



The loss of lives and civic hardships continue despite a Tk 8,626.62 crore mega project by the Chattogram Development Authority, which is currently underway, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. This photo was taken recently in Ambagan Shaheed Lane area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



People cross this makeshift pathway, set up as part of ongoing works, in Chawkbazar Phooltala area. This temporary pathway not only makes it difficult for vehicles to cross, but also poses a risk to people as they can fall into the canal at anytime.

PHOTO: ARUN BIKASH DEY

TK 14,389CR PROJECTS TO MITIGATE WATERLOGGING

# Deadline extends, cost goes up but suffering lingers on



**“We cannot move across the makeshift path on vehicles. We have to leave vehicles on one end, walk the pathway on foot, then take another vehicle on the other end.”**

TAPOS NANDI, a resident of Phooltala area

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Every year, Chattogram sinks following rain, which washes away the tall claims of monsoon preparedness by the city corporation and Chattogram Development Authority.

It was no different last year. The port city witnessed hours of waterlogging throughout the monsoon, resulting in low-lying areas, including but not limited to Chawkbazar, Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholashahar Gate No-2, Badurtola, Bakalia DC Road, KB Aman Ali Road, Agrabad, Halishahar, Chandgaon, Katalganj, Shulakbahar, and Dewan Bazar, being submerged under knee-to-waist deep water.

Ironically, the mayor's residence, “Mayor Bhaban”, in the Bahaddarhat area, was not spared.

The ordeal is often not limited to “mere” suffering, it also takes lives. Nipa Palit, 22, a second-year BBS student at Hathazari Government College, died after drowning in waterlogged streets while going to college last year.

Also, falling into open drains and either vanishing permanently or being discovered as a deceased body after some time (if fortunate) remains a recurring concern in the port city, with the previous year being no different.

And the loss of lives and civic hardships continue amid a Tk 8,626.62 crore mega project by the Chattogram Development

Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. one bank, while work to construct it on the other side has not yet begun. Also, excavation materials and equipment were seen kept on the canal's bank.

With monsoon almost knocking at the door, the CDA's workers have just started working on this canal, which they should have done just after last monsoon, said Fazlur Rahman, a resident of Badurtala Jangi Shah Majar Lane area.

“Also, they are still working on constructing the retaining walls. We don't understand why they are not beginning the excavation work yet,” he added.

As part of the ongoing work, the culvert over Chaktai Khal in Chawkbazar Phooltala area has been dismantled to build a new one. A makeshift pathway has been made over the canal, making it difficult and risky for people and vehicles crossing it.

Tapos Nandi, a resident of Phooltala area, said, “We cannot move across the makeshift path on vehicles. We have to leave vehicles on one end, walk the pathway on foot, then take another vehicle on the other end.”

A similar situation exists in the case of Mirza Khal. Workers have been observed constructing retaining walls on both sides of the canal, but excavation work has yet to start in many sections.

Earth was seen piled up in the canal while excavation materials were



Chaktai khal in Badurtala area.

PHOTO: ARUN BIKASH DEY

According to sources, dams have been made in different canals to build retaining walls. Locals are concerned that the dams will only obstruct the free flow of rainwater and add more waterlogging woes.

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TWICE**

The project, initially worth Tk 5,617 crore -- started in 2018. Although works were scheduled to be completed by June 2020, the project was later re-evaluated twice, with the deadline extended till June 2026.

The project aims to remove a total of 9.50 lakh cubic metres of mud and silt from 36 canals in the port city and construct 85.68 km of roads, 48 PC girder bridges, six culverts, six tidal regulators, and 42 silt traps on the important canals. It will also expand side drains to 15.50 km and construct 10.77 km of new drains and 200 cross-drain culverts.

According to project officials, 65 percent of the project has so far been completed.

Dr Muhammad Rashidul Hasan, professor of Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, said, “It is true that land acquisition for such a mega project is a very complicated task in our country. However, the project officials should have considered an alternative strategy to lessen the sufferings of people in the coming monsoon.”

