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120km Dhaka canals lost to urban greed

PINAKI ROY

Dhaka city has lost a combined length of 120km or 307 hectares of canals, which could have been waterways and vital drainage, thanks to encroachment, unplanned urbanisation and lack of maintenance by the authorities in the last 80 years.

For context, the length of canals lost is more than the distance between the capital and Mymensingh city.

A study by River and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) found that 95 canals have been completely lost or their lengths have been less than halved.

The researchers compared the 1880-1940 land survey, officially known as the Cadastral Survey, and satellite images of 2022.

According to the 1880-1940 survey, there were 54 major canals, 111 narrow canals, the old channel of the Buriganga, and nine lakes.

Currently, there are 77 major canals, 31 narrow streams and several lakes in the two city corporations. Successive governments excavated 10 major canals and four new lakes in the city over the decades.

The city has the Turag river on the north and northwest, the Buriganga on the south and southwest, and the Balu on the east.

The study titled Atlas of Dhaka's Canals, Channels and Lakes: Mapping Changes says Dhaka has 206km of watercourse, down from 326km mentioned in the Cadastral Survey.



LAND USE	AREA IN HECTARE
Settlement	103.64
Agriculture	58.11
Roads	52.03
Vegetation	41.60
Mud Wetlands	40.32
Filled up	11.42
Total	307.12

RDRC Chairman Mohammad Azaz said, "The city has been experiencing critical loss of water bodies due to rapid urbanisation and development."

During the Cadastral survey, canals and river channels occupied 565 hectares of land in the city. Fifty-five percent is gone now.

Of the 307 hectares lost, 33.75 percent is occupied by different structures, 18.92 percent farmland, 16.94 percent streets, and the rest have either been filled up or became wetlands with no water flow, says the report.

Buildings were built in places of canals in Mohammadpur, Hazaribagh and Kamrangir Char. Major canals like Dholai Khal and Mohakhali Khal are in poor state because of encroachment.

As the Cadastral survey was conducted in the lean seasons it did not include the foreshore and wetlands. Despite this, Hazaribagh Khal, Katsur Khal, Ramchandrapur Khal, Amaiya Khal, Atir Khal, Bailjuri Khal, Bhaturia Khal, Dhalpur Khal, Dholai Khal, Gobindapur Khal, Gopibagh Khal, Haikkar Khal, Lawtola Khal, Nasirabad-Nandi Para Khal, Rampura Khal and Rayerbazar Khal have each lost around 2 hectares of land.

Begunbari Khal, Ramchandrapur Khal, Dholai Khal and Rampura Khal each are now shorter by over 3 km.

The Buriganga's old channel, currently 4.32km, lost 2.46 km of its length and 18.63 hectares of land. Besides, some rivers have become canals.

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The Bangladesh Army inspecting an unexploded rocket-propelled grenade, launched from Myanmar, on the Tumburu border in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari yesterday afternoon. The RPG had landed there on Friday.

PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

MYANMAR BORDER Bangladesh consulate in Switte moved to Yangon Gunfire, explosions scare people in Bandarban

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh consulate in Rakhine's capital Switte will be relocated to Yangon this week following the evacuation of UN and international aid officials amid an escalation in the fighting between the Arakan Army and Myanmar military.

"Our consul in Switte will be moving to Yangon temporarily because of the security situation. The Indian consul in Switte as well as foreign staffers of the UN and other international agencies have also been relocated," said a diplomatic source.

The move comes as fighting in Rakhine intensifies.

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GOVT FORMATION IN POST-POLLS PAKISTAN

Negotiations start after hung verdict

PLM-N, PTI claim victory, search ways to build coalition; criticism grows as EC fails to announce full results

AGENCIES

Pakistan's political parties yesterday began negotiating to form the next government after Thursday's general election resulted in a hung verdict.

Both Khan and his main rival, three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, declared victory on Friday, increasing uncertainty over who will form the next government at a time when swift policy action is needed to address multiple challenges.

Gohar Khan, the chairman of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf (PTI) party who also acts as the former prime minister's lawyer, called on "all institutions" in Pakistan to respect his party's mandate.

At a press conference, he said if complete results of the polls were not released by night, the party would hold peaceful protests today outside government offices returning election results around the country.

"We will not be aligning with any major party to set up a hodgepodge government in the Centre. We have learned from our previous tenure that having a compromised government with allies means being blackmailed daily," he said.

Sharif said on Friday his party had emerged

Nawaz Sharif spells out plan for coalition govt

PTI says banner for independents to be announced within 24 hours

US, UK, EU call for probe into 'irregularities and fraud'

Pak army chief says country needs 'stable hands'

as the single largest group and would talk to other groups to form a coalition government.

He hinted at joining hands with the PPP, JUI-F, MQM, PML-Q and IPP to forge a PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) style alliance that governed the country after Imran Khan was ousted in 2022.

Analysts had predicted there may be no clear winner, adding to the woes of a country struggling to recover from an economic crisis while it grapples with rising militant violence in a deeply polarised political environment.

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'Independents' were allowed to race to protect democracy

Hasina tells extended meet of AL

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that her decision to allow party members to run as independents in the recently held national election was necessary to protect democracy.

"If the election was not open to all [AL members], then not only would the election have come under question, but the country's democracy would have been stolen too. And Bangladesh's target of achieving the status of a developing country would have been foiled," she said.

The premier made the remark while delivering her introductory speech at an extended meeting of the Awami League at her official residence, Gono Bhaban.

Around 3,500 AL leaders attended the programme, reports UNB. They included members of the central working committee; leaders of the advisory council and national council; leaders of metropolitan, district, upazila, and municipality units; party and independent lawmakers; city and municipality mayors; chairmen of district and upazila councils; presidents and general secretaries of front organisations.

The meeting began at 10:30am with AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

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Family in fear after suing teen for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A ninth grade schoolboy was arrested yesterday in a case filed over the rape of a seventh grade schoolgirl in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila.

The accused was subsequently sent to a detention centre via a court order.

Meanwhile, the girl was sent to a hospital for medical attention.

Her father filed the case with Galachipa Police Station yesterday, three days after the accused allegedly raped his daughter on Wednesday afternoon.

He said the accused's family threatened him before he filed the case and now that he had, he was afraid that his family might be in danger.

Galachipa Police Station Officer in Charge of Ferdous Alam Khan said police are taking necessary legal action in this regard.

Both the accused and the girl are students at Galachipa Government Technical

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Black smoke being emitted from a brick kiln in Beel Pabla area of Khulna's Dumuria upazila yesterday. Many such kilns are in operation there, while locals have long been complaining of health complications, including eye-burning and respiratory issues. The effects of black smoke are dangerous and can result in death in severe cases.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

SAGAR RUNI MURDER 12 years of frustration

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Justice remains a far cry for the families of slain journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Runi 12 years on.

Despite the court repeatedly setting dates for the investigation officer to submit the probe report in the sensational double-murder case, each instance ends in disappointment as the officer fails to meet the deadline.

This frustrating cycle has been going on for the last 12 years, with the investigators seeking a staggering 107 time extensions to submit the probe report.

The victims' families expressed their frustration, citing it as 12 years of failure on the part of the Rapid Action Battalion.

Last week, Law Minister Anisul Huq told the parliament that it is not possible to give a timeframe for the completion of the investigation into the murder of the journalist couple.

Earlier on February 2, Huq said that if the investigation needs 50 years to find the killers of Sagar-Runi, then so be it.

Sagar, who was the news editor at Maasranga Television, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

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