

Dhaka observes

FROM PAGE 16

as the rivers receive virtually 'no water from upstream' and the level of the underground rapidly descends.

They said unless the government decides to use both groundwater and surface water for human consumption and other uses, the problem is set to aggravate.

Although arsenic contamination of groundwater is quite severe in districts, experts at the Institute of Water Modeling (IWM) said the problem could be greatly remedied by installing deep tube wells.

"Intensive extraction of groundwater is emptying the water layers very rapidly and in urban areas the expanding concrete surfaces are hampering the recharging of the underground reservoirs," said M A Karim, a ground water specialist.

"We have to seriously think of using surface water to reduce pressure on groundwater," Karim said.

Official of the NGO, Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, recently said at a press conference that the groundwater level has declined in 48 percent of the country. About 65 to 70 percent of the country's population have access to safe drinking water.

However, in many parts of the city, residents queue up for hours each day for their water supply. In the city's peripheral villages and townships, the water crisis has reached its height as many shallow tube wells have dried up with the onset of the dry season. Thousands of people are forced to walk miles to fetch water for daily

use.

Wasa supplies 145 crore litres of water in the city against a demand of 210 crore for 120 million people. Of the 145 crore litres, 27 crore litres come from the Syedabad, Chadnighat and Godnail of Narayanganj water treatment plant and the rest is pumped out from underground.

But another senior specialist of the IWD told The Daily Star that the rivers around Dhaka do not get any flow from the upstream Jamuna during the peak period. During this period the Brahmaputra comes between 6,000 and 8,000 cubic metres of water per second through Jamuna, of which "nothing flows" into the Turag, Balu or the Buriganga due to silt formation in the mouths of the tributaries. Whereas, in the monsoons around 87,000 cubic metres of water per second flows in the Jamuna.

"There is enough water flowing through the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, but we cannot make use of it as we are unable to build a barrage due to the flat surface of the delta and also because of fund constraints," the specialist said.

To mark World Water Day a seminar will be held today at the IDB Bhaban auditorium. The theme of this year is "Water for Life."

A fresh International Water Decade for Action for 2005-2015 will be declared by the United Nations today.

Plaintiff wants

FROM PAGE 1

position on the chargesheet.

Majid, also organising secretary of district Awami League (AL), told The Daily Star last night that the investigators in the case had neither shown him any documents, nor informed him about the developments of the probe.

"Being the plaintiff in the case I have every right to know the chargesheet and developments of the case," Majid said over telephone.

"I told the court that I came to know about the submission of the chargesheet through media reports yesterday," he added.

Majid said he had waited at the court until afternoon on Sunday but the police did not confirm him about the submission of the chargesheet. But in the evening, Munshi Atiqur Rahman, CID assistant superintendent of police, submitted it to the court.

The plaintiff said he would like to review the chargesheet and other documents of the case before giving his decision about whether he would accept the chargesheet. He will give his statement about it to the court during the hearing.

Asked to comment on the chargesheet, Majid said: What I have known from the media reports, it seems to me that the chargesheet is made incompetently.

The CID pressed charges against 10 BNP leaders and workers for their alleged role in the grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Habiganj on January 27.

The accused are Habiganj district BNP Vice-president AKM Abdul Quaiyum, Ayat Ali, Kajal Mia, Selim Ahmed, Tajul Islam, Shahed Ali, Jaijal Abedin Mumun and Muhibur Rahman.

Police have arrested eight of them while the other two -- Kajal Mia and Muhibur Rahman -- are on the run.

PM's programme

FROM PAGE 1

the mistakes have raised questions about the ministry's capability to keep information up to date.

The book mentioned Abu Zafar as press secretary to the president. Zafar left the Bangabhaban job in the last week of October last year and took over as director general of the Department of Mass Communication before going on leave preparatory to retirement.

He was later appointed principal information officer (PIO) of the Press Information Department (PID) and is serving in that capacity since February 5.

His full name is Abu Zafar Md Iqbal but the book wrote only Abu Zafar.

Journalist Moklesur Rahman Chowdhury was appointed Press Secretary to the President on December 4 last year but the foreign ministry seems unaware of this even now.

The ministry also mentioned Khandaker Monirul Alam as PIO of the PID although his contractual appointment expired on December 31 last year. Abu Zafar Md Iqbal was appointed to that post.

Advocate Mahbub-e-Alam, counsel for one of defendants, told reporters, "I'm certainly not happy (with the judgement). We will appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgement."

