



PHOTO: ANJA BURRI
The rubber tube used for illegal supply of unclean water to the capital's biggest slum Korail Bosti, running along the right side of this alley. Inset, the dirty path of the tube, which is broken and taped at places, and thus also responsible for contamination of the water. The photos were taken recently.

Dhaka's biggest slum to finally get legal water supply

ANJA BURRI

The 1.5 lakh inhabitants of Dhaka's biggest slum Korail Bosti are dependent on illegal and often dirty water that comes through a small, above-ground rubber tube.

Although slum dwellers pay double prices compared to the inhabitants of official Dhaka neighbourhoods, they often fall sick from drinking this water.

They suffer from diseases like diarrhoea, jaundice or cholera, the slum resident Nurunnahar Begum told The Daily Star recently.

The illegal connection and pipe system is to blame for this. The water runs through a two centimetre thick pipe that curls through the labyrinthine and dirty slum paths.

On certain spots the pipe is broken and taped. Bacteria can grow easily on those spots, also because water in the aboveground plastic pipe gets warm quickly.

Still this dirty water grants some people good earnings. They set up the illegal connections and charge the slum dwellers around Tk 120 per family a month.

In order to keep on running the illegal connections, the "water businessmen" have to pay their contact persons at Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

But all this misery is to end soon—Korail Bosti will finally get access to legal water connections. "A dream has come true," said Nurunnahar Begum.

Together with the NGO Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), the slum people have been fighting for this for the last six years, said the mother of six children.

The slum residents faced various types of challenges. Naturally the sellers of the illegal water first opposed the plans for legal connections in Korail Bosti.

They agreed only after rounds of negotiation with the Community Based Organisation of Korail (CBO) and DSK.

"Due to Dhaka Wasa's plans for a new water connection system, the illegal water business will become impossible soon," explained Abdul Mannan, general secretary of CBO.

The water sellers were not alone to have opposed the legal water supply for Korail slum, though.

Two years ago, the inhabitants of the nearby Banani area had pro-

tested connecting the slum to the water network, said Akhil Chandra Das, project manager of DSK. They feared a shortage of water in their own area, he explained.

In the next week, 39 water connections will be put into operation in Korail Bosti. In total, Wasa has authorised 500 pipe connections for the slum where about 16,000 families live.

A bit more than 30 families will share one water connection. Each installation consists of a tap in a clean and concreted surrounding and a small tank where the water can be collected.

For the clean and legal water, there is no need to pay extra money. Each family will have to pay around Tk 50 per month, said Abdul Mannan.

The rest of the connections will be set up in the next months. Initially, the CBO has applied for 2,000 water connections, said Abdul Mannan.

According to Wasa, only 204 slums out of a few thousand have access to legal water in Dhaka today. The World Bank estimates that a half of Dhaka's population live in slums.

Use of Bangla in every sector urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Language movement veterans and eminent citizens of Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to take effective measures for introducing Bangla language in all sectors of the country for ensuring its due dignity.

The language movement in 1952 had paved the way for the Liberation War that finally established independent Bangladesh, they said.

They were addressing a discussion held on the celebration of the 11th founding anniversary of World University of Bangladesh at Kalabagan playground in the capital.

Language movement hero Dr Ahmed Rafique said though the demand for introducing Bangla at every level after its recognition as state language was vibrant, that demand has not been fulfilled in areas such as higher education level and in courtrooms in the last 61 years.

Professor Emeritus of Dhaka University Dr Anisuzzaman said the language movement is a grand incident in the history of the nation.

"We have both our state language and an independent Bangladesh but I fear we are losing our language," he added.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a

caretaker government, said, "We can only acknowledge the sacrifices of the language movement veterans but we can never repay their sacrifices."

"If they (language movement veterans) did not come forward for the language movement, we would not have our independence later," she added.

Talking about the Shahbagh movement, Sultana Kamal said the protesters are now struggling to fulfil the incomplete achievements of the liberation through raising their voices.

But the anti-liberation forces are still trying to intimidate the country's independence with their destructive activities like tearing down the national flag and desecrating the Shaheed Minars, she added.

Language movement veteran Dr Halima Khatun said, "We do not feel we owe to our language movement despite getting an independent Bangladesh."

Begum Rawson-Ara-Bachchu, another language heroine, said women had equal participation in the language movement and now they are contributing in different fields in the country.

But the tragedy is that women are still suffering from different forms of torture in the society, she added.

Bhola ward councillor doped, mugged in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aggayan party members allegedly doped a ward councillor of Bhola municipality and looted Tk 5 lakh from him on Dhaka-Mawa highway at Jatrabari in the capital yesterday.

Nasiruddin Helal, councillor of Ward No-8 of the municipality, was found unconscious inside a bus of Ilish Paribahan around 2:30pm.

His brother Alauddin said Helal started for Dhaka from Bhola around 8:30am.

As Helal did not respond over cellphone, an unknown person received a call made by Helal's brother and informed him of the matter.

Helal's family and the bus staff said the party members might have looted his handbag containing the money after dopping him.



Nehreen Ferdousi, wife of Col Mojibul Haque who was killed during the BDR mutiny in 2009, addresses a commemorative programme styled "Buk Tar Bangladesher Hridoy" at Rabindra Sorobor in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday. Colonel Mojib Trust organised the programme marking the 4th anniversary of the mutiny, which killed 74 people including 57 army officials.

PHOTO: STAR

Rickshaw trek to save Bengal Tigers ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty adventurers from seven different countries cycled more than 400km on rickshaws across Bangladesh to raise awareness about the need for protecting endangered Bengal Tigers and their home, the Sundarbans.

Their journey, titled Wild Rickshaw Challenge, was organised by an environment conservation organisation, Wild Team.

After the inaugural event, the 10-day journey began in Teknaf on February 17 and ended in the Sundarbans yesterday, said a press release.

The rickshaw crew attracted a lot of onlookers during their journey and the challengers tried to spread the message of the Sundarbans and the tigers among the spectators.

From Teknaf, the riders went to Cox's

Bazar and then to Chittagong. On February 22, the team reached Barisal and continued towards the Sundarbans.

They completed the challenge yesterday at Joymuni, a village by the Chandpai range in the Sundarbans, and were congratulated with fresh coconut water.

Regent Airways, Youngone Corporation and Monsoon Films supported the event as corporate partners.

The Daily Star, People's Radio, UNB News and Channel i were media partners.

A group of Bangladeshi nature enthusiasts founded Wild Team in 2003. Now the organisation has a registered charity arm in the UK.

The organisation also focuses on other areas such as protecting animals from poaching, empowering people to coexist with nature successfully and involving locals in their work to prevent threats to tigers and other wildlife.

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