

India to face severe water crisis in 20 years: WB

AFP, New Delhi

India will face a severe water crisis in 20 years if the government doesn't change its ways and clashes are already taking place because the resource is so scarce, the World Bank has warned.

"There is a virtually no country in the world that lives with a system as bad as you have here," John Briscoe, author of the Bank's draft country report on India, told a media conference in New Delhi.

"There is a widespread complacency in the government about water."

The report says that India has no proper water management system in place, its groundwater is disappearing and river bodies are turning into makeshift sewers.

"Estimates reveal that by 2020, India's demand for water will exceed all sources of supply," the report says.

"There is no question that the incidence and severity of conflicts (over water) has increased sharply in recent times... There is a high level of vitriol in the endemic clashes

between states on inter-state water issues," it adds.

With the Indian government unable to provide its citizens a 24-hour supply of water even in the national capital, those who can afford to have found other ways to turn on the tap.

The result is an unregulated system with no incentive to conserve water.

"What has happened in the last 20 or 30 years is a shift to self-provision. Every farmer sinks a tubewell and every house in Delhi has a pump pumping groundwater," said Briscoe, an expert on water issues at the World Bank. "Once that water stops you get into a situation where towns will not be able to function."

According to the report, 70 percent of India's irrigation water and 80 percent of its domestic water supplies now come from groundwater, which is being rapidly depleted.

The Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment said that in parts of the capital city, the groundwater level is dropping by 10 metres

each year.

"Especially in South Delhi there are a lot of borewells because piped water supply is not coming," said RK Srinivasan, deputy coordinator of natural resource management at the organisation.

The independent group has begun a project to use city buildings to harvest rainwater and return it underground.

The issue of water management is particularly pressing in a country where many states get as much as 90 percent of their rainfall in the four months of the summer monsoon season, leading to a drought-flood cycle.

The World Bank report also worries about the impact of climate change in India, particularly the melting of glaciers in the western part of the Himalayan mountain range.

It makes specific recommendations for India that include negotiating clear-cut water entitlements for states that spar over river water, increasing storage capacity and charging water users appropriately.

ILLEGAL CROSS-BORDER TRADING IN TIGER SKIN

India to hold talks with China, Nepal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India will take up with China and Nepal the issue of illegal cross-border trading in endangered tiger and leopard skins.

"The Prime Minister (Manmohan Singh) has directed that the issue be taken up with the authorities in China and Nepal through diplomatic channels," said Sanjaya Baru, media advisor to prime minister.

The announcement came in the wake of the reports by wildlife conservation groups who said they had found scores of shops openly selling tiger and leopard skins during a recent visit to Tibet and other areas of Western China.

Video footages, shot by London-based Environmental Investigation Agency, a private watchdog, and the Wildlife Protection Society of India, showed traders in Tibet offering fresh Bengal tiger and leopard skins, smuggled in from India, for sale.

The wildlife groups said the skins fetch high price because of the use of tiger body parts in traditional Chinese medicines.

Poaching has led to a sharp decline in India's tiger population and virtually wiped out the big cats from Sariska forest in the desert state of Rajasthan.

Alarmed over this, the government had set up a task force that came out with several recommendations for tiger conservation.

Loadshedding in Khulna sparks outcry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Massive loadshedding in the holy month of Ramadan sparked an outcry among the city dwellers in Khulna.

The city's demand for electricity is 550 megawatt a day, but Ramadan began with a loadshedding of over 200 megawatt as a 60-megawatt power plant suddenly went out of order on Wednesday midnight due to mechanical faults.

It will take at least one month to repair the power plant, PDB sources said.

Resenting the loadshedding, businessmen Din Mohammad and Alamgir Hossain said that the four-party alliance government will have to pay a heavy price for its failure to ensure steady supply of electricity, particularly during Ramadan.

Devotees who came to Baitun Noor and Town Jame Mosques for Tarabi prayers on Thursday echoed similar views as the loadshedding plunged the areas into darkness.

