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# Another toxic ship set to get ministry nod for scrapping

PINAKI ROY

Ignoring threats to public health, the shipping ministry is likely to permit scrapping of another toxic ship-- SA Helderberg-- one of the 50 blacklisted by environmental watchdog Greenpeace.

Kabir Steel of Chittagong, a shipyard in Sitakunda, imported the ship now known as Asian Express. Built in 1977, the ship is believed to be riddled with asbestos, heavy and toxic metals like lead, mercury, cadmium, copper and zinc.

The ministry is now forming an investigation committee to check toxicity of the ship, now waiting at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port. It issued letters to different organisations on Thursday inviting them to be members of the committee, sources in the ministry said.

But sources in Chittagong, who work in this sector, said the owner of Kabir Steel has already beached the ship without taking permission

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PHOTO: SHIPSPOTTING.COM

This file photo shows container cargo ship SA Helderberg, renamed Asian Express, blacklisted by environmental watchdog Greenpeace. The ship may end up on the beach at Sitakunda in Chittagong for scrapping.

## BNP observes National Solidarity Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP and its associate organisations observed the "National Revolution and Solidarity Day" yesterday with elaborate programmes. A few political parties, including Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), observed the day as the "Civil-Military Uprising Day".

They claim that on November 7, 1975, soldiers and people together foiled a "conspiracy" against the country's independence and sovereignty. The then chief of army staff, Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman, was freed from captivity in Dhaka cantonment during the political turmoil.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia

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## WATER FROM SAIDABAD PLANT

# High ammonia concentration poses severe health risk

ERSHAD KAMOL

Millions of Dhaka residents, who drink water treated in Saidabad Water Treatment Plant (SWTP) and supplied by Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), are at severe health risk due to high concentration of ammonia in that, according to several studies.

Ammonia concentration in SWTP treated water has been found to be ten times higher than the standard set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for dry seasons between January and April.

Studies by Bangladesh University of Engineering and

Technology (Buet), Design Planning and Management Consultants Limited (DPM), the Institute of Water Management (IWM), and Aqua, a water resources related private consulting firm, found concentration of diluted ammonia in SWTP treated water reaching up to 5.7 milligram (mg) per litre compared to the 0.5 mg per litre safety limit set by WHO.

The studies concluded that the facilities in SWTP are inadequate for treating dangerously high concentration of ammonia and industrial wastes such as lead and cadmium, which may cause serious kidney, liver, lung, and stom-

ach diseases among consumers.

In 2004, a joint report by Buet and IWM also presented similar findings to Wasa, but with no result.

Each day, SWTP supplies 22.5 million litres of treated water to the capital's north-south pipeline that runs from Postogola Bridge to Farm Gate, and to the east-west pipeline which supplies water to the vast area from Goran through Old Dhaka to Dhanmodi.

The reports' findings reveal that 'conventional technologies' used by SWTP, commissioned in 2002, cannot remove high concentrations of ammonia, algae, and

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## South Africa wrest initiative

BISHWAJIT ROY in Potchefstroom

On a placid surface, the Bangladesh slow bowlers did their part before the South African tail-enders took away the early initiative to post a formidable 283-8, leaving the Tigers an uphill task at Senwes Park on Friday.

Despite the gloomy weather, stand-in South African skipper Johan Botha decided to bat first but they were challenged by the Bangladesh slow bowlers who were brilliantly aided by a spirited fielding effort epitomised by a stunning Tamim Iqbal catch that could have been embelmed as a poster.

Debutant Johann Louw however spoiled the party by hitting three sixes and a boundary to make 23 runs just from seven balls.

The Chittagonian Tamim took a breathtaking catch at the long-leg fence to send back Jacques Kallis, who scored the team highest 50 off 73 balls that featured two boundaries, to give Bangladesh the upper hand.

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## Saifur visits Sylhet after 21 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

BNP leader and former finance minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday paid a brief visit to Sylhet after about 21 months.

While talking to journalists at Hotel Garden Inn in the city, he criticised the government for not clearing its position on lifting the state of emergency before the parliamentary elections.

"We still do not know whether the national election will be held on schedule," Saifur said.

He also held a meeting with local party leaders and activists at the hotel.

"We have placed a four-point demand including the lifting of emergency before the caretaker government and we are ready to contest the polls once the demands are met," Saifur said.

"If my party participates in the polls, I might contest the elections either from Sylhet or Moulvibazar

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks during the party's Presidium meeting at its office in Dhanmodi yesterday following her return to the country on Thursday.

# 14 killed in suspected US missile strike in Pakistan

## Pak jets kill 16 Taliban militants

AFP, Islamabad/Khar

Up to 14 militants were killed yesterday when a suspected US missile strike destroyed an al-Qaeda training camp in a tribal area of northwest Pakistan near the Afghan border, officials said.

Four missiles are thought to have been fired at the camp, in Kumsham village, some 35 kilometres (22 miles) south of Miranshah in North Waziristan province.

Security sources said the village is dominated by Wazir tribes and is near the border with South Waziristan, another hub of Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives.

"Between 11 to 14 militants, mainly foreigners, were killed in the strike," a senior military official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

ity, using the Pakistani term to describe al-Qaeda extremists.

Local official Attiq-ur Rehman also confirmed the strike but gave a different death toll. "There was a missile strike in the Kumsham village and it destroyed a compound, 13 people were killed," he said.

It was not immediately clear if there were any high-value targets among those killed, but sources said seven al-Qaeda operatives and a local Taliban commander were among the dead.

An intelligence official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, added: "The strike successfully destroyed the camp."

"The militants were using the facility for training," another said. A series of recent strikes against suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban

hideouts in Pakistan's tribal badlands bordering Afghanistan -- all blamed on unmanned CIA drones -- have raised tensions between Washington and Islamabad.

On Monday, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari warned the new US commander for Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, that the attacks were "counterproductive" and could harm the battle for hearts and minds there.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and the country's military top brass also told the visiting general that the United States should respect Pakistani sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Previous protests have seen Washington's ambassador to Islamabad, Anne Patterson, called

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PHOTO: STAR

Guardians wait outside Eden Girls' College in the city yesterday as students sit for the government medical college entrance exams at the college centre.

**Edible oil, onion prices up**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prices of non-brand edible oil and onion have been increased whereas wheat and flour decreased in the city markets in a week.

Though various kinds of winter vegetables are coming in the city markets daily, the prices are still high.

The prices of palm oil and super palm oil have been increased significantly in a week.

At different city markets, super palm oil was seen to be selling between Tk 88 and Tk 95 per litre on

retail while non-brand palm oil between Tk 72 and Tk 80.

Shopkeepers said the prices of palm and super palm oil have been increased by Tk 15 in a week. The prices of local and imported onion have been increased by Tk 3 to Tk 5 during the period.

Imported onion retailed at Tk 24 to Tk 30 per kg yesterday while local onion at Tk 30 to 36.

Huge amounts of winter-vegetables have been reaching daily to the city's three big vegetable wholesale markets--Karwan

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The Daily Star

Coming out tomorrow - Star Campus

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