



For residents of Khulna city, finding potable water is becoming increasingly gruelling. Due to a fall in water level, many deep tube wells and water pumps have become useless, as they are unable to bring the water to the surface. As a result, residents flock to the ones that do work, and queues can be seen throughout the day, and even at night. Water provided by Wasa might've helped resolve this issue, but locals say its water is undrinkable. This photo was taken recently from South Central Road.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

Water crisis grips Khulna city

Groundwater depletion, lack of waterbodies the reason, say experts; KWasa unable to meet the demand

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

For the last two months, every morning Helena Khatun, a resident of Moilapota area in Khulna city, wakes up hoping that she will be able to manage enough water for the day.

However, due to depleting levels of groundwater and increasing salinity, the city remains chronically plagued by water shortage and thousands like Helena continue to suffer immensely. "Water is not rising in the tube-wells like before. I am worried about what will happen when the heat intensifies," said Helena, employee of a local NGO in the city.

She said those who have installed submersible pumps can extract water but such pumps are too expensive.

As a result, many, in a desperate attempt, are rushing to the homes of affluent neighbours, who have installed the pumps, to get drinking water.

Meanwhile, to add to the residents' woe, the "purified" water of Mahdumati river that Khulna Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (KWasa) supplies through pipelines in most parts of the city is not helping much as the organisation is not giving any assurance whether it is drinkable or can be used for cooking.

Over the last few weeks, this correspondent visited different wards

of the city corporation including 1-4, 6, 9, 19, 21, 22 and 28 out of the 31 wards and saw the crisis firsthand.

Many residents said they have been facing acute water crisis since the first week of March. They also said this issue has been persisting for years, especially during the dry season, with the authorities concerned turning a blind eye.

To mitigate the crisis, KWasa has implemented a mega project at a cost of around Tk 2,500 crore a few years back.

Through the project, water is being brought from Madhumati river, purified and supplied to the city. KWasa is now supplying water to 36,000 houses out of 70,150 holdings in the city through the pipeline, according to officials.

This means, they are unable to meet almost half the demand. However, those who are getting KWasa water said their problem of drinking water has remained the same.

Tapon Kumar Das, a resident of Pabla (ward 6), said, "My tenants don't trust KWasa water. I use pump to extract water for drinking purpose and household chores."

"However, before I could fill up my water tank within two hours. Now, we have to run the pump for at

least five hours to get water. At times, even that's not enough," he added.

Awal Sheikh, a resident of Iqbal Nagar, said since March 10, they were unable to get sufficient water through the pump. "Though we are getting water through KWasa pipeline, we don't know if that can be used for drinking and cooking," he added.

He said they (he and other residents) now fetch water from different areas.

Similar problems have been reported in Gobarchaka, Basupara, Farajipara, Mirzapur Road, Baitipara, Ahsan Ahmed Road, Tutpara, Basupara, West Baniakhamar and Babu Khan Road areas.

Meanwhile, those who installed submersible pumps are not faring any better either. It's getting tough for them to extract water due to groundwater depletion.

Experts, however, said installing these pumps for extracting water is having a serious consequence as the underground water level has also gone down drastically over the years.

Prof Mustafa Saroar, head of Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, said, "Khulna residents are already facing the effects of groundwater depletion.

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'Reopen educational institutions now'

Students demand in human chains across country

STAR REPORT

Students of different institutions formed human chains across the country yesterday, demanding reopening of all educational institutions immediately.

Students of schools, colleges and universities under the banner of "General Students" took part in human chains held in front of Dhaka's Jatiya Press Club, Jahangirnagar University, Tangail Shaheed Minar, Haji Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur, and Sathma in Bogura town.

They said fates of millions of students in the country are at stake due to closure of educational institutions for over a year.

Students are becoming extremely frustrated because of session jams, and many are not able to attend online classes because of the digital divide -- lack of access to devices and internet, they added.

