

Plagued by pollution

75 Savar industries dump untreated liquid waste in water bodies; 2 lakh people in 12 villages face serious health risks

PINAKI ROY and SURANJIT DEBNATH

About 2 lakh people of 12 villages around the Savar Export Processing Zone (EPZ) face serious health risks due to tremendous pollution, as industries here dump their untreated liquid waste into surrounding water bodies, ignoring the government's environmental law.

Two decades ago, the villagers of this area used local water bodies, such as the Dholai beel, for drinking, cleaning and irrigation purposes. Today, however, that water has turned pitch-black, thoroughly poisoned from the liquid waste of the industries.

At present, about 75 different industries are freely discharging their untreated waste into the Dholai beel, Bongshi river and Dholai canal in Savar. These industries include electric supplies and electronics, footwear and leather



Pitch-black untreated liquid waste from Savar EPZ gushes into Dholai Beel, flowing eventually into the Bangshi river, putting at least 2 lakh people of a dozen nearby villages at serious health hazards.

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Foreign currency worth Tk 1.57cr seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) Wednesday night seized foreign currencies worth about Tk 1.57 crore hidden in the luggage of an outgoing passenger.

Azad Mahmud, a passenger of Singapore Airlines flight SQ-435, was arrested for the attempt to smuggle foreign currency to Singapore.

Customs officials said they challenged Azad after being suspicious about his movement when he was entering the boarding bridge at 10:00pm.

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Notice

The Daily Star publishes the full report of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association Enquiry Committee, which probed the August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League public meeting, on page 4 in today's issue.

Faulty launches sail on bribery

Many owners build vessels first, then get designs approved

RAFIQ HASAN

Instead of building a launch based on government-approved design, a section of launch owners builds their vessels first and then secures approval for the design through allegedly underhanded dealing, said sources.

Sources at the Department of Shipping said that faulty designs as well as deviation from approved design account for the frequency of ferry disasters.

"The practice of getting approval of the design before construction of a vessel in our country is hard to find," a high official of the Department of Shipping said on condition of anonymity. Usually the design is drawn and submitted for approval once the ship is built, he said, adding that a section of owners manages to get the designs

approved at a backdate with the connivance of the government's naval architects, supervisors, and surveyors.

The government-assembled panel of naval architects approves the design of a passenger vessel too quickly to take every aspect of the ship into consideration, said sources.

Besides, hardly any of the government-appointed architects visits the spot while a ship is being built based on an approved design. Many launch owners take advantage of this situation to deviate from the original designs, he added.

A recent investigation by The Daily Star has found that only a few architects are engaged in the job of approving the designs of motor launches. Only five architects approved designs of more than 75 percent of 142 vessels registered

with the government in a one-and-a-half-year period.

ANM Badrul Alam, one of those five architects, had alone approved designs of as many as 57 motor launches, which were registered between January 2003 and June 2004.

A few architects managed to approve so many vessels in such a short period because the vessels were built long before the designs were approved, he said.

According to naval architects, it is impossible for an architect to carefully examine so many designs in such a short space of time.

Recently, an influential leader of Bangladesh Launch Owners Association (BLOA) built a vessel that was not based on a government-approved design. The vessel plied on trial during the last Eid-ul-

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Poor governance impedes growth of Bangladesh

Says US official

UNB, Dhaka

Donald Camp, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for South Asia, has said Bangladesh's significant problems with corruption, increase in violent political attacks, poor governance and hartal threaten democratic stability and impede economic growth in the country.

Presenting the Bush administration's request for foreign assistance funding for South Asia in 2006 fiscal year, Camp said the US would have a crucial opportunity to assist the

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6 realtors, others grab 200-acre Dhaka land

JS body discusses reports by 3 govt offices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six housing companies, Bangladesh Navy co-operative housing society and five individuals have grabbed about 200 acres of public land in suburban Savar, Gazipur and Kaliakair, alleged three government offices.

The parliamentary standing committee on land ministry in a meeting yesterday discussed the

reports submitted by Dhaka Forest Division, Board of Land Reforms and Savar land office, accusing them of grabbing forest and public lands as well as those under the ward of the court, sources said.

According to reports, the navy housing society gobbled 6.45 acres of forestland in Savar, where the local assistant land commissioner said, the society is in possession of 39.58 acres of land.

The Board of Land Reforms in its report alleged realtor Amin Mohammad Foundation felled some 500 trees before seizing about 50 acres of land that has been a ward of the court in Savar. The foundation reportedly also grabbed 20.57 acres of public land in Savar and 96 acres of forestland in Dhaka district.

The Forest Division report accused Partex Real Estate Ltd

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Chief whip's son sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Akhter Hamid alias Paban, son of Chief Whip Khondoker Delwar Hossain, who was arrested in connection with an attempt-to-murder case, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after rejection of his bail petition yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar passed the order when Paban was produced before the court on completion of a one-day remand.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Paban before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court at about 1:30pm with a forwarding report.

In the report, DB Inspector Ruhul

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Galib's top aides brought to Dhaka

Investigators check his statements, records; RU ponders his suspension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the intelligence agencies now grilling militant kingpin Muhammad Asadullah Al Galib in the joint interrogation cell (JIC) are examining his statements and checking the records of the people he used to meet in order to confirm his involvement in militancy.

Meanwhile, three of Galib's associates -- his second-in-command and Ahle Hadith Andolon

Bangladesh (Ahab) Nayeb-e-Amir Shaikh Abdus Samad Salafi, Ahab General Secretary Moulana Nurul Islam and Organising Secretary ASM Azzulhah -- were brought to Dhaka yesterday afternoon from Gopalganj for quizzing by JIC.

In other developments, the documents questioning Galib's tour of India have gone missing from the register office of Rajshahi University (RU), while the university authority

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CHUADANGA RAPE Charges pressed against 5 cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishinia

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) pressed charges against five out of 14 police personnel accused in a much talked about gang rape case in Chuadanga.

Naba Kumar Das, assistant police superintendent (ASP) of CID, submitted the charge sheet on February 28 to a Chuadanga magistrate court after 30 days of investigation.

The accused police are camp in-charge Kuddus, Habilaar Rokunuddin, constables Harun, Sakil and Hrunur Rashid. Nine other accused were exempted from the charge.

According to the charge sheet,

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ADP projects get new rules Mar 27

Preparatory time halved, power of planning minister and line ministries raised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new guideline aimed at speeding and easing up development project implementation comes into force on March 27, cutting down the preparatory time by half.

The new precept also enhances much the planning minister's authority in approving development projects and that of the line ministries in technical assistance projects.

The government and the development partners have prepared the guideline to facilitate quick and easy formulation, approval and implementation of the projects under the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

From March 27 on, 'development project pro forma' will replace 'project concept paper' and 'project paper'. The pro forma will have two chapters instead of eight and 34

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