

# DOWN TO EARTH WASA offers you half a glass of water

By Khalilur Rahman

A large number of women — young, middle-aged and old — came out on the streets in a procession and gathered in front of the WASA (Water Supply and Sewerage Authority) head office at Kawran Bazar in the city. Each of the protesters was carrying an empty earthen pitcher which they smashed before staging a sit-in demonstration demanding regular water supply to their localities.

The demonstrators, who were suffering badly due to acute scarcity of drinking water came all the way from different sections of Mirpur housing estate, about eight kilometers from the WASA office.

This was, indeed, a novel way of registering protest. The representatives of the women demonstrators later met the WASA officials and submitted a memorandum calling for an early solution to their long-drawn problem.

This was about three years ago that such a demonstration was staged by the citizens. But since then situation has not improved. Rather, scarcity of water has deepened in many areas of the metropolis.

With only 12 crore gallons of water produced daily by WASA through 140 deep tubewells and the lone water works at Chandni Ghat, WASA can hardly meet half the total requirement of water for nearly seven million city dwellers. Then again, out of the total production, about 20 per cent water goes waste everyday.

In this column last Friday

we mentioned that the existing water supply system, based on deep tubewells, is nothing but a temporary measure. The permanent system lies with the river source, experts say. Exclusively based on this concept, WASA was created in 1963 by an ordinance. A vast tract of land was acquired for setting up of a water treatment plant on the bank of the Sitalakha at Demra. The project was due to be financed by the World Bank. A huge sum of money has already been spent, but the progress so far made was quite negligible.

Of late, the government has taken up the matter with all seriousness and made substantial progress in implementing the water treatment plant. The Ministry of Local Government has drawn up a plan after a fresh study and recommended shifting of the plant from Demra to Syedabad. Official sources told The Daily Star that the new plan would substantially reduce the cost of the project.

The original water treatment plant at Demra envisaged supply of water to the city through huge pipes called trunk lines. This will involve a huge additional cost and raise the price of water beyond the reach of the commonman, WASA sources said. At present, WASA charges Taka 12.52 for each 1,000 gallons of water for domestic use and Taka 40.70 for commercial or industrial consumption.

The new government plan only proposes shifting of the venue of the plant and all other factors remain the same

as incorporated in the original project. The proposed plant has a capacity to produce 20 crore gallons of water per day. The existing canals of Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) Project will be used as substitute for the costly trunk lines for drawing water to the plant at Syedabad. The canal is already extended up to the river Sitalakha at Demra from Syedabad. This will save money which would otherwise have been needed for digging a new canal for the plant. Moreover, the existing DND canal will shorten the distance from the Sitalakha to Syedabad compared to the laying of trunk lines, official sources said.

The new plan now awaits final approval of the government. When implemented, the plant will meet the total requirement of water for the fast-expanding city, the WASA source added.

With regard to the existing system of water supply in the city, an official of the Local Government Ministry said, it was too complicated and time-consuming to instal pumps. In view of the acute scarcity of water at Gopibagh, Hazaribagh and Madartek, WASA has commissioned three pumps recently, one each in those places. This has increased the strength of deep tubewells to 143. These three pumps can produce 10 lakh gallons of water per day.

The cost of each pump now comes to about Taka 60 lakh, not to speak of other costs. So this is too costly a venture to maintain water supply through deep tubewells.



Famous for her "Pratham Bangladesh, Amar Shesh Bangladesh", Shahnaz Rahmatullah is rendering a song at a cultural function of Jatiyatobadi Samajik-Sanskritik Sangstha (JASAS), organised to mark the passage of the Constitution 12th Amendment Bill, in front of the National Press Club Thursday.

—Star photo

## Nine JN College student parties float new front

Nine student organisations of the Jagannath University College Thursday floated an alliance styled Progressive Students' Unity (PSU) aiming to restore congenial atmosphere on the violence-torn campus, reports UNB.

The new combine of nine left-leaning student groups demanded immediate reopening of the college and inquiry into various "irregularities" prevailing there.

PSU, floated at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club Thursday afternoon, also demanded arrest of all armed hoodlums and democratic atmosphere on the college campus.

It urged the college authorities to convene a meeting of the Education Atmosphere Council to discuss and resolve the present crisis on the campus shut down after bloody clashes that left two student leaders dead.

A written statement, read out by BM Shamimul Huq, Convener of Jatiya Chhatra Dal, called for ensuring adequate security before reopening the college.

He also demanded trial of the killing of JCD leader Munir and BCL (A-A) leader Swapno and exemplary punishment of those involved in the killings.

Meanwhile, PSU will submit a memorandum to the Director General of Education Saturday at the outset of its campaign.

## New condition for promotion angers DFI's officers

Staff Correspondent

A new service condition for eligibility for appearing before the Promotion Committee of Nationalised Banks (NCBs) and Development Financing Institutions (DFI) have caused resentment among senior officers.

According to NCB and DFI sources, the Finance Ministry has issued an order requiring a Deputy General Manager (DGM) at least five years' service in his present post to appear before the Promotion Committee for elevation to the post of General Manager.

