

# Mosque water the only alternative

Locals throng establishment's deep tube-well daily, as Wasa's water undrinkable



**It costs over Tk 50,000 monthly to provide the water. The mosque authority bears the costs, and over thousands of people are benefitting.**

**Mojibur Rahman**, Staff, West Tejturibazar Jame Mosque

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and  
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It takes Anwar Hossain, a 60-year-old cook at a mess in the capital's Farmgate, about an hour to make a trip to the nearest deep tube-well, get 10 litres of water, and return home.

Anwar has difficulties walking but still has to make the journey daily, just to get drinking water. He has been doing this for the last three months, even though there is a water line of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka Wasa) at his home.

Why is an elderly struggling so much to have access to a basic amenity, that too in the capital?

"The tap water often smells of bleaching powder. The stench doesn't go away even after boiling. It's not drinkable,"

Anwar said.

Fortunately, Anwar came to know about the deep tube-well of West Tejturibazar Jame Mosque. And since then, he gets his drinking water from there.

While visiting the mosque for the last one week, a huge gathering was seen in front of the mosque's tube-well every day from evening.

Like Anwar, residents of West and East Tejturibazar, Green Road and Farmgate areas gather at the mosque to get water, according to locals and mosque authorities. And just like Anwar, everyone has Wasa's line at home.

Fifth-grader Niloy Pal Biswas, a resident of Green Road, said, "At first, we would drink tap water at home after boiling it, but then it became undrinkable. We

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Residents of West and East Tejturibazar, Green Road and Farmgate areas gather at the mosque to get water, according to locals and mosque authorities. Although all of them have Wasa's supply at home, they say Wasa's water is okay for bathing and other uses, but not for drinking. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Traffickers keep GETTING THEIR WAY

Promising better lives abroad, syndicate traffics job seekers to India

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Naim Hossain Sujan thought he would not make it out alive. Lured in with the promise of a well-paying job in France, the 22-year-old from Shariatpur ended up in a ruthless cycle of human trafficking, controlled by a racket in India.

"I came back alive because my family could pay a ransom," said Naim.

In 2019, Naim's father initially paid Tk 5 lakh to local syndicate members in 2019, a partial payment for the job in France, while the rest was supposed to be paid upon his arrival in France.

But fate had something else in store for Naim. Rather than taking him to France, the gang took him to India on December 27, 2019.

It was just the beginning of his misfortunes.

"They started torturing me for money. Often, they threatened to harm me if my father failed to pay them the rest of the agreed amount," recalls Naim.

"When my father paid them another Tk 6.8 lakh, they returned my passport. But they did not free me."

After a series of unfortunate events, Naim finally managed to escape and return home on March 24, 2020.

Naim is one of many victims of human trafficking from the country. Several syndicates have been trafficking local job seekers to India, promising them to send to Australia, Portugal, the Netherlands, Romania, Greece, France, Malta, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Egypt, the Maldives and Cambodia and even Canada.

According to investigators, gang members contact them through their agents in different districts. Another major medium is social media.

After being trafficked to India, a major destination for trafficked women and children are "shelter homes" in Kolkata and Delhi, where a series of torturous acts await them.

Gang members in India then force the victims to call their families in Bangladesh asking for more money. The victims are threatened with their lives upon failure to pay more.

Some were reportedly even taken to Sri Lanka, where they were left in a jungle.

They would solicit Tk 12 to 15 lakh from each victim.

The horrifying stories of their sufferings came to the fore after law enforcers busted two separate trafficking rackets in Dhaka recently and arrested ringleaders and their associates.

According to Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, more than a hundred human trafficking gangs are active across the country.

"We have drives ongoing to arrest members of these gangs," said Moin.

Since its formation in 2004, Rab alone arrested 1,207 people for their involvement in trafficking and rescued 1,093 victims -- 792 males and 301 females -- in 406 operations, according to the Rab wing.

During a drive on December 20 last year, Rab busted a transnational trafficking gang in the capital



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**NAIM HOSSAIN SUJAN,**  
A victim of trafficking

and arrested the ringleader along with two associates.

In another raid on June 6 last year, Criminal Investigation Department arrested four other members of the gang.

Mozammel Haque, commanding officer of Rab-4, said following the drive, the arrestees admitted to trafficking more than 100 victims to India over the years, promising lucrative jobs in Europe and Australia.

Saiful Islam Devan (21) from Munshiganj's Tongibari is yet another victim of the gang. His father Haniul Dewan said he provided Tk 6.20 lakh to ringleader Selim after he promised to send his son to Canada.

He said the gang took his son to India around two years back, but then sent him back.

Jahangir Gazi (34) from Shariatpur, another victim, narrated how he managed to return home from India in November 2019 after spending three months in captivity.

