



## DEATHS IN UNPROTECTED CTG DRAINS Who is next?

**Works for installing slabs on open drains and building retaining walls by the canals are ongoing. Almost 80 percent of 'risky spots' on drains have been covered with slabs already, while 70 percent of the retaining walls along risky canals have been built.**

CCC chief engineer  
RAFIQUL ISLAM

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Chattogram*

In 2021, it was 10-year-old Kamal Uddin, 19-year-old Sheherin Mahmud Sadia, and 55-year-old vegetable vendor Saleh Ahmed.

Roll back to April 9, 2017, and the story repeats. Then it was three-year-old Ojaifa and retired government officer Shilbrata Barua. Last year it was an 18-month-old toddler named Yasin.

The common denominator? They are all victims of the port city's open drain. Since 2017, at least eight lives have been claimed by Chattogram's unprotected drains. Many have remained missing after falling into these drains...never to be found again. Their families haven't even received the grim closure of a confirmed death, as they simply vanished into the city's neglected waterways.

Ahmed, a vegetable trader, had met a tragic end in August 2021, this correspondent found the canal was still unprotected and posing a risk for similar accidents to occur yet again as the monsoon looms near.

Huge drains on both sides of the road from Muradpur to Bahaddarhat have been left open and unprotected for over a year, with pedestrians forced to walk on the footpaths amid risk.

"The road and drains get submerged under water during the monsoon. As a result, pedestrians find it difficult to find their feet on the roads beneath the water, and fall into the drains accidentally," said Habib Ullah, a resident of Mohammadpur area.

The risk will only increase manifold amid waterlogging on the road during the monsoon.

A similar situation prevails on the road from Muradpur to Sholoshahar,

When contacted last year, officials of the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) and Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) said they would take steps to cover up the open drains. However, no steps have been taken in a year.

### WHAT THE AUTHORITIES SAY

According to CCC sources, the port city has a total of 57 canals stretching across 161km alongside 765km of drains.

A CCC survey in 2021 found 5,527 spots in drains, canals and footpaths in the city that posed risk to pedestrians, across a total of 19 sq km area. After the survey, however, the works on ensuring safety at the risky spots have been lackluster so far, said the sources.

"Works for installing slabs on open drains and building retaining walls



These aren't just numbers on a page; they are the children of Chattogram — sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers.

Despite these repeated tragedies, many drains and canals are still unfenced and unprotected — death traps waiting for their next victim. Many say that the City Corporation and Chattogram Development Authority have failed to protect human lives under their watch.

Visiting the canal at Muradpur intersection in the city, where Saleh

another main thoroughfare of the port city. There is a wide drain on one side of the road and Chashma canal on the other side, both lying uncovered and unprotected. Several accidents and casualties took place in this canal previously.

"It is risky walking on the footpath beside an open canal even in the dry season. I urge the concerned authorities to erect a wall by the canal before the monsoon," said Ismail Hossain Siraji, an employee at Power Grid Company.

by the canals are ongoing. Almost 80 percent of 'risky spots' on drains have been covered with slabs already, while 70 percent of the retaining walls along risky canals have been built," said CCC Chief Engineer Rafiqul Islam.

"The CDA has been working on the canal and drains on Muradpur-Sholoshahar road under a mega project to address waterlogging and it is the CDA's responsibility to protect the canal and drains there," the official added.

Contacted, project director of the

CDA mega project Lt Col Ferdous Ahmed said installation of slabs on drains and building retaining walls by the canals were not included in the project.

"However, we are building retaining walls along many canals on humanitarian grounds," he said.

"After completion of the project, we will hand over the canals and drains to CCC for maintenance, and they may install slabs on drains and build retaining walls by canals later," he added.

### REMEMBERING SOME INCIDENTS

"I thank God for letting me at least see my son's body for the last time," Ali Kawsar told journalists when the fire service personnel recovered the body of 10-year-old Kamal Uddin.

The body was recovered from Mirza Khal in the Muradpur area of Chattogram, around 68 hours after he fell into a drain.

**Despite these repeated tragedies, many drains and canals are still unfenced and unprotected — death traps waiting for their next victim. Many have said the City Corporation and Chattogram Development Authority have failed to protect human lives under their watch.**

This happened in December, 2021. Located at Sholashahar Railway Station area under Panchlaih Police Station, this was the same drain where 55-year-old vegetable vendor Saleh Ahmed had fallen on August 2021.

However, his family was not as lucky as Ali Kawsar, who at least found the body of his baby boy.

A seven-day rescue operation by Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence divers failed to locate the remains of Saleh.

On July 3, 2017, retired government officer Shilbrata Barua fell into an open drain while on his way to attend a wedding in Bakalia.

On June 9, 2018, a child named Al Amin fell into the drain in Amin Jute Mill area.

On June 30, 2021, three people went missing after an auto-rickshaw fell into a canal in Chashma Hill area of Sholashahar. Two bodies were later recovered.

In September 2021, Sheherin Mahmud Sadia, 19, died after falling into a drain in the city's Agrabad intersection.

On April 15, 2022, fire service divers rescued a woman from the Osmania canal in Kalurghat area.

After 17 hours of searching, the body of an 18-month-old toddler named Yasin was found in a roadside drain in Chattogram's Agrabad on August 2023.

Yasin's family said he may have fallen into the open drain, which was invisible due to waterlogging on the road.