

A decade of failure, inefficiency

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similar problems and some are not even getting water.

Mizanur is one of a few hundred residents from Jurain, Shyampur, Madhya Badda, Rampura and Teigaon who staged a demonstration in front of the Wasa's Karwan Bazar headquarters on April 23 last year, demanding supply of pure water.

The image of him carrying a jug full of dirty water as a sarcastic gift of 'sherbet' for Wasa managing director Taqsem A Khan for saying "water supplied by Wasa was 100 percent safe" is still fresh in the minds of Dhaka residents.

"Unfortunately, nothing has changed," Mizanur told The Daily Star on Sunday.

Mohammad Kanchan, a resident of West Kafrul, said their water has a bad smell throughout the year, but it turns dirty when it rains.

Sakhawat Hossain, a resident of Satish Sarker Road, echoed Kanchan's words.

"The situation is bad at the moment. But I'm afraid things may turn worse during Eid-ul-Azha, when hundreds of sacrificial animals will be slaughtered. We might get blood-stained water, like [we did] last year," Hossain feared.

Wasa has around 8,000 kilometres of supply line -- around 3,000 km of which consist of derelict 150-year-old pipes -- for around 3.9 lakh connections in its 360 square kilometre service area. It produces 255 crore litres of water daily. Of this, 22 percent is surface water and the rest is extracted from underground with 900 deep tube wells, according to an official of Wasa.

A Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report published on April 17, 2019, said 91 percent of Wasa subscribers had to boil the supply water to make it drinkable and, in the process, burned gas worth Tk 332 crore a year.

The TIB findings also showed that nearly 45 percent of subscribers do not get the desired amount of water, while about 35 percent complain of poor-quality water throughout the year.

Wasa MD Taqsem A Khan had however snubbed the TIB report as 'unfounded'.

While supply of safe water is an issue Wasa is yet to ensure, the key utility service provider has also come under severe criticism for failing to solve the perennial waterlogging problem in the capital during monsoon.

Persistent rain last week that caused various city streets to be submerged and many residential areas inundated with knee to waist-deep water, once again exposed Wasa's poor drainage management system.

According to Wasa officials, more

than Tk 5 crore was spent under different projects to clean and develop Dhaka's 26 canals this year. Besides, around Tk 12 crore more was spent on cleaning and repairing the drainage network.

Dhaka residents, however, have not benefited from those initiatives.

The two city corporation mayors -- Dhaka South's Fazle Noor Tapash and Dhaka North's Atiqul Islam -- on Wednesday came down heavily on Wasa and Bangladesh Water Development Board for their failure to properly clean the canals and the drainage system. During an unannounced visit at some canals and pumping stations along with LGRD minister Tajul Islam, they even demanded that the responsibility be hand over to the city corporations.

Dhaka Wasa maintains 26 canals that stretch for around 80 km, 10-km box culverts, around 385 km stormwater drains and four permanent pumping stations. The two city corporations maintain around 2,200 km of surface drains.

The Bangladesh Water Development Board, on the other hand, are responsible for 52 sluice gates and one pumping station.

According to leading urban planners, although it is Wasa's duty to ensure pure drinking water for all, residents of many parts of Dhaka city are supplied with putrid water despite the price of water having increased 13 times in the last 11 years.

The price per unit (1,000 litres) of water was just Tk 6 in 2009, but now stands at Tk 14.46.

In the last seven fiscal years till 2018-19 Dhaka Wasa has undertaken various projects -- ongoing and completed -- related to the water supply costing approximately Tk 20,500 crore, according to Wasa data.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said that the main reason behind the foul-smelling and dirty water is Wasa's failure to invest sufficiently in meaningfully improving its supply line.

"Wasa just increased the amount of production to say that they are producing according to city dwellers' demands, but did not take necessary steps to improve the supply network to deliver safe water to its subscribers," said Iqbal Habib.

