

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Pails go dry, citizens cry

By A S M Nurunnabi

The city is in the grip of a serious water scarcity. This is one of the consequences of the persistent dry spell that has hit the country. Not that the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is in a position to meet the normal water requirements of the nearly seven million city residents. The current drought has served to compound the crisis.

The WASA reportedly supplies about 13 crore 40 lakh gallons of water daily, which is almost half of the total requirement. With the advent of summer and particularly of the long dry spell, the shortfall in water supply is estimated at one crore gallon daily, according to WASA source. The scarcity, according to that source, has severely affected the densely populated areas in the old part of the city and some areas in the new part such as Khilgaon, Shahjahanpur, Motijheel, Fakirapal, and Madhubagh.

The WASA tells us that the current sources of water supply are 154 deep tubewells and the water treatment plant at Chandnight. Nineteen tubewells sunken earlier under a cash programme are expected to come into operation by June this year. Ten more tubewells sunk under the "expanded third project." These additional tubewells would help in somewhat mitigating the present water crisis, the WASA source said.

It is understood that our planning efforts so far for augmenting the city's water supply have been directed towards tapping the ground water. WASA's efforts started about a decade ago for a project for construction of a 20-crore gallon at Demra with World Bank assistance. After an initial feasibility study which cost Tk 10 crore, the project passed through vicissitudes as the WASA and the World Bank could not finally agree on implementation on the basis of the recommendations of the consulting firm appointed by each body and ultimately, after eight years, the project was abandoned as nonviable and the World Bank assistance was withdrawn.

Subsequently the project site was shifted to Sydadab, and a feasibility by a French firm is said to be under way with French assistance. The French study is scheduled to be completed by May this year, but the WASA source could not say when the construction work would begin.

A review of the efforts made so far by WASA for augmentation of water supply for the city appears to indicate that emphasis has been laid on extraction of ground water. In the opinion of some experts, this approach is fraught with prospects of instability of upper ground strata in view of the sinking ground water level. According to them, the more desirable alternative would be

to devise means of drawing surface water through small projects. Since the city is bounded on three sides by Buriganga, Sitalakya and Balurivers, drawing of surface water from these sources through small projects may be explored. These experts feel that the concerned authorities should examine feasibility of these ideas in right earnest.

One major factor contributing to greater scarcity in the context of already inadequate total water supply is the reported system loss of over 40 per cent. Some quarters suggest that the WASA authorities should take the public into confidence on such aspects of the system loss where public cooperation may help in minimizing it. Members of the public, on their part also, should be careful in avoiding wastage in their daily use of water.

The sufferings of the people in scarcity-hit areas can hardly be exaggerated. Supply of water through mobile water carriers for such areas, often resorted to by WASA are small palliatives. Economizing consumption of water has a limit and when that limit is crossed, many families are compelled even to buy water at some price. In such situations water can be a dear item and then the affected people are sometimes forced to consume impure water wherever it is available, thus making them easy victims to gastrointestinal diseases.



## Aid club meet

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for 1992-93. Officials expect aid disbursements at the end of the current financial year (FY) will stand at 1.731 billion US dollars.

Slow pace in aid utilisation by various implementation agencies has created an adverse impact in mobilising assistance.

High system's loss and the accounts receivable situation have prompted suspension of aid disbursement in power sector.

According to senior officials, Bangladesh delegation will be put very much on the defensive as regards 'over-employment and resulting high expenses' in the Government organisations like Bangladesh Railway, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation.

The prevailing labour unrest and indiscipline are not well received by the development partners,' says a Government document.

It also says that the donors foresee a reduction in the rate of economic growth and aid absorption capacity of Bangladesh in forthcoming days.

According to the Bangladesh memorandum, the projected growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is four per cent against a target of five per cent.

Bangladesh officials have attributed this shortfall to economic recession caused by the 1990 political changeover, the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, the 1991 April 29 cyclone etc.

The country could not achieve the desired results in the implementation of annual

development programmes in the first six months of the current FY because of nature's continued hostility and the presidential system of governance in the first three months of the FY, the officials will argue before the donors.

Despite the poor macro-economic situation, the memorandum says, export earning will register a rise by 10.8 per cent in 1991-92 compared to the previous year and the foreign currency reserves at the end of the current FY will stand at Tk 127 crore and 30 lakh US dollars (1273 million US dollars).

Officials say the budgetary balance has been 'more than satisfactory' despite the raise in salary and wages and predict that revenue expenditure will not cross the original target. Revenue earnings, they say, will be 'remarkably higher' than the 1991-92 target Tk 9100 crore.

