

Frantic effort to save Chandpur

MORSHED ALI KHAN, back from Chandpur

Water Development Board (WDB) is dumping over two and a half lakh concrete slabs in the confluence of Meghna and Dakatia rivers to save Chandpur town from the onslaught of fierce turbulence at the onset of monsoon.

During the three consecutive years, WDB dumped over 9 lakh concrete slabs a year in the confluence, WDB officials said, adding that such a slab weighing 300kg costs Tk 350.

The WDB's Tk 108 crore Chandpur Town Protection Project is mainly concentrated on the Mulehead, a 60-metre wide stretch of land running into the Meghna and believed by the experts to be vital for the protection of this river port town.

The WDB engineers said the depth of the Meghna at the Dakatia confluence is over 250 feet, which makes it the deepest point of any river in the country. Turbulence at the 250 feet deep confluence is so fierce during the monsoon that over

half a dozen passenger vessels that sank there over the last decade could never be traced. As a precautionary step at the onset of the rainy season, the BIWTA in Chandpur has shifted its port facilities to a safer place, which is about a kilometre away from the notorious spot.

As in previous years, this year's monsoon brings enormous threat to the Chandpur Mulehead as the river point assumes the fiercest look with enormous whirlpools and turbulence during this time.

The area at the confluence poses a great challenge for the experts every year, Chandpur WDB Engineer Anwar Hossain said.

"We have to protect the 60 metre wide Mulehead if we want to save Chandpur town and many other villages downstream," the engineer said, adding that by repeatedly strengthening the Mulehead they are ensuring that the ferocity of the river is diverted away from the densely populated localities in Chandpur and in the downstream.

"If there is a breach in the Mulehead, Puran Bazar will disappear within a week and then the entire region in the downstream will be exposed to extreme erosion," he said.

Meanwhile, most people in Chandpur including workers in the river transport sector and at the country's largest hilsa wholesale market remain superstitious about the protection of the Mulehead. They believe it is Khwaz Khizir, 'prophet-in-charge' of waters, who is rather protecting the Mulehead and consequently the livelihood of millions in the region. They have even built a complex after the prophet's name on the Mulehead that comprises mosques and quarters for followers, who regularly flock the site for prayers.

The belief among the people is so strong that several attempts to remove the concrete structures from the Mulehead were foiled, said WDB official Mohammad Abu Zaher.



PHOTO: STAR

Water Development Board workers pile sandbags to reinforce an embankment along the River Padma at Hasail Bazar in Munshiganj to prevent land erosion.

HC stays case against Bulu

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) has stayed the proceedings of a criminal case against MNH Bulu, director of Boishakhi TV Channel, pending with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court.

Passing the stay order upon a petition on Thursday, a High Court bench issued a rule, asking the government and Hosne Ara Naznin, the estranged wife of Bulu, to explain why the case should not be quashed.

Naznin had filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on May 30, accusing Bulu of torturing her for Tk 2 crore in dowry.

Barrister A Hasib appeared for the petitioner, a press release said.



PHOTO: STAR

Noted academic Dr Jamal Nazrul Islam addresses a dialogue on 'National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development' at a local hotel in Chittagong yesterday.

Nine including Pakistanis held as suspected militants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Police arrested nine people, including two Pakistani citizens, in Jhalakathi on Friday night suspecting their link to militancy.

The detained, who claimed to be members of 'Dawate Islami' (Tablig and Dawat) and engaged in religious preaching, were sent to Jhalakathi District Jail.

They are Golam Sabbir of Sargoda in Punjab, Pakistan, Belal Afsar, a Pakistani citizen residing in Dhaka, Ilias Hossain and Nurul Absar of Chittagong, Abdul Gani of Barguna, Ilias Akhtar of Rangamati.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Israeli leader rejects Palestinian truce

Tanks pulled out of N Gaza town

AP, Gaza City

The Hamas-led Palestinian government called for a ceasefire in its violent two-week standoff with Israel but stopped short yesterday of offering to release an Israeli soldier held by Hamas militants. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected the proposal by Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. Olmert will not agree to a truce until Hamas releases the soldier, officials in Olmert's office said.

Earlier, an Israeli Cabinet minister said Israel hopes the fighting, which has killed more than 40 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier, eventually will lead to a broader ceasefire deal.

In fighting Saturday, Israeli troops exchanged fire with Palestinian gunmen, and army bulldozers searched for militants' tunnels near Gaza City. In northern Gaza, tanks pulled out of the town of Beit Lahiya, leaving a wide swath of destruction after trying to carve out a buffer zone against rockets there.

Woman killed after rape in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man allegedly raped and strangled his colleague, an employee at a hospital in Uttara in the capital, on Friday night for spurning his marriage proposal.

The victim was identified as Shahanaj Akhter Rina, 19, an assistant in the Ultra-sonogram section of Greenland Hospital. Rina resided at Cherag Ali in Tongi.

Following a call from the hospital authorities, police around 9:45pm on Friday night recovered her body at Ultra-sonogram section of the hospital on first floor.

Rina's relatives, hospital authorities and police suspect Likhon Mahmud, also an assistant of the same section, might have committed the crime and fled the hospital.

Police in the inquest report stated that the killer might have raped Rina before strangling her to death.

Her body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy. Her body bore marks of strangulation in the neck and bruises on her cheek and right

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

3 US soldiers killed in Iraqi battle

Marines covered up Iraqi civilian killing

AFP, Baghdad

Three US soldiers were killed in fighting in Al-Anbar yesterday amid reports that senior military officers could stand accused of negligence in a probe into the alleged killing of 24 Iraqi civilians by US marines in the western province.

The US military said it lost three soldiers in Al-Anbar due to "enemy action" which pushed the military's losses in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion to 2,543, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

Anbar province remains an active battleground in the fight

against the insurgency despite several US-led operations in the area since 2004.

The New York Times meanwhile reported Saturday that Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, the number two commander of US troops in Iraq, had faulted a number of officers for "dereliction of duties" during the probe of the alleged killings of two dozen Iraqis in the town of Haditha.

The report, quoting an unnamed Defence Department official, said Chiarelli concluded that in the deaths, including those

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Tigers kill 2 women in Sundarbans

BSS, Satkhira

Tigers killed two women in Golakhali Mathabhanga and Lotakhali areas in the Sundarbans under Shyamnagar upazila on Thursday and Friday, family sources said.

The dead were identified as Ayesha Khatun, 40, wife of late Kawsar Ali of village Jatindranagar and Rebeya Khatun, 42, wife of Akkas Ali of village Tengrakhal under the upazila.

The sources said a tiger attacked Ayesha while she was fishing in Golakhali Mathabhanga canal on Thursday.

Rabeya came under attack by a man-eating tiger, as was collecting fish fry in Lotakhali canal on Friday. The tigers took the bodies into the deep forest. Family members with the help of forest guards recovered the bodies yesterday.

Ayesha's husband was also killed by a tiger in the same area 12 years ago.

Clarification

Asia Energy officials have given a clarification on a report published in The Daily Star on July 4 under the headline "25 lakh trees face axe for Phulbari mine." The report says "Phulbari coal mine will also require relocating around 4,70,000 people including 50,000 indigenous ones of about 100 villages, and part of Phulbari town." The Asia Energy officials in Dinajpur claimed that at least 50,000 people including 2,000 indigenous ones would be relocated from the mine area.

Prayer Timing		
July 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-17	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation