

Money for city drainage down the drain

*Reinforces the need for
coordinated work*

THE numbers are staggering. According to a report by a leading Bangla daily, a total of Tk 2,000 crore was spent to improve Dhaka's drainage system in the last eight years. Wasa, the central authority for water and sewerage, spent Tk 618 crore, while Bangladesh Water Development Board spent Tk 108 crore. The two city corporations spent Tk 1,270 crore between them. Yet it stretches credulity to think that despite all those projects for building and clearing pumping stations, canals, culverts and drains for sewage disposal, there had been no result of any sort.

Meanwhile, things went from bad to worse as the city-dwellers struggled every time there was an above average rainfall and Dhaka turned into an extended pool of knee-to waist-deep water. Only a week ago, we witnessed what a faulty, poorly-managed system could do—or not do—when heavy rains coupled with traffic congestion hit the Dhaka and Chittagong cities. As we've said before in this column, rain is only a part of the problem. A well-planned and well-coordinated effort to remove rainwater (and waste liquid) from the streets during monsoon, and preserve them for use during the dry season, can make a world of difference.

Apparently, money is in ample supply but the challenge is to undertake projects that deliver results. But lack of coordination among the organisations responsible for Dhaka's drainage management is making it harder for any initiative to work. So instead of wasting money on separate projects, we think the various agencies need to coordinate with each other and launch joint schemes that would fulfil the purpose.