



Sundari, a century-old canal in Tangail, is now only a remnant of its former glory, as rampant pollution and encroachment have sent the once vibrant waterbody to its deathbed. Unscrupulous locals, including politically influential ones, occupied the canal's land to construct structures, shrinking the waterbody's width. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: STAR

# Spending Tk 1.38cr in vain

Sundari canal re-excavated without freeing it from pollution, encroachment

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Once a vibrant waterway in Tangail, Sundari canal is now on its deathbed as a result of pollution and encroachment. While the Water Development Board started carrying out excavation work to make the canal return to its former glory, the effort proved to be futile due to their nonchalance to free the waterbody from pollution and encroachment beforehand. Dug up by the then zamindars (feudal landlords) in the early 1900s to facilitate the supply of fresh water for locals as well as improved navigation through the waterway, the six-kilometre-long waterbody, also known as Katakhali Khal (canal), flows from Karatia of Sadar upazila to Chhabbish of Basail upazila of the district. Before improvements in road communication, the canal used to serve

as a major waterway route connecting many villages and trading centres in Tangail. The authorities recently excavated the waterbody in a bid to restore it. However, during a recent visit to the area, this correspondent observed that the effort has not had much impact since the excavation work was carried out without cleaning the water, stopping the sources of pollution, and removing around a hundred illegal structures. The canal was seen shrunken in width, with its natural flow hindered at several places, including the Karatia Bazar area. "Sundari canal is situated between Louhajang and Jhenai rivers, and it had great flow and navigability, allowing passenger and cargo-laden boats to move through it just four decades ago," said Syed Ezaz Ahmed, a local. As it flows beside the busy Karatia Bazar,

some unscrupulous locals, including politically influential ones, occupied the canal's land to construct structures, including markets and shops, eventually shrinking the waterbody, he said. Meanwhile, all waste from Karatia Bazar as well as from local households is dumped in the canal, causing the waste to accumulate across the waterbody and partially filling it up at places, said locals. They also alleged that some influential people blocked the canal in several places to turn those areas into fish enclosures. To deal with the situation, WDB carried out the excavation work for several kilometres across the canal in mid-2023. Out of six kilometres of the canal, four kilometres have already been re-excavated. The remaining two kilometres will be completed by June of this year, according to WDB sources. The project has a budget of over Tk 1.38

crore, added the sources. Shahjahan Ansary, chairman of Sadar upazila parishad, said following WDB's excavation, the canal's flow has been restored only to some extent. Sazzad Hossain, executive engineer of WDB in Tangail, said freeing the canal from pollution and encroachment, including the removal of illegal structures, is the responsibility of the local administrations. "Coordinated steps from the district and upazila administrations and police are necessary to restore the canal," he added. Md Kaiserul Islam, deputy commissioner of Tangail, said an investigation has been launched to take necessary measures to this end. The canal will be freed from pollution and illegal encroachments as soon as possible, he added.

## MP Suman delivers on promise

Leads Khowai river cleanup drive after taking oath

MINTU DESHWARA, from Habiganj

Election season is all about tall promises. Candidates go door-to-door and pledge different things to the voters, only to be a no-show for five years in many cases. But Barrister Syed Sayedul Haque Suman has shown early signs to be an exception. After winning Habiganj-4 (Chunarughat-Madhabpur) defeating the former civil aviation minister by a huge margin, he wasted no time in starting an initiative to recover the Khowai river from pollution, as pledged by him during his election campaign. Along with 20 trained volunteers and numerous followers, Suman started removing waste from the river on Sunday, starting from the vicinity of the Upazila Muktijoddha Complex building.



Around 650 members of BD Clean, a voluntary organisation, stepped up and joined hands with the MP early yesterday, with the aim to clean the entire river as soon as possible. "Over the years, Khowai has died due to encroachment, dumping of municipal waste, and other forms of pollution. At present it has turned into a wasteland, with unbearable stench emanating from it. Also, its fish population has become extinct," said Mazharul Islam, convener of Chunarughat Mora Khowai Nodi Rokkha Committee. So much so, about five kilometre of the river came to be known as Mora (dead) Khowai river, said Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit. Kadir Ahmed, a local resident, welcomed the clean up initiative saying that saving the river is necessary to conserve the biodiversity that relies on it. Contacted, Suman said it is his responsibility to deliver on his promise to the people after taking oath as lawmaker. Johirul Islam Robi, chief coordinator of BD clean, said, "It is our motto to work for a clean Bangladesh. Around 650-700 volunteers are now working to clean up the Khowai river."

