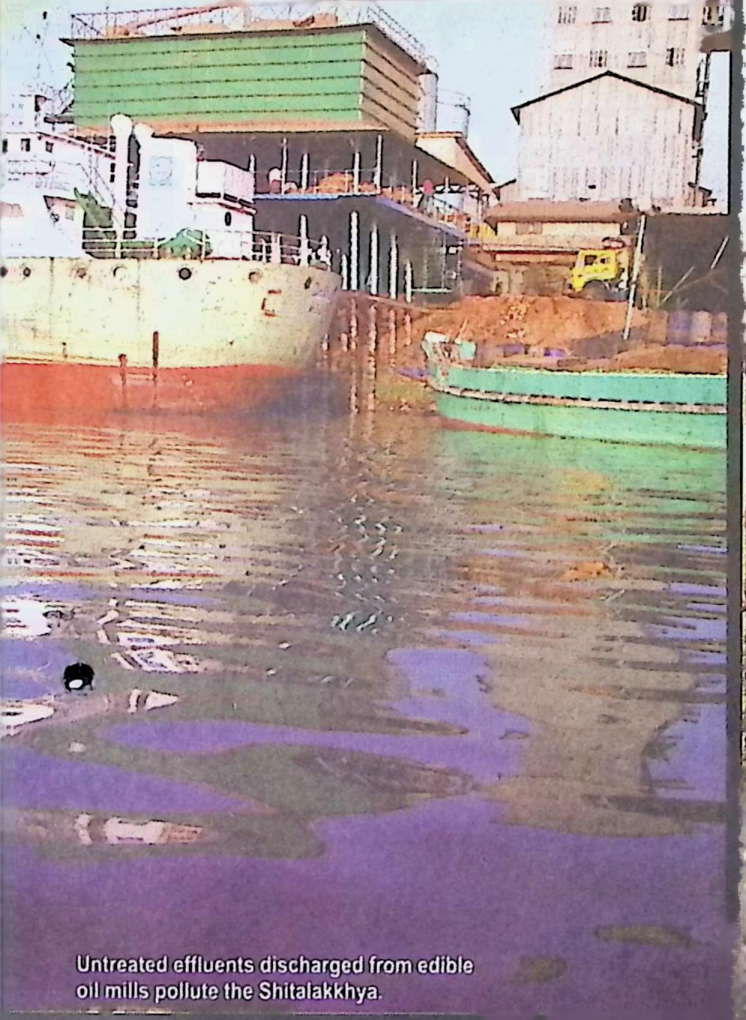
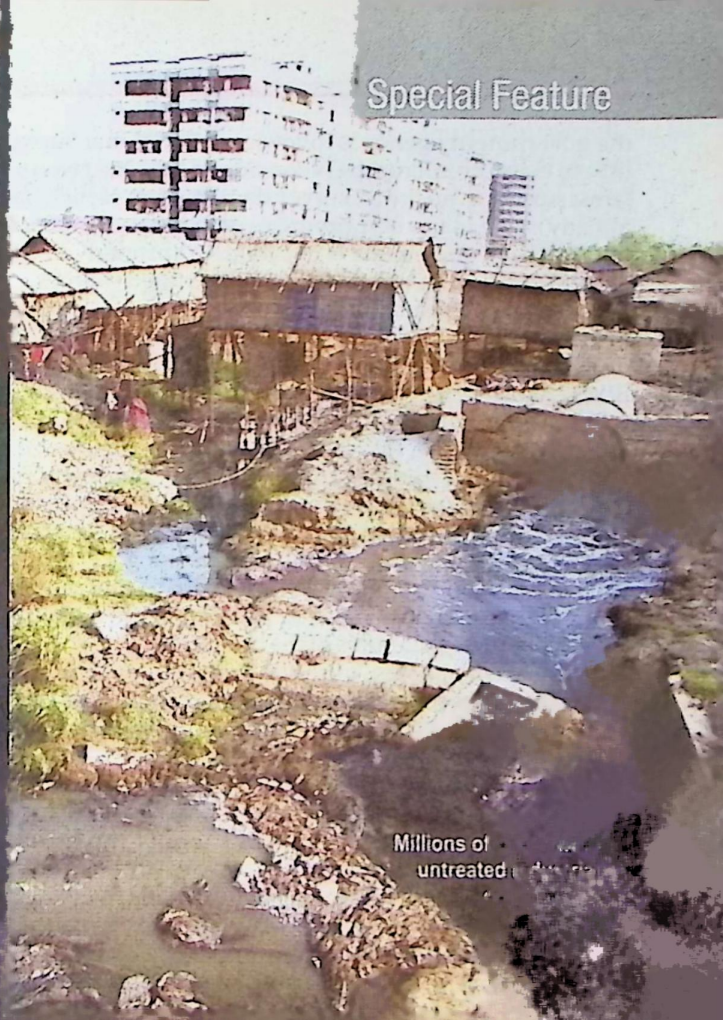


Untreated effluents discharged from edible oil mills pollute the Shitalakkhya.



Millions of untreated

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ERSHAD KAMOL

The government has taken a holistic approach to save the rivers surrounding Dhaka, after a massive campaign against river pollution initiated by the civil society, human rights organisations, environmentalists and mass media. To begin with, the government has already started evictions at different points in Gazipur and Naranganj to pull out the illegal encroachers, who grabbed a part of the Turag and the Shitalakkhya. The Prime Minister has already instructed the concerned agencies to start dredging the rivers and check environmental degradation caused by industries and domestic sources. Reflection of her instructions is evident even in the budget allocation. Moreover, the parliamentary bodies are also concerned about the issue. Recently the parliamentary sub-committee on the Ministry of Environment has asked the representatives of DCC, Wasa and Rajuk to discuss how to tackle river pollution. The sub-committee also asked owners of industries located in the city and its adjacent areas to attend the meeting as industrial waste greatly pollutes rivers. Earlier a high court bench also ordered the government to take necessary steps to save the rivers from encroachment and pollution.

But hydrologists and senior citizens are quite pessimistic about the effectiveness of such steps, no matter how well intentioned they may be. The drive against encroachment is only at the initial stage and already the government agency Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), which is carrying out the drive, is facing problems due to legal loopholes, fund constraints and lack of equipments.

Not following the Cadastral Survey (CS) demarcation,