

Groundwater not so uncharted anymore

Water Development Board completes groundwater quality analysis for the first time; knowledge base to ensure sustainable use of freshwater

SYED ASHFAUL HAQUE

Groundwater is indeed a huge wealth of Bangladesh, but this ample freshwater resource is now at a serious risk of gradual depletion and contamination.

Arsenic, salinity, manganese and iodine. All the chemical-minerals mix in water in proportions lethal for humans, animals and plants alike. But the million-dollar question is: how would we know about the water quality beneath the ground?

No comprehensive water quality assessment was done until recently. But over the last three years, a team of researchers from the Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB)

GROUNDWATER USAGE

Drinking water

97%

Irrigation

80%

Industries & others

100%

completed a phenomenal project, generating for the first time a deep knowledge base that is expected to revolutionise the usage and management of groundwater resources.

"It is a remarkable development for all the right reasons," lead researcher and WDB Director Dr Anwar Zahid told The Daily Star recently.

"We have put together a vast data set, with which water authorities will now be able to devise a strategy appropriate for the use and preservation of the freshwater down below."

Falling groundwater level, rising arsenic level and salinity intrusion in coastal regions

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OVERALL WATER USE

Domestic 3%

Industries & others 7%

Agriculture & irrigation 90%

WASA SUPPLY RATIO

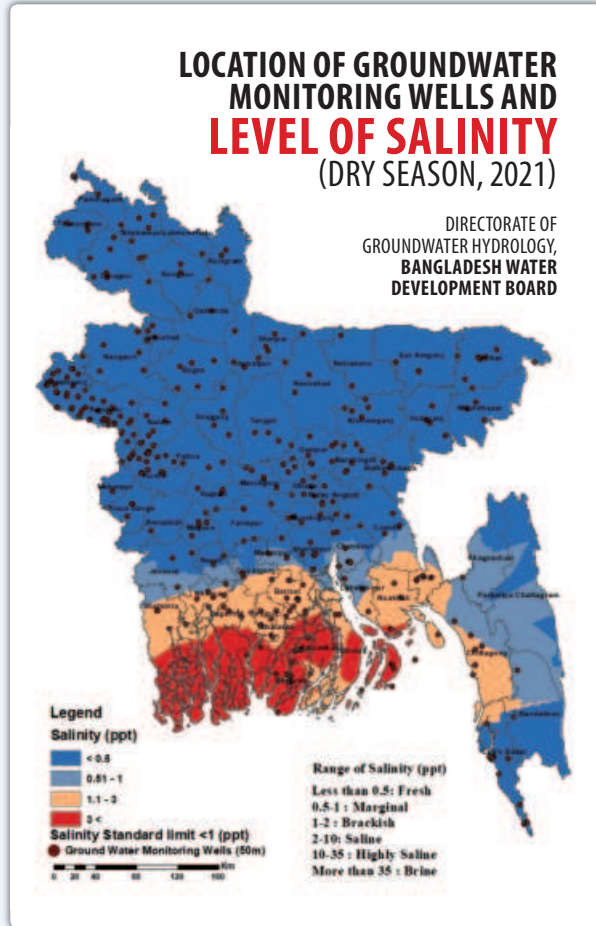
Groundwater 67%

Surface water 33%



We must use the groundwater very judiciously and cautiously, looking at the data. Indiscriminate use will only make a disaster imminent.

DR ANWAR ZAHID
Lead researcher and director, WDB



Govt to be even tougher on BNP

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE
and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The BNP appears to be in for even tougher times in the next few weeks with the government going all out to make sure the party does not gain momentum in its out-the-government movement.

Police across the country are referring to lists of people accused in cases filed over arson and violence in 2013-14 and 2018. Law enforcers are also making new lists of "suspected troublemakers".

Sources say most of those named in the lists are BNP leaders and activists.

Police are keeping an eye on BNP men in general and monitoring their online activities, they add.

Top police officers held a meeting with all the metropolitan commissioners and range DIGs and asked them to make lists of "troublemakers".

Sources in Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said the crime divisions and detective branch were identifying "suspected troublemakers".

Khandaker Al Moin, media wing director at Rab, said Rab battalions were also ordered to make such lists and intensify surveillance.

Police and Rab officers say BNP supporters are paying teen gangs, addicts, and homeless people to carry out arson. That's why the law enforcers were ordered to bring the supporters to book.