Due to this, the country will, for the first time, not fall short in providing internal resources for the annual development programme (ADP) this year, the memorandum claims.

The Government expects that by accelerating the pace of project implementation it will be possible to implement the Tk 7500 crore ADP.

On the WB insistence that Bangladesh remove procedural bottlenecks in aid utilisation, the delegation will tell donors that a change in this regard has already been effected by reducing the decision-making tiers, and enhancing their authority.

The Government will also convey the donors of its commitment to take 'firm postures' in bringing discipline in the labour-management relations.

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## PM: Poverty

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ernment had accorded top priority to education.

The Prime Minister said, "our objective is the proper development of human resources and uplift of women folk was closely related with human resources development." Similarly, she said, all had to think about the youth who were the repository of unlimited creative energy and were future leaders. She said, "our happiness and prosperity largely depend on how best we utilise and harness them."

Begum Zia said though this region have plethora of problems but it had vast prospects also which could be materialised through mutual cooperation. She pointed out SAARC as the embodiment of institutionalised cooperation of the region and said full blossoming of this structured cooperation could help attain economic emancipation of the masses of this poverty-stricken region.

The Prime Minister also underlined the creation of awareness regarding hazards of ecological in balance to stop environmental pollution.

She lauded the service of Rotarians towards humanity and hoped that the affluent section of the society would, likewise, come forward to mitigate the sufferings of less fortunate one.

World President of Rotary International, Rajendra K Saboo, State Minister for Civil Aviation MA Mannan, chairman of conference planning and promotion committee Rtn Iftekharul Alam and Rtn Habibullah Khan also addressed the gathering.

Saboo underlined the need for concerted efforts to fight against the common enemies of mankind like hunger, poverty and illiteracy.

The Civil Aviation Minister who is also a Rotarian introduced the world president of Rotary International in the inaugural session of the three-day conference. More than 700 Rotarians from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh will take part in the cooperation and goodwill conference.

The Prime Minister also administered immunisation of a child against polio and the world president of Rotary conferred the Paul Harris fellowship to her on the occasion.



A portion of a fire-ravaged tannery at Hazaribagh yesterday. — Star photo

## \$ 600m population project begins this month

By Staff Correspondent

The 600 million US dollar fourth population and health project launching workshop will begin in the city on 27 April, an official source said on Thursday.

According to a project appraisal document, the primary objectives of the project, in line with the twin national goals of health for all and fertility reduction leading to an NRR of 1 by the turn of the century or soon thereafter. The objectives also includes reduction of fertility by increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate to 45-50 per cent, lowering the under-5 infant morbidity and mortality rates and also reducing the maternal mortality from the current rate of 6-8 to 4-5 per 1000 live births by improving maternal care and ensuring safer deliveries.

The 3-day project launching workshop organised by the Ministry of health is designed to gear up the initiation activities of the fourth population and health project. It will be participated by all project directors and concerned government officials. The visiting World Bank mission will also attend the workshop.

Jointly funded by the government of Bangladesh and a consortium of 11 development partners led by the International Development Agency (IDA), the project was initially approved in June 1991 and became effective on 17 March last.

With a local currency com-

ponent of \$ 416.1 million and a foreign exchange component of \$ 185.3 million, the project is being financed by Australia, Canada, the European Economic Commission, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom in addition to the \$ 180 million IDA funding and the \$ 165.1 million funding in local currency by the government.

The objectives of the project also includes the reduction of disability, morbidity and mortality from common poverty-related diseases, enhancing the nutritional status of women and children and improving the effectiveness and efficiency in the planning and delivery of family planning and health services to accelerate the objectives.

According to the appraisal document, the fourth population and health project has been designed to incorporate the assistance of most of the donors to the government's family planning and health programme for the fourth five-year plan.

The project which covers the period between 1992-96 has four major components: strengthening family planning and maternal and child health care service delivery; strengthening health services delivery; improving supportive activities to the delivery of family planning and health services and women's and nutrition programmes.

## Fire

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Two security guards and 10 tanners who were inside the building during the fire managed to escape unhurt, the tannery officials said.

Meanwhile, the tannery owner Rezaul Karim Ansari lodged a case with Dhanmondi police Friday and claimed goods worth about Taka 3 crore were gutted by the fire.

Our correspondent from Jessore reports: Sixty eight houses at Kamalpur village under Chowgachha upazila were completely gutted in a devastating fire Thursday noon.

Originating from a cowshed of the house of one Mohabbat Ali, the fire immediately engulfed the whole area and left goods and properties worth about Taka 20,00,000 damaged.

