

# Work on city's drainage systems to start soon

Government agrees to accept WB requirement for funding

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The government will finally accept World Bank's (WB) rehabilitation policy to restore drainage and sewerage systems under a master plan to work out a permanent solution to the city's water logging problem, sources said.

To adjust with WB requirement, the government has to make an adjustment, as the existing law does not provide scope to address the requirement to resettle evicted illegal occupants with compensation.

"Once the government approves WB's Resettlement Policy Framework, we will get the WB funding for the master plan and reclaim the city canals currently in the hands of land grabbers," said acting Managing Director of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) Hedaytullah Al-Mamun.

"We have meanwhile reached an understanding with World Bank, as we need funds for the project," he said. "The matter is now at the ministry for final scrutiny and agreement," he added.

Resettlement Policy Framework, an integral principle of the WB, makes rehabilitation of any evicted or displaced people from a settlement mandatory as per WB shareholder's policy, said a source.

"We fought much against the WB policy, as the existing acquisition law does not provide for resettlement of illegal occupants with compensation," said Mamun.

"But we have to make an adjustment to incorporate the WB requirement, in the same manner requirements were accommo-

dated in other projects like Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge, to get funds to implement the project, likely to cost Tk 1,200 crore," he added.

Sources said the government is likely to approve the WB policy in a few days.

In some projects, the government forms a partnership and usually bears 10 percent of the cost, but this is yet to be decided.

Compensation for rehabilitation of those evicted from the canal areas will require approximately Tk 3 crore, said Wasa's acting MD.

The master plan targets 17 out of canals 43, for the project. The programme will evict illegal occupation, excavate, line edges and build walkways as demarcation to restore original their natural drainage capacity.

All 43 canals the city had cannot be reclaimed because of permanent encroachment.

"We will undertake an integrated and extensive drive by next July for a permanent solution to the problem of canal encroachment," the Wasa Managing Director Dr Kazi Ali Azam had said earlier.

A survey will be conducted on the city's drainage, sewerage and water supply systems to draw up a master plan, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will fund for the plan on the city's water supply system, he said.

The proposed master plan will address the total drainage, sewerage and water supply systems.

Wasa's eviction drive first began on March 29, 2005 and reclaimed Kantasur, Mohakhali and Gulshan-Banani, Ramchandrapur, Begunbari canals



The recent downpour clogged up many roads in the capital causing much inconvenience to the people.

and Kalyanpur branch canal.

The drive was expected to resume last December but was postponed in the face of World Bank's precondition for rehabilitation of the evicted people. Wasa sources said compliance with the WB precondition would encourage the encroachers to move out.

Though it was scheduled to resume on April 12, the drive could not proceed, as a solution to WB's precondition had not yet

been met.

A sub-committee of the canal reclamation expert committee at a meeting on August 26, 2004 at the Wasa Bhaban, decided to rehabilitate the genuine poor and homeless in these areas.

The decision was endorsed at the subsequent interministerial meeting chaired by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

A list of the genuine homeless

must be prepared with caution so that no one can take undue advantage of the programme, said Prof. Nazrul Islam, a committee member.

According to findings of the expert committee formed by LGRD ministry last year, land grabbers who include influential politicians, local goons, real estate developers, filling stations and various organisations, have occupied around 2.41 lakhs square feet of 13 canals

and four distri-butaries in the city.

Encroachment of the city canals has exposed its dwellers to a recurrent suffering of rain-water-logging every year.

The canals heavily encroached are Segunbagichha, Mohakhali, Shahjahanpur, Begunbari, Jirani, Kalyanpur, Ramchandrapur, Khilgaon-Bashabo, Abdullahpur and Ibrahimpur.

## Rise in price puts brakes on gold sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21 other professions deserting their age-old profession," said Md. Sohrab Hossain, vice-president, BJS.

A visit to Baitul Mukarram and New Market Jewellery Markets recently found very few customers at the shops.

"Sales of gold ornaments generally reaches its peak during winter when engagements or weddings take place," said an official of Amin Jewellers at Baitul Mukarram Jewellery Market.

"Our main customers are the middle income group. But sales dropped drastically during summer," he said.

"Customers now visit us mostly to sell their gold ornaments, instead of buying new ones," said an official of Apan Jewellers at New Market.

But BJS's president said that the demand for gold has increased even with the price hike, as ordinary people now prefer to stock gold with the hope of reaping better profits later on.

The crux of the matter is that the flow of customers has reduced all round the city.

"I came to buy a ring for my friend, but I don't have much of a choice as the prices are beyond my buying capacity," said Sumaiya Jahan from Mouchak.

"As a child, I always saw my mother and aunts wear only gold ornaments. When the gold price rose to Tk 20 a bhoori in 1955, they said that nobody would buy gold," recalls Fatema Akhtar, a 62-year-old housewife in Mohammadpur. "But the present price is beyond our imagination," she added.

Like Fatema, most people from the middle-income group find it impossible to purchase gold these days.

On the other hand, panic has gripped jewellers in the wake of an alarming rise in the incidents of burglary at jewellery shops in the capital, especially after the recent burglaries at Patuatuli and Shantinagar.

No proper investigations into these incidents have heightened their fear. Under these circumstances, the BJS has decided to launch a movement. They have already held a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unit over the issue last Thursday.

They will decide on the next course of action if the government fails to take proper initiatives within 48 hours to dig into the 19 previous burglary incidents.

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