"In the last decade or so, there has also not been any visual change in sewage treatment facilities, although Wasa is charging sewerage bills every month," said Habib, adding that the sewerage networks of Wasa still only covers 19 percent of the city.

"The waste treatment master plan earmarked in 2016 is yet to be implemented. Of the four waste

treatment plants under the master plan, Wasa could start building only one so far at Dasher Kandi, and even that is taking a long time to be completed," said Habib.

Experts also said that Wasa did not show any interest in investing their own funds in solving the waterlogging problem; instead depended on government and foreign funds.

In the last three years, Wasa spent at least Tk 125 crore, but none from its own coffers, says an official of Wasa, wishing not to be named.

According to Wasa data, ongoing and completed projects relating to sewerage and sanitations had cost around Tk 3,473 crore in the last seven years, while the cost of projects to improve the city's drainage system (both natural and artificial) was around Tk 1,433 crore over the same period.

The experts however also blamed waterlogging problems on the fast depletion of low-lying wetlands, flood flow zones, storm water retention ponds, ditches and canals in the name of development.

Time and again, the authorities have been warned of grim consequence in urban storm water management ,but they paid no heed, the experts said.

But the reality is many of the flood flow zones, retention areas and parts of rivers have time and again been filled up in the name of urbanisation.

Wasa's failures on other fronts

Allegations of widespread corruption and delays in project implementation are the other issues that hampered Wasa from providing the desired service to its clients. It was highlighted in a report of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) submitted to the LGRD ministry on July 18, 2019.

Wasa keeps extending deadlines and increasing the costs of its projects to create room for corruption, said the ACC report.

The ACC said corruption and irregularities also took place in the selection of consultants and contractors, during revenue collection and overtime bill disbursements.

Manual meter reading is also an area where syndicates have been formed to misappropriate money and deny the government its revenue, said the report that identified eight projects and three areas in Dhaka Wasa where corruption takes place, and made a 12-point recommendation to prevent graft.

The parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings, in its meeting on October 20 last year asked the Dhaka Wasa boss to take immediate measures to rid the public organisation of corruption and ensure that people get proper services from it.

The JS body also blasted the Wasa MD for his failure to provide safe drinking water to citizens and deal with the waterlogging problem.

In face of repeated criticism, the DWASA MD assured the parliamentary committee that the problems were being dealt with and there would be safe water for all the city's residents by 2021.

WASA MD'S ROLE UNDER SCRUTINY

Dhaka Wasa MD Taqsem A Khan drew huge public backlash last year when he said the 'water is 100 percent safe for drinking'.

He also offered an unconditional apology to the HC bench on December 7, 2019 for making an untrue statement about sewerage lines connected to the Buriganga River.

The Wasa MD submitted a report to the HC on December 2 last year saying that there are 67 underground drains and sewerage lines connected to Buriganga river, although he had submitted another report to the court on June 18 the same year saying that there were no such lines connected to the Buriganga.

Besides, TIB on July 20 termed repeated reappointment of Taqsem A Khan 'questionable' and called for a neutral audit of performance.

"After a controversial appointment in 2009, the present Wasa managing director has been serving the post in questionable ways for five consecutive terms for the last 11 years," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said in a media statement.

"It could be known through media reports and other authentic sources that rules and regulations have been violated on each occasion of renewing his appointment," said Iftekharuzzaman.

The TIB executive director said allegations against the Wasa managing director's reappointment also came to light in TIB's report titled "Dhaka Wasa: Challenges of Good Governance and Way Forward".

Taqsem's current term expires on October 14.

What the Dhaka Wasa MD has to say

On the issue of waterlogging, the Wasa MD blamed reduction of natural reservoirs like rivers, canals, water bodies and flood flow zones in the city.

"Artificial drains are not the solution," Taqsem told The Daily Star on July 23.

When his attention was drawn to the recent remarks of the two Dhaka City Corporation mayors, the Wasa MD said, "I have said many times before that this work should come under one government body instead of seven."

