

World Water Day 2011 celebrations in Bangladesh

1. World Water Day Celebration in Dhaka:

The World Water Day was celebrated in Dhaka on 22nd of March 2011. A Seminar was organised on the theme of the day “Water for Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge”. It was sponsored by BWDB, WARPO, DWASA, CEGIS and IWM, all partner organizations of the BWP.

The Honourable Minister for Water Resources Was the Chief Guest and Honourable State Minister of Water Resources and the Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources were the Special Guests. The seminar was presided over by Mr. Md. Habibur Rahman, Director General of BWDB. A large number of participants from all water related sectors were present. From BWP Dr. K. Azharul Haq, Mr. Giashuddin Choudhury and Mr. Sajjad Hossain, all Executive Committee Members of the BWP actively participated in the seminar. The keynote paper was presented by Dr. Liakath Ali, Deputy Managing Director, Dhaka WASA. Dr. Ali presented a brief resume of the present status of water supply, sanitation and storm water drainage of the city. He reported that DWASA has nearly 290,000 connections. The water demand of the city is around 2,200 MLD and DWASA can supply around 2000 MLD. Ground water sources constitute about 87% of the total supply where as surface water accounts for the balance 13%.

On the challenges faced by DWASA, Dr. Ali indicated that over dependence on ground water is becoming unsustainable and he presented a plan for increasing surface water based water supply, to increase its contribution to 50% within the next five years. The other challenges were identified as reduction in NRW, increase in sanitation coverage from the existing 30% to 60% in next 10 years, improving water quality both at source (especially surface water) and in the distribution system and improving the storm water drainage system. He further indicated that unplanned growth of city and a nearly 8% annual growth of the population is also a major challenge. Lack of funds for capital expenditure for infrastructure development especially for sewerage and storm water disposal was also identified as a major challenge. Other major challenges included meeting future needs where the estimated population by 2020 will be 15.5 million with a water supply demand of around 3500 MLD and supplying water to urban slums which houses 30% of the city population. The climate change impact is expected to further, negative impacts on the challenges.

A second paper on climate change was presented by Mr. Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Chief Planning, BWDB. He emphasised the need for accommodating the probable impact of climate change on the temporal and special distribution of rainfall which will ultimately have an impact on availability of raw water for Dhaka city.

The Chief Guest and the Special Guests emphasized the need for preparing the city water utilities for meeting future challenges in service delivery through adequate financing, human resource development and integrated water resources development.

2. World Water Day Celebration in Khulna City:

In Khulna, World Water Day was observed elaborately. As a part of ongoing activities, World Water Day was observed by Bhairab River Area Water Partnership and Initiative for Right view (IRV) with the support of the Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP). A workshop was organized on “Present Status of Water Supply in Khulna City and the Way Forward” on 23rd of March 2011 at Khulna Press Club.



Mr. Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Mayor, Khulna City Corporation, was present as Chief Guest and among the Special Guests, Dr. Tarun Kanti Sikdar, Director, Environment Department, Engineer Mr. Tauhidul Anawar Khan, Secretary General, Bangladesh Water partnership (BWP), Amena Halim Beby, Councilor, Khulna City Corporation, Sk. Ali Akbar Tipu, Councilor, Khulna City Corporation were present. The seminar was Chaired by Ad. Firoz Ahmed, Convenor, Bhairab River Area Water Partnership and the inaugural speech was delivered by Kazi Zaved Khalid Pasha, *Mayor of Khulna City* for Right View (IRV).

Mr. Md. Abdullah, Managing Director, KWASA presented the keynote paper titled ***Present Status of Water*** “Supply in Khulna City and the Way Forward”.

He indicated that Khulna is the 4th largest city in Bangladesh with a population of 1.5 million. Khulna WASA started functioning independently from September 16th, 2008. The Water Works Department of Khulna City Corporation, which was responsible for water supply was handed over, with all their staff, to the newly established KWASA.

Khulna city is experiencing a serious water crisis as KWASA can supply only about 22.7 MLD of water against the daily need of 94.5 MLD. At least 54% of the population collects water from unsafe sources while 75% of water used by city dwellers is supplied from underground sources. The water supply situation in the city has been further aggravated by frequent load shedding and drastic fall in underground water levels. The KWASA is trying to use the water of nearby rivers but the salinity of the water is so high that it will be costly to treat it.



Mr. Md. Abdullah

The Chief Guest Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Mayor, Khulna City Corporation expressed that they are trying their best to solve the water supply problem. In this respect, he indicated that they have taken an initiative in 1996 to bring water through a pipeline from Phultal Upazilla for the city dwellers. When the initiative was nearing successful completion and substantial amounts of funds were expended, the environmental conservationists of the community went against the initiative. Although by that time, all affected people took the compensation as their lands were being acquired for the project. However, they are now protesting and have turned against the project. The Chief Guest emphasized the necessity of solving the water crisis of the Khulna city including the crises of the southwest coastal region especially the Aila affected Dakop, Koera (Khulna) and Mongla Upazillas (Bagerhat). He indicated that he is trying his best to assist KWASA to solve the water crisis of the Khulna City and invited implementable recommendations from the experts.

