

PARALYSED METROPOLIS

A chilling reminder for retention ponds



A guardian carries a schoolboy home negotiating waist-deep water on the Mirpur Road and Road 27 intersection at around noon yesterday.

MORSHED ALI KHAN

With the monsoon showering the city with 103 mm of rain in just six hours' time from 6am yesterday, the city dwellers once again knew they did not have a drainage system working.

Submerged city roads sent a chilling reminder about how important it is to preserve the remaining flood flow zones, which, thanks to our political governments, have mostly been plundered.

Lack of proper drainage and water retention ponds put the Dhaka commuters and its managers to one of the hardest tests ever yesterday, the first working day of the week. The entire city was virtually waterlogged.

Vehicles, especially CNG-auto-rickshaws, stalling in knee-deep water in their hundreds made the scenario even more chaotic.

Fewer policemen who were still manning some important intersections were seen helplessly trying to control traffic bare foot with their trousers folded up to their knees. On-duty policemen and ansar personnel looked on as in many areas rickshaw pullers defied the existing bans on their movements and directly rode into the mayhem.

Scores of day labourers stood by the city roads at the waterlogged areas trying to make some quick bucks pushing stalled vehicles in the water. And busy they were almost throughout the day.

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The worst traffic snarl occurred in the early hours in areas dotted with private English medium schools. Dhamondi's recently introduced one-way system partially collapsed as policemen and ansar personnel deserted their posts in the face of torrential rain.

Most English medium schools are now holding their annual exams and parents had no option other than sending their children to school. According to parents they would never venture out in such weather if there were no final exams.

From 7:30 am hundreds of cars started moving into Dhamondi. By 8am the entire area was a traffic choc-a-bloc. Drenched in pouring rain, trapped children and parents got down from their vehicles just to negotiate knee-deep water and wade towards the school.

Hundreds of cars, rickshaws, CNG three-wheelers, ambulances, motorcycles did not move for hours with helpless passengers trapped inside. On many main roads throughout the city waist-deep water stopped all vehicular traffic. Rickshaws, with sheer muscle power, replaced the vehicular traffic in these areas.

Officials of the Wasa's drainage circle had the toughest time tackling severe water-logging at the Bangladesh Secretariat, the nerve centre of the government's administration. The Secretariat area has become most vulnerable to waterlogging following the start of the Osmani Udyan project by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Faced with vulnerability to frequent water-logging due to lack of drainage in the Secretariat area, the Wasa engineers installed an underground drain connecting the Secretariat with the pond inside the Osmani Udyan. According to Wasa sources the drain line was snapped as soon as DCC started developing Osmani Udyan. Yesterday, it took the Wasa officials more than five hours to clear the water-logging at the Secretariat.

Beware of thunderbolts!

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka dwellers are extremely vulnerable to electrocution through thunderbolts due to lack of awareness and flimsy preventive measures against such natural calamities.

Prattayan Sarkar, an O-level student from Maple Leaf International School was busy with his computer at his Dhamondi house while a thunderstorm swept the city Thursday night. After a deafening sound of lightning hitting a nearby spot, Sarkar found his computer go numb. He desperately tried to restore the power and fumbled with the cables only to get stunned with a jolt of electricity. After Sarkar's father took him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the doctors declared him dead.

Like Prattayan, people lose their lives while properties are damaged due to the absence of preventive measures against thunderbolts. Majority of these incidents go unnoticed and disregarded while public awareness on this issue remains a

fact. Many of these incidents occur in the city.

"Although thunderbolt causes damage to both lives and properties, it remains one of the most underrated issues," said Professor Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of the Department of Physics, Jahangirnagar University.

"We should know why lightning occurs and what the preventive measures are," he added.

Pedestrians commuting in the open during thunderstorms are more vulnerable to thunderbolts than anyone else, said Dr Chowdhury.

"A thunderbolt carries an amount of around 250 kilo ampere electricity and can kill any living being upon impact, therefore commuters should be extra cautious during thunderstorms. They should stay away from high-rise buildings and especially trees as they tend to channel the electricity from the thunderbolts," said Dr Chowdhury.

"Also people should not use cellular phones during thunderstorms as the phone's radioactive frequency may attract lightning," he added.

According to Dr Sekandar Dara Shamshuddin, professor of the Department of Geography and

Environment of Jahangirnagar University, the best solution to thwart the perils of such thunderbolts would be to take adequate preventive measures.

"May to July is the most lightning-prone period, followed by April. Therefore this is the time of the year when people should be extra cautious," he said.

Dr Shamshuddin explains that there are two different kinds of preventive measures that can be taken to ensure safety against thunderbolt related accidents. The external measures include installing fully-fledged earthing facilities in the building, which would include a metallic feeler on the rooftops connected with a wire that would go at least 60 feet beyond the ground level.

"The earthing equipment would channel the static electricity safely to the bottom of the ground, ensuring safety to the building," said Dr Shamshuddin.

"This measure would not only guarantee protection from thunderbolts, they would reduce odds of other electrical hazards as well," said Dr Shamshuddin.

The other measures include taking last minute precautions like

switching off electrical equipment and unplugging other peripherals to avoid any electrical hazards.

"If the bolt strikes any kind of wire such as electricity, cable TV or even telephone cables, the impact would traumatise any equipment connected to it. This collision may not only damage the equipment, it may electrocute anyone in contact with it," he added.

According to electrical engineers, the Building Code 1993 instructs to have earthing facilities in each house. Based on the layout of the place, multiple feeder or antennas would be required to draw the electricity and ensure safety.

"An antenna tends to cover a specific range of area based on its weight. An average antenna would cover around a radius of 10 square meters of space," said Syed Eskandar, an electrical engineer.

"The cost of the antenna depends on its weight and each pound usually costs around Tk 70 to 80. And the total cost for the whole earthing system would depend on the height of the building," said Eskandar.

KHOKA'S CORNER



A part of the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Paribagh subsided during the heavy monsoon downpour yesterday. The north-south thoroughfare is one of the busiest in the city.



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Badaam Tali Ghat (Ferry Point) was founded by Nawab Shajesta Khan during his regime between 1664 and 1677. Historians think there were some Badam (pea-nut) trees which the area was named after. There was also a wooden palace near the area that belonged to Nawab himself. However, the Nawab very often lived in a tent put up in the palace premises. The tent was then known as Katra Pakurtali.

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city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We are being tested every day"



Farkhruddin Ahmed
Chief Adviser
Told European Union-Troika delegation at his office, on Saturday.
Source: The Daily Star

"The donation and assistance that we receive from our well-wishers should not be treated as extortion"

Sheikh Hasina
Awami League Chief
Told party leaders at her Sudha Sadan residence, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

"I myself at a discussion last year termed the budget of my predecessor ambitious, and so I was careful so that this year's does not become an ambitious one"

AM Mirza Azizul Islam
Finance Adviser
Said at a post-budget press conference in the city, on Sunday.
Source: The Daily Star

"My party and I never got involved in any kind of politics of monetary transaction"

HM Ershad
Jatiya Party Chairman
Said in a statement, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"The pressure of population is like the pressure of water. If pressure increases at one place the effect is felt all over"

Brig (Rtd) Shahed Anam
Defence and strategic editor, The Daily Star
Said at a discussion, on Monday. Source: Prothom Alo

"I am not worried about the size of the proposed budget. I have concerns over its proper implementation"

Akbar Ali Khan
Former adviser
Told reporters, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias

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