

UTTARA SEWAGE SYSTEM

Solution yet to be found

TAWFIQUE ALI

Concerned government agencies point fingers at each other on who should save the Uttara Lake from being a waste dumping ground and develop the sewer system in the area, despite public and media outcry since December.

Release of wastewater, sewage and effluents into the Uttara Lake through scores of surface water drains is fast killing the natural water body.

Two and a half months into the demonstrations demanding action to save the dying Uttara Lake by the residents, neither has Rajuk, nor Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) or Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) come up with any plan yet.

"We paid Rajuk for infrastructure development at the time of plot allotment. But the release of solid waste and sewage water from surface drains is destroying the natural lake with its flora and fauna," said Kazi Khurshiduzzaman Utpal, a resident of sector 13.

Save Uttara Lake movement Convenor AY Md. Kamal said that Utpal and he save the Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) minister Abdul Mannan Bhuyian recently with a video clipping on the lake's deplorable state and sought redress to the issue of it being a dumping ground.

Kamal said the minister's observation was that Rajuk as the developer has to save the lake. "Rajuk has to developed the infrastructure as it already taken money from allottees, after which Wasa could install the sewer system," Kamal quoted the minister.

"Rajuk has turned a deaf ear to the residents' concern for provision for sewage discharge and surface water," said Utpal, who made the video clipping.

"It is the basic duty of Wasa and DCC to install sewer and drainage systems," said Rajuk chief engineer Emdadul Islam, adding that Rajuk is not solely responsible for such a job.

"Rajuk, however, is responsible for saving the lake from encroachment by building walkways," he said, adding that the planning ministry has not yet approved any of the project proposals for land requisition and construction of walkway along Uttara and Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara lakes.

Rajuk has made provision to

Release of wastewater, sewage and effluents into the Uttara Lake through scores of surface water drains is fast killing the natural water body. Two and a half months into the demonstrations demanding action to save the dying Uttara Lake by the residents, neither has Rajuk, nor Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) or Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) come up with any plan yet



STAR FILE PHOTO

install sewer and drainage systems along the wide roads of Uttara, Islam said.

He also held residents responsible for dumping solid waste into the lake and for linking domestic waste water lines with the surface water drainage system.

"Rajuk's faulted in not initially making provision for proper sewer and drainage systems in the Uttara Model Town plan," said a top official of the public works ministry requesting anonymity.

"We plan to divert surface water drains running into the lake and develop a sewer system with the help of Wasa. The project will be very big and costly," said the secretary to the ministry.

Local MP Mohammed Quamrul

Islam said he would take the matter up with the minister and mayor and find a solution to the problem.

When asked how the surface water and sewage could be diverted, he said: "Some system has to be developed."

The lake water is now discoloured and stinks and turned poisonous with discharge of domestic and industrial effluents, sediments released from under-construction buildings and liquid oozing of sewage matters.

The 5-kilometre long lake begins from Dalipara near Zia International Airport and flows through sectors 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13, stretching to Diabari, Chandalbagh and Bailjhuri villages under Harirampur union.

The water body, Baonia Bil had once been flowing through Baonia, Bailjhuri and Harirampur areas along the river Turag.

Uttara residents held a public demonstration on December 25 demanding development and beautification of the lake and prevention of sedimentation to save its aquatic system.

They want a water carrier sewer system in the area to dilute human excreta and other sewage, treat it at a safer place and throw the harmless waste residue into the nearby river Turag.

Coaching centres need monitoring

SHARMIN MEHRIBAN

Raisa (not her real name) currently has a secured job in a bank but she still recollects her experience at a coaching centre that could have almost ruined her future.

After moving to a number of so-called English medium schools, she had enrolled herself at a coaching centre as a private A-level candidate, somehow getting through the O-levels.

The teacher in charge of that coaching had actually studied in the UK and was 'smart, intelligent and knowledgeable.' "He frequently took mock tests and encouraged me saying I was on the right track," she said.

But after that she failed one A-level subject despite diligence and hard work she realised that he was a fraud.

She reappeared for the same exam a few months later entirely and on her own managed to obtain a pass grade that enabled her to enrol at a local university.

Not everyone shares bitter experiences like Raisa but lack of proper legislation and monitoring of coaching centres around the city are exposing students to vulnerability of being cheated.

Centres that offer coaching in 'O' and 'A' level subjects in the past, have now shifted more towards offering International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and spoken English in addition to coaching for admission tests to local universities.

A reason why most coaching centres offer IELTS is because present generation students prefer to study in Canada and Australia rather than the US.

"I am doing this course because I want to go to Australia," said a student at Mentors, a coaching centre with branches around the city. Fees range from Tk 2,000 a month to a full payment of Tk 26,100.

"IELTS holds the English language proficiency requirement internationally and is recognised for higher education and migration to UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand," said a course instructor at Mentors.

Mentors offers coaching for admission tests to a number of private universities in the city including Dhaka University's Institute of Business Administration.

For many students, qualifications of teachers available at a coaching centre are adequate criterion for determining its quality, but for someone like Raisa, there is a different perspective.

"The teacher in my case was

apparently qualified but must have deliberately led me on the wrong track by overlooking my flaws perhaps expecting that I would return to him for private tuitions after having failed," she said. "But I didn't," she added.

Acme, offers coaching for courses taught at Open University, Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate, has a number of academically qualified teachers from Tejgaon College and Jagannath University.

When asked if such teachers had adequate time to pay attention to students at the centre

An official of the education ministry said that no separate registration is required for opening a coaching centre and there is no monitoring as such

after working elsewhere, an office assistant said "yes".

"Open University is for students who are either too old or underprivileged. As the number of classes held at the university is inadequate, we help them through coaching and even by selling notes by mail," said the assistant. "Some students at this coaching centre are as old as 50," he added.

Fees range between Tk 3,500 and Tk 4,500 that could be paid in three instalments, while notes are sold between Tk 500 and Tk 700. Classes are held under candlelight during load shedding as the charger has been stolen.

Coaching centres like One Language Club offers greater flexibility in recruiting teachers and charging fees. The centre offers IELTS, BCS, spoken



STAR PHOTO

Number of coaching centres in the city has increased dramatically in recent times.

English and computer courses. "We charge students according to their financial background," said Md. Habibul Alam, its managing director.

Fees range from Tk 5,000 to Tk 8,000 for weekly or monthly courses. The teachers are paid between Tk 100 and Tk 300 per class and recruited according to the number of students.

"We call a teacher after a student enrolls," he said.

This correspondent found a lone IELTS student who had enrolled three days back in a classroom dimly lit by a charger. "I was told that there were many teachers but so far I have seen only one," she said.

Responding to a question, officials of the coaching centres said they started to operate on a Trade Licence from the Dhaka City Corporation.

They also admitted that neither the education ministry nor any other government organisation monitor their activities.

"Many people working in the ministries are themselves illiterate. What would they know by monitoring our activities," said Alam.

When contacted, an official of the education ministry said that no separate registration is required for opening a coaching centre and there is no monitoring as such.

When asked about the possibility of coaching centres cheating students, he said that students should avoid such centres that could be identified by their teaching standards.