Unrepaired

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with LGED's funding and brick-soling by the local union parishad, the damaged sections remain unaddressed.

"Residents of Hamarkona, Brahmangram, Notunbasti, Muslimnagar, and parts of Sherpur Bazar villages bear the brunt of the flooding due to the damaged dam. Every year, hundreds of families become displaced and forced to seek shelter elsewhere after losing their homes to the flooding," said Humayun Mia, a resident of Hamarkona village.

Mudrat Ahmed Mohan of the same village shared, "Last year, the dam broke at three places, inundating the entire area. No government project was undertaken to repair it. Later, local Hamarkona Boys Club and Muslimnagar Oikya Parishad, with support from local affluent people, rebuilt the roads and constructed a bridge in the village that were damaged in flooding."

Residents of several other villages in the upazila echoed similar concerns.

Khalid Bin Wahid, executive engineer of BWDB in Moulvibazar, said a proposal for necessary repairs to prevent erosion in Brahmangram and Hamarkona has been submitted for funding. Repairs will commence once allocations are approved, he added.

Tajuddin, upazila nirbahi officer of Moulvibazar Sadar, said a letter has been sent to the local UP chairman to outline a project plan based on public needs. Further steps will be taken upon receiving a response, he added.

Keeping a tradition alive

Ayesha's journey to preserve clay jewellery

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

In the village of West Chila in Barguna's Amtali upazila, a young artisan is breathing new life into a fading tradition.

Ayesha Akter Akhi, a college student, has dedicated herself to crafting intricate clay jewellery, an age-old art form that is on the verge of disappearing.

What started as a personal endeavour rooted in nostalgia has turned into a flourishing small business. Over the past four years, Ayesha has meticulously crafted over 500 clay jewellery pieces -- earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and entire jewellery sets -- selling them primarily through online platforms.

The earnings from her craft have provided much-needed financial support for her family.

Ayesha's journey began with a cherished childhood memory. "When I was little, my mother gifted me a pair of clay earrings. I wore them for years, but one day, I lost them. I loved those earrings dearly, and I wanted to recreate them. That's how I started learning this craft on my own," she shared.

After passing her HSC examination from Amtali Bokulnesa Women's Degree College in 2021, Ayesha got married but remained committed to her passion.

Now, while pursuing a degree at Amtali Government College, she continues her business, while shaping delicate, artistic clay ornaments.

At first, her work gained little attention. However, as her designs evolved -- showcasing intricate patterns and vibrant colours -- her handmade jewellery began gaining traction. Customers, charmed by the uniqueness of her creations, started placing more orders through online platforms.

Ayesha's clay jewellery sets are also quite affordable, priced between Tk 70 and Tk 150.

"Gold jewellery has become too costly and beyond our reach," said Tanzila, one of Ayesha's customers. "I purchased a clay jewellery set from Ayesha online, and I absolutely love wearing it."

Ayesha's husband Gazi Md Soleman stands firmly beside her in her endeavour. "She is doing a great job, and I always support her. The income from her jewellery sales has been a great help to our family," he said.

Her mother, Mariam Begum, fondly recalled, "I once bought a pair of clay earrings in my childhood and later gifted them to my daughter. Those earrings lasted 25 years before they were lost. Ayesha's passion for making clay jewellery stems from that memory."

With a desire to keep this artisanal craft alive, Ayesha remains optimistic.

"I started this initiative to preserve my mother's memories and to revive a disappearing tradition. So far, I have created over 500 pieces and sold 300 of them. The response has been incredible, and with financial support, I could expand my work even further," she said.

Struggling for every drop

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CLIMBING HUNDREDS OF FEET FOR WATER

For the women of Thangkhroi Para, collecting water is an exhausting daily battle.

Shainuching Marma, a 40-year-old homemaker, has to climb nearly 500 feet up a steep and hazardous hill daily to fetch water for her family.

After working in the Jhum fields at noon, she returns home to find a shortage of drinking and cooking water, forcing her to make another trip in the evening.

"I can't collect water in the morning because there are too many people waiting in line. We have to go through this hardship every day," said Shainuching.

She also said the crisis extends beyond her village, affecting nearby Upor Buri Para, Niche Buri Para, and Sakkridong Para.

WAITING HOURS FOR A JAR OF WATER

Meching U Marma, 45, and Redama Marma, 55, of the village shared similar struggles.

With the stream nearly dry, they have built a narrow bamboo structure to channel water from a rock cavity. Yet, filling a single jar takes hours.

"Once one person collects water, the next has to wait for a fresh supply. The queue of women collecting water stretches from morning until night," they said.

This same water is used for cooking, bathing, washing clothes, and even for livestock, raising health concerns.

A CRISIS SPREADING ACROSS VILLAGES

A recent visit to the area revealed that the crisis is not limited to Thangkhroi Para. Three other villages -- Upor Buri Para, Niche Buri Para, and Sakkridong Para -- are facing the same dire situation.

Over 200 families, nearly 1,500 people, are struggling without access to safe drinking water, forcing them to rely on unsafe sources.

Maui Aungpru Marma, 56, a resident, said, "Our village has been suffering from a drinking water crisis for a long time. Over the past few years, we have submitted multiple applications to the chairman of the Bandarban Hill District Council for deep tube wells and water reservoirs, but no action has been taken."

"We don't know where else to turn," he said.

Jamchari Union Parishad Chairman Kasing Shai Marma acknowledged the issue.

"Not just Thangkhroi Para, but four other villages in the area are also suffering. We have requested the Public Health Engineering Department and the government to ensure access to safe drinking water," he said.

Contacted, Mohammad Julhaz, assistant engineer of the District Public Health Engineering Department, said, "Between 2022 and 2025, 472 deep wells and 110 ring wells were installed across the district, spending Tk 8.08 crore. However, no plans have been made yet for remote hilly areas."

Meanwhile, Anupam Dey, executive engineer of the District Public Health Engineering Department, pointed out additional challenges.

He said, "Due to the hard rock layer and high iron content in the hills, installing tube wells is difficult. Moreover, deforestation has lowered the groundwater level. However, plans are underway to build surface water treatment plants in some areas."

Rights activist Leluang Khumi highlighted that this crisis in the hilly areas is not new and has been worsening over the years.

"Hundreds of villages in other hilly areas of the district are facing similar water shortages. This problem must be addressed through sustainable development planning. If the authorities do not act soon, the situation will become even more critical," he said.

Gang rivalry

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Sumon had at least seven criminal cases against him. He was arrested in a mugging case on January 19 but later released on bail, said the DC.

Originally from Rangpur's Mithapukur, Sumon lived with his wife and two children in Mirpur's Bhashantek area.

His ISP business was based in Mohakhali's TB Gate area.

His brother-in-law claimed Sumon had an ongoing dispute with a cable TV service provider in Mohakhali's TV Gate area, who had threatened him multiple times.

Biman flight

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"significant disruption" over the coming days and told passengers not to travel "under any circumstances" until it reopens.

At least 1,351 flights to and from the airport in west London faced possible cancellation yesterday, according to flight tracking website Flightradar24.

Biman operates four flights per week on their London route. With scheduled flights to London yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Biman officials said subsequent flights may be impacted as well.

3 cops

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journalists rescued Salam and protested the attack. As news spread, journalists across Rangpur demanded justice. Under pressure, DIG Aminul Islam removed the accused officers and assured that appropriate action would follow based on the investigation's findings.

Residents grapple with water

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water release from Kaptai Lake, leading to a decrease in the Halda River's freshwater flow. This has allowed saline tidal water from the Karnaphuli River to enter the Halda, significantly raising the salinity levels of the water treated at the Mohra Water Treatment Plant.

CWasa collects water from the Mohra point of the Halda River during low tide, but even after purification, the salinity level of the supplied water remains at 250 mg/L -- far above the acceptable limit for drinking water.

To address the issue, authorities have started installing 54 deep tubewells across the city, but residents continue to struggle with the worsening crisis.

According to CWasa sources, the daily water demand in Chattogram city is 580 million litres. Currently, around 460 to 470 million litres of water are being supplied from CWasa's four water treatment plants. However, the quantity of water collected from the Mohra point has decreased due to rising salinity, resulting in a shortfall of 30 million litres daily.

"The current salinity level at the Mohra water collection point is 2,100 mg/L, whereas, during normal times, it ranges from just 100 to 300 mg/L. During high tide, water collection is stopped, causing disruptions in the water supply system," said CWasa chief engineer Maksud Alam.

"We are trying to reduce salinity by blending water from other treatment plants with the processed water from the Mohra project," he added.

Md Humayun Kabir Majumder, chief engineer (distribution) of PDB, Chattogram Region, said power generation at the Kaptai Hydropower Plant has been reduced since November due to a decline in the lake's water level. Currently, only one unit is operational.

"If the reduced water release from Kaptai Lake was causing salinity in the Halda River, the problem should have arisen back in November. However, there was no intrusion of saline water at that time," he claimed.

Maksud Alam, however, mentioned that the water supplied by CWasa is treated in accordance with WHO guidelines, making it completely germ-free, but they cannot reduce the salinity level.

In future projects, efforts will be made to ensure both germ-free and salinity-free water, he added.

Dr Idris Ali, former professor of chemistry at Chattogram Government College and a researcher on Karnaphuli River's water, said a salinity level of 250 mg/L or more is harmful to the human body, especially among children, the elderly, pregnant women, diabetic patients, and those with high blood pressure.

Additionally, people with weak immune systems may face further health issues from saline water, including digestive problems, he said.

He criticised CWasa for failing to learn from past experiences, as saline water intrusion in the Halda River during the dry season is a recurring problem, and stressed the need for preventive measures beforehand.

When water becomes a luxury

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up to 25 percent of his income on water," she added.

This is not an isolated crisis. In Polder 33, covering five unions of Dacope upazila, the situation is dire.

Out of 1,813 tubewells, only 247 are operational, and most provide saline water. Of 532 pond sand filters, only 56 work. All 153 VSSTs and 890 SSTs -- types of tubewells -- are out of order, according to the Dacope Public Health Engineering Department.

Md Abdullah Al Mahmud, sub-assistant engineer at Dacope Public Health Engineering Office, explained, "The underground aquifers here are so saline that tubewells are ineffective. No matter how deep we dig, the water remains undrinkable. We need targeted interventions -- preserving good ponds, promoting rainwater harvesting, and investing in RO (reverse osmosis) treatment."

The coastal regions of Bangladesh face high salinity due to their geography and environmental challenges. Most residents rely on ponds or rainwater. Others buy purified water sold by local businesses.

In Polder 33 alone, eight private facilities process and sell treated water. While government and NGO initiatives exist, poor coordination and lack of commitment have yielded limited results. Salinity levels are rising, worsening the crisis.

Experts argue that access to safe drinking water is a basic human right. Yet for coastal communities, it remains a costly privilege. Without sustainable solutions, the crisis will only escalate.

Since 2015, the NGO BEDS (Bangladesh Environment and Development Society) has been collecting and purifying rainwater for local distribution.

Operating three RO units, each purifying 15,000 litres per hour, BEDS supplies 50,000 litres of water daily across 30 villages. "We sell water at 50 paisa per litre -- enough to cover maintenance. Some buy in bulk and resell via vans at 20–40 taka per 20-litre jar," said Md Maksudur Rahman, BEDS' chief executive.

Still, the problem is vast. The Department of Public Health Engineering reports coastal water salinity levels often range between 3,000–4,000 mg of chloride per litre -- far exceeding the 600 mg safe limit.

Standard RO systems can't filter such high salinity, but the department is developing advanced filtration solutions.

Over the past five years, DPHE has distributed more than 125,000 rainwater harvesting tanks (3,000-litre capacity each) across three coastal districts, offering four to five months of drinking water during monsoon season.

Md Jamanur Rahman, superintending engineer of DPHE Khulna, said, "Our freshwater is shrinking due to shrimp and crab farming. This must be regulated. Surface water treatment and pipeline distribution are the most effective long-term solutions."

He also called for accurate mapping to ensure NGO-led projects serve the right communities.