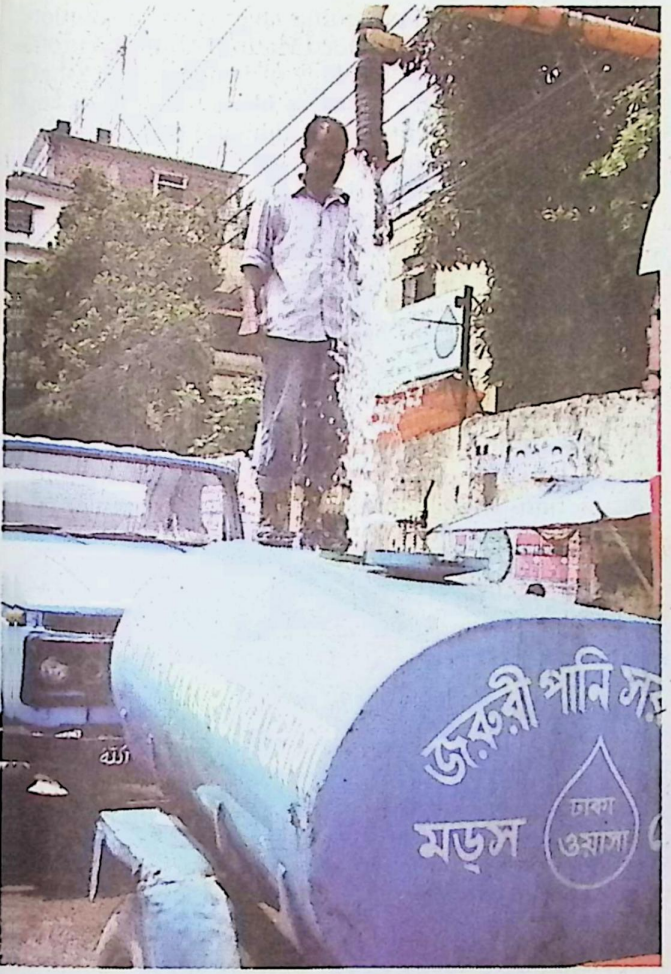
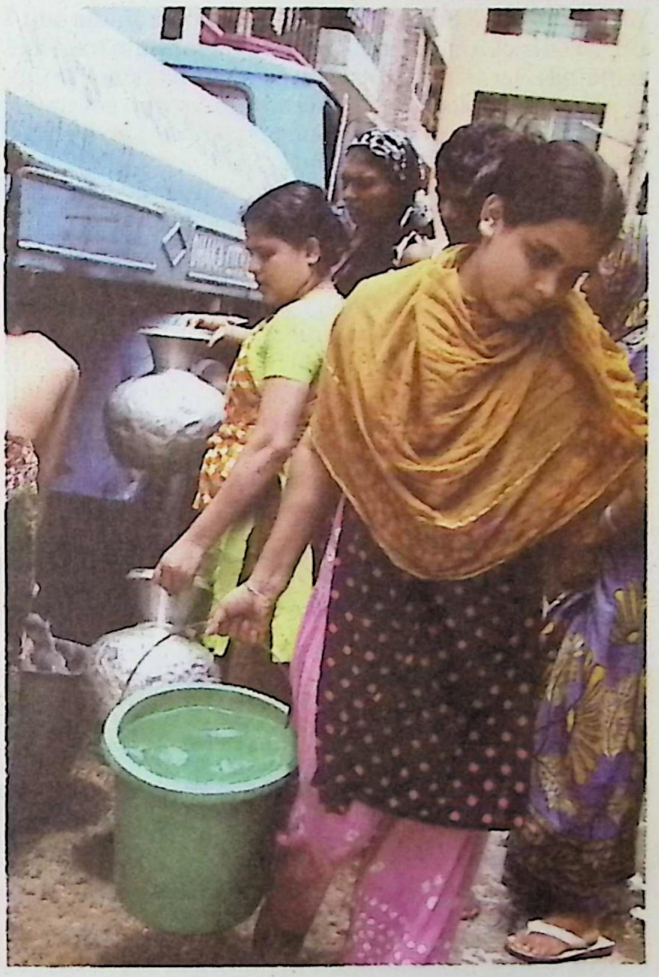




Waiting with containers in front of a Wasa lorry - a familiar scene in many parts of the city.

The first water supply system was introduced in Dhaka by the British in 1888 under the jurisdiction of the district civil surgeon at Chandighat. The Chandnighat plant treating water from the Buriganga River has the capacity of supplying 3.9 crore litres of treated water to supply mainly in the localities under Lalbagh Police Station and Kotwali Police Station. However, after so many years the treatment plant is unable to produce according to its normal capacity. Moreover, the source of water for the plant, the Buriganga River, has become biologically dead because of ongoing water pollution caused by industrial and domestic sources. The conventional treatment plant, which uses only lime and chlorine for treatment, cannot neutralise the existing pollutants in river water, many of which may cause serious health hazards. That is why people get sticky straw-coloured water in the areas where water from the Chandnighat is supplied.

The first deep-water pump was installed in Dhaka in 1949. Till the end of 1960s the water supply in Dhaka was almost surface-water system based. Dhaka Wasa was formed in 1963, being separated from the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), with the aim of giving better service to its city dwellers. It inherited only 33 deep pumps from DPHE. But, to meet the ever increasing demand of the city dwellers of one of the fastest growing mega-cities in the world, Dhaka Wasa without having any long-term vision, kept on installing deep-water pumps on a crisis by crisis basis.

The dependence on groundwater for domestic, industrial, and commercial water supply in the city area was more than 95 per cent prior to the commissioning of a surface water treatment plant (Sayedabad Surface Water Treatment Plant) in 2002.

Each day, the treatment plant at Saidabad supplies 22.5 crore litres of treated water to the capital's north-south pipeline that runs from Postogola Bridge to Farm Gate, and to the east-west pipeline which supplies water to the vast area from Goran through Old Dhaka to Dhanmondi.

Though the treatment plant is well designed, at present it is inadequate for treating the dangerously high concentration of domestic and industrial wastes in the Shitalakkhya River, the source water of the treatment