



# The Daily Star

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## No standards set for water filters

Companies marketing numerous brands of purifiers without BSTI certification; customers in dark about their effectiveness

SOHEL PARVEZ

Companies never tire of boasting about their products, and consumers are easily enticed. But in the case of water purifiers and filters, there is a big problem: people have no way of knowing if the "purifiers" and "filters" actually work.

To attract potential customers, manufacturing and marketing firms come up with various claims -- "safe as boiled water", "free from germs, chemicals, and heavy metals", "no boil, no hassle", "get 100 percent mineral water", "removes 99.99 percent bacteria", "removes health hazardous elements" and what not.

Some even maintain that their purification or filtration products and technologies

**AT A GLANCE**

Companies boast of high quality, but have no approval

Consumers are fooled by cheap and ineffective products

Water purifiers flood the market as Wasa struggles to supply pure water

Unsafe water causes diarrhoea, typhoid

are of foreign origin while others claim that their products have been tested in labs such as the icddr,b.

But the fact is Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) or any other authorities do not have any standard or certification requirements for marketing the so-called purifiers or filters. No certification of the quality of the imported products is needed either, according to the Import Policy Order 2012-15.

Amid allegations that Dhaka Wasa often supplies poor-quality and even undrinkable water, more and more companies are bringing in new products mostly from India, China, Korea and Taiwan. And the market is growing, almost by 30 percent year on year, insiders say.

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An elderly woman near the ruins of her shanty, which, along with many others in the Kalyanpur Pora Bosti, was gutted in a fire yesterday. Weighed down by uncertainty, she does not know how she will manage to survive this winter without a place to live.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## BNP national council likely in March

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After over six years, the BNP may hold its triennial national council in March.

Insiders say a BNP standing committee meeting at the chairperson's Gulshan office tonight is likely to finalise the date of the sixth council.

The meeting, with Khaleda Zia in the chair, is scheduled to begin at 8:30pm.

Asked about a tentative date, a BNP standing committee member, wishing not to be named, yesterday told The Daily Star, "In consultation with party's senior leaders, Khaleda Zia may choose the last week of March for the programme."

He said the BNP chief was eager for the council as the previous one was held over six years ago, and the

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## Arsenic danger still not over

20m people of Bangladesh exposed to contamination in water, Prof Hussam tells The Daily Star

PINAKI ROY

The government is not paying adequate attention to the health hazards caused by arsenic contamination even though millions of people are exposed to it, says Professor Abul Hussam, a US researcher of Bangladesh origin.

Even a decade ago, there were around 10 million tube wells and the number has certainly increased with the rise of population, he says. But people are rarely talking about it these days, which does not mean the danger of arsenic contamination has disappeared, he tells The Daily Star in an exclusive interview.

Director of the Centre for Clean Water and Sustainable Technology (CCWST) in the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at George Mason University, Virginia, USA, Hussam says, "Arsenic contamination in drinking water is very much there. At least 20 million people in this country are exposed to risks of this contamination."

As long as people in this country drink tube well water, there will be arsenic problem and there is no simple method by which one can remove



Prof Abul Hussam

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## NEWS ANALYSIS What should we do for better civic services

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Frustration seems to be somewhere at the top in our two city mayors' job descriptions. Both of our city mayors have lamented in recent days about their inability to serve the city dwellers in a better way.

They had promised quality services to the city in their electoral pledges. They did not fully realise how difficult it would be to deliver on the promises.

The city is serviced by over four dozen government organisations. These single-purpose organisations like Wasa and Rajuk serve the city under different ministries. Mayors really do not have any control over them. Moreover, a lack of coordination among them keeps the development and maintenance of the city in a chaotic situation.

Mayor Annisul Huq on Wednesday expressed his helplessness in doing something effective to free the city of water logging. It is because he does not have any

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## KALYANPUR SLUM

# Blaze follows stalled drive

Dwellers point fingers at ruling party men, say it was to complete their eviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire yesterday burned down at least 21 shanties at the Kalyanpur slum where just a day ago an eviction drive was suspended because of a High Court injunction.

Known as Kalyanpur Pora Bosti, the slum is on the land of Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI) under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

To free the government property, the authorities on Thursday embarked on the drive, which stopped in the midway as the court ordered the authorities concerned to suspend the eviction for three months.

A number of slum dwellers alleged that it was the ruling party men, who would benefited from different projects on the land if it is freed, set the shanties on fire to complete their eviction.

Men of the local lawmaker even attempted to stop a fire brigade vehicle from reaching the spot, they alleged.

About several hundred shanties were demolished in Thursday's drive, forcing over a thousand people to spend the cold night in the open. Now the fire, which began at 9:30am, left 21 shanties and nine shops fully damaged.

Many were seen collecting scrap objects to sell and have some money in this difficult time.

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## Rejoinder, our reply

Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) has issued a rejoinder against a report headlined "Lights were out during pile-ups" published in The Daily Star on Monday.

The rejoinder says there are 153 lights installed on the Bangabandhu Bridge and BBA puts half of the lights in use alternately, which is enough to light up the bridge. The system runs on automatic photo-cell system, turning the lights on when the sun goes down in the evening and off when the sun is up, it adds.

"The first pile-up happened at around 6:30am and from video surveillance system it was found that lights were on at that time," says the rejoinder, which includes dates and timing of the lights -- when those were on and off -- from the surveillance system, seeking to prove that the statement "all

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Zimbabwe opener Hamilton Masakadza's whirlwind 58-ball 93, featuring eight fours and five sixes, took the visitors to a commanding 180 at the end of their allotted overs. In reply, the Tigers were bowled out for 162, as Zimbabwe won the fourth and final T20I by 18 runs to level the series 2-2. Stories on Page 14.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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