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Dying rivers deliver deluge blow

PINAKI ROY

Flooding recurs every year with spiralling ferocity, as no fewer than 25 of the 230 rivers in the country are either dead or dying out, with many more dozens drying up and reduced to water pockets, river experts say.

Natural causes paired up with indiscriminate and ill-planned human interventions have been strangling the rivers, lifelines for many a towns and villages. Agriculture, transportation, trade and commerce, socio-economic development, environment and

lifestyle of the localities are also changing accordingly.

"Excessive siltation has been cutting down the water-bearing capacity of the rivers, which is why they now burst the

banks more frequently and with less water flow than they did previously," notes Flood Control and Information Centre Director Dr. Selim Bhuiyan. "So we suggest the government take mea-

sures to maintain navigability of rivers and stop encroachment on riverbeds."

RIVERS IN DEATH THROES

Water Development Board (WDB) officials warn all the 25 rivers, parts of which have already turned into stagnant waters, will dry up completely in a few years. Farmers now cultivate crops in the dry riverbeds during the dry season of winter and spring. They also breed fish in the stagnating river areas.

The WDB says these 25 vulnerable rivers once were connected with the three major river systems of the

25 rivers dead or half-dead

Route length shrinks to 3,800km from 24,000km

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



A CHOKED CITY ARTERY: Once a mighty river and the prime lifeline for the capital, the Buriganga has now reduced to a mere canal, as was seen at Basila yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Cochin ODI today

REUTERS, Cochin

In-form Pakistan batsman Younis Khan will miss Saturday's opening game of a six-match one-day series against India due to a fever, captain Inzamam-ul-Haq has said.

Bangladesh Television will telecast the match live from 9.30 am

(BST).

"Younis is still very weak. It will be difficult for him to play tomorrow," Inzamam told reporters on Friday.

Vice-captain Younis was in great touch in the test series, hitting a career-best 267 to help Pakistan clinch victory in the third and final

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Boiler explosion kills 2 in Jhalakathi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two people were killed and five others injured seriously in a boiler explosion at a rice mill at Char Indrapasha under Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi district in the early hours yesterday.

The dead are Abdul Majed, 45, driver of the mill, and Abdur Rahman, 40, labourer.

Police and fire fighters said the boiler of Howlader Auto Rice Mill exploded with a big bang at about 1:15am, damaging the tin-roofed

mill and the adjacent house of the mill owner.

On information, fire fighters from Jhalakathi district headquarters reached the spot and extinguished the fire that was caused by the explosion. They rescued the injured with the help of the locals.

The injured are owner of the mill Mohammad Yunus Howlader, 45, his wife Rizia Begum, 40, their son Al Amin, 28, daughter Moyna, 4, and employee Musa, 35.

They are undergoing treatment

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Wolfowitz named WB chief despite misgivings

AFP, Washington

The World Bank Thursday named Paul Wolfowitz its next president despite misgivings about the deputy US defence secretary's "neoconservative" ideology and enthusiastic promotion of the war in Iraq.

The World Bank board, which is dominated by the United States, Europe and Japan, unanimously agreed on the controversial figure as the successor to James Wolfensohn, 71.

Wolfowitz, 61, a former ambassador to Indonesia and State Department official, vowed to uphold the bank's "noble mission" of eradicating poverty when he replaces Wolfensohn on June 1.

But while campaigners kept up a barrage of objections over his

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Chinese premier praises Dhaka's achievements

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao has congratulated the people of Bangladesh for the "enormous achievements" they made in their "unrelenting efforts for independence and national development."

In a message on the eve of his April 7-8 official visit to Bangladesh, he extended cordial greetings and good wishes to the friendly Bangladeshi government and people.

Recalling Bangladesh's long history and splendid culture, the Chinese premier said that China and Bangladesh are traditionally good neighbours. "Our two peoples have been engaged in friendly exchanges since ancient times, just like the Yalu Tsangpo River and the Brahmaputra River sharing the same distant source and flowing endlessly."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

2-yr boy rescued, abductor arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday rescued the two-year-old boy, who was kidnapped from their Nazimuddin Road house in the city on Wednesday.

At about 8:30pm police raided an under construction building at Eskaton Road, where the abductor, Halim, was hiding the abducted baby Ashiq Ahmed Nithil.

Police rescued the baby and arrested Halim.

Halim, a friend of Ashiq's uncle Anwar Hossain Anu, took the baby out of their house on Wednesday evening in the name of buying him chocolate.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Pope hovers near death

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope John Paul neared death yesterday as his health suddenly worsened, drawing anguished prayers from Catholics around the world reluctant to accept his historic pontificate was near its end.

The Vatican said the 84-year-old Pontiff's breathing became shallow and his blood pressure had dropped

dangerously low. He also lost consciousness. But it denied Italian media reports that he had died.

Italian media gave contradictory reports about Pope's vital signs yesterday, first saying his heart and brain activity had stopped and then reporting this was not true.

The first reports, picked up by the state broadcaster RAI, said his

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Quacks cripple hundreds

Wrong treatment often leads to amputation

SHAHEEN MOLLAH AND AKBAR HOSSAIN

Hundreds of people, especially children, across the country lose their limbs and become crippled due to wrong treatment by traditional healers of bone injuries.

In rural areas, patients and their relatives go to such quacks with little knowledge of orthopaedics because they find it is less expensive, orthopaedic specialists say.

Taking advantage of this, these quacks deceive the patients in the name of treatment that in many cases leads to amputation of their limbs.

A section of staff at government hospitals and private clinics also

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A girl of eight with gangrene in her right leg at the DMCH following 'treatment' by a quack. The leg had to be amputated.

PHOTO: STAR

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