

RUNNING LOW



Water wells dry up

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feeling the effects of shrinking water supplies from overpumping. Yemen is fast becoming a hydrological basket case. Grain production has fallen there by half over the last 35 years. By 2015 irrigated fields will be a rarity and the country will be importing virtually all of its grain.

There is also concern about falling water tables in China, India and the US, the world's three largest food-producing countries. "In India, 175 million people are being fed with grain produced by overpumping, in China 130 million. In the United States the irrigated area is shrinking in leading farm states with rapid population growth, such as California and Texas, as aquifers are depleted and irrigation water is diverted to cities."

Falling water tables are already adversely affecting

harvest prospects in China, which rivals the US as the world's largest grain producer, says Brown. "The water table under the North China Plain, an area that produces more than half of the country's wheat and a third of its maize is falling fast. Overpumping has largely depleted the shallow aquifer, forcing well drillers to turn to the region's deep aquifer, which is not replenishable."

The situation in India may be even worse, given that well drillers are now using modified oil-drilling technology to reach water half a mile or more deep. "The harvest has been expanding rapidly in recent years, but only because of massive overpumping from the water table. The margin between food consumption and survival is precarious in India, whose population is growing by 18 million per

year and where irrigation depends almost entirely on underground water. Farmers have drilled some 21m irrigation wells and are pumping vast amounts of underground water, and water tables are declining at an accelerating rate in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu."

In the US, farmers are overpumping in the Western Great Plains, including in several leading grain-producing states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska. Irrigated agriculture has thrived in these states, but the water is drawn from the Ogallala aquifer, a huge underground water body that stretches from Nebraska southwards to the Texas Panhandle. "It is, unfortunately, a fossil aquifer, one that does not recharge. Once it is depleted, the wells go dry and farmers either go

back to dryland farming or abandon farming altogether, depending on local conditions," says Brown.

"In Texas, located on the shallow end of the aquifer, the irrigated area peaked in 1975 and has dropped 37% since then. In Oklahoma irrigation peaked in 1982 and has dropped by 25%. In Kansas the peak did not come until 2009, but during the three years since then it has dropped precipitously, falling nearly 30%. Nebraska saw its irrigated area peak in 2007. Since then its grain harvest has shrunk by 15%."

Brown warned that many other countries may be on the verge of declining harvests. "With less water for irrigation, Mexico may be on the verge of a downturn in its grain harvest. Pakistan may also have reached peak water. If so, peak grain may not be far behind."

GAZIPUR POLLS AL men fare better in councillor race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ward level Awami League leaders won the maximum number of councillor posts in the Saturday's election to Gazipur City Corporation to the consolation of the ruling party.

In the election, the BNP-blessed MA Mannan won the mayoral race with a big margin, rendering a blow to the ruling party.

Local AL leaders won 28 councillor posts out of 57, while the BNP men managed to win 24.

Of the total, Jatiya Party leaders won two, and non-partisan candidates secured three councillor posts.

The women leaders of the BNP, however, outperformed those of the AL in the battle of ballots for councillor posts reserved for women.

They secured five posts out of 19. AL women leaders managed to secure four posts.

The remaining 10 councillors-elect claimed that they were not biased towards any political party.

The Daily Star talked to almost all the councillors-elect and locals to identify their political affiliations.

Both the AL and BNP allowed its ward level leaders to vie freely for the councillor positions.

As a result, more than one leader of both the parties competed in the election from the same ward.

AL's Black Rose

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As the electoral rules prohibited ministers campaigning for the party-backed candidates, the two ministers chose the hotel to set up the party's campaign office. There they held meetings regularly and gave necessary directives to their fellow party men for campaigning.

A number of AL lawmakers, leaders and former Chhatra League men including Whip Mirza Azam, party leaders Alauddin Nasim, Enamul Haque Shamim, former BCL leaders Liaqat Sikder, Sahajada Mohiuddin, and Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Roton; and BCL General Secretary Siddique Nazmul Alam, among others, assisted the two ministers.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif, AL President Sheikh Hasina's special envoy for the polls Abdur Rahman MP and Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury MP also worked from the hotel.

The AL had assigned more than 60 lawmakers and some central leaders to work for the party mayoral favourite Ajmat Ullah Khan. Of them, 57 lawmakers

War hero killed

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Aggrieved by the burning of his house, Anil had set a trap to catch Nizami's nephew. Nizami's nephew fell in the trap and was slaughtered by the freedom fighters, Kundu told the court.

Being furious over the killing, a group of Razakars had caught Baten, group commander of the freedom fighters, at the end of September 1971 and killed him, he said.

Anil, who died in 2010, used to live in Sonatola village under Sathia Police Station in Pabna during the liberation war.

"After the murder of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, Anil left Sonatola for fear of retribution from Nizami and started living in Nilphamari," Kundu said.

