

CWasa to install 55 deep tubewells despite falling groundwater levels

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The Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWasa) has sent a proposal to the Planning Commission to install 55 deep tube wells in Chattogram city in a bid to tackle the water crisis during the dry season.

The state agency has made the move at a time when port city's groundwater level has been receding alarmingly, alongside intrusion of salt water during dry season, posing a significant threat to water security of the country's second largest city.

According to a study published in 2021, titled "Modeling of groundwater level changes in an urban area", the port city's groundwater level receded by 4.75 metres per year from 2009 to 2016.

The study, conducted by Dr Aysha Akter, a professor of Civil Engineering Department at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet), found extraction of water without any planning a prime cause of groundwater depletion.

CWasa supplies around 45 46 crore litres of water, most of it collected from surface sources, to consumers daily, except during the dry season.

Of this, around 41 crore litres

of water are supplied after being collected from Halda and Karnaphuli rivers, according to CWasa sources.

As salty sea water enters into Karnaphuli and Halda rivers during the dry season due to the decrease in water flow from upstream, the port city faces an extreme water shortage every year, causing suffering to city residents.

Now, the CWasa is extracting water through at least 45 deep tubewells, contributing to lowering groundwater levels of Chattogram.

"The CWasa's water production decreases 1.5 to 2 crore litres per day in the dry season. So, we have been forced to take the decision to install more deep tubewells to address the water crisis," said Md Rezaul Ahsan Chowdhury, project director and an executive engineer of CWasa.

As per project documents, CWasa will install these tubewells, each of 16-inch diameter, in Kalurghat area at an estimated cost of Tk 80 crore.

Asked why the initiative is being taken despite the depletion of groundwater level, Maksud Alam, chief engineer of CWasa, said, "We have no option except installing deep tubewells to ensure water supply during the dry season."

He, however, claimed that these tubewells will be set up for an interim period to tackle the crisis.

Experts said the new initiative will

put further deplete Chattogram's groundwater level.

"The CWasa took an unscientific approach to solving the water crisis. Instead, they could have increased the production capacity of its existing plants, or by constructing new treatment plants in areas without salinity problem," said Dr Sudip Kumar Pal, a professor of Cuet's Civil Engineering Department, who conducted several studies on groundwater depletion in Chattogram.

Meanwhile, residents of rural areas under 15 upazilas in Chattogram have been facing an acute water crisis as tubewells in many areas can no longer extract groundwater and are left dysfunctional.

Syed Nur, a resident of Hathazari upazila, installed a tubewell with 200 feet of depth in 2019. However, within just two years, it stopped working.

"The tubewell can't extract any water as the water level receded," she said.

According to a recent report of the Department of Public Health Engineering, the groundwater table has been declining by two-five metres yearly.

Of the total 1,00,423 tubewells installed by DPHE in Chattogram district, only 76,368 are currently functional.

CJ calls for justice as universal

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knowledge, influence, and resources to champion the causes of the marginalised, strengthen the legal framework, and promote access to justice for all," he said.

Pointing at the Supreme Court lawyers, the Chief Justice said they also act as bridges between the judiciary and the people as their role extends beyond the courtroom.

"You educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities, empowering them to engage with the legal system. Your work ensures that the law is not an abstract concept but a living promise of fairness and equality for all," said the Chief Justice.

Refaat Ahmed said when he took the oath as the 25th Chief Justice of Bangladesh, he was acutely aware of the immense responsibility placed upon his shoulders. "This role is not merely a position of leadership, but

a solemn trust bestowed by the people of this nation to uphold fairness, equity, and ensure access to justice for all, irrespective of their status or circumstances," he said.

"From the very moment of my appointment, I recognised the urgency of addressing the challenges that have long impeded the full realisation of our judiciary's potential," he said.

"To this end, on September 21, I unveiled a comprehensive roadmap for judicial reform. This initiative is a cornerstone of my vision to strengthen our judiciary and its capacity to serve the people with integrity and efficiency," said the Chief Justice.

"I have declared and initiated the process of creating a separate Secretariat for the Judiciary, a pivotal measure to ensure the judiciary's administrative autonomy," he said.

Alongside this, he has

proposed the formation of a Judicial Appointment Council to institutionalise transparency and meritocracy in the appointment process of apex court judges, as well as Posting and Transfer Guidelines for District Judiciaries, aimed at fostering consistency and fairness in judicial postings. "These proposals have been formally submitted to the government for necessary action, marking a significant step toward the complete institutional separation of the judiciary from the executive branch," he said.

Moreover, in reinforcing the judiciary's independence from the legislative branch, they have restored and strengthened the Supreme Judicial Council following the disposal of the 16th Amendment review case, he went on.

RULAA convenor Barrister Bodruddoza Badal presided over the

function moderated by its member secretary Kamal Ziaul Islam Babu.

Inqilab Mancha

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the indigenous tribal populations of Manipur must be stopped. The Indian government should seek interventions from the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) of the United Nations to resolve the intensifying conflicts in Manipur."

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Gulshan Zone) Rakib Hassan told The Daily Star that an organisation under the banner of Inqilab Mancha gathered near the office of the Indian High Commission at Gulshan in Dhaka around 4:30pm.

Later on, three of the leaders and activists of the organisation went inside the office and handed over the memorandum. The event took place peacefully, ADC Rakib Hassan added.

from Feni, and recruited after an online interview with a Chinese recruiter, Aryan and four of his Bangladeshi roommates left for Thailand on August 12, hoping for a better life.

Upon arriving in Bangkok, they were taken to Mae Sot, a Thai town near the Myanmar border.

The six-hour drive ended abruptly when they were transferred into pickup vans, escorted by armed men, and driven through hilly roads and dense forests.

"For the first time we realised we have made a grave mistake," Aryan said.

Then the group was made to cross the Moei River on a boat, and they reached Karen, a region plagued with insurgency.

The victims were taken to a compound operated by Chinese syndicates. Their mobile phones were confiscated, and they were coerced at gunpoint to sign contracts obligating them to generate US \$200,000 each through online scams within 18 months, or face prolonged

servitude.

The captives were forced to work 17 hours per day.

Their task was to create fake social media IDs using cellphone numbers of different countries and befriend targets worldwide, posing as attractive women, to scam them.

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families and relatives. They sought the government's help but to no avail.

"Seeing no light at the end of the tunnel, I got frustrated and attempted to commit suicide several times," Aryan said in tears.

A DARING ESCAPE

On October 18, while escorting a Pakistani victim to a clinic near the Moei River, he saw an opportunity to escape.

Aryan said he alone generated US \$25,000 before his escape.

Each of the captives is

given a target to befriend

80 targets a day. Failing

to meet quotas resulted in

brutal punishments.

"We were beaten,

subjected to electric

shocks, and burnt with hot

frying pans. Some women

endured additional horrific

treatment, such as being

forced to stand for hours

with heavy water drums

on their shoulders," Aryan

said.

He said at one point

he gained the confidence

of a Chinese boss and got

his mobile phone back

and secretly informed

their terrible conditions to

home with the assistance of the Thai government, NGOs, and the Bangladesh Embassy.

He urged the government to take action to rescue other Bangladeshi victims still trapped in those centres.

OTHER VICTIMS SEEK GOVT INTERVENTION

Another victim, Mehedi Hasan Shanto, managed to call his sister around a month ago from one of those centres and requested to contact the government to rescue him.

Sonia Akhter Kona, his sister, said they contacted foreign and expatriate welfare ministries requesting to rescue Shanto and others.

Meanwhile, amid the increasing number of such incidents, the expatriates' welfare ministry has issued warnings against travelling to Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

The circular highlighted how individuals and organisations lure Bangladeshis with false promises of high-paying jobs, only to trap them in scam centres.

RU medical centre brings no benefit

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centre are largely limited to primary treatments only, said officials.

Students also complained that they have not been getting proper medicines from the medical centre. The medicines available at the centre are of low quality.

Each RU student has to pay Tk 100 yearly as a health-related fee, which generates a substantial revenue for the medical centre. However, its officials claimed to have three drafts of their budget still pending with the RU administration.

On-duty doctors are often unable to provide proper medicines and other facilities to the students due to insufficient budget deficit, the officials added.

"Lack of manpower is a big obstacle for us. Whenever we approached the

university administration in this regard, they only gave us assurances, but made no visible effort to resolve the issue," said Mafruha Siddiqua Lipi, chief medical officer at the centre.

Referring to the November 24 notice, Lipi said, "We are somehow managing to cover the morning shift with the number of doctors we have, but it is not possible to run the afternoon shift."

"Currently, each doctor has to attend hundreds of patients daily. Recruitment of more manpower is desperately needed to provide services properly,"

she added. Contacted, RU Vice-Chancellor Saleh Hasan Naqib said they are working to resolve the issues pertaining to the medical centre.

"We have arranged to appoint an Ophthalmologist on an urgent basis. Steps are on regarding the other issues. There has been some delay in recruitment over transparency and scrutiny in the process. All the problems will be resolved by January," he added.

RU Pro VC Mohammad Mainuddin, however, could not specify any deadline to resolve the issues.

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