Contacted, CDA chief engineer Hasan Bin Shams, however, claimed that the extent to which the project has progressed so far would considerably curtail waterlogging.

“Of the six newly constructed regulators on different canals, five will be opened before monsoon to regulate tidal water. Also, if the excavation works of the six major canals in the city could be completed before monsoon begins, the waterlogging problem will be solved to a great extent during the coming monsoon,” he said.

Lt Col Ferdous Ahmed, director of

the mega project, said the excavation works of Chaktai, Mirza, Mahesh, Birza, Bakalia, and Hizra canals were supposed to be completed by mid-April but it could not be possible due to various reasons.

“However, we are trying to complete the work before monsoon begins,” he added.

When questioned about the dams in the canals, he clarified that they have been constructed to create retaining walls, ensuring a passage for rainwater flow.

“We aim to free up nearly 95 percent of the dams before the onset of the monsoon,” he added.

**ONGOING PROJECTS**

- » CDA Tk 11,406.01 crore (2 projects)
- » CCC Tk 1,362 crore (1 project)
- » WDB Tk 1,620.73 crore (1 project)
- » Total: Tk 14,388.74 crore

Regarding the culvert on Chaktai Khal in the Phooltala area, he mentioned that its completion would require seven to eight months. Additionally, an alternative route has been established for people to cross the canal.

**PROGRESS OF OTHER PROJECTS** Meanwhile, CDA has also been implementing another Tk 2,779.39 crore project since June 2017 -- to construct a 9.5 km road and dam between Kalurgaht Bridge area and Chaktai canal near the bank of Karnaphuli river.

The project, scheduled to be completed by June 2024, has so far seen only 65 percent progress, said project officials.

“Apart from constructing dams on the bank of Karnaphuli river as

well as Chaktai and Razakhali canals, a total of 12 sluice gates and pump houses would be installed to regulate tidal water,” said Hasan Bin Shams.

“So far, we have installed 10 sluice gates, but are yet to install the pump houses in six canals, which is expected to be completed by May,” he also said.

The deadline of the project has also been extended till June 2025, the CDA chief engineer added.

Also, Bangladesh Water Development Board has been implementing a Tk 1,620.73 crore project since 2019 to set up 13 tidal regulators in Karnaphuli and 10 in Halda rivers.

The regulators will be set up where canals connect to the rivers, with a pump house to regulate the flow of water.

Only 29.95 percent of the project has been completed so far.

Contacted, Shawkat Ibn-e Saheed, executive engineer of BWDB in Chattogram, said, “Of the 23 tidal regulators, works for four have been completed and works for seven are going on.”

“Although initiated in 2019, the project work actually began in August 2021. The deadline would have to be extended from June 2024 to June 2028.”

Moreover, the Chattogram City Corporation has been working on a Tk 1,362 crore project since 2014 to dig a new canal from Bahaddarhat Baroipara to Karnaphuli river.

The project expired in June 2017 before being extended to June 2024.

However, only 50 percent of the project work has been completed so far, including 80 percent of land acquisitions, said Forhadul Alam, director of the project.

“We have got 21 acres of land from Chattogram District Administration out of the 25 acres of land required for the project. Works are ongoing to dig the canal on the acquired lands,” he added.



Heavy rain lasting over an hour on May 6 this year left the entire Prabartak Mor area of Chattogram city waterlogged.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging.

Visiting Chaktai Khal, a vital canal in the city located between Chawkbazar Phooltala and Badurtala Jangi Shah Majar Lane areas, this correspondent recently observed a significant portion of the canal was yet to be excavated, as the portion was visibly filled up due to siltation. A retaining wall has been built on

kept on the bank in the Mirzarpool area.

“I don't understand why the CDA has started excavation of the canals just before monsoon,” said Abdul Halim, a local of Mirzarpool area.

“The earth that has piled up in the canal would hinder the flow of water after rains and consequently cause the area to become inundated,” he added.