The witness also said he

Copper cage

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Ibrahim Yücel has been smoking for the last 26 years, and despite several attempts to quit he couldn't break his two-packs-a-day dirty habit. Every year, on his three children's birthdays and on his wedding anniversary he would give up cigarettes, but he never went more than a few days without them. His family, his friends and co-workers all tried to convince him to stop using tobacco cigarettes, but he just couldn't do it. After losing his father to smoking-induced lung cancer a few months ago, Ibrahim realised smoking just wasn't worth losing his life over and putting his wife and children through the same hardships. But the Turkish technician also knew he lacked the willpower to quit by usual means, so he came up with a rather unusual solution. Inspired by motorcycle helmets, he decided to build a metal wire cage that would prevent him from lighting up no matter how badly he craved a cigarette.

Hope

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EU Trade Commissioner De Gucht will host the discussion which will focus on agreeing on labour rights, safety and health at work, and responsible business conduct, according to EU Embassy in Dhaka.

High level delegations from the Bangladesh and US governments and the International Labour Organisation will take part in the talks titled "Staying Engaged - A Sustainability Compact with Bangladesh."

Representatives of the RMG exporters' association, trade unions and leading buyers will also join the discussion.

Commissioner De Gucht met Foreign Minister Dipu Moni on May 28 to shape a response to address the problems of the garment sector as well as avoiding hardship for Bangladeshis.

Both the sides agreed that the key to a lasting improvement in the sector lies in the engagement of all actors in the supply chain, and of international support for work at a multilateral level which can effect change in the most efficient and comprehensive manner, said an EU statement.

The EU, added the release, wishes to remain engaged with Bangladesh so that it can preserve the preferential access to the EU market which has greatly helped its socio-economic development over the years.

Gazipur

FROM PAGE 1
Voters of Gazipur, however, did not consider much about educational qualifications of councillor aspirants.

They picked 14 councillor aspirants who have not the secondary-level educational qualification.

Among other councillors-elect, 10 passed SSC, 19 passed HSC, nine obtained graduation and four did postgraduate degree.

Among the councillors-elect to the seats reserved for women, eight had not studied till SSC, two passed HSC, four completed graduation and two obtained post graduate degrees. Three councillors elect did not mention their educational qualifications in their affidavits.

AL conspiring

FROM PAGE 16
The BDB would always stay beside Grameen Bank, Badruddoza assured Yunus.

He hoped that the government would refrain from splitting the microfinance institution.

Blasting the government for harassing the Nobel laureate, the former president said, "It was Prof Yunus who first called upon the international community not to brand Bangladesh a poor country."

Replying to a query, Badruddoza said an unconstitutional government might take over the country if the next election is not held in due time under a non-partisan government.

The restoration of caretaker government system could only ensure the next parliamentary polls, he observed.

In his speech, Prof Yunus said the country's poor women owned 90 percent share of Grameen Bank.

"It will bring no good for the government if it wants to grab those women's property," said Yunus.

He urged the people to save the bank from the government's conspiracy to nationalise it.

He also thanked the BDB leaders for expressing their solidarity with the GB.

Buoyed BNP to ride

FROM PAGE 1
people gave us in all the city corporation elections held recently. We will not do anything for which we might lose such support," BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"We believe people are with us. We also believe the government will not be able to reverse the situation in the next four to five months left for the general elections," he said.

The main opposition party now plans to capitalise on people's "anti-government sentiment" reflected in the city corporation polls for realising its core demand -- restoration of the caretaker system. Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia now wants to "proceed carefully" in chalking out and implementing its movement programmes in the next four months, party

insiders said.

Moudud said the BNP is contemplating a fresh four-month programme to take the movement to its peak by October. The party will be reorganised and further strengthened during July and August, and the rainy season will be over by this time.

Contacted, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, another member of the party standing committee, said, "We will have to take our movement to its climax before parliament is dissolved in October so that the government is bound to amend the constitution to restore the caretaker government system."

Party insiders said some of their top leaders think although their movement for restoration of the CG system did not gain desired momentum in the last two years, it will now get people's support as they have

expressed "no confidence" in the government through the city corporation polls. Meanwhile, party's acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday described the victory in Gazipur polls as a triumph for the opposition's movement for a non-party polls-time government.

MANNAN MEETS KHALEDA
Winner of Gazipur City Corporation polls MA Mannan met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office last night.

Accompanied by local BNP leaders and activists, Mannan spent more than an hour with the party chief. Top leaders of the party including Moudud Ahmed Tariqul Islam and Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah.

The BNP chief congratulated Mannan for the "prestigious victory".

Star honours

FROM PAGE 1
capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. The 10 are:

Karuna Begum: A female freedom fighter who fought in the guise of a man at Nalchira of Gournadi. She lost a leg in the war.