Local people had extinguished the fire before the Fire Service from Jessore reached the spot.

Our Correspondent from Khulna adds: About 40 bales of jute and 15 bales of jute twines worth over Tk one lakh were burnt to ashes in a fire at Daulatpur Jute Mill here today.

The fire reportedly originated from an electric short circuit at 4 am this morning at section two of the mill.

Eight fire Service units from nearby Daulatpur and Khalishpur fire stations rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control.

## Two drown, over 100 missing as ferry capsizes

By Staff Correspondent

Two people were drowned and over 100 others were feared missing when an overcrowded mechanised ferry capsized in the Sandwip Channel Friday afternoon.

## News analysis

### Will Gyaw's trip bear fruit?

By Nadeem Qadir, guest writer

Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw undertakes his long-awaited trip to Bangladesh later this month under mounting international pressure and an emerging multi-lateral power play, analysts and diplomats said.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the geopolitical scenario has changed and the United States, Japan and China would take steps to ensure that no one country gained supremacy in South Asia under any pretext, one veteran Asian diplomat said.

He added that India too was watching the developments closely as it warmed up its relations with America.

Gyaw's six-day official visit to Bangladesh for talks on the refugee crisis starts April 23, two months behind than earlier planned.

More than 200,000 refugees, known as Rohingyas, have fled their homes in Myanmar's Arakan state alleging atrocities by Myanmar troops, including rape and murder, a charge Yangon denies as baseless.

The United States, Britain, France, Australia, European Community, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Conference and individually members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have expressed their concern on the crisis urging peaceful bilateral solution.

Some agreement is expected, but the sticky issue of a permanent settlement of the Rohingyas may fall flat because Gyaw's visit is taking place under international pressure, a senior official said.

Another says that Dhaka expects some results as the 'whole world is in our side,' and which observers said Yangon understood 'very well.'

has shown its interest with strong statements by Prince Khaled Bin Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz on Tuesday before heading home ending a four day official visit.

Prince Aziz, former Saudi Army Commandant, condemned Myanmar's treatment of its Muslim population and said the United Nations should take action similar to that which led to the liberation of Kuwait.

"I think the United Nations should do just what it did to liberate Kuwait," he told reporters.

He said Yangon had deployed 100,000 troops on the frontier to prevent the repatriation of refugees. Defence sources said Bangladesh has deployed 'several thousand' troops on its frontier for 'defensive purposes only.'

The Prince also held talks with Army Chief Lieutenant General M Nooruddin Khan, visited an important military installation in Savar and witnessed an anti-aircraft exercise here Monday.

He told defence officials without elaborating that 'King Fahd, Saudi Arabian government and its people will not leave you alone to face your burdens.'

Analysts and diplomats said Gyaw's visit would determine the next of chapter of the crisis: A settlement through bilateral negotiations with United Nations help or a military confrontation.

## Pak army chief

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Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Mohaiminul Islam, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Anisur Rahman.

He is also scheduled to lay floral wreath at the Shikha Anirban — the Eternal Flame — at the Dhaka Cantonment and visit various military institutions.

## The Midnight File

### Top security alert in Colombo

COLOMBO, Apr 17: The Sri Lankan capital Colombo was placed on top security alert today, following information received by the authorities that Tamil rebels were planning to explode more car bombs, officials here said. Security forces have been asked to look out for two vehicles with explosives packed into their fuel tanks, the officials said, adding the car bombs had been brought to Colombo by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) activists from Eastern Batticaloa district, reports AFP.

### Peruvian opposition rejects dialogue with president

LIMA, Apr 17: Opposition politicians on Friday rejected President Alberto Fujimori's proposal for a national dialogue, saying his move to dissolve Congress ruled out any possibility of talks, reports AP.

## Najibullah's family

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Herat without a fight. Fighters of the headline Hezb-i-Islami guerrilla party took control of Herat this morning and later their three commanders offered prayers at the city's Grand Mosque, a party spokesman in Pakistan said.

Guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said today he had ordered his fighters to enter Kabul. The sounds of heavy artillery and rockets echoed until dawn Friday, fired by government forces at the southern approaches of the city where fundamentalist guerrillas were reportedly advancing.

Najibullah, installed by the Soviets in 1986 before their troops left Afghanistan, was stripped of power Thursday and was reportedly staying at UN offices in Kabul.

UN special envoy Benon Sevan has been pressuring the new government to allow the deposed president to safely leave the country, senior sources in the ruling Watan (Homeland) Party said.