Petitioner's counsel Azmalul Hossain in his reaction told the press that the verdict has proved that the reports were baseless and the certificate was not forged. "For these baseless news, Faizee has been unable to serve for the last six months. Now it has been resolved. Besides, the court has identified how far the freedom of expression in the constitution can go."

Barrister Tanjibul Alam told The Daily Star: "The court has expressly stated that this contempt matter was not about the truthfulness of the report or as to whether Justice Faizee was indeed guilty of misconduct. Therefore, any claim that the court has declared the certificate of Justice Faizee genuine is untenable."

Sub-sea cable

FROM PAGE 1

despite the fact that one of the members on the evaluation committee had repeatedly expressed his reservations about the contract.

"The committee also observed that the BTTB violated the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) in many areas. This is why the cabinet wants the BTTB to set clear-cut evaluation criteria during the tendering," the official said.

"The cabinet also wants the officials responsible for manipulation of the bidding to be punished."

The submarine cable project itself has already been delayed by more than four years. In March last year, after sitting on the project for four years, Bangladesh signed an agreement with a consortium of 16 international telecoms operators.

The submarine system will span around 20,000 kilometres across the eastern and western worlds to set an ultra-fast terabit per second connectivity. Bangladesh will get 10-gigabyte bandwidth, enough to match its next 10 years Internet and telephony demands. Presently, it needs about 150-megabyte bandwidth.

But to avail this infrastructure inland, the BTTB needed to install the fibre-optic cable network.

The state telecoms operator received a good price proposal in the bids floated early last year but it mysteriously took eight months to evaluate them.

FBI agent

FROM PAGE 1

He said following recent development in the investigation into the killing of Kibria, Trung Vu returned to Dhaka on March 20 to meet the law enforcement officials and participate in the inquiry.

The FBI investigator had earlier visited Bangladesh for preliminary work, when he had requested setting the terms of reference to investigate the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj that also killed four others.

Intelligence agencies have been instructed to keep a close eye on officials and employees in Bangladesh Secretariat and other

Tornado toll hits 40

FROM PAGE 1

collapsed during the twister.

Several thousand people of the affected villages, rendered homeless by the tornado, passed last night under open sky and without food, said a victim of village Kishamid Hamid.

The storm smashed all the huts in the village within a couple of minutes, he added.

The survivors recovered 14 bodies from under the collapsed houses and sent the injured people to different hospitals and health complexes.

The dead were identified as Shahera Khatun, 31, Abdul Gafur, 65, Mozaher, 42, Nurun Nahar, 31, Swadhin, 20, Liton, 28, Hamid, 42, Tofajjal, 40, Monalisa, 5, Santona, 25, Ranju, 22, Alangir, 18, Rozina, 23, Anju Ara, 35, Chand, Mia, 33, Fulmoti, 30, Rubina, 55, Shamsel, 40, Sirajul Master, 45, Sati, 12, Jobayed, 44, Khaibar, 20, Ajan Ali, 33, Liton Chandra, 15, Anju Ara, 26, Dulali, 22, Masuda, Akther, 26, Mukti, 15, Rina, 20, Arjina, 60, Shahera, 43, Rubila, 55, Jannati, 22, Kamruzzaman, 25, Nawab Ali, 60, Sarvan Bibi, 55.

Upazila nibhai officer (UNO) of Sadullapur confirmed the death of 23 people in the upazila while UNO of Sundarganj put the death figure at 12.

District administration allocated Tk 1,500 for burying each of the dead.

The tornado victims badly need food and medicare services, said Ismail Hossain, chairman of Naldanga union.

At total of 230 injured were admitted to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital while 10 critically wounded people sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

As the hospitals are crammed with injured people, the doctors and nurses cannot take proper care of each of them.

Asadul Habib Dul, deputy minister for food and disaster management, visited the affected areas and ordered officials to extend all possible help to the victims.

Our correspondent from

Rangpur adds: Four people were killed and several hundred others injured in the tornado that swept 17 villages in Pirkachha and Mithapukur upazilas Sunday night.

Around 5,000 families in the affected areas were rendered homeless as the storm razed their houses to the ground within 10 minutes from 7:00pm.

Three of the dead were identified as Shadzaman Khondaker, 17, of Madhyapara village in Mithapukur upazila, Chhaka, 45, and Abdul Aziz, 22, of Majhipara Kandirhat in Pirkachha.

Another injured person succumbed to his injuries at Mahiganj while he was being taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital but his identity could not be known.

Most of the victims were injured in house collapse and when trees fell on them.

The critically injured people were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital and local health complexes. Hospital sources said the condition of more than a hundred injured still remain critical.