## Man crushed under wheels of train

UNB, Jashore

A man died after being crushed under the wheels of a train at Nawapara Rail Station in Jashore on Thursday afternoon. The deceased was identified as Sheikh Faruq Hossain, 52, an accounts manager of Sidlu Jute Mill in Jashore's Nowapara. Government Railway Police (GRP) in-charge of Nowapara Station, Anamul Haq said the accident occurred at 4:00pm when the victim tried to board another moving train and went under the wheels of the Khulna-bound Sundarbans Express train. He died on the spot. The body was sent to Jashore Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

## 22 more Covid cases reported in 24hrs

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh reported 22 more Covid-19 cases in the 24 hours till yesterday morning. With the new numbers, the country's total Covid caseload rose to 20,46,711, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The official death toll remained unchanged at 29,479 as no new fatalities were reported during this period. The daily case test positivity rate stood at 5.12 percent as 430 samples were tested, according to the DGHS. The recovery and death rates remained unchanged at 98.41 percent and 1.44 percent, respectively.



The field in the photo used to be a 50-year-old pond in Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar upazila a couple of months ago. The owners of the property are working round the clock, employing tractors and bulldozers, to fill it up illegally, defying laws. However, after The Daily Star published a report on the issue, the authorities stepped up and stopped the work. PHOTO: STAR

## Star report prompts action

Filling of 50-year-old pond stopped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

The ongoing work of illegally filling up a 50-year-old pond in Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar upazila has been stopped following intervention by the district's deputy commissioner. The move came yesterday morning after the DC came to know about the matter from a report titled "Housing at the cost of a pond", published in The Daily Star on the same day, and instructed the concerned upazila administration to take action. Visiting the spot in the morning, this correspondent saw the earth being used to fill up the pond was removed and placed on the south side of the pond adjacent to a saw mill. Contacted, DC Md Habibur Rahman said those involved in filling

up the pond were given instructions to remove the soil, and they did accordingly using excavators. Over the past two months, one Malai Miah and his two brothers, who claim ownership of the pond with an expanse of 72 decimal area, was filling it up with truckloads of earth to build houses on the land. Contacted, Malai Miah said they bought the pond's land in 2000, adding that he submitted a written application to the UNO for permission to fill it up. "We will build houses here for our family," he added. However, as per Section 2 of the Water Reservoir Conservation Act-2000, a pond cannot be filled even if it is a private property, while the provisions of the Environment Act-1995 and Natural Water Reservoir Conservation Act-2000 also prohibit filling up of any waterbody.

## 45-year-old woman electrocuted

UNB, Natore

A 45-year-old woman died after being electrocuted in Baraigram upazila of Natore yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Maleka of the Agran area of the upazila. Kamruzzaman, sub-inspector of Baraigram Police Station, said Maleka was electrocuted while connecting a water pump to the electric line. She was taken to the Upazila Health Complex, where the duty doctor declared her dead.

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### Corrigendum of Local Tender Notice

Memo No.44.01.0000.024.01.004.2023-50

Date: 18 January 2024

Invitation for national tender published in different national dailies as per Memo No-44.01.0000.024.01.004.2023-2380 Date: 28 December 2023 is hereby amended only for Purchase of goods (Vehicles for Bangladesh Police) as follows:

Other terms and conditions shall remain as before.

SL no.	Description	Published	Revised/Amended
10	Tender Selling last date	18 January 2024	04 February 2024
11	Tender closing date and time	21 January 2024 at 12.00 pm	05 February 2024 at 12.00 pm
12	Tender opening date and time	21 January 2024 at 12.30 pm	05 February 2024 at 12.30 pm

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