

DOWN TO EARTH

Privatisation of WASA water

By Khalilur Rahman

A bath costs Taka 2. The cost of bathing either a child or a grown up is the same. The price of an earthen pitcher or a bucketful of water is Taka one.

A man sitting on the ground under an umbrella is collecting money from each person having a bath or buying water at a place in Tejgaon area in the metropolis. The water trade in that place is continuing for over three years.

It is a profitable business. Each day's sales proceeds come to around Taka 2,000. But the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA), Dhaka does not earn a single farthing out of the water business though WASA is the lone organisation handling water supply to the city dwellers.

The Daily Star correspondent Inam Ahmed was sent to investigate the water trade on the basis of information sent to our office. The trade has been going on uninterrupted. The man under the umbrella, collecting money from the bathers or the water buyers, told the Star that he was not the owner of the business. But he refused to divulge the name of the owner. He was found to be hesitant in talking to the Star correspondent and repeatedly asked his identity.

Close to the open-air 'bathing centre' there is a vast slum along the railway tracks. About 3000 people reside in several hundred small thatched huts in this sprawling bustee. The slum-dwellers mostly work as day-labourers in the industrial zone or at the nearby market places. The womenfolk also find jobs as maids in the locality or as spice-crushers in hotels.

As other inhabitants of bustees elsewhere in the city there is no provision for either toilets or supply of drinking water for the slum-dwellers here. The adult inhabitants of the bustee respond to the call of nature all along the railway tracks others in every vacant space around. But they are

fortunate to have this source of water for bathing and cooking. There are three taps and the connections have been taken out of the supply line inside some shops there. It is difficult to guess the source of the tap connections at first sight behind the shops. Two big drums are kept on a concrete platform. Plastic pipes pour water into the drums while people bath on the platform. Inside the shops the water pipes are well concealed under the concrete slabs.

Rahima (36), a slum-dweller told the Star that she and other members of her family have been living there for over five years. Rahima works in a nearby hotel kitchen. She said that previously the people of the slum had to suffer badly for want of water. They used to collect water from distant places with much difficulty. But now one of their major problems is over.

Hanif (26), another resident of the slum, said that bathing was too expensive. Therefore they usually take a bath after a day or two. The shopkeepers, hotel staff and other people who are not the inhabitants of the slum also have baths or buy water from the unauthorised taps. Some of the consumers told the Star that over 500 people bathe or buy water from each of the three taps every day. The rush of people becomes heavy during hot and humid days.

A group of local people told the Star that some persons visit the water trader regularly to collect money and the business goes on smoothly. The toll collector, however, made no comment when his attention was drawn to this matter. Both the drums kept at the place were found overflowing and in the process a huge quantity of water was being wasted. A little care could save the precious water from continuous wastage. A drastic measure is, indeed, necessary to conserve the supply for the

seven million water hungry populace of the metropolis. It is also essential that the slum-dwellers and the floating people in the capital who constitute one-third of the total population get a supply of water and safe toilets. In fact, this section of the townpeople lives a sub-human life devoid of any civic amenities.

At present WASA can supply only half of the total requirements of water in the city. WASA sources said. About 12 crore gallons of water are produced daily by 140 deep tube-wells spread over the city including 30 lakh gallons treated at the lone water works at Chandi Ghat. Over a century ago the water works was set up by Nawab Sir Abdul Ghani for treatment of water from the river Buriganga and to maintain supply to the city-dwellers.

Of the total quantity of water produced daily, 20 per cent goes to waste, according to an official estimate. The rest is utilised by 1.12,000 WASA consumers and unauthorised users. The WASA has listed some of the major sources of wastage of water as : a) through many of the 1200 street hydrants without bib cocks, b) leakage developed in the supply line, c) burst pipes and d) negligence on the part of the consumers.

Public awareness about the proper use of water is essential to check wastage, the WASA source told the Star. Regular publicity is needed to achieve this goal, the source added.

But an expert on water supply told the Star that the supply network based on deep tube-wells is always a temporary source. The permanent system is based on the river. For this reason, three decades ago Demra Water Treatment Plant was undertaken for the water supply to the city. We shall try to narrate the progress made so far in this regard to meet the increasing demand for water in the fast-expanding city in this column at a later date.

Public holdings

From Page 1 Col. 4 London. The Finance Minister said that he considered the BCCI as a dynamic and modern bank. But, he added, the government has limited operational flexibility to deal with the BCCI affairs since it is a foreign private bank. However, various options for facilitating the resumption of its operations are still under consideration, he added while pointing out that it is a difficult issue and certainly the government can not bear the responsibilities of its future operations at tax-payers money.

