

Tk 100cr another project for drought-prone Barind likely

BSS, Rajshahi

The Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) has been supplying arsenic-free safe drinking water among the people of drought-prone Barind area for the last couple of years.

According to the officials concerned, BMDA took a five-year project titled 'Drinking Water Supply From Irrigation Deep Tube Well' in the region aimed at reducing the crisis of safe drinking water during the drought season in 2002.

The main objective of the project was to supply round-the-year potable water to every rural house in addition to maintaining the agro-irrigation system.

The Tk 41.25 crore project is scheduled to be completed by June next.

Under the programme, 35-feet high 282 water supply installations (overhead tanks) adjacent to deep tubewells, which were installed earlier by the authority, were constructed in 35 upazilas in Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Bogra and Joypurhat districts.

Apart from extension of 26 water supply installations and a water-testing laboratory, necessary pipelines were also installed.

Around three lakh remote people have been getting arsenic-free water supply facilities through the pipelines from these installations.

Project Director Engineer Aminul Islam told BSS here yesterday that the supply system is quite dependable and helping eradicate the diseases caused by shortage of potable water especially in the drought season in the vast tract of dried areas.

In fact, the general health of the village people is gradually improving in the commanding areas.

As a result of irrigation through the deep tubewells, 223 percent crop intensity has also been achieved in 13,254 hectares of surrounding lands benefiting over 20,000 farmers.

As a whole, the project would contribute enormously towards raising standard of living in the remote villages, Aminul added.

On successful implementation of the first phase, BMDA is to undertake another five-year follow-up project at an estimated cost of around Tk 100 crore, which is on the pipeline.

Under the second-phase, around 15 lakh remote people in 16 districts under Rajshahi division would be brought under safe drinking water supply facilities through commissioning another 750 installations side by side with the irrigation.



Family members of arrested leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) call on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday.



Speakers at a discussion on 'Uponnas Samagra' by eminent novelist Ata Sarkar at National Press Club in the city on Saturday. Poet Abdul Mannan Syed, third from right, and Prof Anisuzzaman, fourth from right, were present at the discussion.

Pakistan's 'disappeared' stir up anger at Musharraf

AFP, Islamabad

When Adeela Munir finally got permission to see her brother at a secret location in Rawalpindi city, she says she found him in a pathetic state.

He was hallucinating, disoriented and appeared to have been tortured.

Imran Munir, 27, is just one of hundreds of Pakistan's "disappeared" -- men detained without charge by the shadowy police and intelligence agencies.

Families of some of those missing gathered at the Supreme Court in Islamabad on Friday for the latest hearing in their fight to discover the fate of their loved ones.

It is a complex legal battle with growing political significance as military ruler President Pervez Musharraf faces major social unrest eight years after he seized power.

The public disorder, including deadly riots in Karachi two weeks ago, stems from Musharraf's suspension of Pakistan's top judge Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who has pushed authorities to reveal information about the missing.

Speaking outside court on Friday, Adeela Munir described how her brother was picked up in July 2006 by "the agencies," as Pakistan's intelligence services are universally known.

"He was with my father in Islamabad," she said. "Imran got a call telling him to report to the agencies. He had no reason to fear anything, so he went along. That was when he was taken."

Kuwait switches weekend to Friday-Saturday

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwait yesterday decided to switch its weekend to Friday-Saturday from Thursday-Friday, starting on September 1, State Minister Faisal al-Hajji told the official KUNA news agency.

Kuwait will follow the example of Gulf partners the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar which all made the same switch last year in a measure designed to bring them closer to the working week in the West.

The Kuwaiti decision, which applies to government offices, was taken during the weekly meeting of the cabinet in the oil-rich Gulf emirate on the recommendation of the Civil Service Commission.

Only oil powerhouse Saudi Arabia and Oman still apply the Thursday-Friday Muslim weekend in the six-nation alliance of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The private sector in Kuwait is not bound to follow the government, but banks and most of the oil sector already apply a Friday-Saturday weekend to be more in line with international markets, which close Saturday-Sunday.

'Ata powerful novelist of modern era'

Alokito Nagari (Enlightened City) held a discussion on 'Uponnas Samagra' by eminent novelist Ata Sarkar at National Press Club in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

Speakers at the discussion said that Ata Sarkar is a powerful novelist of the modern era. His vision about world and life is very deep and his sense is also keenly awakened, wary, real and contemporary, they observed.

They also said that Ata can be easily differentiated as a time conscious writer. He can be recognised distinctively from the identity we get in his selection of subjects, distinct quality and originality in the presentation of language.

The speakers said Ata Sarkar scatters the history of the people of Bangladesh as a country of the third world, the story of achievements, the description of deprivation, the sketch of assets and the pathetic story of grabbing the assets.

Eminent educationist Prof Anisuzzaman chaired the discussion while Dr M Moniruzzaman, associate professor, Victoria University, Dhaka was the key discussant.

