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KHULNA SHRIMP CULTIVATION AREA

Thousands suffer from drinking water crisis

AMENA KHATUN, back from Khulna

A few decades of shrimp cultivation has rendered the surface and ground water sources too saline for consumption in two upazilas in Khulna and an acute drinking water crisis has arisen in the area affecting thousands of locals.

People living in the Dakop and Paikgachha upazilas are suffering from such a severe shortage of safe drinking water that it has resulted in widespread diarrhoea and dysentery in the area.

Residents of Kamarkhola, Kalinagar, Saharabad, Joynagar, Satgharia villages under Dakop upazila and Madhukhali, Hanirabad, Radhanagar, Alokdi, Munkia, Dighalia, Bainchapura village in Paikgachha upazila are so hard hit by the problem for the last couple of months

that they live in fear of massive health disaster at anytime.

Dr Akbar Hossain from Dakop upazila health complex said that around 12-15 people are seeking admission in the complex each day and the numbers are increasing rapidly. Most of those admitted are children under the age of five and are suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery.

"They all suffer from acute respiratory infection (ARI) from consumption of impure water," he said.

Locals say high levels of salinity in surface and ground water has almost become a permanent problem here. Even the water pumped out by deep tube-wells is too saline for drinking.

They complained that the local administration is yet to take any con-

structive initiatives to solve this problem.

According to Dakop Upazila Nirbahi Office, a total of 2216 ponds in 106 villages under nine unions of the upazila cater to villagers drinking water needs. But most of the ponds have dried up in recent months due to the soaring temperature and especially because the area has not experienced any rainfall this year.

Chhabi Rani Mandal, 40, a housewife from Kalinagar village, told this correspondent,

"Every day I walk 6 kilometres to fetch one pitcher of drinking water from nearby village. On days it is not possible for me to do so, my children are forced to drink the muddy and salty water from the almost dried up pond nearby. They are all suffering from dysentery now."

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Saifur quits active politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran BNP leader M Saifur Rahman yesterday announced his retirement from 'active politics'.

"It is not possible for me to remain in active politics at this stage of life... Therefore, I have decided to retire," private TV channel ATN Bangla quoted him as saying.

The BNP standing committee member and four-time finance minister further said, "It is not possible for me to be present at the (party) chairperson's office almost every day and stay till 10:00pm or 11:00pm or 12:00pm. And it is also not possible for me to organise meetings at district level."

Saifur said he turned down the party's request to go on with his present role till the national council, supposed to

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Coordinating BDR probe gets tough

Involvement of too many investigators might delay completion of probe

KAILASH SARKAR

Investigators of the BDR mutiny case find it difficult to coordinate activities of different agencies and departments engaged in the probe process, sources said.

As many as 400 personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), over 1,500 from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), around 2,000 from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and a good number of army men are involved in the investigation, sources added.

Terming it an unprecedented event in the history of the country, Additional Inspector General of Police NBK Tripura told The Daily Star, "In my job life, I have never seen so many arrests and so many investigators probing one single case."

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police

(ASP) Abdul Kahar Akand of CID, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, told The Daily Star, "Maintaining coordination is a huge task."

The IO said, "It will take more time to complete the investigation and we hope it will be completed before the stipulated time."

Several CID officials close to the investigation said they could not cope up with the task because of its enormity, as it is a very big deal to handle statements of so many people and then put them together in an orderly manner.

The other most important aspect of the investigation is to maintain coordination among people involved in the process, they added.

According to sources, as many as 1028 persons have so far been arrested. Of them 190 were remanded for various terms and 31

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Govt to give farmers higher price for produce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will purchase food grains at higher prices to help the farmers meet their production cost, but will not give any cash subsidy.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday said, "Giving cash subsidy to the farmers might leave scope for corruption. So we have jettisoned the idea, and instead decided to buy food grains at prices that will ensure the farmers do not incur loss."

Speaking to desh.tv, a private television channel, she also observed that the government will address the problems that the farming community might face if the prices of cereal crops fall further.

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A policeman stands guard at the entrance to Hazaribagh Police Station set up on a rented house. The narrow dingy alley also leads to an entrance to the station.



PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

City cops face housing crisis

New police stations set up in rented houses with inadequate space

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) can provide quarters to only 617 police families against the demand for 16,652, leaving them in a serious housing crisis.

The DMP is also facing problems in housing police stations, outposts and police boxes. Some of the new police stations have been set up in rented houses with inadequate space.

Deputy Commissioner (DC Estate and Development) of DMP Mohammad Shajahan told The Daily Star that a total of 16,652 policemen including fourth-class employees of the force are supposed to enjoy quarters facilities.

The DMP has only 617 quarters in DMP area, which covers only 3.70 percent of the total number it needs, he added.

Most of the police stations are in rented houses and the DMP has to count around Tk 1 crore annually in rent, DMP sources said.

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KHALEDA'S HOUSE No agitation if AL shows restraint: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said it (BNP) will refrain from waging any agitation programme if the ruling Awami League exercises restraint over the issue of Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence.