Leaders of Puja Ujapan Parishad also expressed grave concern at frequent loadshedding and demanded uninterrupted power supply during the Durga Puja to ensure security.

"We feel insecure fearing that criminals may launch attacks on the Puja Mandaps (altars) taking advantage of the loadshedding," said Shyamal Halder, vice-president of Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad.

Face conspirators unitedly: Moudud

BSS, Dhaka

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said the government had attached top priority to flourishing the inner talents of the students by providing various facilities, including the highest budgetary allocation in the education sector.

"There is no alternative to talent to survive in the competitive global village," he said describing talent as the driving force in the current century to have a stake in the contemporary world. Talent and competition go hand in hand, he added.

He made these observations while addressing a discussion organised by Companyanj Student Welfare Association in Dhaka in connection with publication of a magazine and distribution of stipend among poor but talent students at the auditorium of Photo Journalists Association here.

Moudud praised the efforts of this organisation having no link with any political party and said, "when the nation is sharply divided due to difference of opinion hindering the process of development, this association has come up with a commendable job to nurture knowledge and flourish talent."

He said a vested quarter has been hatching conspiracy against the country and its independence. Terming the conspirators as 'enemy' of the country and the constitution, he urged the people to face them unitedly in the greater national interest.

President of the association Mustafiz Billah Maruf, Managing Director of Ibne Sina Pharmaceuticals Abu Naser M Abduzzaher, Chairman of Metro Group Fakhru Islam, President of Noakhali District Association M Shahabuddin, Ln Sheikh Mohiuddin and industrialist Badruddoza Mobin also spoke on the occasion.



Paribesh Bachao Andolon and Jana Udyog form a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding measures to stop use of rotten and stale ingredients, adulterants and poisonous chemicals in Iftar.

Reinstatement of 255 garments workers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garments workers staged a sit-in in the city yesterday to protest the 'illegal' dismissal of 255 workers of the A One BD Limited, a Korean factory operating at the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Savar.

They demanded immediate reinstatement of the workers and payment of salary arrears to the workers. They also sought intervention of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) in this regard.

The National Garments Workers Federation and the National Garments Workers Welfare Federation organised the protest and a rally at Muktagang.

Leaders of the 11 Party, Left Democratic Front, Srarnik Karmachari Oikya Parishad, Garments Srarnik Oikya Parishad and Jatiya Srarnik Federation expressed solidarity with

the garments workers at the programme.

They also protested the repression of workers at the factory and dissolution of the committee of labour representatives.

They threatened to lay a siege to the Prime Minister's office and the Bepza office if the demands go unheeded.

President of the National Garments Workers Federation Sahida Sarkar presided over the rally.

Meanwhile, the National Garments Workers Welfare Federation at a press conference yesterday placed its five-point demand, including declaration of a minimum wage of Tk 2,500 for the workers.

The federation leaders said the salary of the garments workers remains the same for the last 12 years while the salary of ministers and

bureaucrats have doubled.

The workers have been suffering severe economic hardship as prices of essentials have increased several folds, they said and threatened to launch tough movement across the country to press home their demand.

The Bangladesh Garment Workers Trade Union Centre also held a rally at Muktagang demanding payment of Eid bonus and salary arrears before October 20.

While the family members of the workers are starving, owners of the most factories are busy with Eid shopping abroad, said the union leaders.

Presided over by Trade Union President Idris Ali, it was addressed by Ruhul Amin, Sadequr Rahman Shamim, Hafizul Islam, Soheli Rana and Iqbal Hossain.



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US surgeon may separate two sets of Siamese twins in India

AFP, New Delhi

The US neurosurgeon who hopes to separate two Indian girls who are joined at the head is also willing to operate on a second set of Siamese twins from southern India, a hospital official said.

"We heard about them through the media and we would want to collaborate with the team down there," said Anupam Sibal, medical director of New Delhi's Apollo Hospital, yesterday.

