

Pollution industry-made

Roundtable thrashes industrialists for mindless river contamination, seeks immediate actions to save waters

STAR REPORT

Industries got a whacking yesterday as experts and environmentalists maintained that rivers around Dhaka are getting polluted wholesale by industrial waste. Even industries with effluent treatment plants do not run those facilities.

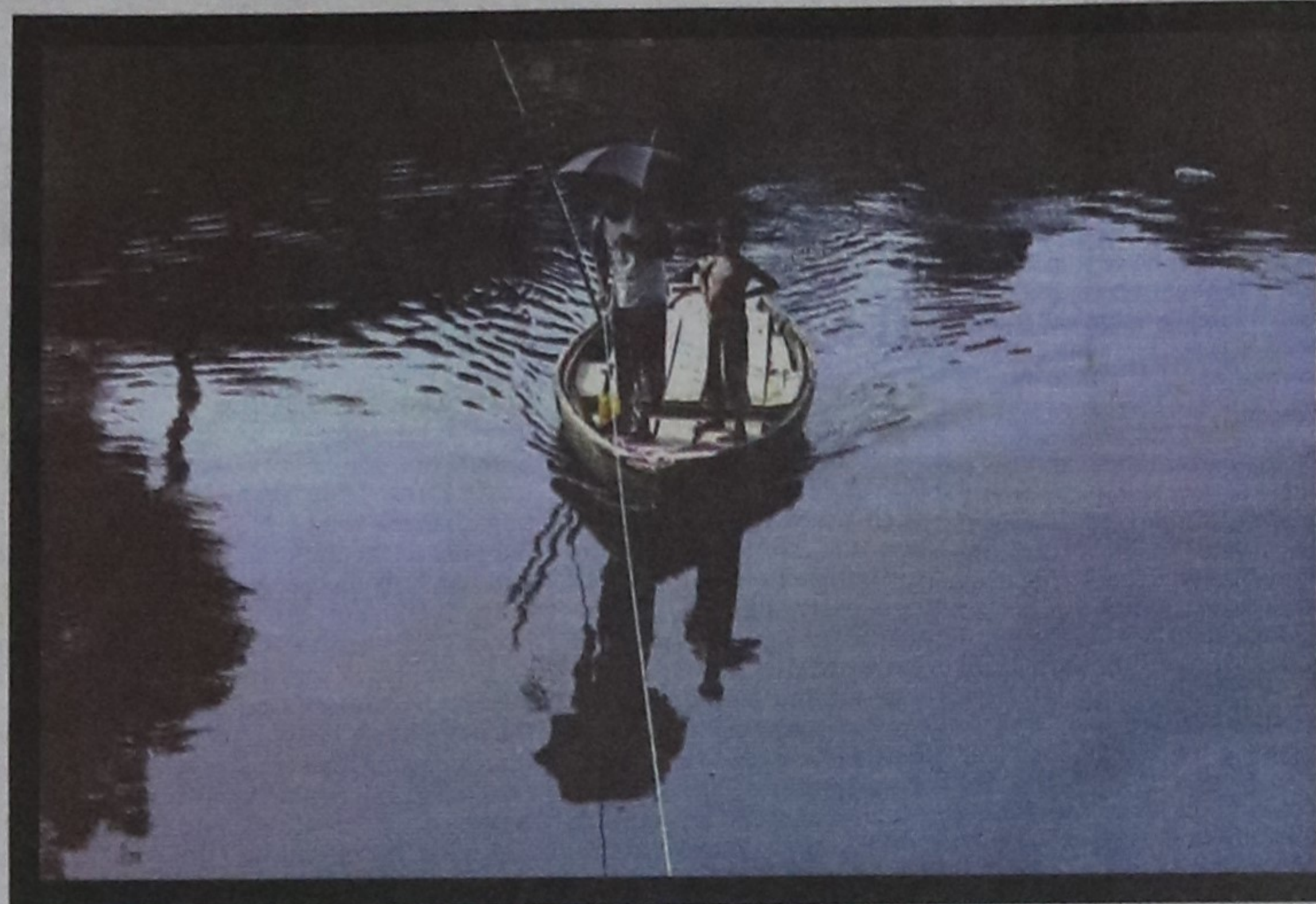
The capital's sewage is also mostly untreated and dumped into the rivers as the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has very few waste treatment facilities. The pollution situation is even compounded as no single entity has the complete authority to deal with the pollution that has already rendered the Buriganga biologically dead and threatened the existence of three other rivers—Turag, Balu and Shitalakhya.

DETAILS ON PAGE 14

The experts recommended immediate setting up of a high-powered "national river authority" in the style of the Ganga Commission and Hooghly Commission in India to deal with the pollution of the four rivers that surround Dhaka. There is already the National Coordination Committee on Environment but it has not had a meeting since 1997 and become ineffective.

