



A child makes a dangerous leap over an untreated sewerage outlet.

Sewerage project brings hope back to 36 villages

Dhaka WASA is making a deal with Japan for installing a sewerage line to divert industrial wastes from Tejgaon to Pagla

SULTANA RAHMAN

About half a million people and thousands of acres of land of 36 villages in the city's periphery would be relieved of extreme pollution as Dhaka WASA is about to sign a deal with Japan for funds to divert industrial wastes from Tejgaon to Pagla, sources said.

For years, huge volumes of extremely toxic wastes from the Tejgaon industrial area have polluted agricultural lands and the rivers Devdholai at Trimohoni, Balu and Sitalakhya through Dhaka WASA's Begunbari khal.

For years inhabitants of Lionhati, Nasirabad, Dasherbandi and other 33 villages have witnessed silently how their rivers, canals and agricultural lands were polluted due to the indiscriminate dumping of industrial wastes.

Japan has agreed in principle to provide the required fund of about Tk 200 crore, half of it in grant and the rest in Debt Relief Grant (DRG) to build a sewerage line that would divert the wastes to Pagla treatment plant. The project for improvement of sewerage system in Dhaka city phase-1 will cover nearly ten kilometers from Tejgaon to Pagla. On Tuesday, in a meeting the representatives of Japan and Bangladesh signed an MOU.

The Economic Relations Department (ERD) of the Finance Ministry is negotiating with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to obtain the funds.

Sources said JICA representatives emphasised on installing the sewerage trunk line on an emergency basis. Due to absence of sewerage network in the city, the WASA is unable to drain enough wastes to the Pagla Sewerage Treatment Plant (PSTP). Sources said due to lack of proper sewerage network the PSTP is only receiving 45 percent of wastes, which it is capable of recycling.

The project will bring hope to a wide range of professional communities in the area along the polluted rivers. The water of the rivers has become so thick with the wastes that it is now totally devoid of any aquatic life. Only few years ago the lands along these rivers were 'very fertile'. Fishermen communities have long become extinct from the villages. Thousands of farmers who used the river water for irrigation are now faced with unemployment.

Thousands of men, women and children have been urging the WASA to do something for diverting the WASA sewerage lines from the rivers. The Japan-WASA initiative would definitely bring back smiles of the population the areas.

Stop slum eviction, provide education and healthcare

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Children and adolescents living in slum areas of the city have urged the authorities to stop slum evictions and to provide safe shelters for all evicted people.

The children gathered from different slums of the city to speak at a press conference organised by the Bangladesh Slum Dwellers Association yesterday.

The youngsters explained their daily living conditions which include a total lack of consideration by the police during their many attacks on slum areas. Children are attacked and subjected to abusive language. Police also ransack the make-

shift shelters of bamboo and polythene that serve as their simple homes. "We heard from our parents that the government introduced a new law to stop slum eviction but we have seen no evidence of its implementation," said Mitu living in Karal slum.

The children complained that the government brings large sums of money from abroad in the name of improving their plight although nothing ever seems to change. The government also proclaims its commitment to stopping child labour. However, they expressed their frustration mentioning that child labour is inevitable for them. They can not stop working since they need to bring in as much income for their

family as possible.

The youthful participants also mentioned that some of them managed to go to school overcoming many obstacles only to find their makeshift schools destroyed during one of the many slum clearances. They asked for assistance from the government and civil society to maintain the two schools established by the Bangladesh Slum Dwellers Association in order to continue their education.

There are no playgrounds or other facilities for their recreation, the children complained. They are even deprived of proper health care when ill, they said.

"We, the slum children can not enter the programmes in the city where beautifully adorned chil-

dren from privileged class sing and dance. They talk about child rights in those programmes as the government does. But we do not understand heavy words like 'Child rights', 'Education for all' or 'Food for education'. What we realise is that we lack food, housing, school facilities and playgrounds," said Jewel who resided in the recently evicted Agargaon slum.

Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Chief Advisor of the Bangladesh Slum Dwellers Association and Samad Azad, Advisor, Slum Dwellers Association and General Secretary of Gono Azadi League were present at the occasion. Slum leaders from different locations also contributed.



Slum children especially suffer from many environmental problems.

Building confidence

MONJUR MAHMUD

The cost for constructing better earthquake resistant buildings is not prohibitively high rather it is a 'negligible' consideration relative to the total budget.

People have to spend an additional amount of approximately Tk five lakh for constructing a Tk one crore building, experts said.

"If people spend roughly three

to five per cent more in design and construction materials, it is possible to improve the resistance of a building significantly," said Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice chancellor of the BRAC University.

If this code is followed, the building may be damaged in a moderate or severe earthquake but it will not collapse, he observed.

Among the most vulnerable structures are four to five storey

buildings supported on unreinforced brick masonry walls (unusually with 250 mm thickness), he said mentioning these are gradually replacing the traditional low-rise structures that have a much better performance in surviving earthquakes.

The Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC93) includes recommendations for providing horizontal and vertical reinforcement in brick masonry buildings. "Incorporation of

these details in the brick masonry buildings require a very small increase in cost and would improve the performance significantly in case of earthquakes."

In most cases people spend more on the finishing and decoration but they do not consider the safety aspect seriously, said S M Kamaluddin, chairman of Concord Group of Companies. "I think it is not a financial problem. Rather, most people are not aware of the seismic risk in the country."

Citing an example, he said if the structural cost of a building is Tk 350 per square feet, a person will have to spend an additional amount of Tk 25 per square feet to make the building more earthquake resistant. "If the increase is compared with the total budget for a building including finishing and decoration, I think the cost is negligible."

A composite index Earthquake Disaster Risk Index (EDRI) developed at Stanford University under the guidance of Professor Hareesh Shah was used to compare the relative seismic disaster risks in 20 cities from different parts of the world. Of these 20 cities, Dhaka appeared to have one of the highest values of EDRI due mainly to its vulnerability and poor emergency response and recovery capabilities.



Many of Dhaka's buildings do not conform to the standards set to withstand earthquakes.

Meeting the mosquito menace

SOHEL ISLAM

The Dhaka City Corporation's decision to privatise mosquito control is set to linger by another month as the evaluation committee was unable to complete examining tender documents, said sources at the DCC.

The former chief health officer of the DCC, Mohammed Asraf Uddin, had told Star City in July that the process of privatising mosquito control would be complete by the first week of September.

The sources said the committee has already examined the technical proposals of the bidders and would start evaluating the financial aspects of the tender soon.

"We hope we will get ready by September-end for submitting the documents to the top officials for the final decision," said a member of the evaluation committee requesting anonymity.

"There is no possibility of awarding the contract of mosquito control to private operators until October," said the member.

Clarity Ecotech, a joint venture of Bangladesh and USA, Diligent Services Limited (a joint venture of Bangladesh and India) and Safeway Pest Control (a consortium of three Bangladeshi companies) have bidden for the tender.

The DCC invited the tender on April 15 this year, aimed at hand-

ling the mosquito control over to the private operators.

Clarity Ecotech submitted a proposal of Tk 7.5 crore for a one-year expenditure for mosquito control in the city. Clarity Mosquito Control of the USA will be working with Clarity Ecotech in Dhaka if it is awarded the contract.

Sufi Iqbal, proprietor of Clarity Ecotech, said that private companies lack practical experience of controlling mosquito in Bangladesh, so it is tagging up with the American company.

Diligent estimated a budget of Tk 12.5 crore for mosquito eradication programme in its proposal for a year.

"Our company has a fair amount of experience of controlling mosquitoes in two municipalities of West Bengal in India -- Holdia and Howra. Besides, our Indian experts have been working in a number of wards of Kolkata," said BA Shamim, in-charge of Vector Control Programme of Diligent Services Limited.

"We have experience of controlling mosquitoes both outdoors and indoors," claimed BA Shamim.

Safeway Pest Control proposed Tk 13.73 budget in its tender documents.

The owner of Safeway Pest Control, Dr Monjur Ahmad Chowdhury, claimed that his

company worked extensively in vector control across the country.

"We also have a group of entomologists and experts working for the company," Dr Chowdhury, also an entomologist, said.

Having failed to control mosquitoes in the city on a budget of more than Tk 12 crore, the DCC has decided to hand over the entire programme to private firms.



Stagnant water provides a perfect breeding ground for mosquitos.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"This government will real-ise tax but will not offer security to the people"

-- Sheikh Hasina
President of Awami League, Opposition Leader
speaking at a meeting at Shahid Hadis Park organised to commemorate and protest the murder of Adv. Monjurul Imam. Published in Bhorer Kagoj, August 27.



"What I do not say gets reported and that is why I am scared of the press"

-- Shahidul Haq
Inspector Ggeneral of police
Speaking to a group of journalists at CMP headquarter. Published in New Age, August 28.



"Land grabbing has become a movement. This could be identified with Bangla proverb - wherever you will find ashes look for wealth beneath it"

-- Obaid-UI-Huq
Eminent Journalist
Speaking, in an occasion of the fifth anniversary of Kalabagan Barta at Muktijuddho Museum, on the Kalabagan Barta's success in convincing local people to leave land for road on the August 29. Source: Star City

"Whatever is praiseworthy will have to be shut down this has become the principle of the politicians."

-- Mamunur Rashid
Playwright and actor
Speaking at a discussion protesting one-year of closure of Ekushey Television on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo.

"A number of ministers visited our house a long time ago. Afterwards they didn't even bother to enquire about abduction of my father. Would you please tell us about the real status of my father?"

-- Titu
Younger son of abducted businessman of Chittagong Jamaluddin
Talking to a reporter of Janakantha over telephone on Friday. Source: Janakantha

"It is beneficiary for the poor if there are more elections like this one. Because whenever there is an election, the poor section of the population gets evaluated."

-- Abdus Salam
A rickshaw-puller at Amarpur, Savar, at Municipal Election. Source: Prothom Alo