Buriganga's old channel getting a new life

MD ABBAS

Only three years ago, the old Buriganga channel would serve as a playground for children as it would remain withered during the dry season.

Even during rainy seasons, the water flow was insufficient allowing silt and waste to accumulate on the riverbed.

But over the last year, with significant changes having been made, the channel is now recognisable as a branch of the Buriganga.

The Dhaka South City Corporation since July last year has been working to revitalise the once-dead Buriganga channel and transforming it into a space similar to Hatirjheel.

The old channel's original boundary, which fell prey to illegal occupation in some places, and dumping of waste, ran from Muslimbagh in Kamrangirchar to Rayerbazar in Hazaribagh, covering a length of 7.5km.

The DSCC plans to establish a new boundary to protect the channel, which is gradually returning to its original appearance.

Spending approximately Tk 22 crore, it has already removed a lot of the waste and silt from the channel bed and plans to spend another Tk 14 crore to clear out the rest.

If the channel is made operational, it will reduce instances of waterlogging in Dhaka's Lalbagh, Hazaribagh, Dhanmondi, and Kamrangirchar areas.

The Dhaka South City Corporation since July last year has been working to revitalise the once-dead Buriganga channel and transforming it into a space similar to Hatirjheel.

During an election rally in Kamrangirchar on December 24, 2018, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pledged to restore the original Buriganga channel and instructed the then DSCC mayor, Mohammad Sayeed Khokon, to take action in this regard.

As part of the initiative, the former mayor had commissioned a drone to capture video footage of the channel and appointed an organisation as a consultant. However, the efforts did not yield positive results.

After assuming office, current mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh initiated a new programme.

According to sources in the DSCC engineering department, Taposh began formulating plans to address the waterlogging issue immediately after assuming office.

Visiting the channel on April 3, this correspondent found that the water flow in the channel had improved, while the amount of waste had gone down.

The removal of waste and silt has been completed in most of the channel, while in some parts the waste collected from it has been placed on the banks.

Officials involved in the project said that first the encroached areas of the channel were cleared, including the removal of multi-storeyed buildings, through drives and then the cleaning operation began.

Till now, 2.5 lakh tonnes of waste have been removed, while the mayor now intends to overhaul the entire channel.

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People return to the capital in droves yesterday after spending their Eid holidays outside Dhaka. The photo was taken at the Kamalapur Railway Station.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PM'S 15-DAY TOUR

Trade, defence co-op to top the agenda

She leaves for Japan today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka today on a 15-day official tour to Japan, the US, and the UK, aimed at strengthening ties with the country's major development partners as it aspires to graduate out of the "Least Developed Countries (LDC)" category by 2026.

During the Japan visit, Bangladesh may sign memorandums of cooperation (MoCs) in eight sectors, including defence and security, to take the bilateral relationship to a strategic level from the current comprehensive one.

Other MoCs likely to be signed include those in thesectors of agriculture, metro rail, industrial upgradation, ship recycling, customs, intellectual property, defence cooperation, ICT, and cyber security.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen briefed journalists in this regard at a curtain-raiser event held at the foreign ministry yesterday.

"So, this visit will create an important

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No new pay scale now for govt employees

They'll get 20pc dearness allowance

UNB, *Dhaka*

Government employees, who are expecting a new pay scale in the upcoming budget of the fiscal year 2023-24, have to be satisfied with a maximum 20 percent dearness allowance (DA).

According to finance ministry sources, the next budget will put the highest importance on the stability of the country's macro economy.

The highest allocations have been kept for the interest payment and

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Star BUSINESS

NOTICE

Star Business has not been published today as economic activities have not yet gained momentum following Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. Business pages will come out from Thursday.

$4.7B LOAN PROGRAMME

IMF mission to check Bangladesh's progress

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The IMF staff mission is set to begin its next series of meetings with the Bangladesh authorities today to measure how the country is faring with the $4.7 billion loan programme.

The staff mission, led by its chief Rahul Anand, will discuss recent economic developments and policy implementation under the programme during the eight-day visit.