All police units were asked to increase patrolling in uniform as well as in plainclothes and to arrest "troublemakers", said sources in police.

Such instructions were also given at the National Security Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Office

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137 BNP men sentenced to different terms

Punishment handed down in 3 cases over vandalism, assault on cops, crude bomb blasts

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A total of 137 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were sentenced yesterday in three cases filed over political violence.

The cases were filed between November 2013 and March 2015 on charges of hurling crude bombs, vandalising vehicles, and assaulting law enforcers and preventing them from performing their duties.

While leaders and activists of BNP find themselves on the receiving end of a conviction spree of late, yesterday's figure was the highest in a single day, said defence lawyers.

In one of the cases, 75 BNP leaders and activists were sentenced to 30 months' rigorous imprisonment each for political violence in the capital's Uttara in November 2013.

BNP's Uttara-East thana convener Shah Alam, its Biman Bandar thana former president Md Shahabuddin and Dhaka North Jubo Dal's former president SM Jahangir Hossain are among those sentenced.

While leaders and activists of BNP find themselves on the receiving end of a conviction spree of late, yesterday's figure was the highest in a single day, according to defence lawyers.

warrants against them. Their punishments will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the magistrate acquitted two other accused as the charges against them were not proven.

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AL tickets for north largely unchanged

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Former Chhatra League president Rezwanaul Haque Chowdhury Shovon, who was removed from his post in 2019 for controversial activities, has been picked as the Awami League nominee for Kurigram-1.

AL Parliamentary Nomination Board yesterday chose Shovon over incumbent AL lawmaker Aslam Hossain Sowdagar, sources said.

Chaired by AL chief Sheikh Hasina, the board during its meeting at the party's Dhaka district office in Tejgaon also picked Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury for Rangpur-6. In the previous two polls, she got elected from the same constituency in by-polls after Hasina vacated the seat.

Hasina collected the nomination forms for Gopalganj-3 and Rangpur-6. After selecting

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Smaller parties planning big

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA
and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Little-known parties are planning big for the January 7 polls and a number of them are selling nomination forms to anyone willing to buy so that they can field candidates in all 300 constituencies.

Take Trinamool BNP as an example.

It says anyone can collect the nomination form from the party's Topkhana Road office by submitting a photocopy of their national ID card and paying Tk 5,000.

And people are buying the forms.

Shumi Islam, a homemaker in her 40s, collected and submitted her nomination form for Satkhira-1.

She was never involved in politics. "I never participated in any election before. As Trinamool BNP is gaining popularity ahead of the polls, I have joined this party and now planning to contest the election."

Forty-five-year-old Mainuddin, a trader from Cumilla, picked up a form from Trinamool BNP for Cumilla-2 yesterday.

He told The Daily Star that he never ran for any office and bought the form because the BNP was not running.

Taimur Alam Khandaker, member secretary of the Trinamool BNP, told this correspondent yesterday, "Our door is open to all. Anyone can collect a nomination form but who will get the party blessings will be decided in a meeting of party high-ups."

The party, which got registered with the Election Commission this year, said it will field candidates in all 300 constituencies.

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Leaders of nine Islamist parties meet Hasina

Agree to take part in polls

RASHIDUL HASAN

Leaders of nine Islamist parties met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night at the Gono Bhaban and decided to participate in the January 7 national election.

Of the nine parties, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Bangladesh Muslim League and Jomiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam used to be part of the BNP's 20-party alliance.

These three parties left the opposition alliance over the last few years. They are registered with the Election Commission, which is required to participate in the election.

