

WATER LOGGING

Inadequate drainage system clogged by rubbish



DCC workers yesterday trying to clean a drain at Karwan Bazar that got clogged with nearby kitchen market rubbish.

A section of irresponsible city dwellers cause sudden water logging by dumping anything from old mattresses, pillows, construction site wastes and all sorts of rubbish in the city's drainage system

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Water logging problem in the city is set to deteriorate with the existing drainage system getting clogged by rubbish dumped by a section of careless city dwellers, WASA and DCC sources said.

Officials of the WASA drainage circle said that at places in the drainage system during the on-going monsoon they found mattresses, pillows, piles of concrete rubbish, old shoes and range of other items clogging the drains and at places suddenly creating a localised water logging.

"With canals and flood flow zones under severe encroachments, we are now faced with this nonsense everywhere in the city," said an official of WASA requesting customary anonymity.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), which maintains a vast network of surface drains are also faced with similar problems everywhere in the city. During the recent rains DCC officials said that they discovered a new problem with new areas suddenly water logged.

"As soon as our teams of workers learnt about the new areas we rushed there to find the local drains clogged with all sorts of rubbish," said a DCC official.

Near the kitchen markets water logging problem remains at its worst, both DCC and WASA officials pointed out.

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become water logged," said a DCC official. "If the public do not cooperate it is impossible to maintain flow in the drainage system," he added.

The municipality act prescribes a mild penalty for obstructing flow of anything from a drain to natural canals. According to officials it is virtually

impossible to apprehend an offender. They said in most cases offenders choose the darkness of the night to dump such heavy wastes into the drains.

"With our manpower it is impossible to post guards everywhere to try to apprehend offenders, we have to help grow awareness among general mass," said the WASA official.

A DCC official said that unscrupulous DCC drivers of the conservancy department are also found dumping rubbish anywhere they liked to save fuel on the vehicle for making extra bucks by selling it.

The existing drainage system is already inadequate for drainage of such a big volume of water at a time. Moreover if these existing lines are clogged with human carelessness, we have to think of doing something immediately about it, officials said.

Dhaka WASA maintains a total network of 150 kilometers of storm sewerage while they said that they need another 100 kilometers of network to manage the city's water logging problem.

The DCC on its turn maintains thousands of kilometers of surface drains in the lanes and by-lanes of the city.

"Nowadays water logging is not happening at a place, the problem is popping up from different parts of the city because people are dumping rubbish everyday into the system," said an official of the DCC.



A covered foot over bridge that resembles a tunnel on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

Foot over-bridge or dark tunnel?

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

ally turned the over-bridge into a tunnel since there is no light.

DESA or DESCO authorities have refused to give permission to use electricity on these over-bridges apparently to save power, which makes the bridges even more risky for pedestrians during the night, especially for women.

According to contract, the companies are paying Tk 100 per sq feet to DCC. If they can obtain permission for electricity they will have to pay to Tk 150. These companies are responsible for the maintenance of the over-bridge and providing safety to the pedestrians by employing security guards.

However, in the future the city corporation will invite tenders to lease out the over-bridges to companies.

There are 28 foot over-bridges in Dhaka city, of which 17 are steel-made and 11 are made of concrete. These bridges are 22 feet high so that double-decker buses can pass.

However, foot over-bridges are not very popular among the pedestrians of Dhaka city. Instead of climbing up the 22 feet high bridges for safety, most people tend to take the risk by crossing the thoroughfares. Overhead sheds have made them even more adverse and unwelcoming to the pedestrians.

The firms who already got allotment are now building colourful roofs made of plastic or steel and decorating the over-bridges according to their own design.

However, the way some of these companies have put up the roof, has turned the passage dark, making it potential safe havens for criminals and vagabonds.

On the Mouchak foot over-bridge, the authorities had to deploy policemen to stand guard during peak hours to ensure security of people.

Advertisement signs have virtu-

FOLLOW-UP

DCC acted illegally to hand over Motijheel Park

TAWFIQUE ALI

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) had no legal authority to hand over the Motijheel Park to Dhaka Bank, which recently chopped down all the trees in the park as an excuse for 'beautification and development'.

"DCC does not have the legal right over the land because they did not receive it from PWD [Public Works Department] formally," said Moniruzzaman, executive officer of PWD Division 1, adding, DCC cannot hand over the park to any organisation unless it has the legal authority to do so.

A top DCC official requesting anonymity echoed the PWD officer's comment and said PWD, the official custodian of the park, did not hand over to the DCC yet.

"It is a big question now under what authority DCC prepared the formal agreement and handed over the park to Dhaka Bank," he added.

Kamruzzaman Chowdhury, chief estate officer of DCC, said the park is not listed in the records of estate department, "but I have to find out if there's any record [of it]."

After the DCC took possession of the site, PWD in February sent a notice to DCC and asked it to explain why DCC should be able to claim ownership of the land and start beautification programme on the land.

"DCC authorities haven't responded to the query yet," said Moniruzzaman, executive officer of Division 1 at PWD.

PWD is going to serve a second and final notice to DCC in a day or two asking it to explain its

position, he added. "If the DCC does not have document of possession [of the land], we will seek permission from the higher authorities to remove whatever that have been set up at the site [by DCC]."

Almost a year ago, Beautification Cell of DCC dubiously handed over the park -- in the heart of Motijheel commercial district and next to Biman's local office -- to Dhaka Bank.

On September 13, 2006, Saifuddin Ahmed, chief executive officer of DCC and convenor of the Beautification Cell, and Sohel Faruque, the then chief conservancy officer of DCC and member secretary of the Cell, approved a 'beautification design' with no provision for trees on the land.

"Biman had taken over the park over 30 years ago for maintenance," said Hossain, "I was directly involved with planting the trees that have recently been cut down."

According to Moniruzzaman of PWD, the Ershad regime had issued an order stating that all car parking spaces under PWD would be handed over to DCC for maintenance. Chief engineer of PWD later issued a letter saying that DCC would have to take over the car parking spaces from PWD officially.

Recently, Dhaka Bank Limited and Biman have jointly embarked on a 'beautification' project on the site. Under the project, concrete structures and advertisement signs are being built there.

Concerned citizens smell shady deals to gobble up the invaluable prime land in the commercial district.

A street theatre with a difference



Physically challenged children performing an act recently (top). Ibrahim (top left) and Rubel.

FIDA-E-TASHFIA

In the bright sunlight of an open schoolyard, a motley theatre crew performs before a mesmerised audience.

The drama unfolds: a young child, afflicted by typhoid, is taken to a quack whose wrong treatment of the disease causes the child to lose the power of mobility in both his legs. His dreams of a normal childhood, shattered before he has come of age to comprehend it, receive a further

blow when he is refused admission to a school on account of being physically disabled.

Deprived and disheartened, the youngster, Ibrahim, has no option but to turn to begging for a living, quite literally on all fours.

Ibrahim's story may sound like a Dickensian invention, but unfortunately, the tragic tale is all too true.

"I was too small to remember things clearly, but I can still recall the incredible pain that the quack's supposed typhoid medicine gave me. I was screaming as

the burning sensation took over both my legs, and soon after, I found they became floppy. I could not stand on them," describes Ibrahim, now a young man in his early twenties.

When the Bangabandhu Government School turned him away because of his handicap, his impoverished parents scraped together enough money to hire a teacher who would come to their house, but the school's rejection had destroyed his faith in learning. "I was so angry, I decided that if I could not study in

a school like other children, I would not study at all," he said.

Nowadays, Ibrahim works with other disabled street children to help ensure that what the unjust treatment he received is not repeated with other children like him.

Through an advocacy group organised by the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID), he works with peers to script and act out plays that educate people about the

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The Motijheel park after chopping of the trees.

STAR PHOTO