Delwar said this while addressing a protest rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Tanti Dal in front of the party central office at Naya Paltan.

"Go to the court - don't force us to take to the street."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

SUMMIT OF AMERICAS

Obama offers talks to Cuba to break hostility

AFP, Port of Spain

US President Barack Obama seized on an extraordinary overture from Cuba to propose talks aimed at breaking the half-century hostility born between Washington and Havana during the Cold War.

He told a Summit of the Americas with Latin American leaders in Trinidad and Tobago on Friday that he wanted to establish "a new beginning" with Cuba that would recognise past US "errors," but require reciprocal gestures from the communist island.

The conciliatory language raised the prospect of the United States considering ending to

its 47-year-old embargo on Cuba.

Several other leaders at the summit -- including those from Argentina, Nicaragua and Belize -- voiced a general consensus in Latin America that the embargo should be scrapped and Cuba readmitted into regional bodies.

The summit was to get into full swing on Saturday. The three-day gathering of 34 countries in the Americas -- all, in fact, except Cuba -- was meant to address common energy, environmental and public security challenges in a succession of plenary sessions.

But an unexpected gesture of conciliation by Obama towards Cuba on the first day, Friday,

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2 killed in clash over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least two people were killed and two others injured yesterday in a clash between indigenous people and a group of locals over land at Kachua village in Dinajpur.

Police arrested five indigenous people including a woman in connection with the incident, said sources.

The dead are Md Azizul Haque, 25, son of Yakini Ali and Md Emdadul Haque, 40, son of Md Yunus Ali of Kachua village.

A group of locals attacked

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Suicide bomber kills 20 at Pak checkpoint

AP, AFP, Peshawar

A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a military checkpoint in Pakistan's troubled northwest yesterday, killing at least 20 people, officials said.

The checkpoint is near the Orakzai tribal region, which has emerged in recent months as a major base for Taliban militants waging war on the Pakistan government.

The explosion wrecked a building housing troops and police next to the checkpoint, said Farid Khan, a senior police official in the nearby town of Hangu.

At least 18 members of the security forces as well as two civilians died, Khan said. More than a dozen other people were wounded, including the local police chief, other officials said.

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150 injured in AL-BNP clash in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 150 people including four policemen were injured in a fierce clash between supporters of Awami League (AL) and BNP at Reshombari in Shahzadpur upazila yesterday.

During the nearly three-hour clash over control of Reshombari Primary Milk Production Cooperative Society, 13 houses and four shops of the AL and BNP men were damaged.

The injured were admitted to Shahzadpur upazila health complex, Bera hospital, Pabna

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INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE Bangalore win Royals' battle

AFP, Cape Town

Veteran Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble sent the Rajasthan Royals crashing to defeat when they started the defence of their Indian Premier League crown at Newlands Saturday.

Kumble took five for five as the Bangalore Royal Challengers gained a crushing 75-run win as the champions were bowled out for a paltry 58.

Bangalore skipper Kevin Pietersen was overjoyed with the opening win.

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Prayer Timing		
April 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Pakistani terrorists planned to attack Malabar Hill: Kasab

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Mumbai

In another stunning disclosure, captured Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Amir Kasab has confessed that he and his associate Abu Ismail were planning to attack the posh Malabar Hill area of south Mumbai Nov 26 last year.

"After carrying out the attacks on Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus that evening, the duo was planning to proceed towards Malabar Hill," Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam said, shortly after the second day's hearing here Saturday.

However, the duo who were fleeing in a hijacked car, were stopped at a police road block near Chowpatty beach that night.

While Ismail was killed in the shootout with security forces, Kasab was nabbed. The details of the sites to be attacked at Malabar Hill were known to Ismail, Nikam said.

Located in south Mumbai, Malabar Hill is home to VVIPs, including Maharashtra chief minister, governor, high court judges, central and state ministers, high-ranking bureaucrats, politicians, industrialists, businessmen, head honchos of multinationals, scientists, diplomats, religious heads, leading academicians and expats.

While Kasab and Ismail were directly involved in attacks at seven of the 13 sites attacked on 26/11, the others were attacked by their eight associates, all of whom were gunned down by the

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Bangladeshi tortured to death in Malaysia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi worker, who recently died in a Malaysian detention camp, was allegedly tortured by the special immigration police of that country.

The corpse of the victim Ikhtiar, 30, son of Abdul Jabbar of Patnitala, Naogaon, was brought home by a flight of Bangladesh Biman yesterday morning, said an official at Zia International Airport.

Ikhtiar along with eight other Bangladeshi workers went to Malaysia on March 6 this year through Bangladeshi recruiting agency Dahmasi Corporation Ltd.

After their arrival in Malaysia, the Bangladeshi workers were asked by the local agent to stay at the veranda of a mosque in

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Water has become indeed a commodity as severe crisis in parts of the capital opens up opportunity for operators of public toilets to sell water and make a quick buck. The photo was taken in downtown Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR