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1,000 illegal deep tube wells lift water in city

Underground water diminishing rapidly

HELEMUL ALAM

Excessive use of underground water of the capital through deep tube wells, and filling up of low-lying land, canals and water bodies is causing the underground water level to drop alarmingly.

Experts say that this could put the city dwellers in severe water crisis in future and also cause land to subside.

Chief Engineer of Dhaka Wasa Mohammad Nurul Haque said there are 1,200 authorised deep tube wells in the city while the number of illegal deep tube wells is probably around 1,000. Apart from these, Wasa set up 513 deep tube wells to meet the growing water demand, he said.

The drop in underground water level has already forced Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to pump water from the second layer (first con-

finied aquifer) at 70 points, including at Mirpur, Nakhla Para, Ibrahimpur and Manipur, Wasa officials said.

Md Eftekarul Alam, engineer of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), said 80 to 90 percent water of the first layer (unconfined aquifer) is almost finished while the pressure of second layer (first confined aquifer) have started to fall even though they started using the second layer only a few years ago.

Managing Director of Wasa Raihanul Abedin said due to dependence on deep tube wells, water layers in the city are dropping around three metres a year on average.

Still, 85 percent of Dhaka Wasa's water comes from underground and the rest from surface water treated at Syedabad Water Treatment Plant and Chadnighat Water Treatment Plant in Dhaka and

Godnail Water Treatment Plant and Sonakanda Water Treatment Plant in Narayanganj.

Wasa is capable of delivering around 190 crore litres of water a day against a demand of 210 crore litres, Wasa officials say.

Acknowledging the problem, Wasa MD Abedin said they have already initiated setting up Syedabad Water Treatment Plant Phase-II, with a capacity of providing 22.5 crore litres a day, and Khilkhet Water Treatment Plant, with a capacity of delivering 50 crore litres a day, to reduce dependency on underground water.

According to the statistics of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), underground water level in Mirpur was 15.60 metres below the surface in 1991, 38.02 metres in 2000 and



Builders at Kamalapur area block a large part of the main road to stock iron rods and other building materials, narrowing down the roads and adding to the misery of commuters.

PHOTO: STAR

Amnesty Int'l welcomes UN help in war crime trial

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International (AI) has welcomed the UN assistance to Bangladesh's efforts to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity and other serious violations of humanitarian law during the War of Liberation in 1971.

Welcoming the news, the AI said four international war crimes experts, Louis Bickford, Priscilla Hayner, Bogdan Ivanisevic and Alexander Mayer-Rieckh, have been named to assist the government.

"The failure to seek truth and justice for crimes against humanity and other serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law in 1971 has encouraged the persistent nature of impunity in Bangladesh," said AI Secretary General Irene Khan.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 16-member body formed to make recommendations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a 16-member committee to review the report of Shamsul Haque Education Committee-1997 in order to formulate a modern national education policy in line with the Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission-1974 report.

"A 16-member committee headed by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury has been formed to recommend for the education policy based on the suggestions made in Shamsul Haque Education Committee," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told the reporters at his office yesterday.

He also said the government wants to come out of the culture of frequent shift in policies which leaves such guidelines unimplemented.

The committee will submit their concrete recommendations before the ministry within 90 days from the date of its first meeting.

"The committee has been asked to submit its report within

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

MINE SUBSIDENCE Villagers form human chain for compensation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The villagers affected by the land subsidence in Barapukuria Coal Mine area yesterday formed a human chain demanding rehabilitation and compensation from the authorities concerned.

The locals of 10 villages including Kalupara, Jhigagari, Bolorampur and Moupukur area gathered in front of the main entrance of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) and formed a human chain from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Later, they held a meeting in front of the BCMCL gate where Md Ibrahim Khalil, convener of 'Jiban O Sampad Rakhkha

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

RETURN OF JOBLESS WORKERS FROM MALAYSIA Govt misled by mission's baseless allegations

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Malaysia

The labour wing of the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia wrote a misleading letter to the government in August last year, saying that migrants' rights bodies are conspiring against Bangladesh's labour market in Malaysia and instigating workers to return home.

It wrote to the expatriates' welfare ministry on August 21 last year that two NGOs -- one based in Dhaka and the other in Kuala Lumpur -- instigated 46 workers to return home though they had legal scopes to continue working.

But, the Special Branch of police in two separate investigations into the matter found those allegations baseless, while the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) in its own investigation found that the workers

returned because they were not provided jobs as per the contracts they signed.

