

Desperate disposal means



WASA is only able to adequately handle one fourth of the city's sewerage. The primitive system (above and left) is based on a plan that was designed for Dhaka 40 years ago.



CITY CORRESPONDENT

More than ten million city dwellers are believed to be using alternative means for liquid waste disposal, as there is no systematic arrangement for the purpose.

Around 80 percent of Dhaka's population have remained out of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA)'s sewerage network since the early 60s. WASA only has the capacity to provide service to one fourth of the city's total area.

With little or no disposal option available, developers and land-owners across the city have connected the sewerage lines of their buildings, houses and apartments to anything from sewerage drains to storm sewerage and surface drains. To compound the complication, even solid waste is being dumped through these lines.

In parts of old Dhaka like Gandaria, Hatkhola, Lalbag, Banglabazar and even in some sections of posh areas like Uttara, Gulshan and Banani, there are no sewerage lines.

"Residents of those places usually dispose off the sewage beside roads or manholes. This is totally illegal but they don't have any other option," said an official of WASA requesting anonymity.

People who live in Dhanmondi, Motijheel and Mohakhali, have reasonable sewerage connectivity. But these areas too are starting to feel the pressure.

"The sewerage system here is on the verge of collapse," warned another WASA official.

"We still maintain the plan designed for Dhaka 40 years ago. It can't possibly meet the present need as the population is ever increasing," said Kamrul Ahsan, a caretaker engineer of WASA.

WASA at present has only one sewerage treatment plant and 23 lagoons and more than 45 thousands connections to maintain the total sewerage system of Dhaka.

"People don't know how to use sewerage lines. They dump solid waste and hard sewage and because of that, the flow of sewerage lines is disturbed. Storm sewerage lines are also used in a very wrong way," added Ahsan.

Now, WASA is drawing up an ambitious plan to combat the crisis.

"We have suggested a master plan for the whole of Dhaka which could cost Tk 2090 crore. The project could be implemented in phases by the year 2020," said Kazi Md. Sheesh, the chief engineer of Dhaka WASA.

"We hope to set up a new treatment plant and necessary lines for the areas in the north east of the city by 2005 spending around Tk 58 crore. Besides, repair work of the treatment plant at Pagla and construction of two other treatment plants and necessary sewerage lines would be completed between 2006 to 2020 at a cost of Tk 1440 crore," said Sheesh.

"We have already talked to the relevant authority in the government. The budget will probably be provided by the Asian Development Bank, Japan and China," Sheesh said.



Street children find pleasure in education provided by Oporajeo Bangladesh, at Osmani Udyan.

Educating street children on life

SHIMU RANI DAS

Child squatters of the Osmani Udyan are no longer deprived of education. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) came forward to rescue them from the clutches of illiteracy.

They spend three hours a day in study and learning lessons based on worksheets provided by Oporajeo-Bangladesh, the NGO.

They had nothing to do before the launch of the mass education programme in the Osmani Udyan that has now become home to 35 to 40 street children.

Abu Sattar and Tariqul Islam are the teachers from Oporajeo-

Bangladesh, working with the children from 9.00am to 12.00 noon every day.

The NGO has been involved in mass education for the last three years. It supplies worksheets and government textbooks as well to the children, who learn Bangla, maths and drawing.

"We teach the children according to their capability. Our lessons plan ranges from the beginners' level to class two. Our aim is to rehabilitate them. We are just trying to help them to be conscious of life," said Sattar.

"I can write my name and count numbers. I have learnt some rhymes by heart too," said Jashim, a student.

Their study time is one and a

half hours a day and as much time for recreation. "During break, we play," he added. The teacher usually gives lessons on health after break.

Fatema, another street child, said, "We learn the alphabet, poems and rhymes. I am happy with all that...I am no longer illiterate...I want to learn more."

After primary education, the students are sent to the main centre of Oporajeo-Bangladesh in Mohammadpur. "The centre gives them vocational training according to their capability," said Tariqul.

"Many more are joining us. I hope they would complete the lessons successfully," he said.