They requested the government to reopen all educational institutions with health directives, after the recent decision to reopen restaurants, shopping malls, and resume public transport services.

They vowed to organise further protests, if their demands are not met immediately, report our correspondents.

Allocate 20 per cent of budget for education

CAMPE says in memorandum to minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Allocation for the education sector in the upcoming budget should be increased so that it can make up for the losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic, said an education advocacy and campaign network yesterday.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), in a memorandum submitted to Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, demanded at least 20 percent budget allocation for the education sector.

It also called for providing stimulus packages for non-MPO teachers and allocation for ensuring at least Tk 250 stipend for primary and secondary schools, aiming to stop possible drop out.

They also sought digital device for each mainstream primary and secondary student.

CAMPE deputy director KM Enamul Hoque said they submitted the memorandum through email.

The advocacy group also demanded that at least 10 percent of education budget should be allocated to district and upazila school level for completing their reopening process.

Due to the pandemic, educational institutions have been closed since March 17 last year. The closure led to cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray. The closure was extended till May 29.

CAMPE demanded allocation for ensuring uninterrupted internet service at all education institutions, and free or low cost internet data for students.

It also called for increased allocation to expand stipends and school meal programme for students.

The 11th Jatiya Sangsad will go into budget session at 5pm on June 2, while the finance minister is scheduled to place the budget for 2021-22 fiscal the following day.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, TITU DAS

Demanding immediate re-opening of educational institutions, students formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka yesterday. Students made the same demand at a human chain in front of Barishal University's main gate, inset.



Man held while fleeing country after 'killing wife over affair': CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police claimed to have arrested a man for allegedly killing his wife by pouring petrol on her over an extramarital affair.

Mainul Islam alias Kajal Bhuyan (47) was arrested from Jafalong border in Sylhet early yesterday.

A CID team arrested Mainul while he was trying to flee to India, said Habibur Rahman, deputy inspector general of CID, at a briefing yesterday. CID also seized a private car from his possession.

Officials said Mainul went into hiding soon after the incident, which took place on May 13 in Akhaura of Brahmanbaria.

According to police, Mainul got the petrol from the tank of his motorcycle and set his wife Dolly Begum (40) on fire.

Hearing her scream, locals rescued and admitted her to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka. She succumbed to her injuries there on May 18.

Her brother then filed a case with Akhaura Police Station. After primary interrogation, CID said the couple, married for 25 years, was having conflicts for a while.

It took a turn for the worse when Mainul suspected she was having an affair with a relative.

On May 13, they locked into an altercation over the issue and at one stage he set her on fire by pouring petrol on her.

DIG Rahman said Mainul is an accused in at least 19 cases including for narcotics. Besides, there were three warrants against him.

By-polls to four constituencies in mid-July

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hold by-elections to four parliamentary constituencies mid-July.

The commission will finalise its decision on holding elections to 371 union parishads and 11 municipalities on June 2, EC Secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker said yesterday.

He was speaking to reporters after a commission meeting at EC office in Dhaka. Dates of by-polls to the Laxmipur-2, Sylhet-3, Dhaka-14 and Cumilla-5 constituencies will be announced after the meeting on June 2, he added.

EC decided to hold by-polls to the four parliamentary constituencies amid Covid-19 for constitutional obligations.

On March 3, the EC announced the schedule of by-polls to Laxmipur-2 constituency, polls to 371 UPs and 11 municipalities, slating the election date for April 11. On April 1, the commission postponed the elections due to the Covid-19 situation.

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Six killed, 17 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 17 injured in road accidents across the country in the last two days, report our correspondents.

In Rajshahi, a bus driver was killed and 13 were injured in a head-on collision of two buses in Choddopai area yesterday.

The deceased, Rabiul Islam (32), was a resident of Chakchhatari. He was driver of intra-district bus Afa Paribahan. The collision occurred around 1pm between Afa Paribahan bus and a coach of Hanif Paribahan.

Rabiul died on the spot, said Golam Ruhul Kuddus, additional deputy commissioner of Rajshahi police.

Besides, 12 passengers from the buses sustained injuries. The other injured was a passenger of a three-wheeler that hit one of the buses.

The injured were taken to a Rajshahi hospital.

In Joypurhat, a tractor driver died after losing control over the vehicle, which overturned, and hitting a man in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Abdul Ali (55) of Khetal upazila.

The accident took place as Ali's tractor was heading towards Panchbibi upazila. After arriving at Komogram around 11am, Ali lost control and hit a local, said police.

Injured Anwar Hossain was taken to Sadar hospital.

In Faridpur, a woman was killed and another injured in a car-motorbike collision on Dhaka-Khulna Highway at Bhanga upazila yesterday.

Quoting locals, OC Omar Faruq of Bhanga highway police said, "Nasima Begum (40) of Gopalganj was coming to Bhanga from Maksudpur on a motorbike when a car hit her bike at Saudia around 12:15pm."

She died on the spot while biker Kalam Sardar sustained injuries.

In Gopalganj Sadar, two people were killed in separate accidents. One of the deceased was identified as Chholeman Mollah (55) Sadar upazila.

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Shahed denied bail in money laundering case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to Regent Group chairman Mohammad Shahed in a case filed on charge of laundering Tk 11.2 crore.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir rejected the bail petition filed by Shahed, now in jail.

The bench passed the rejection order considering that the petition was not submitted properly before it.

Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that the HC did not want to grant the bail petition as Masud Parvez, a co-accused of the case, made confessional statement -- to the magistrate concerned -- involving Shahed alias Shahed Karim.

The Criminal Investigation Department of the police filed the case with Uttara West Police Station on August 25 last year against Shahed and few others on charge of laundering Tk 11.2 crore.



Bahrain suspends entry of travellers from Bangladesh

Other 'Red List' countries also come under the restrictions

REUTERS

Bahrain suspended entry of travellers from countries on its "Red List", which includes Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal, from yesterday, according to the country's state news agency BNA.

Bahraini citizens and residency visa holders are not covered by the suspension, but will have to provide a PCR test before boarding a plane and quarantine for 10 days upon arrival, BNA added.

Bahrain will also apply precautionary 10-day quarantine to vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals from all other countries, in their homes or in places licensed for quarantining, BNA added.

The decision came in line with the Bahrain government's Executive Committee directives and were based on the recommendations of the country's National Medical Taskforce for Combating the Coronavirus, the Civil Aviation Affairs.



The government yesterday resumed launch services, along with inter-district bus and trains, on condition of carrying half the number of passengers of capacity. However, the scenes at Dhaka-bound launches at Barishal River Port told a different story, where social distancing was a far cry and many did not bother with face masks.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

RANGPUR MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL Dialysis service resumes after month and a half

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Dialysis of kidney patients at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) resumed on Saturday after around one and a half months, after an expatriate Bangladeshi living in the United States financially helped repair a faulty water treatment plant, which was responsible for the halt.

Dialysis support at the hospital had remained suspended since April 8. A significant number of kidney patients in eight districts of Rangpur division who needed dialysis suffered during the period, as most of the districts lack the services.

Dialysis service is available at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital, and at private hospitals in Rangpur, but it is expensive.

Dr Mobasser Hossain, head of RMCH's nephrology department, confirmed the matter on Sunday, saying the dialysis service started on Saturday afternoon, after one of the two water treatment plants was repaired.

Purified water is needed for dialysis, he said. There are 26 dialysis machines at the hospital. Of them, only 14 are functional. As a result, they find it hard to meet the demand, he said.

After the water treatment plant problem was reported, hospital authorities wrote letters to various departments, including the ministry and health department, seeking fund allocation to repair the plant, but no progress was seen.

Syeda Afroza Beauty, an American expatriate, finally came forward to help the hospital repair the plant, which was done on Saturday.

With current support, dialysis of 40 patients can be done per day, said the officials.