

# Poor recharging of ground water worries experts

## Filling of open spaces and water bodies blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka's ground water levels are seriously declining due to over-extraction to meet its growing demand.

Water levels have declined at least 24 metres in nine years since 1996 and that has put the sprawling metropolis at great risk.

Experts have attributed the crisis to lack of ground water recharge during the monsoon period.

"If water table continues to fall then a vacuum will be created in the aquifer which could result in the sudden collapse in the surface without an earthquake taking place," said ANH Akhter Hossain, managing director of Wasa.

"Now we are thinking about artificially recharging the water table with rainwater. But we need to carry out a study beforehand," he added.

According to its statistics, Wasa officials say, in the last nine years since 1996 water levels have dramatically fallen by 13 metres in Mirpur, 13.5 metres in Dhaka Cantonment, 11.81 metres in Lalbagh, 8.21 metres in Dhanmondi and 7.29 metres in Mohammedpur respectively.

Then it is no surprise that Wasa is unable to cope with the demands of the city's 13 million inhabitants. Presently, it can barely supply 1560 million litres per-day against a required 2000 million litres. Of the total three water treatment plants provide uneven amounts-- Sayedabad 225 million litres,

Chadnight 39 million litres and Narayanganj 46 million litres. The remaining 1250 million litres has to be extracted from ground water sources.

Recently, another study undertaken by the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) also pointed to a sharp drop in ground water levels.

It found that amount of water available below the surface fell from 26.6 metres in 1996 to 50.6 metres in January 2004.

The study was carried out with a vertical automatic water level recorder, which is now the most accepted method of verifying water levels.

In the previous seven years water levels stood at 28.15 metres below the surface in 1997, 30.45m in 1998, 31.86m

in 1999, 34.18m in 2000, 37.78m in 2001, 41.87m in 2002 and 46.24m in 2003.

Experts believe the situation is the result of overzealous real estate companies encroaching on open spaces, lakes and rivers. As a result it is allowing limited recharging of ground water in the monsoons.

With most of the city rapidly turning into a concrete jungle it is hindering rain water entering into the aquifer.

"Water from different rivers and other water bodies around the city have either dried up or are too polluted to use. Planners should keep some open space and reserve the rain water so that ground water can be recharged," said Dr Muhammed Qumrul Hasan of Dhaka University who conducted research on the subject recently.

# Wasa plans digital metering soon to reduce systems loss

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) plans to introduce digital metering soon to implement its earlier decision on computerised billing, aimed at cutting systems loss.

Wasa decided to introduce computerised billing to its 2.16 lakh clients but could not make it effective because of old-fashioned manual metering.

The authorities say Wasa incurs a 50

percent systems loss because of primitive metering and loses revenues, as a large number of clients use water without bills.

About 70,000 clients pay bills on average reading without meters and Wasa loses revenue from the supply of water to their houses.

Officials say the population of the city has increased significantly, but the number of meter readers has remained the same over the last decade.

"Wasa staff reads up to 1,400 meters a day and each of them can read meters of up to five holdings," an official said,

asking not to be named. "If the meters go digital, reading capacity will increase about 10 to 12 times higher than in the present system," he said.

But it is alleged that Wasa staff issues bills based on previous meter reading and does not visit households regularly.

"Digital metering will ensure accurate reading and increase revenue earning," the official said.

Wasa workers have difficulty reading meters as most meter-chambers are set up in inconvenient places and the whole process takes a long time.

"Time-consuming manual meter reading discourages the workers from doing their job," another Wasa official said.

"Digital metering will make sure neither meter readers nor clients pilfer water," he added.

Wasa runs about 50 crore litres short of water a day to meet demand and on top of that, many clients with the help of dishonest meter readers pilfer water -- an illegal practice that leads to water shortage in summer when the demand for water hits a new high.



# New traffic signals at Gulshan set to start

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The electronic traffic signal lights under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) will be functional within a week at Gulshan-1 and 2 intersections.

