

Dhaka under Deluge

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As almost half of Dhaka stands drowned by the ever swelling flood water the sufferings of the city dwellers, are dire straits specially the eastern parts of Dhaka Gopibagh, Basabo, Madartek, Mugda Kamalapur, Badda, Manda, Fakirapool, Paltan, Motijheel; the older parts like Sadarghat, Kaltabazar, Banglabazar, posh areas like Gulshan, Baridhara are among in the worst-hit areas.

Flood water gushing into Dhaka through different entry points are growing thick with wastes and taking the shade of black, as it advances deep inside the city. The terrible smell emanating from the rotten flood water turns the air heavy making breathing an excruciating task. Cars and scooters have long stopped to poke their noses into these streets. Rickshaws have gone obsolete, people now travel by vans sitting shoulder to shoulder with their legs hanging loosely as the van inches forward through water. The areas where the water level is higher, newly-built boats have come into use; but the boatman and passengers -- both unaccustomed to travelling by boat -- are making boat journey potentially dangerous as they move along tilting to one side now and the other side the next moment.

Accidents are taking place now and then. Often boats are being turned upside down resulting in the forced bath of the passengers. More serious incidents are also happening. In the last two weeks 3 teenagers have met tragic death when the boat they were travelling by sank.

As far as travelling is concerned, office goers are among the worst affected. Arif Ahsan, a resident of Gopibagh who works at the main branch of Marcantile Bank in Motijheel, cannot hide his bitterness as he narrates his plight. "These days I am starting for office half an hour before than I used to do before the flood, as I have to often wait for 10 to 15 minutes to get hold of an empty rickshaw. Sometimes, when I don't have time to wait, I am forced to fold my pants just above my knees and pack my shoes in a bag. The trouble is greater when I return home. Since the rickshaw puller cannot see the terrible condition of a particular road as it remains under water, the danger of the rickshaw taking a dive into a hole or one of its wheels slipping into the road-side drain causing injury to the passenger is greater," Ahsan explains.

Things are still worse with women. Farzana Karim, a young Lecturer at a private university in Dhamandi, has stopped going to university for a couple of days because



As WASA's pledge to provide drinking water to all flood victims go unmet, the search for alternative sources remains a major concern for many.