

## ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

# Filling up part of Hatirjheel raises waterlogging risk

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

If you're wondering whether Dhaka's waterlogging woes have worsened recently, you're not alone. Many residents share your concerns – and for good reason. Over the past 17 months, more than 10 acres of Hatirjheel Lake, behind the Sonargaon hotel, have been filled with sand as part of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project, further straining the capital's already inadequate drainage system and heightening the risk of severe waterlogging.

Authorities claim the filling was necessary to construct 41 pillars for the expressway, but environmentalists and locals warn that this could exacerbate the city's flooding issues.

Despite warnings from experts, the Prime Minister's Office granted permission in April last year to fill parts of Hatirjheel.

According to Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan (2016-35), finalised in 2022, no water bodies in the metropolitan region should be filled. Environmentalists argue that the sand-filling operation violates the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010.

Yet, Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha and the Department of Environment, which were supposed to safeguard water bodies, remained largely silent on the issue.

Contacted, sources within these two government bodies said they could not say anything against the decision as it directly came from the then premier's office.



Large pillars and scaffolding rise from what was once a part of Hatirjheel. Over 10 acres of the waterbody has been filled with sand as part of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway. Cranes, excavators, and now temporary offices occupy the site. The place has been cordoned off with barricades. Authorities claim the filling was necessary to construct 41 pillars for the expressway, but environmentalists warn this could exacerbate the city's waterlogging woes. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



### DELAYS DUE TO FINANCIAL, LEGAL DISPUTES

Nobody could say when the lake will be restored or how long would a portion remain filled with sand.

Misbahil Mokar Rabin, project coordinator of the First Dhaka Elevated Expressway Company Limited, acknowledged that the project has faced delays due to financial and legal disputes among stakeholders, causing work to stall for over eight months.

"Progress has been minimal because of these delays. If work resumes fully, the Hatirjheel section could be completed within eight months," Rabin said.

"Since the lake is very narrow along the expressway route, we had no choice but to fill part of it to complete the construction," he added.

### EXPERTS WORRIED

Professor Mujibur Rahman, former BUET professor and a member of the feasibility study team for the Hatirjheel restoration project, called the sand-filling operation dangerous.

"This canal, designated as a floodplain in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan, is essential for water retention," he said. "Filling it with sand disrupts the lake's natural water flow and reduces its capacity to absorb excess rainwater, especially during the monsoon."

He warned this could increase waterlogging in localities like Dilu Road, Karwan Bazar, Banglamotor, Moghbazar, and Tejgaon.

The sand-filling also threatens Hatirjheel's biodiversity by damaging aquatic plants, fish habitats, and bird nesting areas, he added.

Locals are already feeling the impact.

Kamal Hossain, a resident of Dilu Road, Didar Uddin of Tejgaon and Azharul Islam of Moghbazar said waterlogging has worsened since the lake was filled.

At least a dozen others echoed them.

### URGENT INTERVENTION NEEDED

Adil Mohammed Khan, professor at Jahangirnagar

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# Dengue deaths CROSS 200

## Third highest yearly figure; experts stress early hospitalisation

HELEMUL ALAM

With two more dengue deaths reported yesterday, the total number of fatalities from the disease this year has risen to 201, making it the third-highest death toll since the outbreak in 2000.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, 1,705 dengue deaths occurred in 2023, marking the highest annual death toll to date. In comparison, there were 281 deaths in 2022 and 179 in 2019.

The total number of recorded dengue cases this year has reached 40,895 as of yesterday.

Experts attribute the high mortality rate this year to factors including late hospitalisation, quick onset of shock syndrome, inaccurate test results, and recurrent dengue infections.

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said, "Many patients are going into shock right after their fever subsides, which is very alarming."

Dr Ahsan further noted the large number of patients presenting with shock syndrome, bleeding, and expanded dengue syndrome, which has contributed to the rising death toll. He urged all to stay vigilant and seek medical attention at the

first sign of warning symptoms, as early intervention can significantly reduce the risk of death.

Shock syndrome in dengue patients can be classified into two categories: compensated shock and decompensated shock. In compensated shock, a patient's blood pressure may appear normal or slightly low, but with a dangerously narrow pulse pressure (less than 20). Decompensated shock, however, is more

women, infants, and people with comorbidities, are more susceptible to fatal outcomes.

Dr Ahsan advised that severe stomach pain, difficulty breathing, extreme weakness, bleeding from the gums or nose, and vomiting should be treated as signs for immediate hospitalisation. "Failure to hospitalise patients showing these warning signs can result in shock syndrome," he added.

While patients in compensated shock can recover with prompt treatment, those in decompensated shock face a survival rate of only 50 percent.

Dr Ahsan said in many cases, faulty test kits produce false results, causing patients to seek hospital care only when their condition has already worsened. He recommended consulting a doctor immediately after developing a fever and performing a Complete Blood Count (CBC) test on the third or fourth day of fever, even if the NSI test for dengue is negative.

Public health expert Mushtaq Hussain emphasised the need for changes in treatment strategies to reduce the mortality rate. He suggested the government divide

YEAR	DEATHS
2024 till Oct 11	201
2023	1,705
2022	281
2019	179



severe, involving symptoms such as disorientation, cold and clammy skin, unrecordable blood pressure and pulse, and an inability to urinate.

"Patients experiencing decompensated shock can die within minutes," Dr Nazmul said.

He also highlighted that high-risk groups, including the elderly, obese individuals, pregnant

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## DEEPTO TV STAFF MURDER BNP leader found involved: police 5 arrestees remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



A central leader of the BNP and a deputy director of the Narcotics Control Department are found involved in the murder of a broadcast engineer at Deepto TV, police said yesterday.

Tanjeel Jahan Tamim, 32, was allegedly beaten to death on Thursday by several staff members of Pleasant Properties Ltd, a property developer, along with hired thugs, following a dispute over the handover of apartments in the Mahanagar Project in Rampura.

"In primary probe, we have found the involvement of Shaikh Rabiul Alam Robi and Mohammad Mamun behind the murder," said Deputy Commissioner of police Ruhul Kabir Khan. Robi is an executive committee member of BNP and Mamun a deputy director at the DNC, according to police.

"We are focusing on crime, not political identity. Charges will be filed against anyone found guilty," said the deputy commissioner.

So far, five individuals have been arrested in connection with the murder. They have been placed on four-day remand each. The detainees are Abdul Latif, 46; Qurban Ali, 24; Mahin, 18; Mozammel Haque Kabir, 52; and Bandhan, 20.

Tamim's father, Sultan Ahmed, filed a case naming 16 individuals, including Robi, who is also the managing director of Pleasant Properties.

According to the case statement, the company constructed a building on Sultan's land under a contract promising five flats in return. However, after receiving only two flats, a dispute arose between Sultan and Rabiul that escalated over three years.

On Thursday, associates of the company reportedly entered Sultan's home and attacked Tamim, who later died from his injuries at Monowara Hospital.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



The fish markets in Barishal have been flooded with hilsa fries, locally known as "jatka". Even though catching these fries was declared illegal by the government, fishermen have allegedly been using nets of small mesh size to catch jatkas. The photo was taken in the city's Port Road bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

# Hilsa fries flood Barishal markets

## 22-day ban on fishing begins Oct 13

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The fish markets in southern districts of the country have become flooded with hilsa fries, locally known as "jatka", that are less than 10 inches in length, ahead of the 22-day ban on catching and selling hilsa.

Meanwhile, only a day is left before the ban is enforced from October 13.

Fishermen said only jatkas were caught in their nets as the large hilsas are still not found in the rivers.

The fisheries department, however, alleged that the fishermen have been using gill nets and other nets of small mesh size to catch jatkas, and as such, more than 90 percent of their catch comprises of these hilsa fries.

Catching hilsa fries was declared illegal by the government previously.

Officials of the department said even though they continued drives, the fishermen could not be deterred from catching jatkas.

Barishal division produced more than 65 percent of the total 5,72,342 tonnes of hilsa produced in the country in 2022-23 fiscal year.

Visiting different wholesale fish markets across Barishal division, including Port Road fish market in Barishal, as well as Alipur and Mohipur markets in Kuakata, Khaya-ghat and Ilisha-ghat in Bhola, among others, this correspondent observed that jatkas have flooded the markets as those are caught in huge quantities.

"People are buying 5-6 jatkas in 1 kilogramme for Tk 500-600. As such, the demand is also high. At present, if 100 maunds of hilsa comes to the market, 90 maunds of it will be hilsa fries," said Kabir Hossain, a hilsa trader at Port Road fish landing centre in Barishal city.

"Due to inclement weather recently, we could not go to the sea for fishing. The Meghna only has jatkas, hardly any large hilsa now. So, we only managed to catch jatkas this time," said Mohammad Ali, a fisherman of Hijla upazila.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7