A video documentary on the status of water supply in Khulna city and prospect was presented by Mr. Kausik Ahmed, Secretary, Southwest Youth Water Forum. Another paper on Pollution of Bhairab River was presented by Nausin Ahmed, Deputy Secretary of the same organization.



Mr. Tauhidul Anwar Khan

As Special Guest, Engineer Tauhidul Anwar Khan, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP) indicated that among the total water that our planet contains, 97.5% water is ocean water which is salty. Among the remaining, 1.725% is in the glaciers, snow and permafrost. 0.075% is ground water, and 0.025% is in the lakes, swamps and rivers. So it is clear that the total population of the whole world is dependent on only 1% sweet water. With population increase, the demand for water is also increasing. Upstream flow in all the river systems of Bangladesh reduces in dry months. It is necessary to increase the sweet water flow from upstream to solve the problem. Reduction of flow from upstream during the dry season cause tremendous socio-economic and environmental losses for Bangladesh. Hence, any intervention on the upstream of the rivers affects Bangladesh significantly. For addressing all the key water related challenges of the country, water available in the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna river systems is the single most crucial factor.

Dr. Tarun Kanti Sikdar recollected that it is not a long time since we had used pond water. People started to use ground water with the introduction of tube wells. It is necessary to take an integrated approach to solve the water problems of Khulna city. In his opinion the major problem is the lack of

management experience and the inexperience of staff in operating a commercial water utility is also an important factor. He also advised to create awareness among all stakeholders.



Amena Halim Bebi expressed that she was very much enriched by taking part in the seminar. She learned a lot from the environment and water experts. She is very much interested to be a part of this initiative.

Sk. Ali Akbar Tipu opined that both KCC and KWASA have negative images among the people. But now all can understand that they are trying their best to solve the problem but due to some unavoidable reasons they cannot go forward. Most of our rivers are dried up or encroached. We have to save our rivers for the sake of drinking water supply.

Amena Halim Bebi

Participant's Opinions:

Professor Saidur Rahman opined that in the modern age all tools and adequate knowledge is available to us but we are not taking advantage of that. We have been extracting ground water in an unplanned way. We have made many mistakes. We should be more conscious and aware about the judicious utilization of water resources.

Professor Dr. Nurul Islan said that all over the country we have been using ground water via tube wells. Now we are not getting sufficient water from the tube wells. To solve the problem, we have to develop surface water resources.

Lecturer Gautam Kundu said that recently a policy has been adopted on ground water use. The initiative for supplying water for the Khulna City from the Phultala is a wrong initiative.

Lecturer Jahangir Alam said that the water crisis of the Khulna city is increasing day by day. Awareness is very much important for water management. He advised that rain water should be an important component of integrated water resource management to solve the water supply problem of the city. He also recommended organizing movements for the conservation of the rivers in and around the city.

Md. Babul Hawlader expressed that political commitment is very much essential for water management issues. The level of ground water is in a dangerous situation. We should include a rain water harvesting system in constructing houses and apartments in cities. He also requested that KCC can take the initiative for conserving the existing ponds for reserving water. He also demanded that the government owned water bodies should not be filled up.

3. World Water Day Celebrations by Chittagong WASA:

Chittagong WASA marked the World Water Day by organising a seminar on the 28th of March 2011 with financial assistance from the BWP. Presided by the Managing Director, Mr. Md. Fazlullah, the keynote paper titled “Status of Water Supply in Chittagong: Problems and Prospects” was presented by Mr. Izaz Rusul, Superintending Engineer, CWASA. Dr.K.Azharul Haq, EC Member, BWP was present as a Special Guest.

The keynote paper presented in detail, the historical development of CWASA. Chittagong is the second largest city of Bangladesh with a population of around 4 million. Unlike DWASA, CWASA has only one responsibility of supplying potable water to the city dwellers. CWASA supplies 278 MLD of water which meets the demand of only 40% of the population and the rest 60% arranges their own supply from ground water. In some key performance indicators like NRW, bills, receivables CWASA has are significantly lower than those of Dhaka but in water supply coverage, performance is very poor. The major challenge is therefore to increase both supply and coverage. CWASA has also a favourable balance between surface and ground water.

The following have been identified as key challenges:

- Water pollution at raw water source
- Protection of rivers from pollution & salinity
- Arsenic contamination and unsustainable ground water development
- Delay in implementation of projects
- Lack of institutional capacity
- Reduction of non-revenue water
- Tariff structure revising
- Organizational restructuring
- Rehabilitation of pipelines
- Water quality control management
- O & M facilities management

The MD, CWASA informed that the unaccepted level of low coverage resulted from inability to construct new water treatment facilities since 1987. CWASA has been able to maintain a status quo in water supply by installing tube wells as an interim measure. He also indicated that necessary funds have now been mobilized and construction has begun in one water treatment plant with a capacity of 90 MLD. At the same time CWASA has started to prepare a master plan with the assistance of Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Dr. Azharul Haq observed that CWASA will not be able to achieve the MDG on water supply at the present rate of developments. It also faces a formidable challenge in meeting the water supply needs of the city. He urged the CWASA authorities to expedite implementation of more water supply projects and also to initiate work on sewerage and industrial waste treatment & disposal to keep the raw water sources from being polluted.