



PHOTO: STAR

Blackish polluted water of the Buriganga washes ashore near the Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge. Mindless flushing of industrial waste into the river and trickling flow have turned the river toxic.

## Pollution chokes Buriganga

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Massive toxicity caused by dumping of more than 35,000 cubic metres of untreated industrial wastes every day has turned the Buriganga water black and stinking, more than ever before.

Marine life in the river vanished long ago. Now, thousands of people travelling every day and residents on its banks are exposed to serious health hazard. Many residents complained of irritation in eyes and skin.

Experts and local people said the pollution worsened over the last one-month because the natural

tides have become 'dead slow'. This has turned the river into a virtual pit, preventing toxicity from flowing downstream.

A leading hydrographer said tide has stopped because the river basin is filled up with sedimentation and wastes. Encroachment on both sides has also played a major role in this regard.

"The tidal range from the sea is badly obstructed by the encroachments, massive sedimentation and dumping of all sorts of waste," said the hydrographer requesting not to be named. Immediate steps should be taken to dredge the river and to stop dumping of wastes, he said.

Every day the Buriganga receives about 20,000 cubic metres of toxic wastes from Hazaribagh tanneries, 15,000 cubic metres of other untreated wastes and 80 per cent of the entire sewage generated in the city of over ten million people.

Besides, thousands of factories along the river dump untreated liquid and solid wastes.

All along the river, from Shoalmachi in the west up to miles downstream from Sadarghat, the river water looks black and it stinks.

At Swarighat yesterday, commuters and local traders said they never before witnessed such contamination in the river.

At Sadarghat, when big passenger launches started their engines and whirled the water with propellers, the foul odour became so unbearable that everyone around had to press handkerchiefs on their noses.

But people living along the banks or using the river every day said they were confused about the cause of such unusual contamination. Boatmen said the tides are so slow for about a month that the wastes can not flow downstream.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) officials also said the tide has become

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## NAM urges US to give peace a chance

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Leaders of the developing world told the United States yesterday to give peace a chance in Iraq and UN Security Council members among them said they were in no rush to back a resolution that could lead to war.

But a missile launch by member North Korea cast a shadow over the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Malaysia, complicating the task of nations trying to present a united front and end a crisis over the North's suspected

nuclear programme.

Iraq told the 115 other members it was doing its utmost to comply with UN weapons inspections. Its officials voiced delight at a succession of speeches denouncing war by leaders of a bloc that accounts for almost two-thirds of the United Nations.

After Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad opened the summit on Monday with a strong anti-war message, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe upped the rhetoric on the second and final day of the three-yearly NAM

Summit.

Mugabe, one of the West's biggest bogeymen, described US President George W Bush as a "big brother" proliferating arms and Britain's Tony Blair as a neo-colonialist.

"Iraq might have developed or desired to develop arms of mass destruction," he said. "But the United States has massive arms of that magnitude. Why can't they demonstrate what Iraq should (do) by destroying their own massive heaps first?"

Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan welcomed the NAM position. "International support and sympathy with Iraq was a decisive element in exposing American colonialist intentions," he told the gathering.

"We express our gratitude to all for what NAM has done to oppose the aggressive intentions by the US against Iraq," said the cigar-chomping Iraqi official.

Support came from an expected quarter when Syria said it would

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## 'Solve Iraq crisis peacefully'

BSS, Kuala Lumpur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday called for peaceful solution to Iraq crisis as per the UN Security Council resolution.

The two South Asian leaders expressed the views during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit at Putra World Trade Centre here.

The two-day summit of the 116-nation grouping of developing countries ended yesterday.

Khaleda also held bilateral meetings with Cuban President Fidel Castro, Vietnam President Tran Duc Luong and Nepalese Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Malaysian Minister for Women and Family Development D

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: AFP

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (R) listens to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

## Mission damage control

Bangladesh play New Zealand today



PHOTO: AFP

An ecstatic Wasim Akram hugs wicketkeeper Rashid Latif after claiming his 500th one-day international wicket in yesterday's World Cup match against the Netherlands.

AL-AMIN from Kimberley

Damage control will be Bangladesh's priority when they face New Zealand in their penultimate World Cup Pool B match at the De Beers Diamond Oval today.

"We don't really care about the result tomorrow, we just want to play well and minimise the margin of defeat," said skipper Khaled Mashud.

After going down to Canada in their opening match, the Tigers have been soundly beaten in each of their other games, with the exception of their clash with West Indies which was washed out by rain when they were facing another defeat.

Bangladesh are at the bottom of the standings with two points. New Zealand, after two wins in four outings, are joint fourth with South Africa on eight points.

In an effort to bolster the team's batting, which has failed miserably with scores of 120, 124, 108 against Canada, Sri Lanka and South Africa, four changes have been made to the squad.

Akram Khan, the former national captain, has been picked along with Habibul Bashar, Taposh Baishya and Hannan Sarkar.

It will be Akram's first match since he came as a replacement for the injured paceman Mashrafebin-Mortuza.

The big right-hander's last one-day international was against Zimbabwe in 2001 at Bulawayo.

Akram will have fond memories

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Air force training plane crashes at Kurmitola

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A training aircraft of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) crashed due to 'mechanical fault' on Kutmitola airfield during takeoff at Zia International

### Clarification

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain has said he did not dismiss any allegation of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) wrongdoing in dredger procurement bids.

"I did not dismiss any allegations," he said in a clarification to The Daily Star report captioned "Tender tampering puts dredger aid on the line" (February 25, 2003).

"Rather, I said the issue has not come to a stage where the ministry can check. Parties concerned came

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Airport.

However, no casualties were reported and the two pilots aboard ejected.

A handout of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) claimed that accident occurred due to 'mechanical fault' and a high-powered investigation committee has been formed to probe the incident.

The FT-7 (fighter training-7) aircraft was about to take off on a routine training at about 4:00pm.

Squadron Leader Ahsanul Kabir and Flight Lieutenant AMM Shamsuzzaman, the pilots, narrowly escaped, one official source said.

The civil aviation authorities could not be reached for their comments.

Meanwhile, journalists were not allowed to go to the spot. Airport police also failed to give any details.

## Countdown at UN as rift among big powers deepens

REUTERS, United Nations

With the big powers split on military action against Iraq, the United States and Britain scrambled for UN votes yesterday as France, Russia and Germany sought to stymie a push toward war.

The division became acute after Washington, London and Madrid sought UN Security Council authorisation for warfare by introducing a new draft resolution on Monday declaring that Iraq had squandered its "final opportunity" to disarm.

The draft, presented by Britain's UN ambassador, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, recalled November 8 resolution 1441 that warned Iraq of "serious consequences" if it failed to disclose and rid itself of weapons of mass destruction.

But the new resolution's operative paragraph was simple, saying the Security Council "decides that Iraq has failed to take the final

opportunity afforded it in resolution 1441".

The action opened an intensive period of diplomacy. France and Germany came out strongly against the draft and a shift to a "logic of war", circulating a rival proposal

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Bombs found at Charmonai pir's mehfil

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Sixteen bombs were found at an annual mehfil (religious meet) of the Pir of Charmonai yesterday evening.

Local police found four bombs near the police camp adjacent to the mehfil site in Charmonai at about 7:30pm. Then they started searching

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Corruption, strike keep ships away from Mongla port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Operational inefficiency, corruption and frequent labour strikes have forced ships to keep away from Mongla port.

The activities at the port have come to a total halt, with ships deciding to abandon it. No sea-going vessel entered the port in the last one week. MV 'Sektar', carrying Panama flag, was the last ship that left the port Friday noon.

Termining the situation unprecedented, Mongla Port Authority (MPA) officials said it was the first time that cargo handling had come to a halt for such a long time at the port.

A top official of the MPA blamed the stevedores and dock workers for making the port non-functional.

"Frequent labour unrest, strikes and insecurity are the reasons behind things turning so bad," said an official.

Over three thousand metric tonnes

of imported wheat was stolen from different ships at the port during the last two years. Importers blamed the stevedores and the port managers for the loss of the foodgrains.

According to sources, dock workers are yet to be paid against outstanding bills amounting to nearly Tk 4 crore. Foodgrain importers said there was a possibility that the port would be declared an 'exclusion zone' in near future, as foreign ships were reluctant to use it.

More than 2000 port workers have been rendered jobless by the latest crisis.

The port remained inactive for the first time on January 11 owing to the absence of ships. During that time there was no work for 36 hours. A similar situation arose on January 21, and it continued for two days.