

# THE TALE OF WATER



*Panir Golpo (Tale of Water) is the name of a commendable initiative jointly taken by The Daily Star and Unilever Pureit to fight waterborne diseases in Kushtia.*



Students of Mohini Mohon Bidyapith in Kushtia bring out a procession in Milpara area of the town following a two-day programme titled "Panir Galpo" (tale of water) that began on the school premises to create awareness about diarrhoea.

PHOTO: STAR

## Kushtia hospital struggles with diarrhoea patients

Contaminated water blamed for sudden outbreak

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Diarrhoea situation has taken an alarming turn in the district as at least 786 people have been admitted to Kushtia General Hospital in five days since Tuesday. The hospital authorities said prevailing outbreak of the disease has become a matter of concern as the situation continues to deteriorate. Sources at the 250-bed Kushtia General Hospital said 170 patients took admission on Tuesday, 135 on Wednesday, 140 on

Health Engineering (DPHE) in Kushtia primarily suspected that contaminated surface water supplied by the municipality authorities caused the outbreak. Many patients of Milpara area told this correspondent that they were affected by the water-borne disease after drinking contaminated water supplied by the municipality authorities. One Tara Khatun, 37, her son Ilias Ali, 12, and sister Asma Khatun were attacked all on a sudden and had been receiving treatment at the hospital for the last two days. However, their condi-



PHOTO: STAR

Star report on the diarrhea situation in Kushtia published on July 24, 2016.



A woman receives a water purifier.

PHOTO: STAR

In early July of this year, The Daily Star ran a report on the outbreak of diarrhoea in Kushtia when around 2000 people were attacked with the disease during the span of a week (July 20 - July 27). Subsequently, Unilever Pureit joined hands with The Daily Star and formed a research team which went to the area to find out what went wrong. The team visited Kushtia and identified that the worst affected areas were Milpara, Courtpara, Mozumpur, Amlapara and Talipara. Interviews of residents and local administration revealed that the main reason water sources get contaminated is because they become submerged in water after heavy rainfall. Most of the area around Kushtia is low lying which makes it susceptible to waterlogging in the rainy season leading to the city's two primary

sources of water—supply water and tube wells—being polluted with harmful germs. The field report also concluded that some crucial factors contributing to the high prevalence of diarrhoea are dirt and an unclean surrounding (e.g. tube wells' proximity to toilets in hostels, garbage near houses causing food and water to be contaminated, etc.) and a general lack of awareness.

To address this gap, The Daily Star and Unilever Pureit came forward with the initiative titled Panir Golpo to create awareness and provide water purifiers to people affected by the disease. A two-day awareness campaign was held in Kushtia on October 4-5, 2016. It helped fill in the gap of information on what preventive measures can be taken when dealing with problems of unclean

water. They provided water purifiers to 100 underprivileged families. Through this timely intervention people in Kushtia learned of the importance and ways of purifying water—whether by boiling water or using water purifiers.

Panir Golpo proved to be a much needed intervention for these communities. Residents expressed their thoughts on the ways in which water purifiers changed their lives for the better. When approached by The Daily Star, women spoke about the drastic reduction in diarrhoea among their family members as a result of water purification. One woman said that even though she still uses tube well water, the Pureit water purifiers have helped improve its water quality dramatically. She confessed that her children do not suffer from diarrhoea anymore and she believes that the water purifier will help her and her family sustain themselves for a long time. Another woman talked about the fact that she and her family do not have to resort to drinking unpurified tap water any longer. She said that it has now become routine for her to replenish the purifier with water every morning for consumption on that particular day. Overall, these accounts of women indicated an increase in awareness about clean, safe water and showed the immediate effects that a simple appliance—such as the Pureit water purifier—can have in the lives of the underprivileged.

In Bangladesh, water-borne diseases are one of the most prevalent types of all illnesses, and the most common type of water-borne disease is diarrhoea. Diarrhoea and other gastro-intestinal diseases account for almost a quarter of all illnesses in the country. Furthermore, given that around 66 percent of the population reside in rural areas, the lack of sanitation

### HOW TO PURIFY WATER

**BOILING WATER**

Place the water you wish to purify into a pot.

Bring the water to a rolling boil.

Remove the pot from the heat.

Let the water sit and settle.

**USING A WATER PURIFIER**

Use a pump purifier.

Buy a water bottle with a built-in purifier.

Use an ultraviolet purifier.

Try out a gravity fed purifier.

