

BAUFAL IN PATUAKHALI

Acute drinking water crisis grips coastal people

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Most of the one lakh people living in 17 coastal islands belonging to Baufal upazila under the district are suffering for want of safe drinking water as around 40 operational tube-wells in the areas are too inadequate for the demand.

Momela Begum, Fazila Begum and Noor Bhanu of Char Miajan were seen collecting drinking water from a tube-well in front of Char Miajan Government Primary School, about one and a half km from their house.

"We have to carry water from this tube-well daily, which is very hard for us," said Momela, a housewife.

Failing to get any tube-well even within such a distance, a large number of people have to use water of river, canal or pond for drinking and cooking.

"I use this water for cooking, washing and even drinking as the nearest tube-well is about three km away from my house," said Rina Begum, a housewife of Char Roysaheb island under the upazila, while collecting water from a ditch near her

house.

"I have to use canal water in absence of tube-well in the area," said Nurjahan Begum of Char Nimde island.

Crisis of drinking water turns serious especially from November to June when there is scanty rain, said Noor Bhanu of the area.

According to Baufal upazila public health engineering office, 18 of the 178 tube wells in the 17 islands are permanently out of order.

But Md Delwar Hossain, manager for 'Watson' pro-

ject of NGO Slob, which is working in these islands for water and sanitation, said only 35 to 40 tube-wells are functional in the 17 coastal islands with about one lakh people.

Of them, the people of Char Basudebpasha, Char Miajan, Char Roysaheb, Char Nimde, Char Wadel, Char Algi, Char Shahjalal, Char Diara, Amorkhali Char, Char Kachua and Char Hade are the worst sufferers, sources said.

Many tube-wells including those at Char Wadel Primary School, Char Diara Kachua Primary School, Char Wader High School, Amorkhali Primary School, and Char Wader ashrahan project are out of order, locals said.

"Minimum Tk 50,000 is needed to set up a tube-well. It is beyond our capacity as most of us are landless," said Forkan Munshi of Char Amorkhali.

"We suffer from water borne diseases like diarrhoea and dysentery round the year as we have to drink unsafe water," said Babul Mridha, another resident of the same island.

Babul Mia of Chandradweep in the same upazila said there are only four tube-wells for 13,000 people living in the island.

Md Ali Ashrab, Baufal upazila public health engineer, said steps will be taken to sink tube-wells to ensure availability of pure drinking water for the coastal people.



Children carry on boat drinking water collected from a far away tube-well set up on the premises of a primary school at Char Amkhali, a coastal island in Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district.

PHOTO: STAR

Man gets life for killing wife for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his wife for dowry in Nagarpur upazila of the district in 2013.

The convict is Buddu Miah alias Badsha of Atapara village in the upazila.

Judge Sharif Uddin Ahmed

of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal fined the convict Tk 10,000. In default, he is to suffer three months more in prison, court sources said.

According to the prosecution, Buddu used to torture his wife Farida Khatun to bring Tk 50,000 as dowry from her parents. On July 8, 2013, Buddu locked in

altercation with Farida over the issue. At one stage, he strangled her.

Later, Farida's brother Abdul Malek filed a murder case with Nagarpur Police Station. Police pressed charges against Buddu after investigation.

After examining case record, judge Sharif Uddin pronounced the verdict.

35 students fall sick due to mass hysteria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Thirty-five students of Kalidas High School in Sakhipur upazila of the district were attacked by mass hysteria yesterday.

Of them, 20 were admitted to the upazila health complex and the rest given first aid.

Students belonging to Classes VI to Class IX suffered from vomiting, headache and breathing problem during the assembly. The teachers arranged first aid, said Hossain Ali, headmaster of the school. Later, the sick students were rushed to local hospital for better treatment, he added.

Dr Rezaul Karim, upazila health officer in Sakhipur, termed the disease as mass hysteria and said mostly girl students were attacked. All of them are out of danger, he added.

The managing committee members and teachers were advised to take care of the students properly, said upazila secondary education officer Mofizul Islam.

Two held with pistol, bullets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police arrested two alleged criminals along with a foreign made pistol from Noapara Nurbag area in Abhoynagar upazila of Jessore district last night.

The arrestees are Akbar Shikder, 24 son of Liakat Shikder, and Babul Sheikh, 25, son of Kashem Sheikh. They are from Bichchali area of Narail district.

Officer-in-Charge Sheikh Nasir Uddin of Abhoynagar Police Station quoted locals as saying that a gang of criminals attacked a shop belonging to Sujan Patwari, a local Jubo League leader, at around 11:00am.

Locals caught two of them and informed the police while the others managed to flee the scene.

Later, police arrested the duo and seized a pistol and four bullets from their possession.

A case was filed in this connection.

Onion yield too low in Meherpur

Defective seeds blamed for the situation

AMANUR AMAN, back from Meherpur

Onion farmers in Meherpur district are worried due to serious production fall this season.

"Following experience of previous years, I expected 150-200 maunds of onion yield per bigha this season. But I am getting only 70-85 maunds. The quality is inferior too," said Asan Ali, 48, who cultivated onion on four bighas of land at Biswanathpur village in Mujibnagar upazila of Meherpur.

This year, farmers have cultivated onion on 2900 hectares of land in the district, but a large number of

them, especially in Mujibnagar upazila, are facing production fall due to problem in the seeds and saplings they used, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

A high yielding Indian seed named Sukhsagar came to popular use in the area a few years ago and around 80% of the onion farmers in the district now use the seed, they said.

Farmers collect the onion seeds and saplings from different markets in border areas and plant it in late December.

This time the Indian farmers are also facing similar setback in onion produc-

tion, said local farmers and agriculture officials.

The situation has arisen as quality of seeds and seedlings fell due to untimely rainfall, they said.

The production fall comes as a big blow to the farmers who had to pay higher prices for seeds, fertilisers, weed killers and insecticides this season, local farmers said.

The prices this season are low too, they said.

Admitting the production fall in onion farming, SM Mustafizur Rahman, deputy director of DAE in Meherpur, said farmers must remain careful about the seeds and saplings they use.



Farmers sort newly harvested onion at a field in Meherpur district. The yield this season is very frustrating allegedly due to problem in seeds and saplings.

PHOTO: STAR

SNAPSHOTS OF FIRST PHASE OF UP POLLS



1) Women wait in long queues to cast their votes in favour of the chosen candidates at Char Agbohail Primary School centre in a remote area of Bohali union in Sariakandi upazila under Bogra district during the union parishad elections yesterday. 2) Voters crowd a tractor driven vehicle to go to Burjan Primary School polling centre in Khadimnagar union under Sylhet district. 3) The collapsible gate of Ikri Board Government Primary School in Pirojpur district remains locked from inside around 2:30pm during the vote casting there. Several locals alleged vote rigging by a candidate's men at the centre. 4) Alleged supporters of a ruling party candidate set fire to the spot of makeshift sitting arrangement of the opponent candidate after occupying Akhaila Government Primary School centre in Tuberbazar union in Sylhet Sadar upazila. 5) Voters wait for their turn at Roypasha Karapur Government Primary School centre in Barisal Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR