

of flood. Well, there are rickshaws, but if you want to escape from the black, foul-smelling and poisonous water you need to sit *aaraari* or sideways along the seat as a man can do," Karima points out.

There are other troubles too. 50-plus Bashiruddin who owns a four-storied building in Fakirapul, is worried about his reserve tank. "I have built a brick fence sur-

rounding the reserve tank to keep flood water from seeping into the tank. I don't know how long it will work," he says.

People living in the flood hit areas are living a prisoners' life. Nurzahan Begum, a resident of Paltan, is extremely bored staying indoors for days on end. "I used to do the everyday shopping, but now I am forced to send the boy servant. I am also not going out for morning walks," she says.

While flood affects all and sundry, the sufferings of the poor people living in the different slums are many times greater in comparison with the middle-class people, who at least haven't had to leave their homes. Since the flood hit the city a couple of weeks back, these people have started to take shelter in different government owned schools, colleges and other buildings. The back side of Birsreshtha Sepahi Mohammad Mostafa Stadium in Kamalapur is one such shelter. It is now home to several thousand homeless people. Its large and spacious space on the 1st and 2nd floor has been divided into a good number of small makeshift

homes, each occupied by a family. Each of the homes has its boundary, the numerous *potla-putli* (small belongings in pouches) people have brought with them when they abandoned their homes have been arranged in the shape of a rectangle. Ropes tied like as done in wrestling stages are also used to mark one's area distinctly. Amid all sorts of household articles -- from plates to stove and *badna* to meatsafe scattered all over the place -- lies a space exclusively devoted for arranging beds. Beds are prepared of folded sacks and a folded *katha* as the pillow. Half-clad and half-fed children are everywhere -- walking around aimlessly and playing with the new found pals. Somehow they don't look like as if they are in any troubles.

But in reality life is hard, harder than what appears in the open eyes. Acute crisis of drinking water is invariably the first thing the inhabitants would speak of. "We have to buy drinking water 1 taka per *kalshi* from the nearby mosque," says Hosne Ara who is living here with her four minor children since her home in Maniknagar went under water last week. Farid Ali, a 40-plus construction worker who is enjoying a forced leave as the site he was working at has been swamped by flood water, also complains of the

drinking water crisis.

"An emergency water supply car from WASA came here yesterday for just once in the whole week. The tank emptied long before many of us staying on the 1st and 2nd floor reached there. Besides, it is impossible for women to collect water forcing her way through men who raise war to get water."

The absence of any proper toilet arrangement is also adding misery to the plight of these destitute people. Children can be seen attending nature's call in the adjoining open places, helping germs to spread all around, not to mention the terrible smell in the air. Many of them are already down with diarrhoea, while skin disease is spreading fast.

Unfortunately there has been no help of any sort from anywhere. "We are living with half of our stomach filled. Women are forced to go to far away places for attending toilets. We also need enough drinking water. Will you help us," 60 year-old Sahera Begum asks expectantly. We should all extend our helping hands to these suffering souls.

