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WATER HARVESTING IN COASTAL UPAZILAS

From scarcity to security

NILIMA JAHAN

Archana Rani, 36, a homemaker from coastal upazila Assasuni in Sathkira, struggled for 23 years to collect drinking water from faraway sources that were often salty and contaminated with arsenic.

Initially, Archana used to walk an hour to a neighbouring village to collect water, sometimes multiple trips per day. Even when fetching water from her village, she had to walk half an hour and wait in long queues, paying Tk 6 for a pitcher of water.

This strenuous task caused her back pain which worsened during her periods. During her pregnancy, she had to carry the water alone as her husband was often away for work.

Fortunately, UNDP's Gender-responsive Coastal Adaptation (GCA) project, with financial assistance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the government, helped 13,308 households in Khulna and Sathkira districts harvest rainwater using a 2,000-litre tank.

Rainwater harvesting systems provided relief to families, especially mothers responsible for fetching water, allowing them to collect enough

water during the rainy season to last through the dry seasons. "The system is simple yet effective," said Mainul Islam, GCA's water and sanitation specialist at UNDP.

"We installed a 60 square feet tin roof as a self-catchment system to collect rainwater in every house. The water passes through a primary filtration system to remove larger particles, followed by a pre-filtration unit to remove solid substances and microorganisms."

Mainul also mentioned that around 20,000 households will receive drinking water from 288 community water facilities provided by DPHE. Among them, 25 facilities have been handed over to communities, and work continues in another 210 sites. The remaining 53 sites are expected to be completed by 2024.

Archana said last week's rain helped her harvest 800 litres of water, which they can use for the next few months.



"We hope to collect sufficient water by the end of the season if there is enough rainfall."

Sunita Rani Sarker from Khulna's Paikgachha had a similar story. "Collecting drinking water was a struggle for 18 years, even during painful periods, pregnancy, and recovering from a caesarean

Apas" in these areas.

Parbati Gain, a widow from Assasuni, is one such Pani Apa who regularly cleans the catchment, gutter, and filter of 301 households in ward 9 of Khajra union.

"Each household pays me Tk 20 for my services, which helps me support myself and my son," said Parbati.

A survey conducted by the GCA Project in February 2021 found that 63 percent of the population, faced difficulties in accessing drinking water, with the water crisis lasting for more than six months for 51 percent of the population.

GCA Project tested 666 tube wells and found only 27 percent of them met Bangladesh's salinity standard, while for ponds, it was 48 percent. Women in 74 percent of households were responsible for getting drinking water, reflecting the burden of unpaid work.

Households in the project area spent much more on the water than city consumers, with an average of Tk 642 or Tk 842 per month, compared to the average monthly cost of Tk 200 for all-purpose water supply in cities. The project aims to provide safe drinking water solutions to 31,000 households through six options.

No legal bar for Shahabuddin to take oath as president: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday upheld a High Court order that rejected a petition challenging the legality of the process of electing Md Shahabuddin as president of the country.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim rejected an appeal filed by MA Aziz Khan, challenging the HC order.

Following the apex court chamber judge's order, there is no legal bar for Shahabuddin to take oath as president and discharge other relevant functions, Additional Attorney General Sk Md Morshed told reporters at a press briefing in the attorney general's office.

He added that the SC



SCIENCE LAB BLAST

DU student dies at DMCH, death toll now 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University student Nur Nabi, who suffered critical injuries in the March 5 blast in Science Laboratory area, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

He breathed his last while being treated at the Intensive Care Unit, Brig Gen Nazmul Haque, director of DMCH told The Daily Star.

With this, the death toll in the blast has risen to six.

Nur, a fourth year student of the Islamic Studies department, used to stay at Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Huq Hall.

He was passing by the area during the blast and suffered injuries to his head and leg after debris from the blast fell on him. Nur was rushed to DMCH immediately where he was being treated.

Complete appointment of medical technologists

Association urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of graduate medical technologists have urged the government to finish two appointment processes for them, which were initiated in 2013 and 2020 separately.

An acute shortage of medical technologists in public hospitals have been causing complexities in serving patients as there has been no appointment after 2008, said a press release issued by Unemployed and Private Services Medical Technologists Association (BPSMTA) yesterday.

Medical technologists perform laboratory work at healthcare facilities, like processing test samples of patients for diagnosis.

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PRAYER TIMING				
MARCH 22				
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:55	12:45	4:45	6:16	7:45
JAMAAT 5:30	1:15	5:00	6:20	8:15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				

MY DHAKA

Involving community to paint garbage depot



RBR

Completely immersed in work, Tanmoy, 36, has not gone home for the last five days. He is busy painting a garbage depot at Jollad Khana Garbage Secondary Transfer Station (STS) in Mirpur-13. STS is the place where all the garbage is dumped before taking them outside Dhaka.

