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Nasa probe confirms water on Mars

Nasa scientists said Thursday the Phoenix lander exploring Mars had confirmed water on the planet after analysis of a soil sample from the Red Planet's surface.

The discovery was made after the lander's robotic arm delivered a sample this week to an instrument onboard the lander that identifies vapours through heating samples.

"We have water," said William Boynton of the University of Arizona, lead scientist for the lander's "oven" Thermal and Evolved-Gas Analyzer, or TEGA.

"We've seen evidence for this water ice before in observations by the Mars Odyssey orbiter and in disappearing chunks observed by Phoenix last month, but this is the first time Martian water has been touched and tasted."

Earlier, Nasa officials said the Phoenix's mission had been extended until the end of September, describing its progress so far as "very successful."

Michael Meyer, chief scientist of Nasa's Mars Exploration Programme, told reporters that the lander's minimum objectives had been achieved and that "full mission success" was expected.

Khoka suggests 100-yr master plan for Dhaka

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka during a meeting yesterday underscored the need for formulating a 100-year-long master plan to keep the capital habitable.

He also suggested that a separate independent authority be formed, comprised of environmentalists and experts concerned, to save the rivers around Dhaka as they are dying.

Khoka was presiding over a meeting arranged to celebrate 144 years of the DCC at Osmani Auditorium. He said if a 100-year-long master plan is not taken immediately, Dhaka will become an uninhabitable city.

Khoka also underscored the need for strengthening the family planning activities in the country.

"The government should do an assessment on how many people will be able to live in the country. According to that assessment, birth control activities have to be conducted and the government should do it even if it has to reduce spending on some of its development activities," he said.

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal speaking as the chief guest at the meeting said the DCC should take initiatives to free the parks from land grabbers.

Mentioning that some private waste-management companies are doing better than the DCC at a

BDR fair price outlets for Ramadan to open Aug 15

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will start selling Ramadan items from August 15 through its fair price outlets ahead of Ramadan.

This year BDR will set up over 200 fair price outlets across the country, including 100 in the capital, under its "Operation Dal-Bhat" Programme to keep the prices of essentials within the purchasing capacity of common people in the holy month.

Currently, BDR has 65 fair price outlets in the city and the number will rise to 100 by the middle of August.

BDR sources said supply of daily necessities, particularly the Ramadan items, will be ensured through its outlets, as the city dwellers did not get some Ramadan items like date (khejur).

Prayer Timing August 2

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Massive plan to enact, implement RIA

Draft awaits final approval soon

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The Ministry of Information chalked out a massive plan for enacting and implementing the proposed Right to Information Act (RIA), a modified draft of which now awaits the law adviser's nod.

Government officials said the law ministry might send a draft of the ordinance to the information ministry some time next week for the final approval of the council of advisers, for promulgating it sooner than later.

Since the act's promulgation, 90 days will be given to the government to set the ground and to equip all its offices down to the upazila level so information can be made available from the 90th day of RIA's promulgation. All ministries will also be engaged in the process to meet the deadline.

"We desperately need participation and cooperation of the ministries for successful launching of the Right to Information Act," Information Secretary Jamil Osman told The Daily Star in his office on Thursday.

Terming the task a huge challenge, he said his ministry however took comprehensive preparations for completing within the deadline all tasks ranging from formation of the proposed Information Commission to making the entire government machinery ready to provide information.

Sources in the information and law ministries said each ministry and thousands of departments and divisions under those will be considered separate units, each of which will have a designated officer who will be responsible for providing the information sought.

Every ministry will have a coordinating agency or an information desk, so that required information can be given to seekers within the stipulated time.

According to the proposed provisions of the act, information has to be provided within 20 days of application and the applicant must be informed within 10 days of application if any office is unable to provide information.



A family moves its entire house on a boat at Charnalshapara in Sirajganj yesterday as changing course of a channel of the Jamuna is devouring several chars near the Jamuna Bridge.

DEVASTATING EROSION IN SIRAJGANJ

Jamuna turns furious as shoals hinder its flow

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, From Sirajganj

Obstruction to smooth flow of the Jamuna in its main channel caused by many shoals on both sides of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge is the main cause of devastating erosion now going at many points in Sirajganj town and its adjacent areas.

Flow of the mighty river has taken a turn to the town about four km upstream of the bridge due to the shoals, devouring lands and hundreds of homesteads.

Experts on rivers are of the view that it is not possible to check erosion of the river at turning points of its water flow unless the shoals are removed. In such a situation, proper dredging of the river is a must to ensure its unhindered flow at and near the bridge to save the district town, they say.

The authorities however do not appear responsive to this.

Water Development Board officials said about 300 houses and establishments in Charnalshapara, Motinshahabergat, Malshapara, Puthiabari and Bearaghat areas were devoured by the Jamuna in the last one week.

They said as part of emergency measures, the WDB is dumping sand bags and brickbats along the erosion-affected river bank near the town.

Locals alleged they are attributing the deluge to some fake causes.

Meanwhile, demanding urgent steps to stop erosion, about 2,000 people including women and children of the erosion-hit areas brought out a procession in the town and barricaded a road near new Dhaka road intersection recently.



Rapid Action Battalion personnel show nine firearms and ammunition recovered from a pond in Borhan in Tongi yesterday.

CRIMES, TRAFFIC SNARLS

DMP to install 59 CCTVs, 32 digital message boards

KAILASH SARKAR

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is going to install 59 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and 32 digital message boards at strategic city points to monitor and control crimes and ease traffic snarls.

The measures under the Command, Control and Communication System (C3S) will be operational in November.

Besides, the police headquarters and different police departments like Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB), Detective Branch (DB), Highway Police and Railway Police, city police stations, Rab, judge courts and chief metropolitan magistrate courts will come under e-policing network by next month.

It would allow the networked offices to share data.

The C3S and e-policing projects will be implemented at a cost of Tk 5.5 crore. A separate department, staffed by tech-savvy police officials, would run them.

The 59 CCTV cameras will be installed at 11 entrance and exit points and other important spots like Sonargaon Crossing, Farmgate, Shapla Chattar, Bangladesh Bank, Zero Point, Baitul Mukarram, Paltan Maidan, Maghbazar and Mohakhali.

The digital message boards will inform drivers about traffic movements and guide them to congestion-free roads. Important points like Farmgate, Mohakhali, Shahbagh, Paltan, Gulistan, Jatrabari, Sayedabad, Shyamoli will display them.

The C3S staffers will be provided with sophisticated wireless equipment.

Two outlaws killed in 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two underground operatives were killed during a "shootout" between their cohorts and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Mirzapur village under Atrai upazila of Naogaon district early yesterday.

The outlaws were identified as Naser Ali, 55, of Atrai village and Saiful Islam Palowan alias Kajol, 28, of Jamgram village under Atrai upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-5, Rajshahi, raided a bush at Mirzapur where Naser, Kajol and some of their comrades were holding a secret meeting at around 3:30am.

Sensing the presence of the Rab men, the outlaws opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Rab sources said Naser and Kajol received bullets during the shootout that continued for about 15 minutes, while their accomplices managed to flee.

The bullet-hit outlaws were taken to Atrai Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared them dead.

Tata's pullout won't affect FDI: Azizul

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the Tata Group's decision not to go ahead with its \$3 billion investment plan in Bangladesh is unlikely to affect foreign direct investment in other sectors of the country.

"I hope, there'll be no adverse impact on the investment," he told reporters after a function at National Museum.

Tata sought guaranteed gas supply to its planned projects for a 20-year period from Bangladesh, which itself is suffering from lack of smooth supply of gas due to sharp rise in domestic demand.

