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Patuakhali's deep tube-wells run dry as water table drops

SOHRAB HOSSAIN with ANDREW EAGLE

Patuakhali town in summer's blazing heat is more than usually parched. A drop in the water level in tube well pipes to around 32 feet below the surface, caused by a corresponding dip in subterranean water tables, has left around half of the town's 1,150 wells inoperable. In the midst of a serious water crisis, town-dwellers are worried.

"I have a tube well in my household yard but for the last three months it's been dry," says Abul Bashar of Old Hospital Road. "We have to search for water because our own tube well

has no water in it," says another resident, Md Islamil Hossain from the Titas Cinema Hall Road area. "It's a big problem.

At the Baitul Aman mosque meanwhile a good number of women and children are taking advantage of a pipe to collect fresh water supplies.

"There are actually two water tables starting at around 850 and 1000 feet below the surface respectively," explains Sarder Shamsul Islam, an executive engineer with the public health engineering department. "Both have dropped. At their former levels, water inside the tube well pipes used to sit at around 25 feet below ground, which made it easy for the wells to draw water. Now it has fallen to 32 feet. Many hand-powered wells can't lift the water that far."

Tube well contractors like Syed Chunnu Mia have also marked the change. "Earlier we could sink a tube well to somewhere beyond 850 feet to reach fresh water," he says. SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



People queue up in Patuakhali town's Puran Hospital area to collect drinking water from a deep tube-well at Baitul Aman mosque. Residents of the town have been hit hard by water crisis over the last four months as the Patuakhali Municipality is failing to supply enough water to households due to a fall in groundwater level. The photo was taken last month.

PHOTO: STAR

Wedding turns into tragedy

Bride's brother electrocuted at ceremony in Gazipur OUR CORRESPONDENT,

The house was full of extended family members and friends preparing

for the Shamsul Alam

wedding. The Gaye Holud, a prewedding ceremony, for bride Shahnaz Akhtar Ratna had just ended around 1:30am at the house in Montri Para area of Sreepur upazila.

Everyone was making

arrangements for the feast for nearly 500 guests expected to arrive within hours.

But everything changed when the bride's younger brother Shamsul Alam, 22, was electrocuted by a fan beside the wedding stage.

The wedding was postponed and people in the neighbourhood were shocked to hear about the death of Shamsul, who was

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

3 more 'drug dealers' killed in 'shootouts'

Brother of Bogra Sramik League leader Tufan Sarkar among them

STAR REPORT

Three alleged drug peddlers, including an elder brother of suspended Sramik League leader Tufan Sarkar, were killed in "gunfights" in Bogra, Tangail and Jessore yester-

Police said Tufan's brother Putu Sarker, 45, was accused in five cases.

His two other brothers Sohag Sarkar and Jhumu Sarker are also top-listed drug traders in Bogra. They have been on the run since May 4 when the countrywide special anti-narcotics drive began, according to law enforcers.

Tufan, former Sramik League convenor in Bogra town, allegedly abducted a schoolgirl from her home, raped her and tortured her mother in July last year. He is now behind bars in two cases in connection with the incidents.

Putu was killed in a tripartite "gunfight" involving police and two rival groups of drug peddlers in Bogra. The two other "gun battles" took place between Rab and a criminal gang in Tangail and rival groups in Jessore.

With the three deaths yesterday, at least SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

northwest of London yesterday. More on page 11.

JULY 30 POLLS IN THREE CITIES

BNP concerned, AL confident

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP is concerned whether the upcoming elections to three city corporations would be free and fair as they fear the ruling Awami League might follow the "Khulna-Gazipur model" in those polls.

On the other hand, the AL believes it will triumph in the three cities as well after the morale-boosting wins in Khulna and Gazipur elections.

The elections in Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal on July 30 will be the last battle of ballots before the next parliamentary polls scheduled for end of this year. So the city polls also pose a major challenge for the Election Commission as to whether it can win the trust and acceptance of all the political parties.

The BNP has already assigned three of its standing committee members to coordinate the campaigns for the three city polls -- Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury for Sylhet, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy for Rajshahi and Mirza Abbas for Barisal.

The party, however, is not hopeful of a smooth electioneering as its leaders say law enforcers have already started arresting its activists and supporters, and the intimidation and use of force will increase with the election day nearing.

"The last two city elections were not fair at all. Besides, our leaders and activists are being arrested regularly and still the atmosphere for a fair election is absent," said Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a standing committee member of BNP.

In Gazipur and Khulna city polls, there were instances of ballot stuffing and driving out BNP agents from the polling centres. Keeping this in mind, BNP leaders think if the AL candidates win the

elections to the three cities through irregularities, it would help expose "the government's real plan" for the national polls.

"We are participating in the city corporation polls despite knowing that polls would not be fair under this government and the Election Commission. Because we want to show the people that a fair election is not possible under them," Moudud Ahmed, BNP's standing committee member, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

5 arrested for raping girl

They stormed house posing as DB men STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested five youths in the city's Chawkbazar and Bahaddarhat areas overnight Thursday over raping a college student four days ago.

Introducing themselves as detectives, six youths, including the five arrestees, on Monday night entered the rented flat of two female college students in Kapasgola area, said Yasir Arafat, sub-inspector of Chawkbazar Police Station.

At one stage, one of the youths raped the college student while another filmed the incident with a mobile phone, said the SI quoting the victim.

The intruders also took away some valuables from the flat.

The arrestees are Mohiuddiun, 22, Saimun Islam Sakib, 22, Asif Iqbal, 25, Rajbir Hossen, 25, and Mossaraf Hossain Akash, 22. Of them, two were picked up from Baruipara of Bahaddarhat and the rest

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

First-ever colour X-ray on a human



AFP, Paris

New Zealand scientists have performed the firstever 3-D, colour X-ray on a human, using a technique that promises to improve the field of medical diagnostics, said Europe's CERN physics lab which contributed imaging technology.

The new device, based on the traditional blackand-white X-ray, incorporates particle-tracking technology developed for CERN's Large Hadron Collider, which in 2012 discovered the elusive Higgs Boson particle.

"This colour X-ray imaging technique could produce clearer and more accurate pictures and help doctors give their patients more accurate diagnoses," said a CERN statement.

The CERN technology, dubbed Medipix, works like a camera detecting and counting individual sub-atomic particles as they collide with pixels while its shutter is open.

This allows for high-resolution, high-contrast pictures.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Drug official caught taking drug

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

A drug superintendent and his office assistant were arrested while allegedly consuming Phensedyl at Durakuti village in the district on Thursday night. Mehedi Afzal, 33, drug

superintendent and Ataur Rahman Sazu, 43, office assistant of the drug administration were arrested with two bottles of Phensedyl, said Mizanur Rahman, subinspector of Lalmonirhat SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING JULY 14 Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-55 8-17 JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 7-00 8-45 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



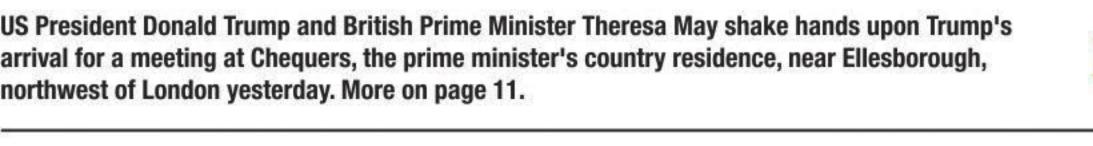




PHOTO:

AFP