The earlier requirement was three years.

This has screened out as many as 90 out of 120 DGMs from facing the interview leaving only 30 in the race for the five vacant posts of GM.

The new condition also automatically negates an earlier selection in 1989 for promotion of 10 DGMs and also a panel of 107 DGMs.

The panel was prepared by a committee formed with the Governor and one Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank, Additional Secretary and Joint Secretary of the Finance Ministry.

The selection in 1989 had picked up 26 DGMs from the panel for promotion. First 12 of them were promoted to GM after President's approval, one was dropped due to allegations against him and three were retired.

The ten officers awaiting promotion after the earlier selection, have now to face the Promotion Committee, if they have completed five years' as GM.

The sources said many of the DGMs will retire before fulfilling the new condition for promotion.

## Tamils kill 13 in fresh fighting

COLOMBO, Aug 8: Tamil militants killed at least 13 soldiers in fresh fighting around a strategic army camp that was liberated from a rebel siege last week, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

The Soviet Civil Aviation Ministry countered Thursday by branding any work stoppage by the country's 12,000 air traffic controllers as "illegal" and said it was seeking a court order to block the walkout.

Recent meeting in Thailand and Beijing of Cambodia's Supreme National Council (SNC), which groups all the country's warring factions, have concluded with key agreements on a ceasefire and the nomination as SNC Chairman of Prince Sihanouk, who appears acceptable to both Vietnam and China.

Observers here said the agreements would never have been possible if Hanoi and Beijing had not softened their positions in recent months.

Also expected to aid in the normalisation of relations is the impending, already-agreed-upon resignation of Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who is widely considered an irritant and "anti-Chinese" by the Beijing leadership.

Finally, as Asia's two most important communist countries, China and Vietnam have both opposed the fundamental political reforms which have transformed the Soviet Union and the former communist nations of Eastern Europe.

Observers said they doubtless consider it in their interest to stick closer together now.

## The Midnight File

### French officer kidnapped

BEIRUT, Aug 8: An underground group claimed it kidnapped a French intelligence officer in Lebanon, Lt Jerome Laro, on Thursday to protest the release of a British hostage earlier in the day. The claim was made in a phone call to a western news agency in Beirut by a man saying he spoke for the Organisation for the Defense of the Prisoners' Rights. The same group on Wednesday claimed responsibility for a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a UN office in Beirut and said that attack was a warning against any unconditional release of Western hostages, reports AP.

### Israel ready for hostage deal

JERUSALEM, Aug 8: Israel on Thursday it was ready to free Lebanese prisoners under its control in exchange for Western hostages in Lebanon if captured Israelis were included. Welcoming the release of British hostage John McCarthy, a government spokesman said that any deal would have to include the seven Israeli servicemen missing in Lebanon since 1982, reports AP.

### Seven Kashmir militants killed

SRINAGAR, Aug 8: Paramilitary troops shot and killed seven Kashmir militants Thursday in a gun battle started by a rebel ambush that left two soldiers dead. At least five more people were killed in other parts of Kashmir where Muslim militants are fighting for independence from the predominantly Hindu India, the officials said, reports AP.

### Worst-ever flood in Burma

RANGOON, Aug 8: Burma has been hit by what is being described as the worst flooding in 50 years, and there are fears this season's rice crop will be seriously affected. The flooding, which has hit Burma's "rice bowl," the low-lying southwestern Delta area, has inundated more than 80,000 hectares (200,000 acres) of paddy fields, the official Working People's Daily reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

## Indemnity Ordinance

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proclamation of martial law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975; and whereas Parliament is not in session and the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render immediate action necessary.

The ordinance said the "acts and things" in the morning of 15th August, 1975 were done as necessary step towards the change of government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

But the Ordinance did not mention names of the persons who were killed or did not mention anything regarding the killing. But it was interpreted by the experts that the connotation of the words "acts and things" covered the act of killing. The experts say interpretation could be sought from court whether there could be

any trial of the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman even if the Ordinance was not repealed.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz said that the Indemnity Ordinance was a complex one and it would require to untie many knots. However, yesterday, he gave a hope in the House that the Special Committee would be able to overcome the complexities.

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## Ankara wants to establish buffer zone

### Turkish planes launch new raids into Iraq

ANKARA, Aug 8: Turkish warplanes and helicopters launched new raids Thursday aimed at wiping out Turkish Kurdish guerrilla bases in northern Iraq, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported, says AP.

The attacks came on the fourth day of a huge Turkish offensive that has caused "heavy losses" to the separatist guerrillas, according to the agency.

In another development, officials denied reports that Turkey wanted to reclaim Iraqi territory. But they defended Turkey's decision to establish a narrow "buffer zone" in northern Iraq.

Northern Iraq has been controlled by Iraqi Kurds since an US-led allied humanitarian force pulled out on July 15. Turkey fears its rebels will operate unchecked from the area, even though the Iraqi Kurds deny supporting the Turkish Kurdish guerrillas.

Iraqi Kurdish groups have protested the Turkish attack and said their own people were being killed.

US and allied troops stationed near the Turkish-Iraqi border have not been involved in the operation, officials say. The allied force is poised to defend Iraqi Kurds from any attack by their government.

Anatolia reported that F-4 and F-104 fighter-bombers flew sorties over northern Iraq on Thursday morning in a 2 1/2 hour operation.

Puma and Sikorsky helicopters also attacked guerrilla hideouts, setting them on fire, Anatolia said. Commando units then moved into northern Iraq toward the targets, the agency said, without giving details.

## Launch owners threaten strike

By Staff Correspondent

Launch and cargo vessel owners associations have given an ultimatum to the government to bring down fuel prices to the pre-Gulf war level by August 26.

A joint press release by the Bangladesh Launch Owners Association, Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Association Thursday said they would stop operating their vessels from August 23 if fuel prices were not reduced by that time.

The decision was taken at a meeting of representatives of the three associations on August 6, the press release said.

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## Nasim Khan off to Pakistan

Leader of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh M Nasim Khan left for Pakistan Thursday afternoon at the invitation of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reports UNB.

During his visit, expected to last a week, Nasim Khan will discuss the issue of repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh with the President, Prime Minister and high officials.

He will emphasize on the fixation of a schedule for repatriation of the Pakistanis before August 14, the press release issued by Shoukat Ali, General Secretary SPGRS said.

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) has threatened to go on a long march to Pakistan across India if a definite time table for their repatriation is not announced by August 14.

## JS session

The House was adjourned at 9.36 pm to meet again at 11 am on August 11.

## Tk 76.25 lakh land development tax realised

BARISAL, Aug 8: The revenue department, Bakerganj has realised land development tax amounting to Tk 76,25,896 from ten upazilas of Bakerganj district in the 1990-91 fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the demand was Tk 1,76,03,880 for the year. The cyclone and the tornado had affected the collection of tax this year.

## Vietnam, China agree to normalise ties

HANOI, Aug 8: Vietnam and China have quietly agreed in principle to normalise their long strained relations, diplomatic and Vietnamese sources said today, reports AP.

The sources said the agreement was reached during an unannounced visit to Beijing last week by General Le Duc Anh, the No 2 in the Vietnamese power structure.

Relations between the two communist nations have been tense since Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia more than 12 years ago and China's subsequent attack on Vietnam.

The visit of Anh, who is also Vietnam's Defence Minister, has not been officially confirmed. But the sources, who asked not to be identified, said he travelled to the Chinese capital with Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) Secretary Hong Ha and reported his progress to Vietnam's national assembly.

Anh and his Chinese hosts achieved "positive results," said a source adding that "normalisation is close." The sources said the normalisation process, which has accelerated in recent

## UN membership for North, South Korea recommended

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 8: The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously recommended that rivals North and South Korea simultaneously be admitted to the United Nations in September, reports AP.

The membership application of the two Koreas must still be approved by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly when it convenes September 17, but that is considered a formality.

Once approved, North and South Korea will become the 160th and 161st members of the world body. Both states currently hold non-voting observer status.

Cold War tensions and the bitter rivalry between the Communist North and capitalist South had delayed membership for the two Koreas for years.

But at Thursday's council session, South Korean Ambassador Roe Chang-hee and North Korean Ambassador Pak Gil Yon sat smiling side by side and later shook hands in what might be their first public handshake here.

"This is a giant step toward peace and the reunification of our country," Roe said after the council session.

The council postponed until Friday a vote to recommend the admission of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. Diplomats said the Soviet Union still was awaiting approval from the Soviet legislature in Moscow and described the delay as a technicality.

Security Council President Jose Alaya of Ecuador read a statement welcoming the two Korean states.

"The aspirations of the peoples and governments of

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea have harmoniously coincided," making possible a joint vote on their applications, Alaya said.

Alaya, who holds the rotating council presidency for the month of August, added: "I am certain that as new members (they) will contribute positively to efforts to enhance the work of the United Nations."

"In the positive atmosphere resulting from the end of the Cold War, we note with great satisfaction that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (will) become members of the world organization," he said.

US Ambassador Thomas R Pickering and British Ambassador Sir David Hannay later welcomed the forthcoming membership of the two Koreas, saying they hoped it would contribute to an inter-Korean dialogue.

The Soviet Civil Aviation Ministry countered Thursday by branding any work stoppage by the country's 12,000 air traffic controllers as "illegal" and said it was seeking a court order to block the walkout.

Recent meeting in Thailand and Beijing of Cambodia's Supreme National Council (SNC), which groups all the country's warring factions, have concluded with key agreements on a ceasefire and the nomination as SNC Chairman of Prince Sihanouk, who appears acceptable to both Vietnam and China. Observers here said the agreements would never have been possible if Hanoi and Beijing had not softened their positions in recent months. Also expected to aid in the normalisation of relations is the impending, already-agreed-upon resignation of Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who is widely considered an irritant and "anti-Chinese" by the Beijing leadership. Finally, as Asia's two most important communist countries, China and Vietnam have both opposed the fundamental political reforms which have transformed the Soviet Union and the former communist nations of Eastern Europe. Observers said they doubtless consider it in their interest to stick closer together now.