The signals had to be done on priority basis there to demonstrate the effectiveness of demolishing the roundabouts there by the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

"Almost 80 per cent of the work has been completed. The poles, lights and cables have been installed so the signals should be up and running within a week," said Abdul Qaiyum, project director (PD) of DUTP.

"Initially, DUTP had estimated a cost of Tk 24 crore to install the electronic traffic lights at 59 spots in the capital. But the cost has come down by Tk 10 crore after floating tender bids. ATS Hong Kong Limited was awarded the contract for the World Bank (WB)-funded project as their bid was the lowest," said

Qaiyum.

However, a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) source told Star City that costs had gone up by Tk 1.619 crore due to 'incompetence' of some officials. The government was forced to count the additional cost as customs duty as the contract did not specify who would pay the duties. The DCC had to bear the duties as ATS refused to pay. This indecision also delayed the progress of the project. The project director said that new deadline to complete the project is September as agreed by WB.

"Installation of signals depends on finishing the civil work at intersections. So far, civil work of 36 intersections has been done and these should be functional by July. Meeting the deadline depends on the completion of civil work," added the PD.

"Traffic movement in the capital will be monitored from a central control room," said Qaiyum.

It was learnt that a number of foreign engineers will maintain

the system for at least three years. They will train their DCC counterparts.

The DCC decided to go for a modern signal system under the DUTP as the present one was not in proper working order a situation that has remained for the last few years due to lack of maintenance.

The new electronic traffic signal lights have helped to ease flow of traffic as has been observed along the Mirpur Road, officials said.

However, installing automated electronic traffic signal lights is just a half measure to ease traffic congestion.

"Installing advanced traffic signals cannot ease the traffic congestion in areas like Gulshan and Baridhara. Strict traffic rules and discipline must be maintained especially in following the specified lanes which they are expected to move in," observed Manish Pandey, a foreigner residing in Baridhara.



## JAPANESE FOOD FESTIVAL

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, in association with JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation) and Standard Chartard Bank, has opened a three-day Japanese food festival yesterday to mark the on-going 'Japan Trade Show 2004' at the hotel premises.

## useful telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

**International**  
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724  
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970  
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075  
Airspeed Express- 9563494  
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543  
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606  
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989  
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666  
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636  
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425  
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057  
Enem Express- 9330699  
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884  
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169  
Pacific Courier- 9568446  
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249  
Sky International Service- 9660442  
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184  
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155  
Union Courier Service- 9341722  
United Parcel Service Air Alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

**National**  
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543  
BAE- 9884851  
Central Courier Service- 9881118  
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036  
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,  
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975  
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

Dolphin Courier- 9558802  
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975  
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759  
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359  
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703  
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249  
Sundaran Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656  
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751  
World Runner Express Ltd.- 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068

### TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

### LIBRARY & INFO-

**Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers**  
**Central Public Library-** 8626001-4,  
**Shishu Academy-** 9564128  
**Shilpakala Academy-** 8614673  
**Bangla Academy-** 8619550  
**Islamic Foundation-** 9550280, 9556407  
**Nazrul Institute-** 9114602  
**Ford Foundation-** 8116133  
**Alliance Francaise-** 8611557  
**British Council-** 8618867-8, 8618905-7  
**Community Development Library-** 8113769, 8113604  
**Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-** 9126525-6  
**Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library-** 8615096  
**The Russian Cultural Centre-** 9116314, 9118531, 9118314  
**Drk Photo Gallery-** 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

### OUTING

**Museum and Zoo**  
**National Museum-** 8619396-9  
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday 3 pm - 8 pm, Thursday closed  
**Muktijuddha Jadughar-** 9559091  
Open: 10:30 am - 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed  
**Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar-** 8110046  
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Wednesday closed  
**Ahsan Manzil**  
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed  
**Shishu Jadughar-** 9666466  
Open: 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday Closed

### CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoil	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahar
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard - Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan