots away in negligence



OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Nilphamari's history carries a deep wound from the colonial era. During that period, its farmers were compelled to cultivate indigo in the face of torture from British traders.

The very name of the district is said to have originated from the two words -- "Neel", meaning indigo in Bangla, and "farm", owing to the presence of several indigo farms in the region.

The "Neel Kuthi" at Notkhana village in Polashbari union bears testimony of the indigo traders' atrocities on local farmers.

But despite its significance, the establishment is on the verge of rotting away due to the lack of preservative steps.

A few years ago, the Department of Archaeology (DoA) declared it as a proposed archaeological site, but this is yet to materialise.

According to "Nilphamarir Itihash", published by Bangla Academy, the establishment was constructed in the early 19th century and was used as a torture centre.

"The history of the Kuthi is intertwined with that of the area. It reminds everyone of the pain and agony inflicted on their colonised forefathers," said Jahangir Alam Sarker, author of the book.

Locals alleged that the dilapidated Kuthi is a safe house for anti-social and criminal activities today.

Contacted, SM Hasanat Bin Islam, assistant custodian of Rangpur museum and a DoA official, said, "When the Kuthi is declared as a fully reserved archaeological site, we can proceed to take proper safety and development measures, as mentioned in our proposal."

Nominations open for 'Unsung Women Nation Builders' award

CITY DESK

The Daily Star and IPDC have called for nominations for the sixth edition of "Unsung Women Nation Builders" awards.

The joint initiative will honour women change-makers for their silent and unrelenting contributions in building a better Bangladesh, said a press release.

This year, the nomination categories are health, education, social welfare, entrepreneurship, and Covid hero. An independent jury panel comprising eminent personalities will be evaluating the submissions.

Mominul Islam, managing director and CEO of IPDC Finance Limited, said, "The narrative of nation-building is overwhelmingly dominated by men. Whatever little credit we spare for women is also

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Father, son among 3 killed in road crashes

12 people injured

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed and 12 others were injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Khagrachhari, a man and his son were killed after a cement-laden truck carrying them hit a roadside tree at Budong Para in Guimara upazila.

The truck driver was injured in the accident, said police.

Jibon Majumdar (50) and his son Ratif Majumdar (12) died on the spot, said Guimara Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mizanur Rahman.

"They were going to Khagrachhari Sadar from Manikchhari," he said.

In Munshiganj, a worker was killed and 11 others were injured as a concrete mixture truck and a minibus collided on Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Baktarkandi in Baushia area yesterday.

Jinnahhar Begum (35) from Sunamganj was a worker of a local factory in Gazaria upazila, said police.

She was travelling in the minibus.

The 11 injured -- who were also the minibus passengers -- were taken to Gazaria Upazila Health Complex.

When the vehicle of Anwar Cement Company hit the moving minibus around 2:00pm, both the vehicles fell into a roadside ditch one after another, said Bhaberchar Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge C Shah Jalal Babul.

He said the vehicles were pulled with a wrecker.



Fire service officials conducting rescue operation after a truck and minibus collided and fell into a roadside ditch in Munshiganj yesterday. A worker was killed and 11 were injured in the accident.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Journalist Habib dies in road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Habibur Rahman, a senior reporter of the daily Shomoyer Alo, died in an accident in Dhaka's Hatirjheel early yesterday.

His motorcycle hit a footpath near Begunbari around 2:30am on his way home, said Sub-Inspector Enamul Haque, duty officer of Hatirjheel Police Station.

Pedestrians took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he told The Daily Star.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the motorcycle.

Majdar Hossain, a pedestrian who took him

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4