

As Bangladesh confronts an escalating water crisis, the struggle for safe drinking water is becoming increasingly dire—both in urban centres and remote villages. In Chattogram, rising salinity has rendered water sources undrinkable, leaving residents scrambling for alternatives. Meanwhile, in the hills of Bandarban, villagers endure perilous climbs and hours-long waits for a single jar of water. In Khulna, families from coastal areas have to buy drinking water. These challenges are not isolated incidents but warning signs of a broader crisis that could threaten millions in the years ahead. On this World Water Day, we spotlight harsh realities faced by communities across the country and the urgent need for sustainable solutions.

WORLD
WATER
DAY 2025

COASTAL AREAS IN KHULNA

Where drinking water becomes a luxury

DIPANKAR ROY

When Razia Begum, now 56, got married at just 16, water was not a concern. Like most women in her village of Banisanta in Khulna's Dacope upazila, she collected freshwater from nearby ponds. Life was simple, and water was abundant.

But everything changed with the spread of shrimp farming. Once brimming with freshwater, the ponds gradually turned saline. By the early 2000s, Razia and her neighbours were caught in a mounting crisis. By 2002-03, access to drinkable water became a daily battle that stretched on for years.

To cope, the community restored a pond near Amtala Banisanta Government Primary School, three kilometres from Razia's home. For years, she walked the distance to fetch water. But declining health—kidney disease and bone ailments—have now made that impossible.

"My family needs at least three pitchers of water a day. Each 15-litre pitcher costs 30 taka, and delivery adds another 10 taka. We spend 2,500–2,700 taka a month just for drinking water," Razia said.

For a household of 10, surviving on a modest monthly income of 9,000 taka, this is a crushing burden.

Her father-in-law is immobile,

and her husband too ill to work. The family depends on her son, an easy bike driver, and her son-in-law, a security guard, for survival.

"Nearly 15–20 percent of our income goes into buying water. If we add in medical costs for waterborne diseases, the expenses are even higher," Razia added.

fears for her children's health. "Even the water we buy sometimes makes them sick. I spend 300–400 taka a month on medicine for stomach issues and diarrhoea," she said.

Just half a kilometre away, Taslima Begum faces similar hardship. Her family of four survives on one 20-litre water jar



Ten years ago, they bought a 1,000-litre tank on instalments for 8,000 taka. It barely lasts a few days. Despite multiple requests to local officials and NGOs for another tank, help has not come. "If a large reservoir or pipeline could be built, it would ease our suffering," she said.

Her daughter, Asma Khatun,

daily. "The only usable pond is three kilometres away, I'm sick and can't carry water. Buying water every month costs me at least 1,000 taka," she said.

"During the rainy season, we rely on rainwater, but for half the year, we have no choice but to buy water. My son, a seasonal farmer, spends

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PORT CITY

Water crisis grips residents amid rising salinity

MD NAZRUL ISLAM

For the past two weeks, residents of Chattogram have been grappling with an acute crisis of drinkable water as rising salinity levels in the supply have made it virtually undrinkable.

The issue stems from the Halda River, where saline tidal water has intruded due to reduced upstream water flow, leading to an increase in salinity at Chattogram Wasa's main water treatment facility.

Despite efforts to blend water from other treatment plants before distribution, the problem persists.

Residents of several areas of the port city, including Patenga, Kattali, City Gate, Halishahar, Pahartali, and both sides of Zakir Hossain Road in Khulshi, have reported increased salinity in water supplied by CWasa.

"The Wasa water is very salty and undrinkable. I am compelled to collect water from a tubewell in the neighbourhood for daily use," said Kutub Uddin Ahmed, a resident of Pahartali.

Sabina Rahman, a resident of Khulshi, said, "For the past 15 days, the Wasa water has been unusable. Despite filing complaints with Wasa officials, the problem remains unresolved."

Officials fear that without adequate rainfall, the crisis could deepen, leaving residents increasingly dependent on alternative sources.

Authorities are now pinning their hopes on the upcoming monsoon to bring relief.

Anwar Pasha, managing director of CWasa, told The Daily Star that the Power Development Board (PDB) has scaled down

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Struggling for every drop

Plight of hill villagers in Bandarban for safe water

MONG SING HAI MARMA

Residents of Thangkroi Para, a centuries-old village in Bandarban Sadar upazila, are grappling with an acute drinking water crisis even before the peak of summer.

Their only source of water is a stone pit in a dried-up stream called Thangkroi, where water trickles down at an agonisingly slow pace. Meanwhile, as the dry season sets in, this meagre supply dwindles further, making survival increasingly difficult.

Home to around 30 families, Thangkroi Para is a picturesque yet remote village located approximately 15 kilometres from Bandarban town.

Rugged terrain and a lack of proper transportation isolate the community, causing their struggles to go largely unnoticed by authorities, leaving residents to fend for themselves.

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A man of integrity and courage

Say speakers on Syed Manzur Elahi at his memorial event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned entrepreneur Syed Manzur Elahi was a man of kindness, integrity, and courage, who proved that businesses can thrive through honesty and compliance, said his children, business leaders, friends, and colleagues.

They made the remarks at a meeting in memory of the late Syed Manzur Elahi at the Senapangan in the capital yesterday. The eminent entrepreneur, who built the country's leading shoe brand—Apex, passed away on March 12. He was 83.

Speakers described him as a symbol of excellence—an inspiring entrepreneur, compassionate leader, and devoted family man.

Recalling his father's words, his son Syed Nasim Manzur said, "You can't command respect; you must earn it."

Munize Manzur, daughter of Syed Manzur Elahi, shared how her father placed family and country first, discouraging her from staying in the US for work after graduation.

"Our country must come first. It allowed me to make a living and give you the best education. Now you must return and do your best," she remembered him saying.

Among the distinguished attendees were Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman, Finance Adviser

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Two sellers display vibrant saris to customers at a busy shop in the capital's Bashundhara City Shopping Complex yesterday. With Eid only bit more than a week away, the festive shopping frenzy is in full swing.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

GULSHAN MURDER
Cops suspect gang rivalry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man, who was shot dead in Gulshan on Thursday night, may have been a victim of an internal gang feud involving criminal networks in Mohakhali, Banani, and Gulshan, police and locals said.

Sumon, 35, was shot around 9:00pm in front of Gulshan Police Plaza.

His wife, Mousumi Akter, has filed a case with Gulshan Police Station.

Sources said Sumon, once affiliated with a gang, formed his own group after August 5, seeking control over extortion in the area. He identified himself as a Jubo Dal leader to gain influence.

Following the changeover, other groups also expanded their operations, including one led by Akter, known as "Jail Akter," and another by Dipu, intensifying rivalries.

These gangs were involved in extortion, tender manipulation, and illegal gas and electricity businesses, often targeting local Awami League men, according to police and residents.

Police are investigating possible links between Sumon's murder and ongoing gang conflicts, said Tarique Mahmud, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division Police.

No arrests have been made yet, said the DC, adding that investigations are

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