Poet Belal Chowdhury, poet Abdul Mannan Syed, Dr Selim Al Deen, eminent dramatist and chairman of Theatre and Music, Jahangirnagar University, Dr Syed Mohammad Shahed, director general of Bangla Academy, Khairul Alam Sabuj, noted actor, Shamim Reja, literary editor, Ajker Kagoj and Aminur Rahman Rana, chief executive officer of Alokito Nagari (Enlightened City) were also present.

The author also said a few words on the occasion.

N Korean leader grooming sons as successors

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Il is grooming two of his sons as potential successors and testing which of them is fit to head the Stalinist state, a report said yesterday.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency, quoting an unnamed source, said that the 65-year-old Kim seemed to be testing them by taking them to military inspections to see how they performed.

"By taking them out to inspections of military units, he seems to check who will fit better," as his successor, the source was quoted as saying.

Kim has three sons: Jong-Nam, 36, Jong-Chul, 26, and Jong-Woon, 23, but the eldest's star has waned after he was embarrassingly deported from Japan in 2001 while trying to enter the country on a forged Dominican passport, Yonhap said.

"Chairman Kim has yet to determine who is to succeed him, but he is still believed to point at Jong-Chul or Jong-Woon," the source was quoted as saying.

The two men received secret military education at the North's prestigious Kim Il-Sung University over recent years, apparently to prepare them for succession, the report said.

Kim Jong-Il inherited power from his father, Kim Il-Sung, who founded the North in 1948 and died in 1994, creating the world's first communist dynasty.

In 2005 Kim banned discussion of succession, fearing it could make him a lame duck leader, Yonhap said.

The report also speculated that his health might be worsening, saying Kim had diabetes and problems with his heart and liver.

Kim had attended 23 publicity events so far this year, half as many as expected, said Yonhap, which monitors North Korean state media.

North Korea could see a three-way power struggle between a group supporting Jong-Chul and Jong-Woon, a group backing Jong-Nam, and supporters of Kim's new wife, Kim Ok, the report said.

Yonhap reported last year that the North's leader took Kim Ok, a musician-turned-secretary, as his new wife.

Jong-Nam was born to actress Sung Hae-Rim, who reportedly died of an unidentified disease in a Moscow hospital in 2002.

Jong-Chul and Jong-Woon were born to a different mother, Ko Yong-Hui, a former dancer who died of lung cancer in 2004.

Thailand to beef up security ahead of key party ruling

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand plans to beef up security in the capital ahead of a crucial ruling on whether the kingdom's two largest political parties should be dissolved, Bangkok police said yesterday.

About 500 police will be deployed on Wednesday at the court where judges will announce the fate of Thai Rak Thai (TRT), the party formed by the ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and the Democrat Party, Thailand's oldest party.

The parties face a slew of electoral fraud charges related to annulled elections in April last year, and many people are concerned that a verdict banning one or both of the parties could provoke unrest and clashes.

Colonel Sansern Kaewkamnerd, spokesman for the junta which seized power in a coup last September, said police would work with the army and Bangkok security staff to monitor both the capital and the countryside.

He said the army would set up checkpoints on roads from the north, a stronghold of Thaksin and his TRT party.

"If we find that people are coming to Bangkok, we will check them and stop them from bringing weapons, but we will not stop them from coming to assemble," Sansern said yesterday.

Acting national police chief Sereepisit Taameeyaves told AFP last week that they would scupper any plans to bring elephants to the capital, after rumours that protesters would bring 99 pachyderms from the north.

"The law already bans elephants from entering the city, and those who bring them to incite chaos will face prosecution," he said. "Police will not let them in to avert clashes."

Anti-junta groups with links to Thaksin have said they plan to rally, but have given no further details.

Police and the military, however, have played down talk of any clashes, while the leaders of both the TRT and the Democrat Party have stressed that they would accept the verdict and discourage their supporters from protesting.

Thailand's influential monarch has urged the judges to act fairly and warned that dissolving the parties would damage the country's image.

"You have responsibilities to make the country not sink. You can advise people because you have knowledge. I ask you to solve the current situation which is not good at all," King Bhumibol Adulyadej said on Thursday.

"Whatever the judgement is, it will damage the country," said the 79-year-old king, who is almost universally adored by Thais.



President of Rotary Club of Dhaka Buriganga Rtn Raquibuddin Ahmed and President of Rotary Club of Shanghai, China, Rtn Chee-Chin Wu, are flanked by the visiting members of the both countries at a function in China recently. An eight-member delegation of club led by Raquibuddin Ahmed went on a two-week trip to China that also included a fellowship visit to Rotary Club of Shanghai besides Beijing, Liajiang, Dali and Kunming. This is for the first time that any Rotary Club from Bangladesh visited a Rotary Club in China.