

## Dhaka on thin ground as water table drops

PINAKI ROY

The city's groundwater level has dropped 20 metres over the last six years or more than three metres a year, according to a government survey.

"The decline in the water table could lead to contractions in the clay soil plate Dhaka is situated on and eventually subside," warned Dr Mollah Afzal Haque, a geo-morphologist.

Dr Haque is an assistant director (geology) of the irrigation department.

ment of the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), which conducted the survey.

The level went down 0.34 metres or about a foot over the last 29 days of last year, down to 46.24 metres below the surface on December 31 from 45.9 metres on December 2.

The survey finds the decline concentrated mainly to the city centre where concrete coating prevents recharging of the groundwater level from rainwater.

"The city is increasingly being covered with concrete. So rainwater cannot recharge the groundwater level that is being used every year," Dr Haque said.

In November last year, the water level was at 45.54 metres below the surface, down from 45.12 metres in October, according to the Survey and Monitoring Project for the Development of Minor Irrigation.

The water table was on average 42 metres below the surface in 1970s and 20 metres in the 1980s, they said quoting a

**Advani vows to deport illegal immigrants**  
AFP, New Delhi

in 1999, 31 metres in 1998, 29 metres in 1997 and 26 metres in 1996.

The finds of the survey, conducted in the city and other parts of the country, are yet to be made public.

BADC officials say the decline of water table is inversely proportional to the city's population growth.

It was 11.3 metres below the surface in the 1970s and 20 metres in the 1980s, they said quoting a

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Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani yesterday pledged that India would deport illegal migrants, as Indian border guards said they foiled an attempt by 200 Bangladeshis to enter the country.

Advani's comments came a day after he met in New Delhi with Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Morshed Khan for talks on the illegal immigration dispute.

Without naming Bangladesh, Advani said illegal migration from a neighbouring country had increased and many of the "foreigners" had acquired valid identification documents.

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India's borders were "such that infiltration is possible even if security forces are there," said Advani, as quoted by the Press Trust of India.

Rudrapal Singh, deputy inspector general in India's paramilitary Border Security Force, said some 200 Bangladeshis tried to enter India at Sikarpur, about 130 kilometres north of Kolkata, around the same time Khan was wrapping up his visit to New Delhi.

"Local people alerted Indian border guards towards (Saturday) afternoon saying that (a group) of Bangladeshis had gathered near the border," Singh told AFP.

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