About the TIB report on his holding the post for five consecutive terms, Taqsem said he was ready to hold the position as long as the government desires and finds him productive.

He also said, "The government will be able to answer why they kept me in the post for a long time."

About ACC's corruption report, Taqsem said the allegations of corruption have to be proved first.

"As far as I know, not a single allegation has been proved yet. What does it mean? It means the allegations were not based on facts," he said, adding that his organisation takes immediate action whenever they find any irregularities.

The Wasa MD has often been heard telling reporters that Wasa's production of water supply is now in surplus against demand, but there are some pockets that creates water crisis due to technical problems.

Regarding the failure of providing safe water to city dwellers, Taqsem said Wasa's water is safe at source but is contaminated in some areas due to leakage of old pipelines.

3,000 dead

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observed dropping gradually since July 3.

According to it, the number of tests fell by 5.1 percent in the last one week.

At the regular briefing on Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh, Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services, said 12,714 samples were tested across the country in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday.

The previous day, 12,859 samples were tested.

According to the DGHS, in the last 20 weeks since the detection of first coronavirus case in the country, 2,243 people, aged over 50, died from novel coronavirus infection.

Of the 3,000 dead, 2,358 were male and the rest were female.

Thirty-five more people breathed their last in the 24 hours after being infected with coronavirus, said Prof Nasima.

The death rate now stands at 1.31 percent of the confirmed Covid-19 cases, she said at the online briefing yesterday.

Meanwhile, 1,731 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours.

The number of recoveries is now 1,27,414, and the recovery rate is 55.59 percent.

Some 713 people were put under isolation in the 24 hours, added Prof Nasima.

Masked men rape girl, rob her home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A group of masked men has looted gold ornaments from a house, beaten up the owner couple and raped their daughter in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila.

Raju Sarker, officer-in-charge of Rajarhat Police Station, said the incident took place early Monday and a case was filed later that day.

Police, however, could not arrest anyone as of 8:30pm yesterday.

The law enforcers are trying their best to bring the culprits to books, the OC said.

According to the case statement, three masked men entered their house at midnight, tied up the parents and looted gold ornaments worth Tk 2.5 lakh and other valuables. One of the three also raped their ninth grader daughter.

Locals rescued the family and admitted them to Rajarhat Upazila Health Complex on the night. The girl was referred to Kurigram District Sadar Hospital on Monday afternoon, the OC said.

The father also said that they previously received illicit messages over phone from unknown people. He could not identify any of the three criminals.

Floods, coronavirus hobble two of India's poorest states

REUTERS

Floods caused by heavy monsoon rains in two of India's poorest states have displaced or affected 8 million people and killed 111 since May, authorities said yesterday, at a time when coronavirus cases have swelled there.

The Brahmaputra river in the northeastern state of Assam is flowing above the "danger level" in many places, while heavy rains that began this week in Bihar in the east will last until Wednesday, officials say.

Since the start of the monsoon season on June 1, Assam has received 15% more rainfall than a 50-year average and Bihar 47% more, according to the country's weather department.

The floods in Assam, where at least nine one-horned rhinos have drowned in an inundated national park, have so far affected 5.7 million people, more than 45,000 of whom are still sheltered in makeshift relief centres.

Swollen rivers wreak havoc



A part of Balua Flood Control Dam on the Bangalee river is breached in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila affecting 20 villages. PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

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A total of 1,84,833 people have been affected by flood in the district as the Padma river is flowing 119 cm above the danger mark, recorded at the Goalanda ghat point.

Many flood-hit people along with their livestock have taken shelter in safe places.

In Gaibandha, around 1 lakh people of 20 villages under Gobindaganj upazila have been waterlogged since an embankment broke down on July 25.

A 40-metre long portion of the 39-km long Balua Flood Control Dam was breached at Bochadaha on Saturday, while another 30-metre broke of the dam at Balua area on Monday.

