



DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2007

## Huge pilferage of Wasa water unearthed

CPA mobile court continues drive against illegal connections

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) in its drive against pilferage and wastage of water unearthed numerous incidents of irregularities and realised outstanding bills and revenues.

Different commercial firms and apartments have been pilfering crores of litres of Wasa water everyday, causing huge loss of revenues to the government exchequer in the port city, sources said.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) started the drive titled 'Operation Save Wasa' led by its Magistrate Md Munir Chowdhury through a mobile court on December 1 last year to check pilferage and wastage of Wasa water.

Chowdhury, as usual, took no time to discover one after another various kinds of disorders and irregularities in this state-owned organisation.

The mobile court unearthed incidents of water pilferage of around five crore litres in two months until January 31.

Sources said a section of commercial firm owners and high-rise buildings are involved in pilfering and selling the huge amount of water through illegal connections from main Wasa line by setting up pump.

They did not pay Wasa bill and evaded the revenues.

During the drive as of January 31, the court found incidents of huge pilferage and wastage of water and other irregularities in community centres, private clinics, diagnostic centres, hotels, restaurants, factories and bakeries and high-rise residential apartments.

The court realised Tk 5.13 crore in revenue and Tk 50.48 lakh in fine from the owners concerned during this period.

It also realised Tk 15 lakh in compensation, disconnected around 71 illegal lines, seized around 56 illegal pumps and motors and arrested 71 people in this connection.

The accused firms steal Wasa water from main line through PVC pipelines, creating leakage in lines, using bypass line from underground main line, extending pipelines illegally and setting up of illegal pumps in the main line. They also sell Wasa water for commercial purpose bypassing the metres and collect water from



Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) Building at Dampara.

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residential apartments to supply to the commercial building.

In its drives on February 14 and February 15, the court unearthed pilferage of around 15 crore litres of Wasa water at a residential colony Gani Colony at city's Chawk Bazar area. They have been pilfering water during the last one and a half years.

The authorities disconnected all the lines of Gani Colony on August 30 in 2006 for not paying the outstanding bill of Tk 6 lakh, sources said.

The owner supplied huge Wasa water through a bypass line from the main line to around 400 tenants living in three buildings of the 6,000 square feet colony.

The mobile court fined the owner Tk 7 lakh and realised Tk 2 lakh on the spot. The court also arrested the owner of the colony and its manager.

Chittagong Wasa is capable of producing 180 MLD (million litre per day) as against the daily demand of over 500 MLD in the port city, sources said.

Wasa Commercial Manager Sirajul Azim Khan said pilferage of water is one of the causes of 26 per cent to 32 per cent system loss in the total

production of Wasa.

Other reasons of system loss are leakage in supply line in different areas, technical and treatment problem, he added.

Chief Engineer Shafiqul Islam said the ongoing drive will play a vital role in stopping the pilferage.

Dwellers in different areas also welcomed the drive.

The firms punished by the mobile court for pilfering water are Well Food Centre, Russel Vegetable Oil Industries, Woodland Diagnostic Centre, Agrabad Maa O Shishu Hospital, Karnaphuli Shishu Park, Banani Cinema Complex, Agrabad Taher Chamber, Mehdi Tower in Mehdibag, Citycell Building, Keari Mashud, Mostafa Properties, Javed Steel Mills, Al Amin Construction, Bengal Fabrics, Frozen Foods Ltd, Orchid Tower, Mamata Drum Factory and Banga Builders.

"I'm surprised to notice how shamelessly some of the moneyed persons are pilfering Wasa water in the port city," Munir Chowdhury said. He expressed his resolve to continue the drive against all the corrupt people.

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

The resident students of Chittagong University (CU) are suffering from eating disorders since they are served unhygienic and substandard foods in the dining halls.

The substandard and unhygienic food served at the dining and canteens exposes the students to different health-hazards.

"After taking food from the canteens and dining very often we feel stomach ache, or suffer from dyspepsia and IBS (Irregular Bowl Syndrome)," said Asiful Hasnat, a student of Arts faculty.

"However, we don't have any other options other than going there for lunch," he added.

Besides, in absence of suitable canteens, around 8,000 students, including resident and non-resident ones, of science and arts faculties and Institute of Marine Sciences and Fisheries have to take these type of foods or go hungry after the lunch hours when practical and other classes are held.

An underground cafeteria at Arts faculty serves the students substandard foods in a most unhygienic atmosphere while the condition of canteens at Science faculty and Institute of Marine Science is miserable, students of

meat and pilau at Tk 8 only.

The students will be benefited if the authorities run a cafeteria in the main building like Commerce, Social Science and IT faculties," said Jahid Hossain, a student of the Science Faculty.

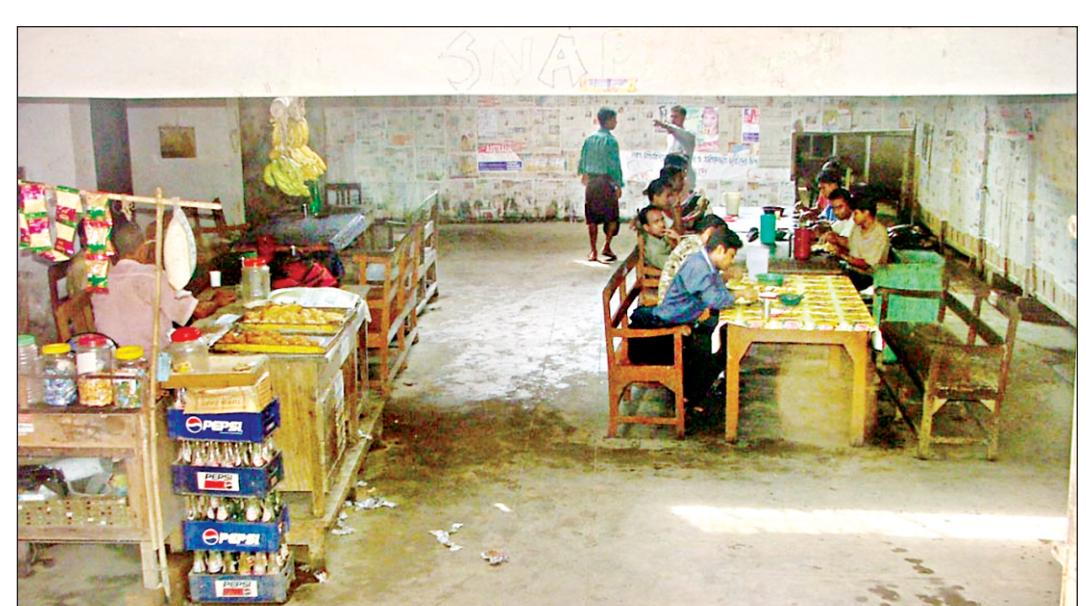
Meanwhile, the cafeteria at Chittagong University Central Students' Union (CUCSU) serves rich foods like meat and pilau at Tk 8 only.

But, the other foods served in the cafeteria are also of poor quality and small in quantity, said the students.

As such students are forced to take fast foods from nearby tea stalls, popularly known as "jhupuri", during the lunch or go without any food.

Proctor Prof Didarul Alam Chowdhury said, "I would warn the owner of the underground cafeteria and ask him to serve better and hygienic food".

Dining hall manager Mohammed Khorshed Alam, also



Students, top, take lunch at the cafeteria that runs in a most unhygienic condition at the basement of Arts Faculty building while a shabby kitchen, bottom, speaks about the miserable condition of the cafeteria on the campus.

## the week that was



Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus visits a painting exhibition titled, "Jol Ronjez Jobra Gram" at MA Aziz Stadium ground in the port city on Friday. The exhibition that portrayed Jobra (the village where Prof Yunus started his micro-credit programme) in water colour was a part of the two-day programme organised to accord reception to the Nobel laureate.

### Take preparation to face disaster of earthquake

Speakers at a workshop urged different government utility services for taking preparations and building up internal cooperation among themselves to face disaster of serious earthquake.

They were addressing a workshop on "Preparation and Feedback in Earthquake" jointly organised by ActionAid Bangladesh and European Commission at the Chittagong Circuit House on Wednesday.

Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Amir Hossain was the chief guest at the workshop with Additional Deputy Commissioner Tofazzal Hossain in the chair.

Senior officials of different utility services including Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), Fire Service and Civil Defence, Public Works Department (PWD), Chittagong Development Board (CDA), Seismic Observatory Centre, Red Crescent, Local Government and Rural

Development (LGRD), Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) participated in the workshop.

M Shahidul Islam, professor of Geology and Environment Department of Chittagong University (CU), presented the keynote paper at the workshop.

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Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) Director Mahfujul Hoque Shah, CCCI President Monwar Hikim Ali, Senior Vice-president Khaleda A Awal and Netherlands-based consultant CJ Tineke Wischmeijer addressed the seminar.

Chairperson of Bangladesh Association of Business Woman and Professionals Prof Masuda M Rashid Chowdhury also spoke on the issue at the seminar.

Around 52 representatives from different government and non-government organisations and women entrepreneurs participated at the seminar.

### Bakul, Saif Drishty president, general secretary

A new executive committee of Drishty, a cultural and educational organisation, for 2007-08 was formed at a meeting on Tuesday.

Saif Chowdhury presented the report of general secretary at the meeting with Drishty central coordinator Kalim Sarwar in the chair.

Masud Bakul and Saif Chowdhury were elected president and general secretary of the eleven-member

CMC North America, an organisation of former students of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) living in North America, donated 2,000 US dollar for the project 'Gift of Life' of the Dialysis Fund of CMC Hospital on Tuesday.

CMC Principal Prof Imran Bin Yunus, also a patron of the Dialysis Fund, and CMC Director Brigadier General Md Abdur Rahman, chairman of the fund, jointly received a cheque from LA Quader, a member of the organisation, in this regard.

Head of Nephrology Department Prof Dipu Chowdhury and other officials were present on the occasion.

Sources said CMC Dialysis Fund has been providing dialysis and related treatment facilities to the kidney failure patients since its inception in 1996.

### Seminar on women entrepreneurship

Speakers at a seminar emphasised the need for taking immediate steps to help women entrepreneurs in entering the export business.

Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CWCCI) and Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Chittagong jointly organised the seminar titled 'Access of Women in the Export Business'.

Director of EPB, Chittagong Manoj Kumar Roy presided over the seminar held at Isamat Hall of Hotel Agrabad.



Artists of Rakta Karabi, a cultural organisation, render song at a function organised by Waheedul Haque Nagorik Smaranshba Committee, Chittagong in memory of journalist and Tagore song specialist Waheedul Haq at Nazrul Square in the port city on



The Matamuhiri, once a vast river with strong current, is lying in a dying state at Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar. Losing navigability long before, the river by now has rather turned into a sand-bed to provide business to the sand traders. Though the river takes the shape of a river during the rainy season, it is there only to remind one of its existence flowing like a narrow stream in the dry monsoon.

ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIDDIQUE

STAR PHOTO