

Desa turns to Wasa in despair

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) in desperation to curtail the shortage of electricity is trying to persuade Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to close down their pumps in the city for at least two hours daily, apart from the regular load shedding, Wasa sources said.

Wasa officials said this decision would be suicidal, as the water supply, already in shortfall, will reduce drastically creating a chaotic situation during the month of Ramadan.

Wasa officials said their operational 447 pumps altogether could produce 7.25 crore litres of water every hour, and shutting down the pumps for two hours would cause a deficiency of 14.50 crore litres to the existing supply which would enhance the existing crisis.

"Our production at the moment is already 40 crore litres less than the daily demand while regular load shedding decreases our capacity by another 10 to 12 crore litres. Now if we intention-



This picture was taken at 9pm in front of National Shooting Complex at Gulshan on Friday.

ally do not produce another 15 crore litres, the entire situation would deteriorate considerably," said a high official of Wasa.

The official said the Secretary to the Power Development Board (PDB) has requested Wasa to keep the pumps shut for two hours everyday.

"We consume on an average, 26.82 megawatt of electricity to run the pumps everyday which

means only 2.22 megawatt in two hours. The water should not be interrupted to just save two megawatts of electricity when the electricity deficiency is around 2,000 to 2,200 megawatt a day," said the official.

He also said that power authorities should consider other alternatives as in shutting down city markets during peak hours.

"The Power authority wants to

give us a share of public wrath which is now on them in trying to curtail the supply of water as well," the official added.

When contacted the acting managing director (MD) of Wasa Hedayet Ullah Al-Mamun did not want to comment on the matter.

However, he said that if he receives any such request, he will try to convince the authority against taking such a decision, which he thinks would create a water crisis in the city.

"The power authorities should consider options of overcoming the existing situation while we have to consider our clients' interest," he added.

Mamun also said that the coordinating committee consisting members from Desa, Wasa and Desco would come to a decision in this regard.

"I believe we wouldn't have to take any such decisions," said the acting MD.

The PDB Secretary could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

KHOKA'S CORNER



While the Nagar Bhaban keeps spending crores for renovating city's VIP roads the narrow street called Laboratory Road, off New Elephant Road remains waterlogged and dilapidated with large potholes. For over three months residents along this road have been suffering silently. Will our mayor please look into it?

Gold rush in the name of beautification



A private ad firm has embarked on renting ad spaces under the Mohakhali flyover ignoring the beautification.

WAHIDA MITU

In the name of participating in the ongoing beautification programme of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), a private advertisement company has embarked on selling scores of advertisement spaces under the Mohakhali flyover.

Having taken the responsibility of beautifying the spot in December 2005 for three years, the Unicom Urban Development immediately started selling spaces for advertisement in the area. The company totally ignored the requirements for beautification under which it had been entrusted with the responsibility.

Officials of the DCC's Dhaka City Beautification Cell said that the company was given the responsibility of beautification illegally by the officials of now-defunct Mohakhali flyover construction project. They said that the flyover project officials, manned by officials of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), had nothing to do in the beautification of the city.

"It was illegally handed over to a company simply for making money," said an official. "The proof is there, since they took over the spot they

(Unicom) has done nothing but selling ad spaces worth crores of taka."

The entire city has been subjected to unplanned advertisement hoardings indiscriminately put up on every corner. There are many hoardings in the city that have been installed on footpaths, roads and playgrounds.

Mohakhali.

Raisul Ahsan, business development manager of Unicom, admitted that beautification of the area is going on in a slow pace.

"The area in which we are supposed to plant trees and shrubs for beautification does not receive sufficient sunlight and rainwater as it is under the

Under the terms and conditions each company can display three billboards, advertising its own company. If the company sells the spaces to outsiders, DCC taxes must be paid.

At Mohakhali flyover Unicom has already sold 30 advertisement spaces, each for a yearly charge of Tk 4.6 lakh.

Officials of the now-defunct flyover construction project said that they had awarded the company under written instruction by the Ministry of Communications.