Shahed Ali: He first took up arms in Rangpur and conducted a guerilla attack against Pak Army's 21 cavalry on March 23, 1971.

Rebati Mahali: The indigenous tea garden labourer in Sylhet, who was tortured to death by the Pakistan Army for saving women and children from fire, set by the army.

Sofir Uddin Munshi: He was killed along with his family for helping freedom fighters in Mymensingh.

Mahtab Begh: He was killed in Saidpur while trying to rescue the Bangalees caught by non-Bangalees of the city on March 24, 1971.

Hasan Ali: A young freedom fighter who was killed by the Pakistani Army after he was brought to a military camp by a group of razakars. The account of his heroic death came up in the book Witness to Surrender written by Pakistani Major Siddique Salik, who was at

the camp at the time.

Salahuddin: He was forced into the cage of hungry tigers by the occupation army to force him leak information about fellow freedom fighters.

Aminul Haque: He was among the 350 who died of exhaustion from forced labour imposed upon them by the Pakistani Army to build the Saidpur Airport in 1971.

Anarbalal: One of the 10 cleaners of Mirin Jilla in Old Dhaka, killed on November 21, 1971, because they had information about the number of people killed by the army.

Abdul Mannan and families of the other war heroes were each honoured with crest, sash and Tk 20,000 at the ceremony chaired by Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman.

Speaking on the occasion, Anisuzzaman said: "We must try those who were responsible for the killing of the people of this country."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said: "The Daily Star will not only cherish and uphold the spirit of the Liberation War but also continue to spread it."

Of an educator

FROM PAGE 16
"It's good to study here as the didimonis let me play with toy lions, buses and cars," said another Ankur student Tasfir.

The preschool is likewise popular with parents. A monthly mothers' rally is held, where solutions to any problems the children are facing are found. Minara Khatun, the wife of a day labourer, said her five-year-old son Ahad used to be disobedient but has become quiet, gentle and learnt to write both Bangla and English letters.

Arifa said none of her former students had stopped studying, although for some the necessity of work must run alongside their continued education.

About the source of finance, she said with part of her salary from an insurance company and donations, she did her best to manage the preschool's Tk 5,000 monthly running cost.

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* Air-conditioners: * Comparison of 1.5HP Inverter model between ECONAVI with (Dual Human Activity Sensor, Sunlight Sensor, and Temperature Wave ON) and ECONAVI OFF (Cooling).
ECONAVI ON, Outside temperature: 35°C/24°C
Remote setting temperature: 24°C with Fan Speed (High)
Vertical Airflow direction: Auto, Horizontal Airflow direction: ECONAVI Mode
Setting temperature goes up 7°C in total, 1°C controlled by ECONAVI activity level detection and another 1°C controlled by ECONAVI light intensity detection.
Temperature Wave is ON, electric heater (300W, simulating the heat of human and TV etc)
ECONAVI OFF, Outside temperature: 35°C/24°C
Remote setting temperature: 22°C with Fan Speed (High)
Vertical Airflow direction: Auto, Horizontal Airflow direction: Front

Total power consumption amount are measured for 2 hours in stable condition. At Panasonic Amenity Room (size: 16.6m²) This is the maximum energy savings value, and the effect differs according to conditions in installation and usage.

** Refrigerators: Up to an additional 10% energy savings - Comparison between the same refrigerator with and without ECONAVI function under the following test conditions: <1> Ambient Temperature: 30°C <2> No. of Family Members: 3-4 <3> Frequency of Door Operation: 39 times (PO) & 8 times (FC) <4> Foodstuff Loaded: 2.5kg (PO) & 1.0kg (FC).

*** Washing machines: <Model> NA-148V63 <Testing Institution> TÜV Rheinland (Shanghai) <Test Conditions> - "Cold Wash" programme - Up to an additional 45% energy savings - Comparison made with ECONAVI operation (clothes amount: 2kg) water temperature: more than 35°C against operation without ECONAVI (clothes amount: 8kg) water temperature: less than 25°C - Test was conducted based on IEC60456 other than water temperature.

Air-conditioners: Up to 50% energy savings on top of ECONAVI - Comparison of 1.5HP Inverter model and 1.5HP Non-Inverter model (Cooling). Outside temperature: 35°C/24°C. Remote setting temperature: 25°C with Fan Speed (High). Vertical Airflow Direction: Auto. Horizontal Airflow Direction: Front. Total power consumption amount is measured for 8 hours from start at Panasonic Amenity Room (size: 16.6m²). This is the maximum energy savings value, and the effect differs according to conditions in installation and usage. Refrigerators: Up to 40% energy savings on top of ECONAVI - Comparison between Inverter Compressor and Conventional Compressor with the same refrigerator and freezer compartment capacity. Washing machines: Up to 50% energy savings on top of ECONAVI - Comparison between NA-FS series Inverter model and Non-Inverter model.

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