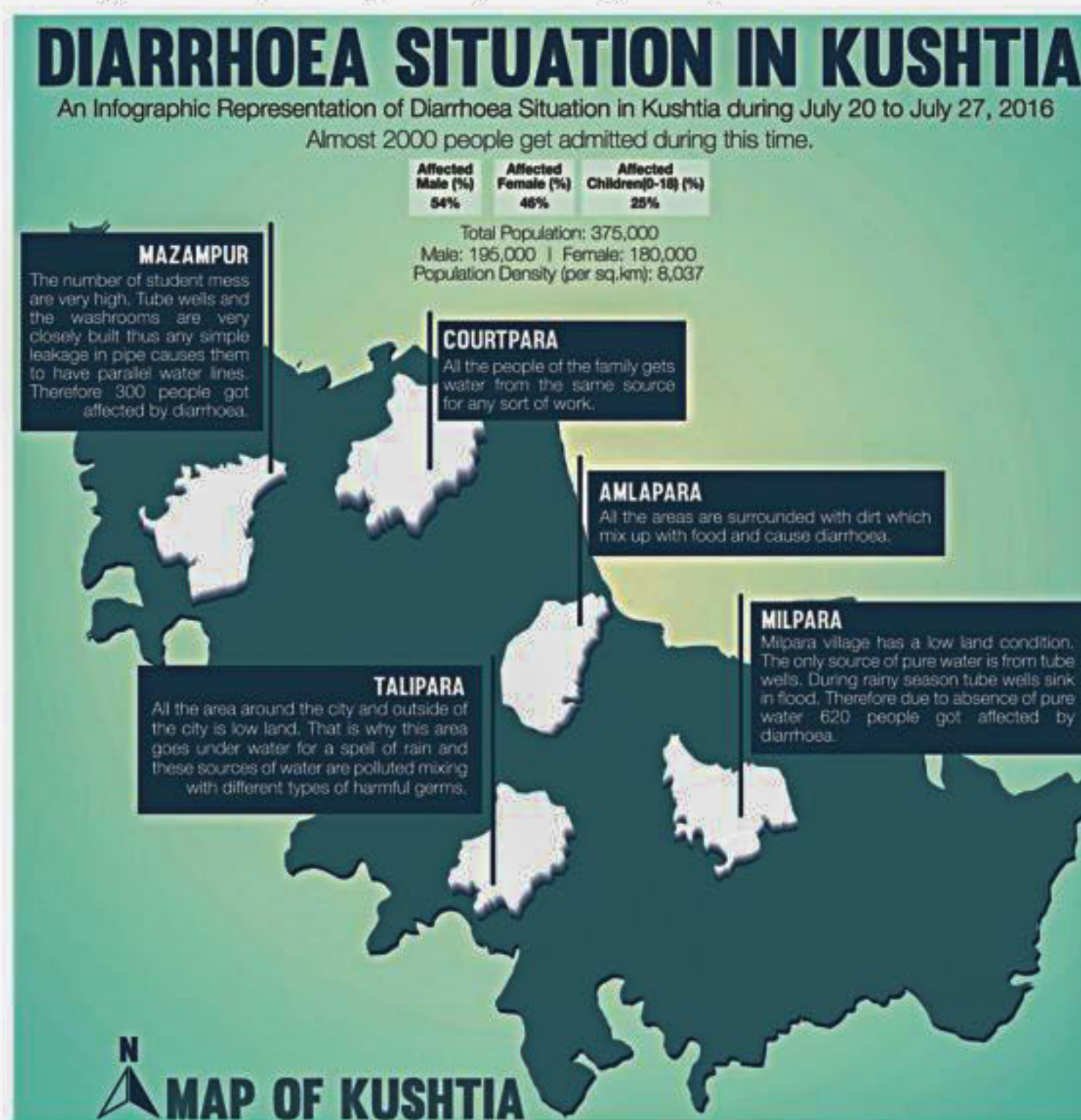
**USING PURIFICATION TABLETS**

Use purification tablets or drops.

Strain the water if it has large particles floating around in it.

Place the tablets in the water.

Mix the tablets into the water until they dissolve.



Students performing a play to create awareness about water-borne diseases.



Participants at the awareness campaign programme held on the premises of Mohini Mohon Bidyapith School.



"I am very happy to get a water purifier. Now we are drinking pure water. We are no more suffering from water-borne diseases. Besides, I have learnt many new things on various water-borne diseases, which will help to prevent such problems."

FATEMA KHATUN  
Housewife.



"The diarrhoea situation of Kushtia has improved significantly. Now, there are less patients for diarrhoea-related problems. If we make our people aware about the importance of drinking pure water and provide necessary water purification systems we will be able to successfully reduce the prevalence of water-borne diseases."

DR TAPAS KUMAR SARKAR  
Residential Medical Officer,  
Kushtia Sadar Hospital