UNB adds: The Finance Minister ruled out any deviation by the government from its policy of pursuing market economy. "BNP came to power with the commitment to facilitate by all means private initiatives so that economy gets market orientation fast and there is no chance to fall back," told the leading businessmen at the MCCI.

The Minister discarded allegation of the business community that successive publication of defaulters' lists was aimed at maligning the private sector.

"We don't have any vengeance towards the private sector... rather we want them as parallel partners in national progress," Rahman said. Certain misunderstanding has arisen, he said referring to the recent disclosure of big-amount bank loanees in the parliament.

"But there shouldn't be any misunderstanding as the list was a borrower's one which I was liable to place before the House, responding to a query. It was not a defaulter list... it was misinterpreted," the Minister added.

He, however, pointed at the prevailing crisis in the banking sector that has grown out of non-payment of the loans. One has to pay back loan otherwise, he said, the whole banking sector would lead to cease.

"Particularly once a parliament is there you should be more careful as you should know there is no secrecy in the parliament," Saifur Rahman said.

NBR Chairman Nurul Hossain Khan and other government officials were present.

BSS adds: The Finance Minister called for cooperation from all quarters to attain economic self-reliance. He said, "it

JCD, BCL clash in Sirajganj: 20 injured

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 1: At least 20 people were injured in scattered clashes between student fronts of Awami League and BNP here tonight, reports UNB.

Eight of them sustained serious cuts as the rival groups used sharp weapons apart from sticks, witnesses said.

A furniture shop was also set on fire. The trouble started at about 8-30 pm as Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists allegedly attacked a Chhatra League (A-A) procession passing by the BNP office in the town.

The attack was allegedly prompted by derogatory slogans against Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia by the processionists.

At least 10 people were injured during the first round of running street battles.

An hour later, the two groups were again locked in clashes near Sirajganj Government College, leaving another 10 injured.

The furniture shop was set afire amid chase and counter-chase during the second round of trouble. Fire Brigade, however, brought the fire under control quickly.

Shops downed shutters amid the street fight. Riot police were posted at major crossings.

Both parties were parading the town roads in militant processions.

SCOP hunger strike for CU VC's removal

From Our Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 1: Shibir-backed Sammilito Chhatra Otkya Parishad (SCOP) started its 18 hour token hunger strike from 6 pm Thursday in front of the Chittagang University Vice Chancellors' residence demanding the implementation of enquiry commission report and removal of the incumbent Vice Chancellor Professor Alamgir Mohammad Serajuddin.

Another Shibir supported organisation Sangrami Chhatra Otkya also started continuous sit-in in front of the VC's residence from 8 am Thursday to press the same demand.

UNB adds: VC's office remained under lock and key for the last 12 days. He has been performing his official duties from his residence.

Police officials, visited the VC's residence today to ensure his safety.



Police taking into custody those arrested in connection with the armed attack on the JCD rally at Jagannath College on Thursday. - Star photo

Janata got maximum government ads

State Minister for Information, Nurul Huda, Thursday held out the assurance that the government would extend all possible cooperation for the solution of the problems in some newspapers, reports BSS.

Making a statement in the House in response to a question from Monirul Haq Chowdhury (JP-Comilla) he said the government was anxious to solve the problems and hoped that these would be resolved through discussions. In this connection, he categorically said the BNP government fully believed in the freedom of the press.

Referring to the problems in some newspapers, Huda said publication of only three newspapers namely Ittefaq, Sangbad and Khabar had now remained suspended centering the implementation of the Fourth Wage Board Award. He said after the rejection of the prayer of the newspaper owners both by the High Court and the Supreme Court, five newspaper owners had fled cases with the High Court individually, challenging the Wage Board. Of the five newspapers the owners of the 'Inquilab'

and 'the Azad' later withdrew their cases, he added.

He informed the House that the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was also concerned over the situation in newspapers.

Turning to 'Dainik Janata,' Nurul Huda said this particular newspaper was first published on June 15, 1984. A newspaper was qualified for enlistment in the media list of the Department of the Film and Publication (DFFP) for advertisement after 180 days of its publication. But the Dainik Janata was enlisted in the media list illegally within one month of its publication, he added.

Narrating the special patronage this particular newspaper got during the period of the past government, he said in 1988-89 the Dainik Janata got 92,896 inches of advertisement as against little over 71,000 inches given to the Ittefaq, the highest circulated newspaper, during the same period. Again in 1989-90 the Dainik Janata was given 86,186 inches of advertisement compared to 61,144 inches given to the Ittefaq, he said.

BKSAL, AL merger

From Page 1 Col. 8

the party under the leadership of Syed Ahmed have expressed their dissent over the merger decision.

Syed Ahmed said that they had no objection to joining the Awami League but that they would not accept the leadership of Sheikh Hasina as president of the party.

Syed Ahmed and others opposed to the merger said that the BKSAL had to split from the Awami League in 1983 only because of the wrong leadership of Sheikh Hasina and that her role during the last ten years as party President had contributed a lot to splitting the soldiers of 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

At the beginning of the discussions, the student wing of the BKSAL, the Jatiya Chhatra League had vehemently opposed the merger of the party with the Awami League.

Jahangir Sattar Tinku, President of the Jatiya Chhatra League opposed the Merger and threatened BKSAL central leaders to continue its existence as an independent organisation.

But later Jahangir Sattar Tinku was reportedly convinced by his predecessor Khorshed Alam Sujon to support the stand of the majority members of the BKSAL work-

ing committee.

However the Jatiya Chhatra League has not yet decided anything on whether it will merge with the Chhatra League - the student wing of the Awami League.

Meanwhile Awami League and BKSAL sources told The Daily Star that everything has been finalised to stage the merger.

The five MPs of BKSAL are also unanimous on the decision to go back to their old bastion.

The merger process was initiated after the defeat of the Awami League in the February 27 Parliament election.

The working committees of the Awami League and the BKSAL in their post-election evaluations resolved that the debacle of the Awami League in the election was due to the split among the soldiers of Bangabandhu.

According to the sources a meeting between the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and the BKSAL leader Abdur Razzak was held in New Delhi with Congress leader Pronob Mukherjee when both of them went to India to attend the cremation of Indian leader Rajiv Gandhi.

At that meeting the two leaders decided to work unitedly.

World Bank VP

From Page 1 Col. 8

"The amount was about 500 million Dollars higher than the level of 1.81 billion Dollars pledged in 1990-91.

During his visit to Dhaka, the WB Vice President will be holding discussions with government leaders including the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman.

He is also likely to call on the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman indicated on Thursday at his meeting with the members of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry that the discussions with the WB Vice President would cover reform programmes in financial, trade, industrial and agricultural sectors.

Sources said that disbursements of credits in the energy and financial sectors, withheld by the Bank since January 31 for non-fulfillment of related policy conditions, would also figure in the discussions.

The industrial policy and the export and import policies announced recently by the

government, as well as the budgetary measures for 1991-92 will also come up for a detailed review at the meetings, the sources added.

The WB credit programme for the industrial sector has not been yet approved, though negotiations and discussions on the same were completed much earlier.

At the last Consortium meeting, Attila Karaozomanoglu in his statement noted the developments following the parliamentary elections in Bangladesh.

The increased number of donor pledges at the Consortium meeting symbolized 'the renewed confidence of the aid group in the quality of economic management and the new government's stated intentions to accelerate growth, meet Bangladesh's pressing poverty alleviation and curb corruption," so he observed.

But he, at the same time, cautioned all sides that increasing donor support could be justified only by 'demonstrated performance and tangible results.'

AL bill on judiciary sent to Select Body

By Staff Correspondent

The Constitution amendment bill introduced by AL member Salahuddin Yusuf was sent to an 11-member Select Committee on Thursday without opposition.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Haidar is the chairman of the Select Committee. Its other members are: Salahuddin Yusuf, Sudhansu Sekhar Haidar, Suranjit Sengupta, Anwaruzzaman, Amirul Huq, Abu Yusuf, Khalilur Rahman, Khondaker Delwar Hossain, Sheikh Anwar Ali, Advocate Fazle Rabbi and Barrister Rafiqul Islam. The committee is to submit its report to the House within three days.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Haidar supported the proposal by Salahuddin Yusuf to refer the bill to the Select Committee. The bill seeks to ensure independence of the judiciary by separating it from the executive.

He said that the government believes in the independence of the judiciary and would introduce a bill in the next session to ensure complete separation of the judiciary from the executive.

He, however, said that mere passage of laws would not ensure judicial independence, if the Judges did not have security of life, and had no freedom.

19 arrested

From Page 1 Col. 7

attack. Later, the group that attacked the JCD rally took up positions behind the College area and continued intermittently firing and blasting bombs for about two hours. None was hurt in the shots or explosions.

At one stage, police chased the armed men up to the Mahanagar Bhaban.

During the violent incidents students of the Pogos School were kept hostage within the school compound for hours.

Police identified the arrested persons as: Swapan Ghosh, (20), Morshed Alam Andolon (21), Najim, Selim, Mahbubur Rahman, Tapan Pal, Matti Lal, Sukumar, Nasimuzzaman, Ashim Bhattacharjee, Shohebur Rahman, Abul Kalam Azad, Shahidul Islam, Abdul Hannan, Ratan Chandra Nath, MA Samad alias Helal, Mynuddin, Biplob Das, Firoj Islam and Md Harun-ur-Rashid.

Morshed and Andolon are reportedly Chhatra League (S-A) workers while the others could not be identified.

Khaleda

From Page 1 Col. 8

Advocate Dakhina Ranjan Biswas and Prof Judhisthir Bala.

They said they had joined the party inspired by its ideology and programmes aimed at achieving welfare of the people.

The function was addressed, among others, by State Minister for Education Principal Yunus Khan, Ms Selima Rahman, MP, Bibhuti Bhushan Biswas and Padanava Thakur.

The Prime Minister said her government believed in the equality of all people, irrespective of cast and creed. "We hope that every citizen of Bangladesh would contribute his mite to the nation-building activities," she said.

Begum Zia said some quarters had utilised a particular community for their own self-interest but did nothing for their welfare. But our party would make all efforts to unite all citizens so that peace, progress and prosperity are achieved," she said.

She was critical of those who talk about democracy yet indulge in activities detrimental to it. She said democracy which we achieved has to be consolidated at any cost.

The Midnight File

Crisis session of Lithuania's parliament

MOSCOW, Aug 1: Separatist Lithuania recalled parliament back from holiday for a crisis session today amid horror at the cold-blooded killing of six border guards. The guards were shot dead in a dawn raid on their customs post in the worst border attack since the Baltic republic proclaimed independence from Moscow last year, reports Reuter.

Helsinki Human Rights Day

KIEV, Aug 1: US President George Bush, visiting the Ukraine capital Kiev, proclaimed today as Helsinki Human Rights Day 1991. A statement from the travelling White House cited the Yugoslav crisis as an example of the ethnic conflicts which remain an obstacle to universal compliance with the 1975 Helsinki accords on human rights, reports AFP.

Croatia calls up reservists

SISAK (Yugoslavia), Aug 1: Croatia called up all reserves on Thursday after its security forces were forced to abandon a vital stronghold to ethnic Serbian militants and escort a convoy of 1,000 fearful villagers to safety. The secessionist republic's President, Franjo Tudjman, announced the full mobilisation in parliament, accusing Serbia of waging "a war of conquest," reports AP.

AL wants assurance

From Page 1 Col. 4

Abdus Samad Azad, Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that the Indemnity Bill introduced by Mohammad Nasim should not be taken lightly. More than 15 days had passed since notice for the bill was given. Its introduction should not be delayed further, he said.

Abdus Samad Azad said that there had been a revolution in Bangladesh for the establishment of the rule of law. The Indemnity Ordinance of 1975 was an obstacle to the establishment of the rule of law. He wanted to know what were the obstacles to the introduction of Nasim's bill.

Mirza Golam Haidar while assuring not to create obstacles to the introduction of the bill said that the bill was the most complicated one he had seen in his 45-year career as a lawyer.

He said that the Opposition had given convincing arguments in favour of the bill, but there were many knots which had to be opened to pave the way for its passage.

He invited constitutional experts in the Opposition Bench to work together to clear the complexities.

As to the point why the bill was not being introduced even after fifteen days of notice, the Law Minister said that the Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated in 1975 and that the AL took 16 years to decide on the initiation of the bill. It was in Parliament in 1979, and in 1986 but it did not attempt to pass such a bill. "Now please don't try to put the entire blame on me for the delay. Take the blame for year lapses also", he said.

JCD blames BCL(S-A) for campus violence

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of BNP at a rally Thursday at the National Press Club demanded immediate reopening of the Dhaka University and other educational institutions.

The rally also demanded expulsion of the killers of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon from the university.

Speakers at the rally accused Awami League's student front Chhatra League (S-A) for "unleashing terrorism at the educational institutions throughout the country."

Pass the bills

From Page 1 Col. 3

the Election Commission would have to hold referendum before organising election of a president under the amended Constitution.

A minister who is among those who have been asked to communicate and explain the situation to the opposition said "it's no decision, but a constitutional compulsion".

He said that keeping in view the time constraint, the ruling party considered it different to continue discussion on the Constitution Amendment Bills beyond Sunday.

The source said that even those opposition leaders who were not members of the Business Advisory Committee were invited to sittings of the committee and informed about the tight situation.

A senior opposition leader told a State Minister on Thursday they had sought assurance from the ruling party for paving the way for the introduction of an Indemnity Bill proposed by Mohammad Nasim, but they did not make it a condition for lending support to the Constitution Amendment Bills.

There had been confusion in the ruling party as to what the opposition would ultimately do in respect of the Constitution Amendment Bills, as they spent almost an entire private member's day in the House to press the introduction of the proposed Indemnity Bill.

Meanwhile, an extended meeting of Bangladesh Awami League scheduled for today (Friday) is expected to make clear the party's strategy on Constitution Amendment Bills vis a vis the proposed Indemnity Bill.