Two days after the Apollo announced plans to go ahead with an attempt to separate twins Sabah and Farah Shakeel if their parents consent, the Times of India reported another case in Andhra Pradesh state.

Like the 10-year-old Shakeels, Veena and Vani, aged two, are joined at the head and share a major blood drainage vessel in the brain.

Dr Benjamin Carson, head of paediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Children's Centre in Baltimore, Maryland, has agreed to operate on Sabah and Farah.

The Apollo hospital has been in touch with the hospital in Andhra Pradesh that is caring for twins Veena and Vani.

"Dr Carson has dedicated his life to the cause of conjoined twins," Sibal said. "In place of one, he will now supervise two similar cases in India."

The Shakeels from eastern Bihar state are to make the difficult decision on the operation during Ramadan.

The family are poor and a Gulf prince has agreed to pay all treatment costs after reading about the twins' plight.

Veena and Vani, who have no benefactor, are in the care of the Government General Hospital in Gunter.

"They live in the hospital because they have been abandoned," Sibal told AFP, adding that Apollo would have to raise contributions from the public to treat the girls.

But, said Sibal, before any tests can be carried out to identify whether they are good candidates for surgery, the girls' parents must be traced.

"You need the consent of the parent or identify who the legal guardian is," he said.

Veena and Vani do have a caring doctor, who, the Times says, turned down a request to operate on the Shakeel twins because he already had his hands full.

The newspaper also said that Yarlagadda Nayudamma, former director of the Gunter hospital and a professor of paediatric surgery, has successfully operated on three sets of conjoined twins.

Carson, was the lead neurosurgeon of a 70-member team that successfully separated seven-month-old German twin boys in 1987. In 1997, he and a team of 50 doctors separated 11-month-old Zambian boys, both of whom survived.

He was also involved in at least three other attempts to separate conjoined twins, including the unsuccessful 2003 operation on the 29-year-old Bijani twins from Iran.

Assault of Hill Women's Fed leaders condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hill Women's Federation (HWF) yesterday condemned the assault on its three leaders allegedly by the members of the Army in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The federation led by its leader Sonali Chakma staged a sit-in demonstration and held a rally at Muktagang in the city yesterday to protest the incident.

The leaders alleged that a group of army men led by Major Moinuddin from Baburchhara camp under Dhiginala in Khagrachhari district assaulted HWF leader Sonali Chakma, and United People's Democratic Front members Kalika Chakma and Subia Chakma on October 2.

They demanded immediate punishment to Major Moinuddin and his men.

The leaders warned that such atrocities on the hill people will only make the situation worse.

Gonotantrik Jubo Forum's Publications Secretary Rupam Chakma, Organising Secretary of Pahari Chhatra Parishad Rico Chakma, Secretary General of Jatiya Mukti Council Fayzul Hakim and President of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation Mridul Kanti Das spoke at the rally.



Hill Women's Federation (HWF) staged a demonstration at Muktagang in the city yesterday demanding withdrawal of army from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).



Obituary

Begum Faizunnesa, wife of noted dramatist late M Golam Rahman, passed away on Thursday at her Moghbazar residence at the age of 85, says a press release.

She was buried at the Azimpur Graveyard after Asr prayers.

Her qulkhwani will be held at her residence after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Begum Faizunnesa is the mother of former PIO Harun-ur-Rashid and Senior News Editor of The Daily Star Azizur Rashid.

JU goes on 34-day vacation from today

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) goes on a 34-day vacation from today.

All classes will remain suspended till November 10 on account of Durga and Laxmi puja, Shab-e-Qadr, Eid-ul-Fitr and National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

However, the examinations will be held according to the schedule given by respective departments.

Administrative offices will remain closed from October 11 to 13 for Durga puja and on October 16 for Laxmi puja. Admission under 2005-06 academic session will be held from November 30 to December 13.

DHAKA TODAY Discussion Rotary Central Meeting Rotary North West

WEATHER TODAY Day temperature may rise UNB, Dhaka

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)