

Wasa drive fails to widen mouth of Ibrahimpur canal

RAHMAN SABUTTAGIN

Widening the Ibrahimpur canal has failed to check waterlogging in the area as the canal's north end remains too narrow to discharge added rainwater.

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) conducted eviction drives in May and July this year at dif-

ferent points of the canal to widen it following the master plan.

Wasa managed to make the canal 60 feet wide at different points through the drives but the mouth of the canal that suppose to release water into the wetland in Mirpur section 14, remains only 8 feet wide, making the whole efforts futile.

People living on the bank of the canal expressed dissatisfaction.

fact over the half-hearted efforts by the Wasa that cannot check waterlogging at different points of old airport, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Ibrahimpur and Rokeya Sarani areas.

Zahirul Alam, superintendent engineer of the drainage wing of Wasa, said Wasa could not widen some points of the canal, as they did not get permission from the dep-

uty commissioner's office to work there.

Sukumar Chandra Ghosh, who owned a sweetmeat shop at Pulpar, is a victim of the Wasa eviction drive. He said many people lost their houses and shops during the eviction drive but it could not check waterlogging.

Gias Uddin, a landowner, said the government in 2002 acquired his ancestral prop-

erty for a 30 feet wide canal. Wasa demarcated the canal with pillars and he constructed shops and houses on the land following the demarcation. But he suffered loss again this year as the Wasa evicted his shops for making the canal 60 feet wide.

"Wasa conducted drive to evict establishments on my land, but keeps the canal narrow just a few yards from my land. Why?" he asked.

An official of Wasa said that Wasa paid Tk 5 crore as compensation to the landowners and acquired the land for a 60 feet wide canal.

In 2002 when Wasa came to restore the canal for the first time, interference from the influential political quarters forced Wasa to demarcate the canal as 30 feet wide. Moreover, the wetland where the canal discharges its water is being filled up by the developers.

"This time we achieved 80 percent success in widening the canal. We all know that the half-done development could not bring respite from waterlogging. Other parts of the canal would definitely be widened in future," said a Wasa official.

The government implemented Dhaka Integrated Flood Prevention Project between 1991 and 2001. All the prevailing and dying canals of the city are supposed to be restored under the project involving Tk 263 crore.

Dhaka Wasa started conducting eviction drives to restore the canal since March and it will continue August 26.



Ibrahimpur canal was not widened equally at all points.

Safety measures ignored

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Now, it has to be found out under whose instruction and supervision the worker moved to the dangerous position to demolish the wall, said a source.

The BNBC (part-7), in the construction practice and safety chapter, provides that sequentially, there has to be a detailed survey of the building to be demolished and of the surrounding buildings first of all. A demolition plan then has to be drawn on the basis of survey and protection taken for the adjoining properties.

Then one has to take pre-demolition protection for public safety and precautions during demolition.

Former chief engineer of Rajuk M Emdadul Islam said, "Very minimum safety precautions too were absent in this case in the light of BNBC."

As per BNBC, there should have been a sidewalk shed or a protective scaffold to avert public hazard, he said.

Rajuk chairman said that Rajuk staffs have given the family of Sohrab Tk25,000 as humanitarian aid.

But according to the labour law, a labourer even if employed on daily

basis is entitled to compensation of Tk1 lakh in case of death, said advocate Jafrul Hasan Sharif.

Any employer or a labour contractor is bound to issue appointment letter to any formal labourer, no matter on what basis one is employed, said Sharif, "But employers and labour contractors trickily avoid issuance of appointment letter to avoid responsibility of labourer easily."

Section 5 of the labour law provides that no owners or employers shall employ any (formal) labourers without issuing appointment letter, he said.

According to a source, Rajuk employs labourers on daily basis and does not issue appointment letter.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed of BILS said that as per labour law, government has to pay the family of Sohrab Tk1 lakh as compensation through labour court.

"While enforcing one law, the government agency ignored labour related law and building code," said Ahmed, "It was apparent that they ignored labour safety precautions."

The government is expected to demolish portions of 110 buildings

including 45 high-rises, constructed in violation of the Civil Aviation rules, because they reportedly pose a grave threat smooth take-off and landing of flights at Zia International Airport and Tejgaon Airport, according to sources at Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Rajuk is currently reviewing legal status of 110 buildings that have violated Civil Aviation rules.