The Indian industrial giant on Thursday said it would not pursue its long-awaited \$3 billion investment plan in Bangladesh, as the country would not be in a position, in the foreseeable future, to grant the projects the natural gas commitment.

Rab recovers arms, ammo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered nine different types of firearms and 99 bullets from a pond in Borhan area under Tongi Police Station.

The firearms include three foreign made revolvers, four shotguns, one 22 bore rifle and a one-barrel gun with 99 bullets.

Officials of Rab-1 said the firearms belonged to Prince Khan, a top terror in Tongi area who was killed in a gunfight with Rab personnel on May 3 at Tongi.

Body burnt, eyes damaged, Parul pays for no fault



Parul, a victim of acid attack, lies in pain at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital recently.

SHAMIM ASHRAF and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Parul Begum had nothing to do with the enmity between her husband and some local criminals but she is the one paying the price. She has 25 percent of her body burnt with acid and the doctors are trying desperately to save her eyesight.

Her four-year-old granddaughter Happy was also burnt when the perpetrators hurled acid on them as they were sleeping in the early hours of July 4.

"Her [Parul's] eyes have been severely damaged. We are trying to save her eyesight," said Samanta Lal Sen, project director of Burn and Plastic Surgery

Kuwait to be asked to ensure payment to deported workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will ask Kuwait to ensure that employers there remit arrears to the Bangladeshi workers now being deported for allegedly inciting or taking part in strikes, an official yesterday said.

"We'll hold meeting with Kuwaiti authorities and ask them how they'd arrange the payment of the outstanding salaries to the deported workers," Shahriar Kader Siddiky, labour counsellor at Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait, told The Daily Star.

He said the deportees left behind their salaries and belongings in the Gulf state.

Meanwhile, at least 63 workers arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning on board two Kuwait Airways and Qatar Airways flights. With them, the number of deportees from Kuwait in the last three days stands at 280.

Kuwait is sending the workers back home after thousands of Asian workers went on strike in protest at low wage, poor work conditions and exploitations by their employers.

Many of the deportees, however, said they were not involved in the demonstrations in any way, but that Kuwait police broke into their camps out of the blue, beat them up and hopped them on board Dhaka-bound flights.

When asked about this, Shahriar Siddiky said the embassy asked the Kuwaiti authorities to make sure that no innocent workers are deported.

"Of the around 1000 arrestees, 250 are innocent," he said.

Radar station roof collapse kills labourer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A child labourer was killed and two others were injured when the roof of an old building of Kalapara Radar Station collapsed on them yesterday morning.

The dead is Abdul Gaffar, 12 of Kalapara town while the injured are Gaffar's father Anwar Hossain, 45, and Nizam Uddin, 35.

Anwar and Nizam were admitted to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex. Later, Anwar was shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (BSMCH) as his condition deteriorated.

Witnesses said the roof of dilapidated generator building collapsed at around 9:00am when more than ten labourers were demolishing it.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and recovered Gaffar's body. They also rescued the injured and sent them to the health complex.

Slow pace of FP threat to attaining 5th MDG

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The on-going slow pace of family planning programme has made it hard to attain the fifth Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which aims at reducing the (TFR) to 2.2 percent by 2010.

The TFR, which was 3.4 percent in 1993-94 and 3.3 percent during 1996-2000, came down to 2.7 percent in 2007, according to the Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey 2007.

But the family planning programme, which is completely dependent on donors and a major factor in reducing the TFR, has been showing a sluggish achievement for some time, creating uncertainty in achieving MDG-5, experts said.

Failure in management at all levels of the programme has only added to that uncertainty.

According to Wikipedia, the TFR of a population is the average number of children to be born to a woman over her lifetime if she were to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates through her lifetime and survive from birth through the end of her reproductive life. It is obtained by summing the single-year age-specific rates at a given time.

The Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey 2007 said the overall contraceptive use declined by 2 percentage points in the last three years from 58 percent in 2004 while

The Daily Star

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