While visiting the tornado-hit areas in Pirkachha and Mithapukur upazilas yesterday, this correspondent found a trail of devastation left by the storm.

Almost all thatched houses were razed to the ground in Deulpara, Haripur, Muradpur, Arifpur, Imadpur Chhoto Krishnapur and Porab of Mithapukur upazila.

Apart from houses, large number of schools and madrasas were damaged by the storm.

Visiting the affected areas in Mithapukur, the deputy minister for food and disaster management said the government has sanctioned Tk 1 lakh and 100 bundles of tin (corrugated iron sheets) for the victims in Mithapukur.

Besides, Tk 3 lakh and 300

bundles of tin were sanctioned for the victims in Gaibandha district, he said.

The tornado-hit villagers of Imadpur complained yesterday that they did not get any relief materials.

Kibria family

FROM PAGE 1

AL leader told newsmen at her residence yesterday.

She said, "Media reports on the charge sheet suggest that investigators have stopped the inquiry after a certain stage following dictates of the government high-ups."

Though the report claimed that Qaiyum managed a grenade for the attack, it did not mention where he got it from, she said.

Reiterating the demand for a US Federal Bureau of Investigation probe, the slain lawmaker's wife stressed that any such probe will have to be independent of any government control and the report has to be made public.

She also asked to record Qaiyum's statement detailing on whose instructions he planned the killing.

It's a bid to save the masterminds by putting blame on some local level leaders of BNP," he said reiterating the party's demand for an international probe into the killing.

Senior AL leader Surajit Sengupta MP said, "Through the charge sheet, the government has blocked the way for neutral international probe into the killing as its high-ups are involved."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu said it proves the prime minister's and her senior colleagues' accusations that AL killed Kibria, were totally untrue.

On Qaiyum's involvement, Inu said, "He is merely a small fry who had carried out the orders of his bosses, and the bosses have to be identified through an international probe."

He alleged that senior ministers of the government including M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Matiur Rahman Nizami have influenced the investigation process by making comments in public about the crime.

Quoting Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's remarks after the incident, Reza Kibria said, "How could Saifur Rahman say that the killing resulted from conflict over local politics and personal feud?"

He said that LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mannan Bhuiyan accused AL of the killing, but the police investigation so far has detected BNP leaders to be the

culprits in the murder.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil rejecting the charge sheet said that the government through the charge sheet has tried to save the persons who originally masterminded the killing.

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Other valiant freedom fighters will be honoured in the same manner, the sources added.

The recent step was taken to "honour the greatest children of the soil" for their glorious role in the Liberation War, said the mayor.

Earlier on Sunday, the DCC renamed the link road from Mohakhali crossing at Jat Khabar to Gulshan Circle-1 as Bir Uttam AK Khandaker Road after another sector commander AK Khandaker, Bir Uttam.

Renaming of three other roads are on the cards after sector commanders MA Rabb, Bir Uttam, Shawkat Ali, Bir Uttam and CR Datta, Bir Uttam, DCC sources said.

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Commanding Officer of 2 Rifles Lt Col Imamul Huda said the BSF move to build fences must be stopped at any cost.

The BSF however stopped the construction following the BDR raid.

Border tension was mounting for the last two months over the construction of barbed wire fences within 150 yards of the zero line.

The Indian side suspends construction in daytime in the face of the BDR's resistance but resumes it at night.

Nine arrested

FROM PAGE 16

In another drive, police arrested one Abdul Hye of Malik Deluxe Travels yesterday afternoon after one Monir Hossain filed a case with the police station against Hye for swindling him out of Tk 50,000.

In the FIR Monir mentioned that the travel agency took the money from him a few months ago, assuring him they would send his wife to Kuwait. The travel agent demanded Tk 1.10 lakh and took Tk 50,000 in advance from him. But ultimately they embezzled the money.

Twenty-four Bangladeshi fortune-seekers returned home on Saturday, a year after travel agents illegally sent them to the West African country of Mali on promises of finding jobs in it.

The manpower agents dumped the unsuspecting youths in the Sahara desert, where they wandered for days without food and water. They were later thrown into a Mail jail after police rescued them from the desert.

In addition, 11 out of 26 Bangladeshis who, with the aid of a travel agency, left the country on December 23, died last month of hunger and thirst in a boat on the Mediterranean en route to Spain from Morocco.

Along with 15 other Bangladeshis, they ran out of fuel and supplies and went without food and water for 10 days on the high sea, as the boatman lost his way and headed for Algeria instead of Spain.

The ministry was pushing the Belshara-Orion bid giving it some additional flexibility. For instance