The Rangs Bhaban, was at the top of the 111-list including 46 high-rises.

According to Emdadul Islam, who is a fellow of the Institute of Demolition Engineers, UK, "There are possibilities of further fatalities and causalities if carried on with the conventional demolition."

He suggested controlled demolition (blasting with explosives) considering the very location of the Rangs building.

The zoo seriously requires some more 'mahouts' for the elephants and staff for horses because elephant and horse rides are very popular. During these rides someone must take care of the visitors for their safety.

This June the zoo authority made the zoo premise a smoking and litter free zone. However, this cannot be enforced properly because of the shortage of security guards, officials said.

Currently the zoo has only 20 Ansars posted to maintain its security. There are provisions for another 40 in-house security personnel, but 20 of the positions are lying vacant. Nighttime security is another important but unsolved issue, said the officials.

In addition to the current fleet of animals, around a hundred new inmates from eleven different species are expected to arrive at the Dhaka zoo by December, pressing for urgent appointment of more animal caretakers.

The new attractions include giraffe, zebra, chimpanzee, impala, kudu, elan, lemur, horse, donkey and several species of monkeys.

The yearly budget of Dhaka zoo is Tk 3.75 crore, said the official, out of which Tk 2.50 crore is spent to feed the animals.

The zoo earns mainly by leasing out the ticket counter. This year it was leased out at Tk 2.7 crore. Another 35 lakh was earned by leasing out the parking zone.

The zoo also earns a considerable amount through its deer sell venture. In 2006 it earned Tk. 9 lakh from deer sell.

Dhaka zoo

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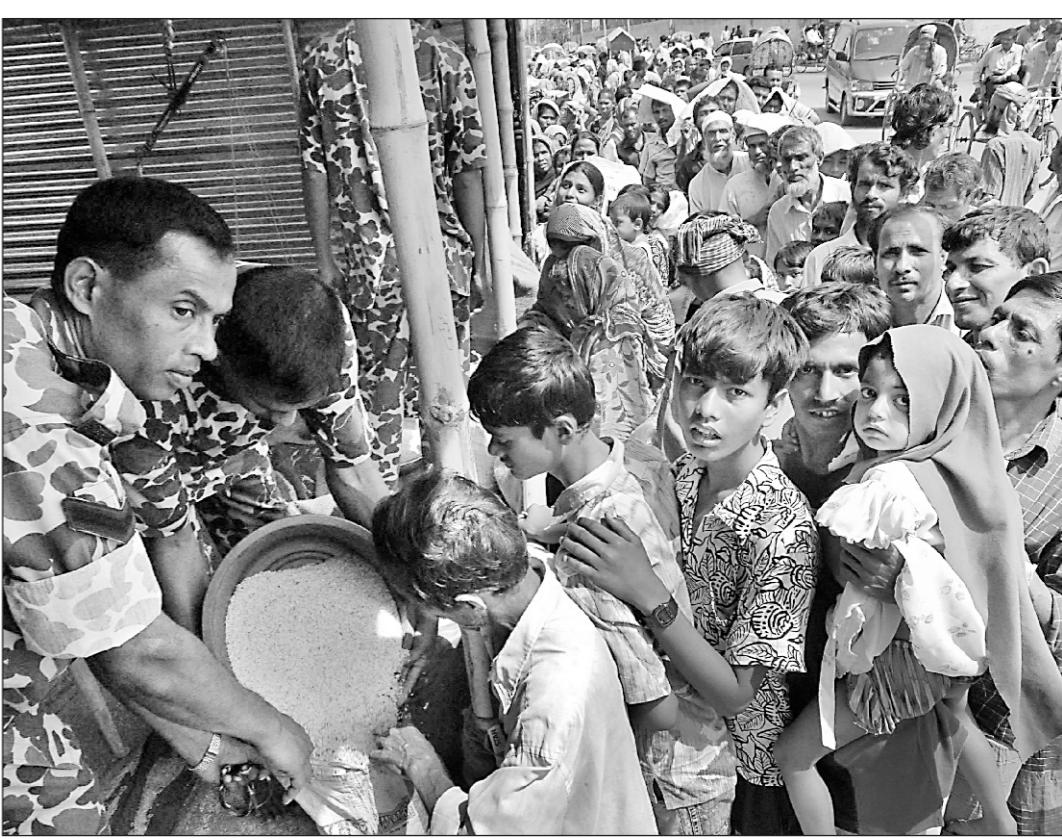
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STAR FILE PHOTO

Steps to arrest price hike ahead of Ramadan

OMS of rice, more fair price outlets planned

CITY CORRESPONDENT

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City dwellers may find some respite from the wild price spiral of essentials in the holy month of Ramadan as the authorities have decided to set up more "fair price" outlets throughout the city.