However, the sources said, the army and some party members called for Najibullah's arrest and trial.

The top general who took power from Najibullah promised that the 'civil war would end soon.'

## Museveni

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five-day visit to North Korea. He described the existing relationship between Bangladesh and Uganda as excellent. In this connection, he recalled his meeting with Prime Minister begum Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman at Harare.

During the talks between President Biswas and Museveni, Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Hasan Ahmed, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and chiefs of three Services were present.

Museveni said, 'we will explore the possibility of recruiting trained manpower like agricultural scientists and doctors from Bangladesh.'

Asked if there is a possibility of sending any recruiting team for the purpose, the Ugandan President replied in the affirmative.

Museveni said there was wide prospect of cooperation also in other fields including engineering, industry, irrigation and research for seed development. He said, 'we are in need of trained manpower to tap our unexploited mineral resources.'

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of Foreign Affairs Paul Semogerere and Minister of State in charge of Presidential Affairs Kintu Musoke were with Museveni during the talks with Biswas.

## Rain

From Page 1 Col 8

Weather experts, however, feel that the expected rain fall would be too little to fight the current hot spell the country has been experiencing for one-and-a-half month. Heavy deluge is not expected until the strong westerly winds weaken.

The little rainfall the five places experienced on Thursday and Friday were because of the moisture southerly winds have brought from the Bay of Bengal. So far, the southerly winds have remained tamed by the westerly low that has been driving southern moisture away from Bangladesh to the Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal. That was why there has been rain in these north eastern Indian states, but not in Bangladesh.

Weather pundits says the Bay of Bengal moisture, carried by the southerly winds, will be able to produce local rain this week in many parts of the country and there will be heavy rain only when the westerly winds conjugate with the easterly winds.

"We are expecting the conjugation between westerly and easterly winds any time this week," said a duty officer at the Met office. However, he warned, "Our forecast may not prove to be 100 percent correct."

"I assure you there will be peace in the very near future," Gen Mohammed Nabi Azmi said in a speech broadcast on state-run Kabul radio. "There is no longer any need for war."

In the first publicly acknowledged negotiations by the government and the rebels, Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil traveled to the mountain headquarters of a powerful guerrilla chief, Ahmed Shah Masood, for talks, government and guerrilla sources said.

There was no immediate word on the outcome of the session, and it was uncertain what impact any accord might have. Masood is a sworn enemy of the two hard-line rebel groups that are threatening to attack the capital.

Meanwhile AFP says the mystery over an Afghan plane that landed today in eastern Iran thickened with the official IRNA news agency reporting that four unidentified servicemen were on board.

IRNA did not identify the men or their rank nor did it specify the type of aircraft involved, but the agency said the plane was parked on a strip used by the Iranian air force.

The aircraft touched down at Mashhad Airport after making a surprise entrance into Iranian airspace, Tehran radio reported earlier.

## Hasina

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st the anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir clique", Hasina said amidst repeated cheers and slogans of her supporters at the rally.

It was the first public rally the Awami League chief addressed outside Dhaka after the February 27 parliamentary elections.

Charging the ruling BNP for giving shelter to anti-liberation elements, Hasina said the Zia government had allowed entry to Golam Azam who opposed the country's independence and does not believe in Bangladesh while the government of Khaleda Zia is now trying to save him.

She said the opposition moved a proposal in parliament to try "killer" Golam Azam at a special tribunal under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act of 1973. "But it's a matter of great shame that some Barristers in the BNP government are pleading for saving this hated war criminal."

## Take decision on Azam today or face 'danger': Samad

By Staff Correspondent

Historic 'Mujibnagar Day' was observed Friday to mark the formation of Bangladesh's first government at Mujibnagar during the country's War of Liberation in 1971.

The day was observed through the holding of discussions, laying wreaths at the Mujibnagar Smriti Souha and garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who headed the country's first government during and after the war.

Various programme were organised throughout the country by the Awami League (AL) and its front organisations, forums of freedom fighters and different socio-cultural bodies in remembrance of the day.

The city unit of the Awami League held a discussion meeting at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the afternoon.

AL presidium member and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abus Samad Azad, and other party leaders including Tofael Ahmed, MP, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim, Dr Mohammad Selim, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mollahuddin, Muzaffar Hossain Chowdhury Mays, Advocate Shahara Khatun, Akhterul Alam, Advocate Kamrul Islam, Foyezuddin Mia and Muniruddin addressed the meeting. City AL President Mofazzal Hossain Palto was in the chair.

Abus Samad Azad said the present BNP government was 'similar to all the post-'75 regimes.'