



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over the meeting of the National Economic Council at the NEC conference room in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Surface water pollution threatens public health of 1cr city dwellers

BSS, Dhaka

Surface water pollution in and around the capital, especially the waters of the rivers Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Tongi canal, have been threatening the supply of safe drinking water and public health of over on crore city dwellers.

The main sources of water pollution in the capital are domestic sewage, including human excreta, bathroom and kitchen wastewater, industrial wastewater including toxic chemicals, pesticides and fertilisers used in the agricultural fields around city.

At present, colour of water of these four rivers, canals and ditches in and around the city has become almost black with bad smells making it impossible for fish to survive as the organic wastes have been absorbing the dissolved oxygen from water.

Prof Dr M Mujibur Rahman, a teacher of Civil Engineering Department of BUET, Director International Training Network (ITN) and Environmentalist, said the polluted surface water may cause a disastrous situation if effective steps are not taken immediately.

Prof Mujib said treatment of human waste is a must to keep the surface water clean, and added the Wasa sewerage system can not cover the whole city. A combination of medium and low cost technologies, including properly designed septic tank system and water-sealed pit latrines, can be introduced to control surface water pollution, he added.

Wasa sewerage system covers only 20 percent of the total population in Dhaka City. Forty percent of the population use septic tanks, 20 percent use water-sealed pit latrines and rest 20 percent use unhygienic means like open latrines.

Referring to actual condition of sewerage system in Dhaka, he said 60 percent people still use unhygienic methods while hygienic system covers only 40 percent.

As a result of the damage of the sewerage lines in different places, the Wasa sewerage treatment plant at Pagla in Narayanganj receives only one-third of its capacity in dry season, he added.

He said in the capital less than 20 percent people use properly designed septic tanks and about 10 percent use water-sealed pit latrines.

Prof Mujib said most of the city dwellers, including the residents of the posh areas, may think that their excreta does not pollute the environment as they use costly toilets.

But in reality, the excreta discharged by many of these toilets ultimately goes to the open canals or water bodies through broken sanitary sewers or storm sewerage lines without treatment and pollute the environment equally, he added.

He said in the city, 85 percent of the drinking water supply come from ground water and the rest is provided by treating surface waters. People in the city are surviving as

they use drinking water after boiling to free it from contamination, he added.

At present, about 400 deep tube-wells are extracting ground water in the capital. As a result, the water level on and average is going down three metres annually. Excessive exploitation of ground water may cause environmental disaster in future, Prof Mujib pointed out.

Industries at Postogola, Fatullah, and a huge number of tanneries at Hazaribagh have been polluting the river Buriganga. Tanning waste contains sulfuric acid, chromium, ammonium sulfate, chloride and calcium oxides.

The industries are the major source of pollution of the Turag river while many others dump their wastes in the rivers Balu and Shitalakhya.

Saidabad water treatment plant and Chadnighat waterworks are installed only to refine natural surface water from rivers. These are not designed to process polluted water containing toxic substances, he added.

Four rivers surround Dhaka city, he said and added polluted surface waters of these rivers have become the hub of fatal water-borne diseases.

Prof Mujib said in Bangladesh, people are to spend about Tk 500 crore annually to fight against water-

borne diseases including diarrhoea and skin diseases.

Referring to solutions of surface water pollution, he said the environmental issues are emotional and hence political decisions are necessary to implement technical solutions.

Globally, every year, polluted water is estimated to affect the health of about 1200 million people and contribute to death of about 15 million children under five, he added.

VIEW EXCHANGE

Hasina meets grassroots leaders from June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina will begin view exchange meetings with the party leaders of district, upazila and municipality units from the first week of next month to strengthen anti-government agitation including the Dhaka siege programme on June 11.

Hasina will discuss with them prevailing political situation and give them future directives, party sources said, adding that as the AL has a plan to paralyse the capital on June 11, the

AL chief will also ask them to mobilise people to lay siege to the capital in a bid to press home the demand for electoral reforms.

The AL chief was originally scheduled to exchange views with the grassroots level leaders in January, but it was delayed due to 14-party opposition combine's anti-government agitation in the capital.

According to revised programme, Hasina will meet leaders of different districts under Dhaka division from June 3 to 8.

The series meetings will be held at the party's Dhanmondi office in the city from 9:00am to 12:00 noon on scheduled dates.

Leaders of Manikganj, Munshiganj and Narayanganj districts will meet Hasina on June 3, leaders of Tangail, Gazipur and Narshingdi districts on June 4, leaders of Netrokona, Jamalpur and Sherpur districts on June 5, leaders of Mymensingh and Kishoreganj districts on June 6 and leaders of Faridpur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Madaripur and Gopalganj districts on June 8.

After the Dhaka siege programme, the AL chief will meet the leaders of other divisions, sources said.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil has requested all district presidents and general secretaries to attend the meetings.

PM Gold Medal distribution ceremony postponed

UNB, Dhaka

The Prime Minister Gold Medal Award-2006 distribution ceremony, scheduled to be held on June 1 at the Prime Minister's Office here, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances.

The fresh date of the ceremony, under the auspices of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC), will be announced later on.



Bangladesh Jubo Maitri stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding fair wage for the garment workers.

PHOTO: STAR

'Ensure right to trade union at garment factories'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samaj Anushilon Kendro expressed their solidarity with the movement of the garment workers at a meeting in the city yesterday, says a press release.

They observed the recent agitation of garment workers in and around the capital and demanded solution to the worker's problem rather than suppressing them.

The leaders demanded that the government ensure trade union rights of the garment

workers, regular payments of salary and wages, maternity leave for women workers, re-fix minimum wage and take adequate measures to stop fire accidents.

They cautioned the workers to be aware as the factory owners are trying to foil their movement without realising their demands.

Abu Sayeed Khan presided over the meeting where Dr Beena Shikder, Dr Mushtak Hossain and Advocate Ruhul Kuddus Babu were also pres-



Bangladesh Jewellery Association forms a human chain at Uttara in the city yesterday protesting robbery at a jewellery shop at Utra Rajlakkhi Complex and demanding security of their business.

PHOTO: STAR