

FOCUS: BADDA

WATER CRISIS

Residents pushed against the wall

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

While illegal connections to houses has caused a severe water crisis, negligence of the water supply authority have caused immense sufferings to around 60,000 residents of north Badda for over one year.

Apart from the shortage of water, the water is unusable as it is dirty and gives a bad odour.

"The water is too dirty to touch and it smells so bad that we cannot use it to clean ourselves even before prayers," said Sirajul Islam, Imam of the Quiety Mosque at Uttar Badda, describing how bad the quality of water is.

He said: "Ramadan will commence within a fortnight from now and people of this area have no supply of fresh water."

Because of the pressure put on the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) by local leaders, it has from September 14, started supplying one truck of water daily to the mosque. But that it not sufficient, residents alleged.

People told Star City that the problem emerged for the first time when WASA dug sewerage lines in the area two years ago. Initially the problem was negligible, but now the stage is quite unbearable.

Locals said that the water line is below the sewerage line and constant digging by the authorities has caused a number of leakages in supply lines, which are merging dirty water with clean



Poor section of the city dwellers suffer more for potable water..

water.

Papia Sarwar, a housewife said that like all other neighbours she also has been bringing in drinking water from a long distance for more than three months.

"It's a tough task. Families resort to this practice regularly as there is no other way left for them," she said, adding that it was very embarrassing to seek water

daily from relatives living in Gulshan.

"The water we receive along the lines is of no use, but we still have to pay WASA for it," said Anwar Hossain, a house owner.

"We tried to demonstrate against Wasa for their negligence but the commissioner did not let us do so," said another resident.

He said that Ward Commissioner stopped the locals

from staging any demonstration and no one in the area dared to go against the commissioner.

Peyara Mostafa, female ward commissioner for the ward's reserve seat said that she and the ward commissioner are jointly trying to solve the water problem as she too suffers because of the water crisis.

She said that the Wasa authority came and checked the

problems but failed to give any solution.

She also said that after lobbying with the authority, they were informed that Wasa could not change the faulty pipes due to shortage of funds.

M A Qaium, Ward Commissioner, denied the accusations against him for foiling the demonstration programmes and claimed that he himself called the people together to press the authority to adhere to their demands.

He also said that they had fixed a date to hold a demonstration rally on Pragati Sarani but because the Awami League, had a demonstration programme they had to postpone theirs.

Wasa authorities told Star City that the unscrupulous house owners had created the problem as these house owners changed their connection-lines to get more water and left leakages in the water pipes.

When asked why Wasa took more than a year to repair the damaged lines, an official said that it was difficult the authority to identify the leaks as they were large in number.

Halim a young man who was carrying water for his house in the Cha block said: "I don't know who is responsible for the problem and I don't want to know either. All I want is fresh water. Like me none can compromise with this demand and if any one creates an obstacle, people would turn violent."



Cars blocking city footpaths is a common scene in Dhaka.

Leave your car at home, please

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists demanded at least one car-free day in a month in the city, at a rally organised by Save the Environment Movement on September 22 to mark World Car-Free Day 2006, for the first time in the country.

They urged the government have a ceiling on the number of licences issued for cars; impose higher parking fees, and the pass regulations to reduce the use of cars.

Some areas should be made car-free, in addition to the increasing the tax on cars, they demanded.

The number of cars is growing rapidly in the city resulting in inadequate car parking, pollution, accidents, illness, inequity, social alienation, while expense in fuel, vehicle maintenance, infrastructure and transport, and various other problems are increasing.

It has been found that only three percent of Dhaka residents use a car, yet cars occupy 60 percent of space on the Mirpur Road. The vast

majority of road users thus face great inconvenience in moving on the remaining road space.

The number of cars in Dhaka at the moment amount to 1,50,000. This large number is causing problems not only for those without cars, but for drivers and car owners themselves. If this figure rises to five lakh in ten years, environmentalists wondered what the traffic situation would be.

Since rickshaws have been controlled in the name of reducing traffic jams, action has to be taken to reduce private cars, as STP 2004, states that private cars occupy 2.5 times as much road space as rickshaws.

In order to improve the transport situation for everyone, public transport and infrastructure for walking and cycling should be improved. At the same time, appropriate control on cars should be instituted.

Parking should be banned along main streets and footpaths, and charges for parking increased to reflect the actual value of the space being used, the environmentalists said.

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