In his desperate attempt to go abroad, he met Mollik Rezaul Haque alias Selim at Dhaka's Rupnagar in August 2019 through a neighbour. Selim promised to send him to Australia if he paid Tk 16 lakh.

Once the payment was made, he was taken to India, as the gang told him that getting a visa from there would be easier.

Gang members made him a fake Indian NID card and passport and asked him to wait for his visa to Australia.

The gang also convinced him that they would send his nephew Akash to the Netherlands.

After the family provided Tk 7.5 lakh for Akash, the gang took the college student to India in December 2020.

"Since then, my nephew has been confined to a safe house in Delhi," Jahangir told this correspondent on February 14.

Jahangir also mentioned that Selim and his associates kept Akash in a safe house, tortured him and threatened to kill him if they could not pay them more.

"I provided Tk 23.5 lakh to Selim for me and my nephew in good faith to go abroad. I never realised in my worst nightmare that we would be trapped by a trafficking gang."

Failing to bring Akash home, Jahangir recently filed a complaint with Rab-4, followed by which ringleader Selim and his associates -- Bulbul Ahmed Mollik (55) and Niranjana Pal (51) -- were arrested on December 20 last year from Pallabi and Uttara.

After the arrests, Jahangir filed a case with Rupnagar Police Station against the arrestees and several other members of the gang. "Even after their arrests, Akash could not be brought back home," said Jahangir.

SI Debraj Chakrabarty of Rupnagar Police Station, who is also the case's investigating officer, said, "We are trying to bring Akash back through NCB of the Police Headquarters."

## Bengal was once full of wealth

Noted journalist MJ Akbar recalls its past at lecture on Indo-Bangla ties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming weavers and manufacturers of clothes as rural geniuses of Bengal, renowned journalist and former state minister for external affairs of India MJ Akbar said the wealth they had brought was taken away by the British.

"The poverty of Bengal was a direct consequence of British imperialism, as every account and travelogue by every visitor of the 17-18 century confirms Bengal was a wealthy province in the sub-continent before the arrival of Europeans," he said.

Also a member of India's Rajya Sabha, Akbar praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her role in liberating people from poverty and establishing democracy in the country.

"She [Hasina] also understood that freedom is incomplete until a state has managed to liberate its people from harsh poverty," he said.

He said this while taking part in Zahur Hossain Chowdhury Memorial Lecture on "Reminiscing 50 Years of Indo-Bangla Relationship" organised by Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj at a hotel in the capital.

The lecture was held to mark 50 years of Bangladesh and the 30th anniversary of the daily. Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta moderated the programme.

Bangladesh and India have opportunities to establish harmony and prosperity in Asia as both countries nurture similar values, said Akbar.

"They both have the right intentions. They are

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## Int'l recognition of genocide a must Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should take steps to get international recognition of the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani army during the Liberation War, researchers said yesterday.

They said this while addressing two events marking National Genocide Day.

"It won't be easy to get international recognition, as the US, China, and parts of the Muslim world were in favour of Pakistanis," Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee President Shahriar Kabir said at an event at Bangla Academy, organised by Genocide-Torture Archive and Museum.

Researcher and museum trustee chairperson Muntassir Mamoon said the museum is trying to identify genocide cases, torture centres, mass killing sites, and mass graves.

After preliminary report of a survey on 34 districts, they found 14,452 cases of genocide, 759 mass graves, 1,048 mass killing sites and 1,027 torture centres.

At the programme held at Jatiya Press Club, organised by Sampriti Bangladesh, Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun said various researches show the genocide carried "was a planned killing to make the country meritless".

Lawmaker Aroma Dutta was also present.



A florist at Shahbagh meticulously puts flowers on a wreath. On the eve of Independence Day, florists like him prepare over hundreds of these floral arrangements. As these wreaths wither away soon, the artisans try their best to ensure that citizens who want to pay their respects at the National Martyrs' Monument can do so. This photo was taken in front of Dhaka University's Curzon Hall.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Climate action, right now!

Greens rally in solidarity with Fridays for Future

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Youth activists at a rally yesterday called on the government and other stakeholders to put a stop to engaging in environmentally detrimental activities and de-prioritise fossil fuels in the country.

Fridays for Future Bangladesh and Youthnet for Climate Justice made the demands at the rally held in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, as part of the global climate strike organised by "Fridays for Future", a worldwide school student movement.

In Bangladesh, the climate strike was simultaneously held in 25 districts.

Sohanur Rahman, executive coordinator of Youthnet for Climate Justice, said, "Accelerating adaptation or resilience-building centring climate change may seem difficult, but it is vital."

PRAYER  
TIMING  
MAR 26



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-45	12-45	4-45	6-20	7-45
Jamaat	5-20	1-15	5-00	6-25	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION