

# Businesses suffer as DCC repairs drains

IMRUL HASAN

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) have started digging and repairing roads in Sutrapur, Gandaria, Loharpool, and Postogola areas.

Construction materials have blocked the Dhaka-Narayanganj road, lanes and by-lanes in those areas and shopkeepers have complained that their businesses have been hit.

"Not too many people come to the shops these days. At present, I am selling half of what I used to sell. Besides, goods cannot be brought up to my store as rickshaws can not come. We have been compelled to shut down our shops for almost half the day," said Mokbul Alam, a rice seller.

"Nowadays, we sell only around ten bags of cement a day whereas this number was 80 to 100 bags before. We cannot even bring the cement bag carrying trucks near the shop," said Mohammad Rashid, who owns a cement store.

WASA and DCC are working to widen and increase the depth of the drains in old Dhaka before the upcoming rainy season. The road from Gandaria via Loharpool to Postogola has remained closed for the last 15 days for this reason. Other important routes in the most densely populated part of the city like the Satish Sarker Road, the road from Faridabad to Postogola and some lanes and bi-lanes have also been dug up and vehicular movement has stopped.

Some local residents and businessmen recently called a meeting under the banner of 'Old City Public Welfare Committee' on May 6 and demanded that the roads from Gandaria to Loharpool and Millbarrack to Postogola be reopened within the next 15 days. They also asked the concerned agencies to complete the digging work as soon as possible.

"We are hoping that the drainage work will be completed by this month. These roads go under water during every rainy season. That is why we have launched this work in advance. We are sorry for the temporary suffering of the locals," said a WASA official.

"These days, the entire area resembles a village in the evening with all the shops closed," said Insan, a Postogola resident.



STAR PHOTO

Damp earth lies on as Shitish Sarkar road in Gandaria being dug up for drainage improvement.

# 'Pipes on sidewalks instead of underground laying can ease chaos'-- Dr K M Maniruzzaman

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

*"Instead of digging the roads to lay utility lines underground, provision could have been made on the sidewalks. A specific gap could have been kept on the footpath where human movement was possible so that technicians could go in and work inside. Those gaps could have been covered with stone slabs. Technically, it is still possible to do something like that but it will be very expensive".*

Below is an excerpt of expert opinion from Dr K M Maniruzzaman (KMM), Associate Professor and Head of Department, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

**Star City (SC):** How can the present situation of inconvenience created by road digging be minimised?

**KMM:** First of all there has to be a regulatory body that will govern this random digging of roads. Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) can very well do this. A central meeting with all the chiefs of the utility organisations like DESA, T&T, TITAS and WASA can sit together and plan one specific time when their work will be done.



Synchronisation of different department's work has to be introduced.

Although these departments gets funding at different times, that too could be worked out so that work can be adjusted accordingly.

These organisations do not properly plan their tasks meaning that they do not chalk out a way in which the work can be expedited, perhaps by using appropriate equipment. For example as labour cost is still cheap manual ditch diggers are used which take up a lot of time whereas mechanical tools can cut down the time required. Machinery specified to cut road surfaces could be used.

Once synchronised and the pace of work increases, the

organisations need to attend to debris management. The dirt and rubble should be moved immediately to clear the roads. DCC has to play a part again. The governing body has to make sure that the dirt is removed. Proper monitoring at those points can decrease inconvenience on roads.

**SC:** Are there any alternatives to road digging?

**KMM:** Instead of digging the roads to lay utility lines, provision could have made on the sidewalks. A specific gap could have been kept on the footpath where human movement was possible so that technician could go in and work inside. Those gaps in the shape of boxes could have been covered with stone slabs. Technically, it is still possible to do something like that but it will be very expensive.

**SC:** What policy do you think Government adopt to start this sidewalk project?

**KMM:** Whenever a new road will be built, it can be constructed with the sidewalk provision. The road can be designed in a way that on a specific road, cables need not travel underground. And if such sidewalks are to be developed on the present roads, a total new infrastructure has to be made and will cost much.

**SC:** Is there any country that uses this sidewalk system?

**KMM:** I am not sure about any country but it surely is in the textbooks. The books propose such options when road digging is frequently done for utility line arrangements.

**SC:** Do you think our Government is willing to develop systems to avoid such road-digging hazards?

**KMM:** The higher authority seems negligent about the problem. The DCC is supposed to do so many things but nothing effective could be seen so far. Proper co-ordination and supervision is immediately needed.

**SC:** Then what do we lack? Expertise or funding?

**KMM:** Actually we do not lack any of the above. We are just lacking 'honest commitments' and 'lack of co-ordination'.

**SC:** Do Urban planners in Government offices have optimum training?

**KMM:** Most of them have proper training. The ones, who lack, can be trained at BUET, Dhaka University or Jahangir Nagar University's Urban and Regional Planning departments. Our Government offices lack number of trained planners.

Beijing has around 1,000 planners for their city whereas with around the same size, Dhaka has hardly 10 planners in the Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkhya (RAJUK). We need more trained individuals.

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