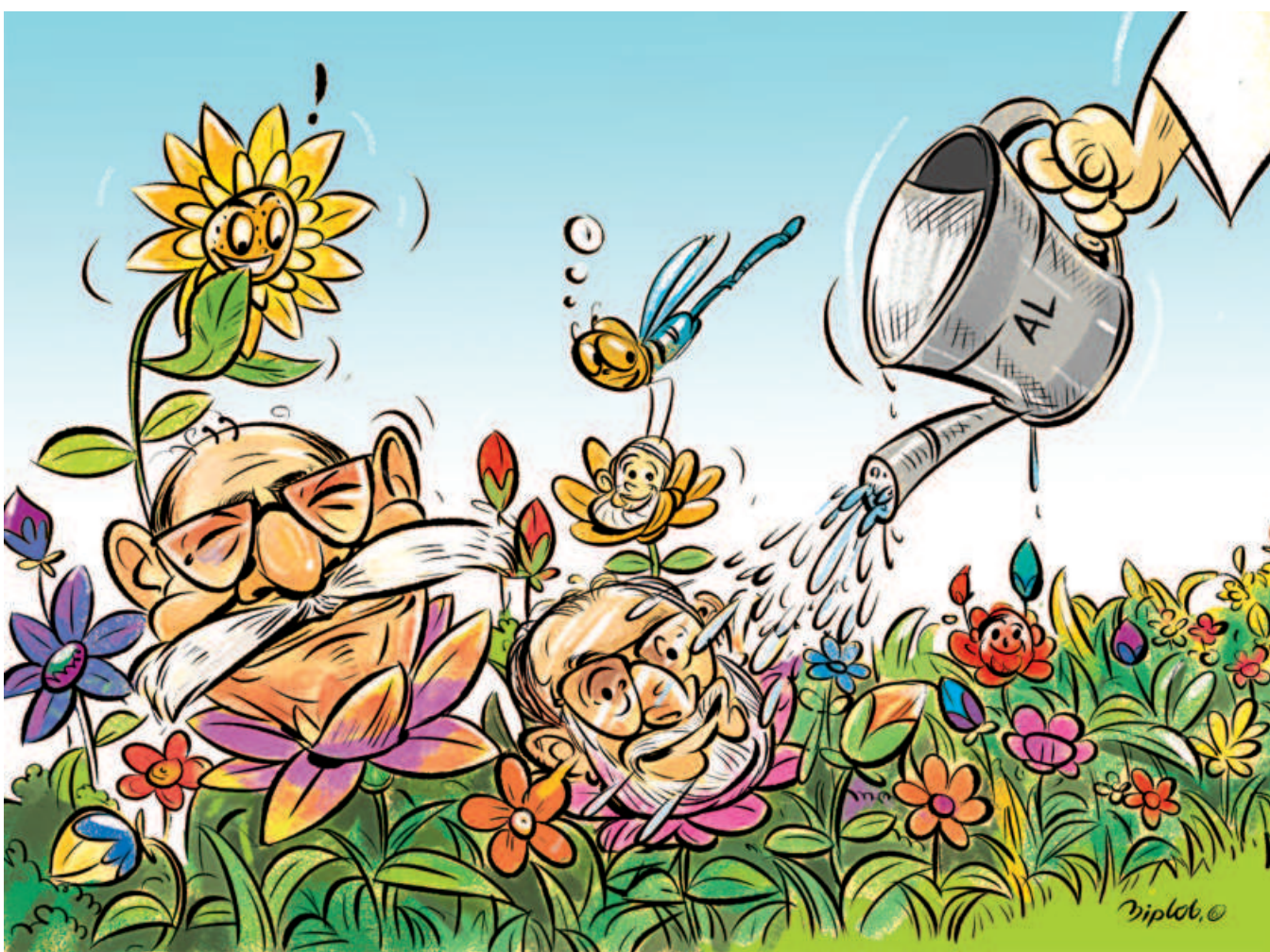
Even though these parties left the BNP-led alliance, they are known in political circles to be critical of the Awami League.

Besides, leaders of these parties also have been saying for months that they will not participate in the national election under a partisan government and demanding that polls be held under a caretaker government.

Only last week, an alliance of which these three parties are members issued a statement, saying the atmosphere was not conducive to free and fair elections.

They also said participating in the

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JP extends time for nomination form submission

Raushan, her loyalists yet to collect forms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party yesterday extended the deadline for collecting and submitting nomination forms until today as the party's Chief Patron Raushan Ershad and other senior leaders loyal to her were yet to collect the forms.

The sale of the party's nomination forms for the January 7 national election began on Monday.

The previous deadline ended at 4:00pm yesterday, but the JP leaders loyal to Chairman GM Quader waited until 6:00pm for the pro-Raushan leaders to collect forms from the party chief's Banani office.

Speaking to The Daily Star last night, JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun said they extended the time limit so that all party leaders willing to run can buy nomination forms.

Golam Moshi, political secretary to opposition leader Raushan, told this correspondent that Raushan and her son Rahgir Almahe Ershad were yet to collect nomination forms.

Besides, Moshir Rahman Ranga, the opposition chief whip in parliament, also did not buy a nomination form until yesterday.

"They [Quader and leaders loyal to him] will have

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