The letter signed by the second secretary (labour) at the Labour wing of Bangladesh's mission in Kuala Lumpur, Mohammad Masudul Hasan, says: "Return of so many workers at a time in a single flight is fully intentional. These workers were instigated to go back home though they had legal scopes for work. Many workers who got in trouble made these complaints."

The letter further claimed that an NGO based in Malaysia, Tenaganita, was arranging funds for repatriation of these workers.

"On the other hand, members of IMA Research Foundation in Dhaka are instigating the guardians and parents through mobile phones to bring back their sons. Besides,

SHATTERED DREAMS OF MIGRANT WORKERS - 4

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Police raid DU hall, arrest 6 BCL men

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police in a raid detained six activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and an outsider from Salimullah Hall of Dhaka University early yesterday.

Around 15 sharp weapons, including machetes, swords and knives, were also recovered from the hall during the raid, sources at the hall said.

The detainees are Sarafat Hossen Shakil and Imtiaz Russell of Philosophy department, M Aziz of Islamic History, Ehteshamul Haque Khokan of Political Science, Rehnam Nasir Rajib of International Relations and Kamal Bin Ali of Urdu

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

7 new MPs sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven lawmakers elected in the recently held by-election were sworn in yesterday at a ceremony filling up all 345 seats including reserved ones for women in the House.

Speaker Abdul Hamid administered the oaths at the oath-room of Sangsad Bhaban.

The newly elected lawmakers are Sheikh Helal Uddin (Bagerhat-1), Rowshan Ershad (Rangpur-3), Abul Kalam Azad (Rangpur-6), M Zafar Ali (Kurigram-3), immediate past speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar (Bogra-6), Barrister Moudud Ahmed (Bogra-7) and Nazmul Hasan Papon (Kishoreganj-6).

After the oath-taking ceremony, Jamiruddin Sircar told

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



The wide availability of Jataka in the fish markets of the country shows how unsuccessful the government's drive against catching fry is in the country. This picture was taken from Gandaria in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hazari cleared of 4-murder charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Former Awami League lawmaker Joynal Hazari and AL leader Abdul Quader Mirza, brother of central AL leader Obaidul Quader, were yesterday cleared of charges of killing four BNP activists in Feni about eight years ago.

Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal (STT) framed charged against several accused but cleared Hazari and Quader of all the four cases filed in connection with the murders at Sonagazi upazila on August 12, 2001 as the charges brought against them could not be proved, court sources said.

Following the murder of BNP activists Shah Alam, Tota Mia, Nobuillah and Ahmed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Thai protesters pile pressure on PM

Demand resignation of govt, fresh election

AFP, Bangkok

More than 100,000 anti-government protesters rallied in Bangkok yesterday in their biggest bid yet to topple premier Abhisit Vejjajiva, deepening Thailand's political crisis ahead of a key Asian summit.

Demonstrators dressed in signature red shirts massed outside the house of a top royal aide whom they accuse of masterminding the 2006 coup that ousted former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and eventually led to Abhisit's rise.

They also gathered outside the offices of the British-born Abhisit, where protesters have staged a sit-in for the past two weeks, chanting "Bring Thaksin back, Abhisit get out!"

Thousands of security forces guarded key sites across the capital, but there was no immediate sign of violence despite the prime minister's warnings that a core group of protesters would try to provoke bloodshed.

"We came here to expel the government,"

protest leader Nattawut Saikuar told the cheering crowd of so-called "Red Shirts," adding that they planned to stay in place until Friday.

Abhisit rejected the protesters' demands to dissolve his four-month-old administration and hold fresh elections, warning of strong action if there was any.

Police issued a formal warning to protesters not to enter the house of General Prem Tinsulanonda, a former premier who is now a key aide to King Bhumibol Adulyadej, after thousands of demonstrators ringed the compound.

Bangkok deputy police commander Lieutenant General Chakthip Chaijinda said he had informed Abhisit that there were more than 100,000 protesters in the city and that more were expected overnight, raising security fears.

Abhisit insisted there was no threat to a summit of Asian leaders, including the Chinese and Japanese premiers, due to start Friday in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

5 militants arrested for plotting attack in Karachi

AFP, Karachi

Police in Pakistan's financial capital said yesterday they had arrested five members of one of the country's most feared militant groups for allegedly plotting to bomb sensitive sites in Karachi.

"We have arrested five terrorists and seized... weapons, explosives and chemicals required for bomb-making," Karachi city police chief Waseem Ahmed told a news conference.

He said the suspects

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

আলমাস সুপার শপ

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Prayer Timing

April 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8