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy is a cartoonist by profession, an art educator of Artolution, and the founding member of Cartoon People.

Tanmoy's recent assignment -- a pilot project of non-government organisations Shakti Foundation and MeLife Foundation, and Dhaka North City Corporation -- is to paint a mural. With the painting almost complete, the garbage depot, with strokes of white, blue, green, and yellow, looks almost inviting, if not for the stench.

A group of 15 young girls and boys from Cartoon People are painting the depot walls and changing the look of the community. The setting surrounding the painting has taken on the form of a carnival, with loud music playing at the backdrop.

Community art gives people relief as it involves the entire neighbourhood taking part in the painting, and as a

result, they start to own it as theirs. A rickshaw-puller casually requested Tanmoy to paint his rickshaw; a boy named Shanto walked in and showed interest to work on the project.



that the garbage collectors here, the bhangari [scrap] shop owners at the opposite, the rickshaw pullers passing by -- all can take part in this huge wall painting."

Imran Ahmed, deputy executive director of Shakti Foundation, one of the largest national NGOs that works throughout Bangladesh with a prime focus on climate change, said, "We are incorporating art to convert the ugly into something beautiful. As part of the programme, we take rundown places and convert them into green, public spaces and engage the community so that they can take care of the place as well. We want to keep the city green and clean. Dhaka North City Corporation is very helpful in this regard."

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy's latest work is a 10-day project and is to be inaugurated by the DNCC mayor on March 26.

LONG-TERM COVID EFFECTS

Women, elderly worst sufferers

Researchers share findings of follow-up study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Covid-19 survivors, particularly women and the elderly, carry a high burden of long-term effects of Covid-19 infection, often described as post-Covid-19 syndrome (PCS) or long Covid, revealed a study.

The prevalence of post-Covid complications was found to be 1.5 to 4 times higher in females than in males, according to the study titled "Long Term Sequelae of Covid-19: A Longitudinal Follow-Up Study in Dhaka, Bangladesh".

Meanwhile, Covid-19 survivors above 60 years face long-term complications, double those aged less than 40.

The results highlight the need for continuous follow-up and care of Covid-19 survivors, researchers said while sharing the study at an event at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMU) yesterday.

A guideline titled "Long Covid Clinical

Management Guideline for Physicians" was also launched at the event.

A team of researchers at BSMMU and the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease and Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) jointly conducted the study on 362 Covid-19 patients, aged 18 years and above between December 15, 2020, and October 30, 2021.

The prevalence of post-Covid complications was found to be 1.5 to 4 times higher in females than in males. Meanwhile, Covid-19 survivors above 60 years face long-term complications, double those aged less than 40.

All of them were treated at two Covid-19 dedicated hospitals in Dhaka after they tested Covid-19 positive in RT-PCR test.

The participants were given comprehensive in-person follow-ups on the first, third and fifth months after their recovery, to evaluate the presence of post-covid-19 symptoms, which include neurological, cardiac, respiratory outcomes, and mental health.

Prof Shohael Mahmud Arafat, chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine at BSMMU; Prof Chowdhury Meshkat Ahmed,

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'Ensure our rights to practice religion'

Ahmadiyya community leaders urge govt, place 4-point demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ) yesterday placed their four-point demand, including ensuring their rights to practice, observe and protect their religion.

At a press conference at its headquarters in the capital's Bakshibazar, AMJ leaders also demanded that the government provides security so that they can hold their jalsas in all parts of the country, including Panchagarh, and prevent the recurrence of untoward incidents.

"In the name of various sabhas and waj mahfils on social media, disinformation and lies against the Ahmadiyya community should be stopped and all

Govt officials to blame for dying waterbodies

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The negligence and mismanagement of government officials have put rivers, canals, haors, and reservoirs in a critical state, said discussants at a programme yesterday.

Due to the decreasing water level, crop cultivation has gone down, and this failure to protect the country's water resources is due to the lack of good governance and accountability, they said.

The Water Rights Forum, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) jointly organised the national seminar at the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

"Government officials are turning rivers into dumping grounds, which is a grave threat to the environment," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela.

"It's crucial to avoid development projects that damage the environment...," she added.

Addressing the seminar, Muzibur Rahman Howlader, former chairperson of National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), criticised a recent proposed project undertaken by the Water Development Board (WDB) that would reportedly shrink Jamuna river.

Muzibur further alleged that the district

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