Recycling literary treasures

BISWAJIT DAS

The sidewalk bookshops at Nilkhet have become an integral part of the city's education and literary vibes.

There's hardly a book-lover or a student who hasn't visited this market filled with small shabby bookstores near the busy intersection.

These shops serve the need of all sectors of the society. People from across the country throng the area to buy or sell books. Arguably, the Nilkhet book-market is the largest recycling centre of books in Bangladesh.

What kind of stuff is available there? Well, what isn't?

It covers texts and notes for all classes, fictions and non-fictions of every writer of the globe, magazines of varied types and the list goes on. The popularity of this place stems from the price of books. You can get them at half or less of the original rate mainly because most books are second-hand ones. Readers can also return a book after finishing it and get back 80% of the buying price.

Despite the regular visit by customers, booksellers still struggle to make a decent living.

"We can barely pass the month with the money we make

here," said Md. Hamid, a shopkeeper at Nilkhet. "Usually I earn Tk. 50 or 100 a day and if luck smiles, then it can shoot to Tk 500."

Monir admits that even if the return is inadequate, it is still an enjoyable job.

"I have followed my father into this business as I enjoy dealing with books. The most fun part, I think, is the opportunity to know a variety of educated people."

"I have met some great personalities through this profession. I would never have had that chance if I wasn't here."

Md. Shahadat, father of Monir adds: "This profession becomes an obsession. I had many opportunities to go into something else but just couldn't."

The sources of books at Nilkhet are as varied as its customers.

"Getting books was easier before. I used to import Russian books from Chittagong. But after the fall of communism, that supply stopped," informed Kawsar, a bookseller. "Now, people come up with old books to sell after they have read them. Some even come with books stolen from libraries."

Customers however, are least bothered about where the books or notes came from as long as they were available.

"I got hundreds of important

and interesting books from Nilkhet I never expected to find there," said Rana, a university student.

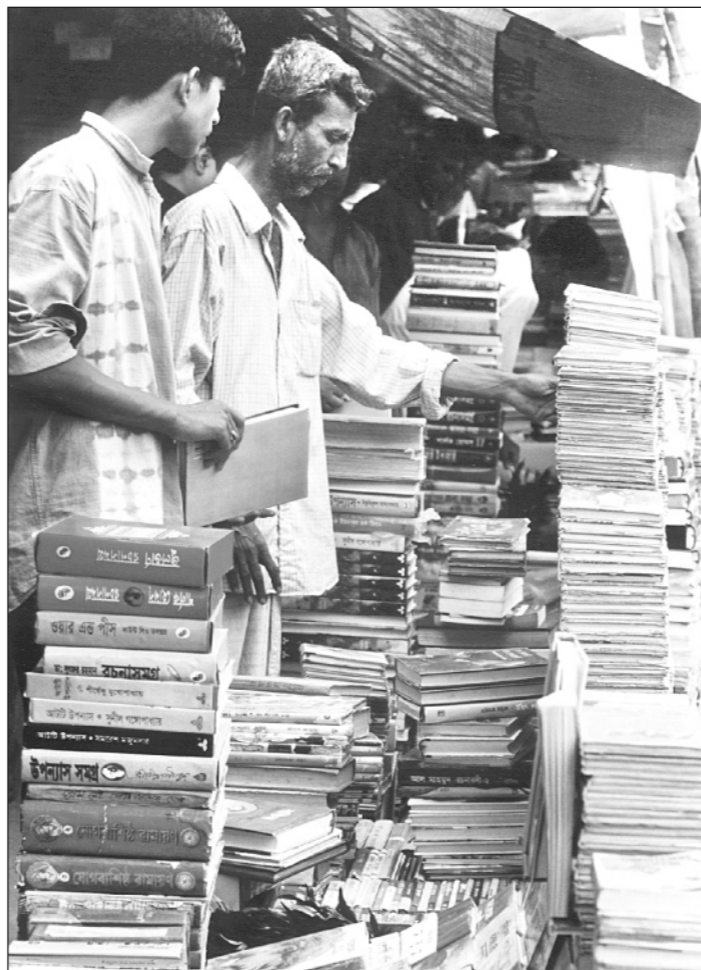
Another student Palash expressed his gratitude: "Had it not been for Nilkhet, I am not sure whether I could have continue my studies."

Not every reader comes for texts and notes. There is a huge demand for daily newspapers and novels too.

The market is not above controversy. There are allegations that pornographic books, magazines and CDs are sold here, even to school-going children. Pirated books are also available.

Some 48 shops have encroached parts of the pavement. These were built nearly 20 years ago and have remained there illegally.

"We used to sit in front of the new market in the beginning. When the police started regular raids to evict us, we had to find a permanent spot. There have been some serious confrontations with students of nearby colleges and local hoodlums too over the years and the odd fire incident. But we have managed to keep our place unaffected because of the moral backing of the general students whom we serve most," says Abdul Haque, an elderly shopkeeper.



Nilkhet's footpaths are a source of wealth for avid readers.

State sponsored torture rising

The intensity of state sponsored torture has increased across the globe in the name of fighting terrorism

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion meeting last Thursday, June 26, urged the governments across the world to stop tortures sponsored by individuals and states and establish human rights in their respective countries.

Speakers also alleged that after September 11, 2001, the intensity of state sponsored torture has increased in the name of fighting terrorism.

Speakers stressed the formation of Independent Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh at the earliest.

On the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victim, Odhakar and Global Network for the Prevention of Torture (GNPT) jointly organised the meeting.

Addressing the meeting as chief guest, Justice of the Supreme Court J R Muddassir Husain said that the judiciary system of a country can play a bigger role to help prevent the victims of torture. "This is now the cry of the day to form Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh because the children at present are the greatest victim of many heinous acts. The tortures perpetrated against the victims are seriously destroying the social equilibrium," said J R Muddassir Husain.

"When a torture takes place the victim along with their family members suffer both physically and mentally. This is really frustrating," said J R Muddassir Husain.

Narrating the bitter experiences after post 9/11 scenario in the USA, a teacher of Philadelphia in the USA Dr Dina Siddiqui said, "During these days, I had to think of the definition of torture twice. Till date, the Muslims of American had to suffer from 'Islamophobia'. Each and every Muslim suffers both mentally and physically. The immigrants from sub-continent suffered a lot."

Dina Siddiqui said, "I didn't have to face any torture of the Americans because I am not a stereotype Muslim lady. That's why I get away with it. But the 'women of cover' American President George W Bush and his wife Lora Bush dubbed the Muslim women have suffered most," said

Tipu Sultan, a journalist and victim of torture, moderated the session. Sharing his experience about the torture Tipu Sultan said, "My feeling is that torture is taking the entire humanity towards the dark days of the medieval era. Torture has no character and its consequences are the same in each and every country."

Fazlu Sattar, Co-ordinator of GNPT, Human Right activists Shaheen Ara and Masood Alam Ragib Ahsan of Adhikar also spoke on the occasion.

essential numbers, cabs & train timing

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563999
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9522666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service- 9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975

Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222
Solphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

SPECIAL NOTICE

The admission fee for Bangladesh National Museum will be raised from Tk2 to Tk5 per person from July 1st 2003. The admission fee was last fixed at Tk2 eleven

UTILITY

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

Museum and Zoo

National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 6 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday Closed
Sonargoan Jadughar
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday Closed
Dhaka Zoo- 9002954, 9002020
Open: 9am 5 pm, Sunday Closed

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477, 0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611
Capital 9352847

Union 8130485
Kool 0171826731
Black Cab
Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364575
Sajan 018126036
Anudip - 8125285 and 8127611
Cab One 7113282-3

Palki 0171052500
Cab I 7113282
Jatri 0171540074
Nipun 9572277
R-Cab 8914782
Star Cab 9571919
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675
KG N 8620011

RAIN TIMING

Subarna Express
Mahanagar Prabhati
Mahanagar Godhuli
Turna
Parabat Express
Joyantika Express
Upaban Express
Tista Express
Ekata Express
Upakul Express
Padma Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am
Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am
Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am
Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 9:11 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am
Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:55
Reaches Noakhali at 1:35 pm
Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm