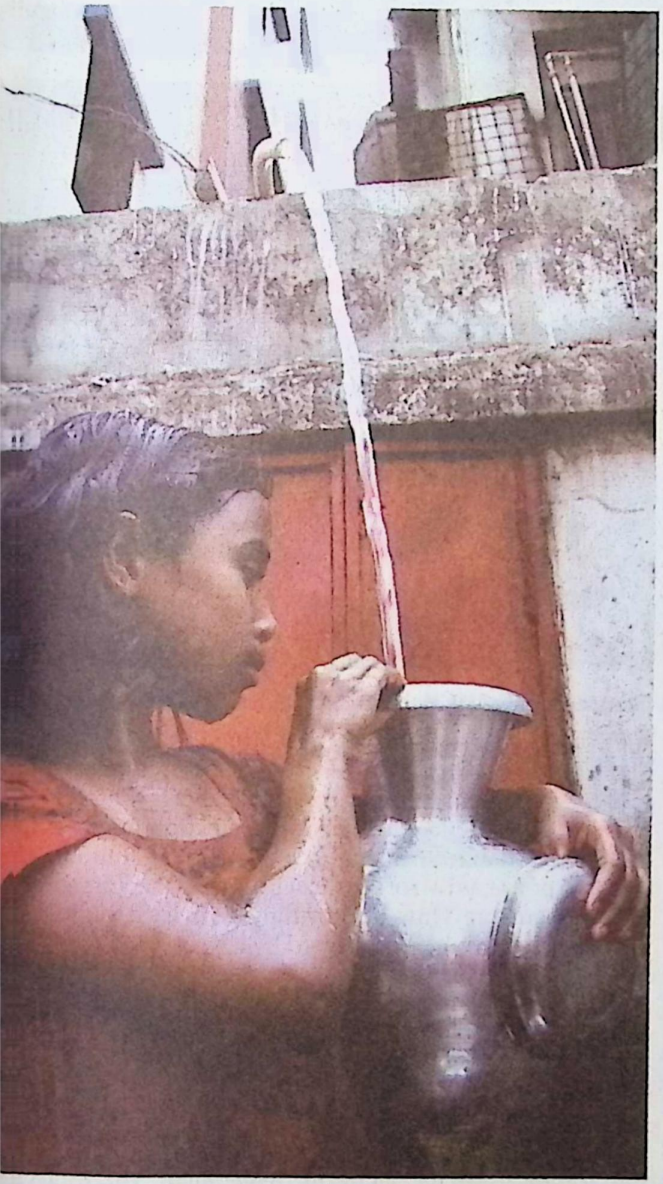
water. Moreover, they create holes in the pipeline for connecting illegal lines. Sewage water enters into Wasa supply line through these holes which contaminates water quality."



People are flocking to collect water wherever available.

So far Wasa does not seem to have any concrete plan to solve the crisis despite the fact that over the years many donor agencies have urged it to shift to surface water sources instead of its current dependence on groundwater extraction. Surface water pollution has affected the ability of Wasa to draw and treat surface water at Sarulia and Chandnighat.

Danish International Development Agency (Danida) has come up with technology to control the foul smell in water treated at the Saidabad Water Treatment Plant to a minimum level. This 'pre-treatment technology' will be installed as part of the Second Phase project of the plant, which is expected to be functional from 2012.

"The second phase of the treatment plant will supply 22.5 crore litres of additional water daily, which will improve the existing situation. But at the same time the government should take steps to control the ongoing pollution in the Shitalakkhya River. Otherwise, it will be difficult to implement the third phase of the plant, which is expected to produce additional 45 crore litre water a day," says an important Wasa official.

Wasa hopes to solve the water problem in the next four years. To meet the water crisis in the Mirpur area a well field in Singair Upazila, Manikganj district has been identified. A total of 30 crore litres of water is expected to be abstracted from the field. "After getting approval from the Planning Commission, we expect to go to production in three years," says a high official of Wasa.

In order to meet the growing water demand in Uttara, North Badda and Gulshan, a surface water treatment plant is under consideration at Khilkhet area, which would add another 50 crore litres of water in a day to the supply line. The intake of this treatment plant would be the Meghna River. In fact this is a part of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s proposed 'Water Supply and Sector Development Project,' informs the Wasa official. "This treatment will also create opportunity to improve the existing water quality at the intake point of SWTP at Sarulia," he says.

The ADB's proposal includes replacement of leaky pipelines, installation of water overheads, capacity building and institutional development of the government agency.

Wasa has already sent a proposal to the government to purchase 200 generators, so that power cuts do not hamper the production of the agency.

But the hydrogeologists suggest that the government takes immediate steps for artificial recharging engineering to control the ongoing depletion of water in the underground layer. Rainwater harvesting might be a solution to the crisis. "Many parts of the world even in Delhi, rain harvesting has proved to be effective for artificial recharging in the urban areas," informs Professor Matin.

Annual rainfall, he says, is over 2,000 mm in Bangladesh which can be used to recharge the underground water through dug wells, ponds and abandoned wells of Wasa. The professor also says that the low-lying areas near Dhaka can be used as surface water reservoirs using the water of the monsoon. It will help recharging and at the same time can be used for surface water source."

A holistic approach is needed to ensure adequate supply of potable water to the citizens, one that would increase Wasa's capacity as well as promote private sector involvement in the supply of water given that Wasa only caters to part of the water demand. Above all, it is vital that the sources of surface water are not themselves polluted through sewer and effluent dumps. ■