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## Water Supply and Sanitation

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The rural areas of Bangladesh suffer from lack of quality drinking water. Surface water supplies are generally polluted and groundwater, which till now had been the best source of safe drinking water, is contaminated with arsenic in many parts of the country. Heavy withdrawals of groundwater for irrigation have also lowered the water table in many areas below the effective reach of hand tube wells. Seepage of agro chemicals into shallow aquifers may also pollute water for human and animal consumption. Salinity intrusions from seawater deep into the land in the southwest are rendering groundwater unfit for consumption. Cities and urban areas too are facing the problem of receding water table due to heavy groundwater extraction. These water supply and sanitation problems have obvious implications for public health. Diarrheal diseases, arising largely from drinking unsafe water, are a leading cause of death in the rural areas. Lack of proper sanitation and drainage facilities, inadequate water supply, and insufficient health and hygiene education are the primary causes of diseases in the urban areas. Lack of access to safe water supply in the rural areas is a special hardship for women who have to carry water over long distances, with significant impact on their health and productivity.

**To address these problems, it is the policy of the Government to:**

- a. Facilitate availability of safe and affordable drinking water supplies through various means, including rainwater harvesting and conservation.
- b. Preserve natural depressions and water bodies in major urban areas for recharge of underground aquifers and rainwater management.
- c. Mandate relevant public water and sewerage institutions to provide necessary drainage and sanitation, including treatment of domestic wastewater and sewage and replacement of open drains and construction of sewers, in the interest of public health.
- d. Empower, and hold responsible, municipalities and urban water and sewerage institutions to regulate the use of water for preventing wastage and pollution by human action.

Mandate local governments to create awareness among the people in checking water pollution and wastage.