



PHOTO: STAR

Collecting drinking water in crisis-hit Sylhet City has become a routine affair for many families.

Sylhet city water project gathering dust

Crisis to mount as summer approaches

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The water supply and drainage project in Sylhet city is yet to get the ECNEC nod, a year after approval by a pre-ECNEC meeting and the LGED ministry while the city dwellers are facing acute water crisis for long.

The crisis will mount as summer is approaching because the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) can supply only 40 per cent of the demand for 1.1 crore gallons of water a day in its 27 wards, SCC officials and citizens said.

The SCC prepared the Tk 38 crore 'Water Supply, Sanitation and Drainage Scheme' in 2003 after the Sylhet Pourashava (municipality) was upgraded to city corporation, expanding its area greatly.

The scheme includes setting up of two water treatment plants on the banks of the Surma river, fielding eight deep tube-wells and laying of 50

kilometre new pipeline. An amount of Tk 20 crore would be spent for construction of water treatment plants, one at Alampur on the southern bank of the Surma and the other at Masimpur on its northern bank.

Most of the new pipelines have been planned for the three new wards on the southern bank of the river, sources said. The SCC can not supply water in most of the areas in the new wards.

There are only 18 deep tube-wells and 160 kilometre water supply pipelines in the city now.

Talking to this correspondent, the SCC authorities said the water crisis in the city can be solved for the time being if the project is implemented.

"At least 95 per cent of the demand could be met", an official of SCC said.

The project would bring about 10,000 new subscribers under water supply network in South Surma area

comprising wards 25, 26 and 27, besides improving supplies in other areas, he said.

People in these areas are deprived of the minimum civic amenities now.

Mohammad Nurul Islam, a businessman in Kodomtoli in South Surma said, normally most of the people in the area have to use Surma river water to meet their day to day needs. Their sufferings mount when the river almost dries up in winter. Many well-to-do people have made their own arrangement by sinking tube wells, he said.

While talking to The Daily Star recently, SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran said there is no possibility that the crisis will be over in the next three years because, if approved now, the project will take three years or so for implementation.

JMB behind 2003 cinema blasts

Arrested cadre of the Islamist outfit discloses in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Eight cadres of banned Islamists militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) carried out bomb attacks on four cinema halls in Mymensingh in 2003 and Mymensingh district commander of JMB Salahuddin Shaiehin led the attacks.

JMB cadre Moinul Islam Ranga, arrested from Nagarpur in Tangail seven months ago, said this in his confessional statement before a first class magistrate court in Mymensingh last week, sources said.

A top police official in Mymensingh on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that the investigation in

Mymensingh cinema blasts has taken new turn after the confessional statement of Moinul that calls for a thorough investigation into JMB role in the incident.

Police had arrested Awami League (AL) leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to AL president Sheikh Hasina, a journalist and some employees of the cinema halls in connection with the bomb attacks. Moreover, some of them had also faced police remand and lived in jail.

Ranga, son of Yakub Ali of Hapania village under Gabtoli upazila in Bogra district in his confessional statement on February 8 said before first class magistrate of Mymensingh Atiqur Rahman that he joined JMB at

the instigation of top leader Abdul Awal, son-in-law of JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman.

Although Moinul Islam in his statement disclosed that eight JMB cadres carried out the attacks, he denied his own involvement, sources said.

Moinul Islam Ranga was arrested in Khetal upazila in Joypurhat district in 2003 after he along with some JMB cadres attacked police. He was freed on bail five months later. Moinul was arrested again from Nagarpur upazila in Tangail district while he along with JMB cadres were carrying out test blasts on a shoal.

Moinul is in Tangail jail for the last seven months. Criminal Investigation

Department (CID) brought Moinul to Mymensingh for quizzing on February 5 while he gave confessional statement on February 8.

Nineteen people were killed and at least 50 others injured in bomb attacks on the four cinema halls in Mymensingh. Of the injured, at least 20 became crippled.

Four separate cases were filed and police arrested many people including AL leader Saber Hossen Chowdhury, journalist Enamul Haque, Mymensingh district unit president of AL Prof Motiur Rahman in connection with the attacks.



Moinul Islam Ranga

Deep tube-wells deprived of power supply

Court order sought as allegations, agitation go unheeded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Alleged corruption and irregularity by Nilphamari Pali Bidyut Samity (rural electrification body) is affecting irrigation of IRRRI-Boro crops on vast tracts of land in the district.

The Samity is giving power supply lines to houses and privately owned shallow tube-wells allegedly in exchange of money, depriving the deep tube-wells.

Deep tube-well owners are staging demonstrations in many areas and crowding Pali Bidyut Samity offices almost every day as irrigation of their lands are suffering for lack of power, the managers of deep tube-well committees said.

Deep Tube-wells Farmers Welfare Association (DTFWA) earlier submitted an application to the district administration alleging corruption by the Samity, but to no response. It finally filed a case against the Samity on November 30 with the court of Nilphamari Senior Assistant Judge, seeking a court order for power supply.