Along with houses, a vast area of Aman paddy croplands and sugarcane fields were inundated.

"Different parts of the dam were breached in the last three years as officials of WDB do not work properly," Md Zafirul Islam, a resident of Gobindaganj's Balua village, alleged.

"Our house was located next to the dam. When a portion of the dam

suddenly broke on Monday, our house was submerged instantly," said Abu Sayeed, a resident of Nayapara village under the same upazila.

Many villagers are suffering from a shortage of food and drinking water.

Moklesur Rahman, executive engineer of Gaibandha WDB, said, "Some portions of the dam were breached multiple times in the last three years as the soil here is weak."

In Tangail, the district town protection dam is under threat due to severe current of the Pungli river, a branch of the mighty Jamuna.

Local WDB officials said the Pungli's current becomes stronger at the curves and a number of cracks have appeared along the dam in those places.

"We are trying to protect the dam by dumping geo bags on a temporary basis. We are on vigil round the clock to protect the dam," said Md Sirajul Islam, executive engineer of Tangail's WDB.

In Manikganj, the flood situation has further deteriorated as the Padma, Jamuna, Dhaleswari and Kaliganga rivers were flowing above the danger

mark.

Except for the Jamuna, water of the other three rivers has continued to rise, said local WDB officials yesterday afternoon.

Over six lakh people have been affected by the flood in the district.

In Munshiganj, the swollen Padma washed away the Shimulia ferry terminal and a portion of the approach road, yesterday at noon.

Ferry service in Shimulia-Kathalbari route was disrupted and all the Ro-Ro ferry service was suspended.

"We are trying to make an alternative arrangement. But the river is very rough with severe current," said Khaja Mia, chairman of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), yesterday.

"If we cannot make an alternative arrangement, we will request all vehicles to take the Paturia-Doulatdia route," he added.

An official from the Shimulia ghat said, the ferry terminal was floating in the river as its pillars were eroded by the Padma.

Besides, the connecting road to the terminal, a food store of BIWTC and a mosque were also eroded, he added.

A large number of vehicles were waiting on both sides of the river to cross through the route.

Meanwhile, water of the rivers surrounding the capital are also showing a rising trend, said a bulletin of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), yesterday.

The bulletin mentioned that the trend will continue today.

A total of 18 rivers across the country were flowing above danger level yesterday, according to the FFWC.

Over 47 lakhs of people of 153 upazila under 31 districts have been affected by flood, according to the latest report of National Disaster Response Coordination Centre.

Our correspondents from Faridpur, Gaibandha, Tangail and Manikganj contributed to the story.

Hajj begins today

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State media showed health workers sanitising their luggage, and some pilgrims reported being given electronic wristbands to allow authorities to monitor their whereabouts.

Workers, clutched brooms and disinfectant, were seen cleaning the area around the Kaaba, the structure at the centre of the Grand Mosque draped in gold-embroidered cloth towards which Muslims around the world pray.

Hajj authorities have cordoned the Kaaba this year, saying pilgrims will not be allowed to touch it, to limit the chances of infection.

They also reported setting up multiple health facilities, mobile clinics

and ambulances to cater to the pilgrims, who will be required to wear masks and observe social distancing.

"There are no security-related concerns in this pilgrimage, but it is to protect pilgrims from the danger of the pandemic," Khalid bin Qarar Al-Harbi, Saudi Arabia's director of public security, told reporters on Monday.

Some 70 percent of the pilgrims are foreigners residing in the kingdom, while the rest will be Saudi citizens.

All worshippers were required to be tested for coronavirus before arriving in Makkah and will also have to quarantine after the pilgrimage as the number of cases in the kingdom nears 270,000 -- one of the largest outbreaks


in the Middle East.

They were given elaborate amenity kits that include sterilised pebbles for a stoning ritual, disinfectants, masks, a prayer rug and the ihram, a seamless white garment worn by pilgrims, according to a hajj ministry programme document.

'INDESCRIBABLE FEELING'

The foreign press are barred from this year's hajj, usually a huge global media event, as the government tightens access to Makkah.

Saudi authorities initially said only around 1,000 pilgrims residing in the kingdom would be permitted for the hajj but local media reports say as many as 10,000 will be allowed to take part.



Islamic Bank
Bangladesh Limited
Based on Islamic Shari'ah

Head Office
Islamic Bank Tower
40 Dilkusha Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000

Notice of the 37th Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 37th Annual General Meeting of **Islamic Bank Bangladesh Limited** will be held on **Thursday, the 20th August, 2020 at 11.30 A.M.** through Digital Platform for transacting the following businesses:

AGENDA

- 1) To receive, consider and adopt the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December, 2019 along with Reports of the Directors and Auditors thereon.
- 2) To approve Dividend for the year ended 31st December, 2019.
- 3) To appoint Auditor(s) and to fix up their remuneration for the Year 2020.
- 4) To elect / re-elect Directors.
- 5) To approve appointment of Independent Director(s).
- 6) To appoint Professional for the certification on Corporate Governance Code for the Year 2020 and fixation of their remuneration.

All Members are requested to make it convenient to attend the Meeting in time.

By order of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
J Q M Habibullah, FCS
DMD & Company Secretary

Dated: Dhaka
28th July, 2020

Notes:

a) The "**Record date**" was on **21st July, 2020** i.e. the honourable shareholders whose names were appeared in the CDS (Central Depository System)/Company's Register on the **21st July, 2020** are eligible to attend & vote at the Annual General Meeting and be entitled to get dividend for the Year 2019 against their shareholdings.

b) Pursuant to the Bangladesh Securities Exchange Commission's (BSEC) Order No.SEC/SRMIC/04-231/932 dated 24 March 2020, this will be a virtual meeting of the Members, which will be conducted via live webcast by using Digital Platform.
The members are requested to log in the link "<https://www.islamicbankbd.com/AGM>" for attending the 37th Annual General Meeting of the Bank.

c) Link for joining in AGM through Digital Platform and details login process will be notified to the respective email address. Full log in/participation process for the Digital Platform meeting will also be available in the Bank's website : www.islamicbankbd.com.

d) A member eligible for attending and voting at the Annual General Meeting may appoint a proxy on his/her behalf. Power of Attorney/Proxy Form must be submitted to the Registered Office or Share & Bond Division (63 Dilkusha C/A, 5th Floor, Dhaka) of the Company at least 48 (Forty Eight) hours before the Meeting i.e. **11.30 A.M. on Tuesday, the 18th August, 2020**. Revenue Stamp of Tk.20/- (Taka Twenty) only shall have to be affixed on the Proxy Form.

e) As per Bangladesh Securities Exchange Commission (BSEC) Gazette Notification No.BSEC/CMRRC/2006-158/208/admin/81, dated 20th June, 2018, soft copy of Annual Report along with the Attendance Slip, Proxy Form and the Notice will be forwarded to the all members at their respective email addresses available in their Beneficiary Owner (BO) accounts as per CDNL record. Shareholder may collect the printed copy of the Annual Report from the Registered Office or Share & Bond Division (63 Dilkusha C/A, 5th Floor, Dhaka) if required in writing beforehand. Soft copy of Annual Report for the Year 2019 shall be available on Bank's website: www.islamicbankbd.com.

f) Election of Directors will be dealt in terms of Articles of Association of the Company and relevant rules/laws/circulars in force.

N.B.: As per BSEC Notification No.SEC/SRMI/2000-953/1950 dated 24th October 2000 and Circular No. SEC/CMRRC/2009-193/154 dated 24th October 2013, No Gift/Gift Coupon/Gift Box/Food/Food Coupon/Food Box etc. shall be given to the shareholders in the 37th Annual General Meeting of the Bank.

www.islamicbankbd.com