"The authorities are taking steps to meet programme objectives, such as reducing un-targeted subsidies by raising electricity and natural gas prices and gradually moving toward a unified market-determined exchange rate. Further, increasing exchange rate flexibility and strengthening the foreign exchange reserve management framework will enhance external resilience," Anand earlier told The Daily Star.

The International Monetary Fund has set six targets for the first quarter of 2023, which would give the lender an indication of the government's seriousness in adhering to the programme objectives.

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Meeting the March targets is not mandatory for the release of the next tranche of about $476.27 million, which will be based on how Bangladesh fares with the targets for June.

Bangladesh has met five of the six targets set by the International Monetary Fund for the first quarter of 2023, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings. They spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The condition that the government has failed to meet is the minimum net international reserves (NIR) of $22.95 billion.

At the end of March, the NIR was less than $22 billion, they said.

NIR is calculated as gross international reserves (GIR) minus short-term foreign currency drains. Short-term foreign currency drains include impending import bills and loan repayments.

The GIR as per the Bangladesh Bank's methodology on March 30 were $31.14 billion, while going by the IMF's methodology, it is in the

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World's 'oldest' tree able to reveal planet's secrets

AFP, *Valdivia*

In a forest in southern Chile, a giant tree has survived for thousands of years and is in the process of being recognised as the oldest in the world.

Known as the "Great Grandfather," the trunk of this tree measuring four metres (13 feet) in diameter and 28 metres tall is also believed to contain scientific information that could shed light on how the planet has adapted to climatic changes.

Believed to be more than 5,000 years old, it is on the brink of replacing Methuselah, a 4,850-year-old Great Basin bristlecone pine found in California in the United States, as the oldest tree on the planet.

"It's a survivor, there are no others that have had the opportunity to live so long," said Antonio Lara, a researcher at Austral University and Chile's centre for climate science and resilience, who is part of the team measuring the tree's age.

The Great Grandfather lies on the edge of a ravine in a forest in the southern Los Rios region, 800 kilometres (500 miles) to the south of the capital Santiago.

It is a Fitzroya cupressoides, a type of cypress tree that is endemic to the south of the continent.

Lightning strikes kill 9 in 3 districts

STAR REPORT

Nine people including two teenagers died on Sunday morning while two others were injured after being struck by lightning in different areas of Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, and Sylhet districts.

The incidents, nine in total, took place between 10:00am and 11:00am amidst heavy rain.

According to locals, eight of the deceased were struck by lightning while they were working on farmlands.

Of the victims, six people, including two teenagers, died while two others were injured in six separate incidents in Sunamganj's Chhatak, Dowarabazar, and Tahirpur upazilas, said Ripon Kumar Modok, additional superintendent of Sunamganj district police.

The deceased were identified as Mahim Miah, 18, of Paschim Debergaon village, Arosh Ali, 58, of Paschim Barakapon village and Abdus Samad, 25, of Charmahalla village in Chhatak upazila; Tara Miah, 30, of Ranbhumi village and

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Spanish diplomatic personnel and citizens queue outside a military plane after they were evacuated from Sudan, in Djibouti yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Fighting rages in Sudan

Foreign nations push on with frantic evacuations of citizens from Khartoum; death toll rises to 427

AFP, *Khartoum*

Foreign nations yesterday pushed on with frantic evacuations of their citizens from chaos-torn Sudan, where heavy fighting raged for a 10th day between forces loyal to two rival generals.

As army and paramilitary forces again clashed in Khartoum and across the country, terrified Sudanese have endured acute shortages of water, food, medicines and fuel as well as power and internet blackouts, the UN said.

At least 427 people have been killed and more than 3,700 wounded, according to United Nations agencies, which also reported Sudanese civilians "fleeing areas affected by fighting, including to Chad, Egypt and South Sudan".

"Morgues are full, corpses litter the streets" and overwhelmed hospitals often have to stop operations for security reasons, said Dr Attiya Abdallah, head of the doctors' union.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday warned that the violence in Sudan "could engulf the whole region and beyond".

"We must all do everything within our power to pull Sudan back from the edge of the abyss," Guterres said, calling again for a ceasefire.