In a bid to keep the prices of essentials within reach of the larger section and smoothen supply, the BDR will open 200 more stores within the coming month while the Ansar and VDP will launch around 50 of their outlets.

The government also have plans to selectively cut tariffs and open five new wholesale markets in the city to ease the suffering of city dwellers.

According to BDR officials, the new outlets will be set up on the unused lands of different government departments and other agencies.

"Raising prices of essential commodities on the eve of Ramadan has become a common practice in our country," said Colonel Halim, the official responsible for the fair price outlets of BDR.

"To tame the soaring prices we have decided to open more outlets to offer goods at convenient price to more people during the holy month of Ramadan," he added.

The government in an inter-ministerial meeting on Monday also decided to sell rice at Tk. 19 per kilogram through Open Market Sale (OMS) programme during Ramadan.

The programme is scheduled to start from September 10 and run till the day of Eid-ul-Fitr. BDR will sell rice through its 500 outlets across the country.

"We bought rice for Tk. 13 a kilogram in OMS last time. It has already gone up by Tk. 6 officially," a city dweller remarked.

"Not only that, we were

allowed to buy 5 kilograms, but this time the OMS is giving us only 3 kilograms of rice per head," he added.

After their launch earlier in March, the fair price outlets became immensely popular with thousands of city dwellers especially belonging to the middle and low-income groups welcoming the move.

"Businessmen tend to raise the prices of essentials taking advantage of low supply on the eve of any festival as we do not have any remedial measures against such unethical practice," said Mainul Huq, a service provider from Green Road.

"In fact the suffering of the common people multiplies with the government's inaction to control prices on the eve of any festival," he added.

Many other residents expressed similar views venting disappointment on authorities failure to arrest the price hikes.

"When we started our fair price outlets, we received tremendous response from the general public because our outlets not only offer quality products at fair price, but also sell goods at accurate weight," said Colonel Halim, the official responsible for the fair price outlets of BDR.

The paramilitary troops from the BDR are currently operating 20 fair price markets and helping traders to run 25 others at different points in the capital. They are also monitoring the prices of essentials at other retail and wholesale markets.

The Ansar and VDP have also started their fair price outlets from August 14 under the 'operation nitto ponyo' to sell products at reasonable prices.

The fair price outlets will be set near the Airport rail station, Hajee camp, Uttara, civil aviation staff quarters, Kawla, Janey Alam Government high school

and college, Kurmitola High School, Sher-e-Bangla High School, Kuril, New Light High School along with Joa Sahara, Coca Cola bus stand, Wapda Bazar near Rampura TV station and Mugdara Community Centre.

More outlets would also be set in Khilgaon Jora Pukur, Taltala market, Sipahibagh, Bashabo Jubo Sangha ground, Madar tek A. Aziz High School and College, near Kadamtala Sangsab ground, in front of Malibagh rail gate, Bangladesh Bank Colony Samaj Sangstha, near Kamalapur rail station and overbridge along with T&T colony, AGB colony, Brothers' Union ground, Shahajahanpur Colony, Gopibagh Bazar, Sutrapur, Sarulia Bazar, Demra, Jatrabari, Kutubkhali School, City Corporation staff quarters, A.K. degree college, Jurayeen, West Juriyeen medical road, Bangladesh Bank Staff Quarters, Gandaria, Dhupbagh, Namapara rail crossing, Khokon Primary School, Sutrapur Bus station and in numerous other prominent spots throughout the city.

According to Ansar and VDP sources, their outlets are selling mosur dal (pulse) at Tk 56 per kg, soyabean oil at Tk 375 for every 5 litre, sugar at Tk 10 per kg and flour at Tk 29 per kg. The outlets will sell beef, fish, rice and vegetables pretty soon, said Ansar and VDP officials.

According to BDR sources, around 15 thousand kilograms of rice along with 50 thousand kilograms of wheat would be imported within the next month which would later be sold during the month of Ramadan.

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