The court issued a show cause notice on the Samity on January 30.

DTFWA President Khairat Hossain at an emergency meeting of its Executive Committee recently alleged that the association submitted an application to the General Manager (GM) of Nilphamari Pali Bidyut Samity on January 18 seeking electricity connection to deep tube-wells owned by its members. But nothing has been done though this is the peak season of IRRRI-Boro cultivation.

He said that a number of managers of different deep tube-well management committees also submitted several prayers separately at different times to the Pali Bidyut Samity for electricity connection. Those all went unheeded for 'mysterious reasons.'

General Secretary of the association, Ayub Sarkar, alleged at the meeting that the Samity is violating government rules by not providing power supply to deep tube-wells.

As per rule, the minimum distance between deep tube-wells should be 2,500 feet and between a deep and a shallow tube-well it should be 1,700 feet to get power supply.

But the Samity is providing electricity connection to privately owned shallow pumps even within 50 feet from a deep tube-well in exchange of money, he alleged. Allegations are there that a section of Samity officials demands bribe for power connection.

The Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) had fielded 323 deep tube-wells in the district. It later sold 236 to deep tube-wells management committees. The rest are under care of Barind Multi Purpose Development Authority (BMDA) and some NGOs, said Ayub Sarkar.

Lutfar Rahman, manager of a deep tube-well management committee at Fakir Para village in Sonarai union under the Sadar upazila told this correspondent that they were compelled to stop operation of their deep tube-well while two shallow pumps under its command area are operating with power supplied by the Samity.

Farkan Ali, the manager of deep tube-wells management committee at Kalkeut in Jaldhaka Upazila said he is waiting for long for power connection to their deep tube-well.

A farmer in Shaha Para Kundupukur village of the Sadar upazila said irrigation cost is around Tk 1000 under a shallow tube-well against Tk 650 to 700 under a deep tube-well. When contacted, general manager of Nilphamari Pali Bidyut Samity, Nazibul Islam, said the order of the agriculture ministry regarding power supply to deep tube-wells is not in force now.

Asked about farmers' allegations, he said if the deep tube-well is within 100 feet from electricity line, then certainly it would get connection. But if it is far away, it will take time for construction of new power supply infrastructure.

Meanwhile a 20 MW diesel powered electricity generation unit in Syedpur is inoperative for long due to lack of repair, sources said. The other 20 MW unit, run by furnace oil, is operating but the power it generates is supplied to the National Grid. Only 6 to 7 MW power generated by it is supplied to Nilphamari, the sources said.

Recognise Sundarbans Day

Call to protect the biggest mangrove forest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Sundarbans Day-2006 was observed yesterday in Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts.

The programmes in Khulna city included a discussion at Khulna Press Club. Club president and convenor of Sundarbans Day Observance Committee Alhaj Liaquat Ali presided over the function.

Director General of National Museum Prof Mahmudul Huq attended it as chief guest while Dr Indrani Huq, daughter of famous novelist Shib Shankar Mitra was present as guest of honour.

Prof Mahmudul Huq said it is a matter of shame for the nation that the government is yet to officially recognise the Sundarbans Day. He called upon the people to build up a movement, if required.

Liaquat Ali called upon the people to protect the Sundarbans and its resources at any cost.

The chief executive of Rupantar

Swapon Guha announced formation of 'Sundarban Academy'.

Prof Anwarul Kadir was made Executive Director, while journalists Faruque Ahmed, Abdul Halim and Subhash Biswas became directors of the newly formed academy.

Our Correspondent from Satkhira adds: Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to declare February 14 as Sundarbans Day.

The biggest mangrove forest in the world must be preserved in its natural form as it is essential not only for our survival but also for existence of the mankind, they said.

The discussion 'Conservation, Possibility and Development of the Sundarbans,' was held at Satkhira Pourasava auditorium.

The Sundarbans Day is being observed by the environmentalists for the last six years.

Former minister Dr Aftabuzzaman was the chief guest at the discussion.

Presided by the committee convenor Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar, it

was addressed also by Satkhira Chamber of Commerce and Industries president Sheikh Azhar Hossain, journalists (Prof) Abu Ahmed, Kalyan Banerjee, BNP leader Kamrul Islam Faruque and others.

The speakers said, the Sundarbans with its rich bio-diversity, is protecting the south-western region of the country from natural calamities. But the resources are being plundered, destroying the eco-system. The flora and fauna of the Sundarbans have to be preserved and the main responsibility lies with the people and the Government of Bangladesh, they said. The wild life and its vast natural resources will be vanished if the authorities failed to take measures right now, the speakers warned.

They called upon the people to build a social movement against piracy and destruction of the world's largest mangrove forest.

Earlier, a colourful procession organised by the committee, was brought out in the town to mark the day.

16X3

7X3

7X2