



The river Sati got back to its old shape less than a year into excavation. The photo was taken from Sarpukur union of Aditmari upazila.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

EXCAVATION WORK

Tk 23cr washed back into rivers!

**S DILIP ROY**

Over Tk 23 crore was spent only last year to excavate a 65 kilometre stretch of rivers and canals in five upazilas of Lalmonirhat. But most of the excavated earth, piled up on its side, has already made it back to the rivers and canals obstructing water flows.

Bangladesh Water Development Board's (BWDB) small river and canal re-excavation project was completed in the district in June last year, but the project has not been to reach its desired goal.

The rivers and canals constricted by washed down earth that had been piled up on the banks and the beds are silted up again -- thanks to unplanned and unmanaged dumping of the excavated earth by the BWDB, locals alleged.

In many places, there is no water flow in the re-excavated rivers and canals.

According to the BWDB officials, the government allocated Tk 39 crore 2 lakh and 71 thousand for re-excavation of a 98,100-metre stretch of small rivers and canals in five upazilas. The work order of Tk 35 crore 43 lakh 12 thousand was given to contractors. The project was expired in June last year.

During the project period about 65 km rivers and canals have been re-excavated which is 66 per cent of the work. It has cost 23 crores 37 lakh 4 thousand and 195. While Tk 15 crore 65 lakh 66 thousand and 805 has been sent back leaving 44 per cent of work unfinished due to the expiration of the project. Under this project, Sati river, Vateshwari river, Swarnamati river, Hasmara canal and Sutidhar Pankauri

canal were re-excavated. Although Sakoya canal was on the list, no work was done on this canal.

Nazrul Islam, a farmer from Bhadai village in Aditmari upazila, said re-excavation of Swarnamati river was done but it was of no help to them. The excavated earth piled on the bank has already made it back to the rivers and canals obstructing water flows.

This would not have happened if the river bank had been fortified properly with the excavated earth as planned, he said.

Safiar Rahman, a farmer from Chalbala village in Kaliganj upazila, said the Vateshwari river has been re-excavated but it remains the same. Although the soil was lifted from the riverbed, the river has filled up again. There is no water flow in the river, he

said.

However, Mizanur Rahman, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board, said the work was done properly. The contractor could not work fully due to obstruction by the landowners along the rivers and canals. If the project were completed as per the design, the locals could be benefited from these rivers and canals.

"Contractors have been billed for the amount of work they have done. Our senior officials came to the field and inspected it and allowed us to pay the bill," he said adding, "It was not possible to re-excavate the Sakoya canal because the locals did not allow the contractor to use their land." "I have refunded the money to the government leaving the work unfinished as the project was expired," he said.

Kushtia dam collapses again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

About 100-metre of Rabindra Kuthibari protection embankment on the Padma river in Kushtia has collapsed.

This is the second time the embankment has gone into the Padma since its construction.

In 2016, the 3.72-km-long embankment named 'Rabindra Kuthibari Conservation Dam Project' was constructed in Shilaidaha at a cost of Tk 176 crore.

Sources said within two months of the completion, 150 metres of the dam in Kaloa area was washed away by the river in 2016. Later, the broken part was built.

According to the Water Development Board (WDB), this time crack appeared on the embankment in Komarkandi area on March 1 and it collapsed at the same night.

After visiting the area on Wednesday, it was seen that the part above the embankment has gone up to 100 meters along with the soil.

Afshar Uddin, executive engineer at WDB in Kushtia, said such incidents could happen if holes develop on the top of the dam after the rains.

He said he is aware of the matter and has already informed the higher authorities. A team from Dhaka will visit the spot soon. There would



PHOTO: STAR

be no problem if the repair works were carried out before the monsoon, he added.

Local WDB authorities said initiative to construct the dam was very important to protect the historic Kuthibari in Shilaidaha where great poet Rabindranath Tagore penned some of his most memorable, as it had been at risk of the river erosion.

The government gave priority for construction of a concrete embankment to protect the property besides homes, business establishments and farmlands of around 21 villages under two unions of Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila.

A vast hectares of farmland were lost to the river. Educational, government and private institutions and religious sites were also under erosion threat.

Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Diesel Plant Limited jointly carried out the construction work of the embankment in September 2016.



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