"The ministry asked us to process the papers for handing over the space to Unicom and accordingly we had to abide by the ministerial order," said a former official of the flyover construction project. It may be mentioned that the son of an influential minister owns the ad agency.

Commander Sohail Farouque, DCC's chief conservancy officer, and member Secretary of the beautification cell, said that the RHD handed over the spot under Mohakhali flyover to a private company. But he did not know anything about the terms and conditions under which the company is supposed to beautify the spot.

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Residents of Mohakhali area accused the DCC of creating vision pollution by putting up unplanned hoardings everywhere in the city. They said there are hardly any measures taken for beautification in the area. "For the last one year I have not seen anyone or any company planting any tree under Mohakhali flyover," said Khairul Alam, a resident of

bridge. It's not easy to do the job," said Ahsan.

"We took the area under the flyover for beautification from Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) of RHD," he said.

The DCC's Beautification cell has so far awarded 80 private and state-owned companies different road islands and medians for beautification.

Police keep converting children into adults

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Police, violating children's laws and rights often projects juveniles as adults in cases, though Police Headquarters have issued orders to all officers, including those in the railway sector in a bid to maintain child rights for the last two decades.

But this violation has been continuing sans proper monitoring, accountability and an age-checking system, and hundreds of children have been deprived of their legal rights.

The massive violation of the law later produces notorious criminals from these child victims.

Police arrested Imran (not his real name) on August 5, 2003 on charge of murder in a factory at Rajashan at Savar. Imran, a mentally disabled orphan was then 14 and half years, but police recorded his age as 20. Imran was fortunate that Aparajeya Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO) came to his aid.

Mahbubur Rahman, panel lawyer of the organisation said that he made a petition to the court on Imran's age and provided a certificate from school, but court refused to accept it.

Later Imran was checked at the jail hospital and it was proven that he in fact, was only 14 and half years.

Once proved as a child, Imran was caught in the tug of war between the jail authority and the Tongi Kishor Unnoyon Kendra over his age, and had to stay for more than seven months in the Dhaka Central Jail.

Finally he was able to reach the Kendra and is now at the Kashimpur jail. Mahbubur said that police found no witness or evidence against the boy, but arrested him only because he was at the spot.

Another 14-year-old Azim (not his real name) was caught red handed with two other armed adults in a robbery incident under Sympur Police Station. The boy faces two charges, against him -- carrying arms and robbery.

The police had recorded his age as 18, but with an NGO coming to the boy's aid, Azim was recorded as a juvenile in one case and an adult in the other. The boy's lawyer told Star City that he could not understand how the boy could be treated at two levels in the same incident.

According to police records, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) on February 2, 1987, had

issued an order to all police to follow the Child Act 1974 properly especially in recording their exact age, informing the local probation officer as soon as possible after the arrest of a child and granting bail from the police station under section 48 of the Act.

But the order remains in paper only. Many such orders followed, including one on July 16, 1997, but none of the law enforcers seemed to have paid any heed to the order.

Clear instructions and orders came from the police high command in recording the accurate age, bail, notifying the probation officer and keeping these children in custody.

This order too failed to hold the attention of the law enforcers and the situation worsened.

On a petition received from Save the Children, Police Head Quarters issued another order on the same issue on June 11, 2005.

When asked about monitoring the implementation, accountability and existing situation, Mozammel Hossain, additional IGP, only said that: "We issued the order and situation will be ok."

A sub-inspector told Star City said that in recording ages in certain cases the physical status of children confuse the police and

under such circumstances police have to send the accused for a medical test. He said it was troublesome process as it takes the whole day to arrange a certificate for an accused child, adding that they usually record children as adults to avoid the hassle.

The National Taskforce to Release Children from Prison, headed by the principal secretary to the prime minister's office is working on the issue. The task force recently had its eighth meeting emphasising on the need to record real ages and stop police violation of these laws.

In the previous meeting on July 17, through a demy official letter, the head of the task force requested the home ministry secretary to take initiatives against the violation.

A human rights worker and legal aid provider to vulnerable children said orders or initiatives from high command would not have impact in stopping these violations by police until monitoring and accountability of police is assured.



How long will it take to recognise children as children?