

## Editorial

### Safe water: a far cry for the Dhaka city dwellers

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal

Fecal contamination of water is the main cause of communicable diseases in the capital city of Dhaka. Actual population of Dhaka city is unknown. But, it is assumed that total population of Dhaka city is about 20 million.<sup>1</sup> Total amount of human excreta produced in the Dhaka city is unknown. But it is known that capacity of waste management of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority or WASA is very poor, specially the capacity of management of human excreta. Pagla sewage treatment plant has the capacity to treat only 20% of human excreta of Dhaka city.<sup>2</sup> But, due to broken sewerage lines Pagla sewage treatment plant is receiving only 2% of the sewage. In 2014 World Bank had drawn a diagram of sewage treatment plants and septic tanks of Dhaka city. It had shown that outcome of pagla sewage treatment plant was only 2%.<sup>3</sup> Referring to this information, Professor of Civil engineering department of BUET and planner of Hatirjheel project, Prof. Md. Mujibur Rahman told, according to the diagram of World Bank only 2% of human excreta are safely refined and decontaminated.<sup>4</sup> Rest 98% of human excreta is going to the four rivers surrounding the Dhaka city. In last six years after the publication of the report, this situation has further deteriorated. In Dhaka city water and sewerage are running side by side under the roads. Old lines are damaged and sewerage mixes with supplied water. Sometimes colour and smell of supplied water is obnoxious. WASA also supply water from surrounding rivers, which is unpurtable due to presence of heavy wastages.

Water born communicable diseases are very common in Dhaka city. Every day ICDDR,B receives 500 to 1500 diarrhoea cases.<sup>5</sup> Diarrhoea is the main cause of malnutrition of Children under 5 years. Other than diarrhea, typhoid, hepatitis due to A and E viruse are also very common. Hepatitis E causes many maternal deaths every year in Dhaka city. Skin diseases due to contaminated water are also very common in Dhaka.

We want safe and wholesome water to drink, to cook food, to wash our hands, to bathe and for so many purposes. It seems that, it is a far cry for the Dhaka city dwellers.

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