They also said actions must be taken immediately to stop industries from polluting rivers.

The Daily Star conference room became a buzzing place for brainstorming yesterday morning as over a dozen experts and environmentalists along with State Minister for environment Mustafizur Rahman and Industries Minister Dilip Barua met at a roundtable titled "River Pollution:



Industrial waste polluted the Shitalakhya so much that it is now untreatable, say experts. The photo was taken at the meeting point of DND canal and the Shitalakhya near Kanchpur Bridge.

THE CONCERN

City groundwater depletes 3m annually

Shitalakhya water beyond purification

Hazaribagh groundwater gets polluted

WHAT TO DO

Set up high-powered river authorities

Enforce environmental laws strictly

Set up central ETP in 3 industrial clusters

How to Save Our Rivers". The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the roundtable.

Managing Director of Dhaka Wasa Shahjahan Ali Mollah revealed how inadequate Wasa facilities are to treat sewage and said the raw waste is dumped into the rivers, which has

in turn rendered the river water unusable.

He said loads of medicines are being used to treat water at the Sayedabad water treatment plant and even a newly undertaken plant would serve as a temporary solution to the problem. Another big World Bank project to build a treat-

ment plant for industrial waste will only solve 10 percent of the problem. He admitted that unless major programmes are taken to stop industrial pollution Dhaka would face a severe water crisis in the near future.

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TACKLING RECESSION

ADB pledges \$200m

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is going to get \$200 million as budget support by December this year from the newly formed recession fund of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to tackle the fallout of global meltdown.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said this at a press briefing at his office yesterday on return from the ADB's annual conference in Indonesian resort city Bali.

The conference held on May 4-5 was preceded by a seminar on World Recession on May 3.

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Talks on change in constitution start

SHAKHAWAT LIṬON

A parliamentary committee yesterday began deliberations on a private member's bill seeking to repeal the constitutional provision that allows the president to assume the role of chief adviser to caretaker government.

Along with another, the bill also proposes provisions for displaying the portrait of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at offices of government, semi-government, autonomous and statutory bodies, public educational institutions, and Bangladesh embassies and missions abroad.

The committee, which deals with private members' bills and resolutions, however has yet to okay the two bills brought by ruling AL lawmakers Imajuddin Pramanik and Aslamul Haque.

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Fresh notice to Khaleda to vacate house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments yesterday served a fresh notice upon BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia asking her to show cause as to why she should not be asked to return the estate, including the house, within the next 15 days.

Talking to The Daily Star a senior intelligence official said an officer of the Directorate of Military Lands and Cantonments handed over the notice, signed by the military land administrator, to a staff of Khaleda's cantonment house.

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Cabinet to expand soon

Poor report cards to get some ministers axed; lobbying starts as PM plans to induct new faces

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Some senior and mid-level leaders of Awami League (AL) and the components of its grand alliance are busy with hectic lobbying to become cabinet members, as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is planning to expand the cabinet soon.

Sources in the government and AL said Hasina's plan was inspired by an evaluation report that had identified ministries with unsatisfactory performances, which the prime minister might seek to fill with some efficient AL and alliance leaders who did not get any cabinet post at the time of its formation.

Hasina already warned her existing cabinet colleagues of being dropped from the cabinet,

unless they show satisfactory performances within the next couple of months.

Talking to The Daily Star two of the government ministers, preferring anonymity, said the prime minister's plan to induct a few more ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers, is for bringing dynamism and efficiency in government activities.

Sources said she might break up the food and disaster management ministry into two separate ministries and appoint a minister for a disaster management ministry. Currently Dr Abdur Razzaque is in charge of food and disaster management ministry with no state or deputy minister.

She might also appoint full ministers to the

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Bismillah to remain in constitution

Asserts law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim would remain in the constitution as it was even if the fifth amendment to the constitution was annulled in line with the High Court (HC) verdict.

He refuted the allegation of former minister Moudud Ahmed that one-party BKSAL (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League) rule and anarchy would grip the country if the fifth amendment was scrapped.

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55,000 Bangladeshis to get job gradually

KL positive about lifting ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia will gradually recruit the 55,000 Bangladeshi workers it sent back, said Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

"Bangladesh High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur said there was discussion in the Malaysian parliament on lifting the ban but the decision has not been officially shared yet," Mosharraf Hossain told The Daily Star.

"Malaysia needs workers and they were positive about it when I visited the country recently," he said.

Meanwhile, President of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) Ghulam Mustafa told The Daily Star that two Malaysian television channels broadcast news stating that Malaysian government would allow companies to hire workers if they really needed.

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OnlinePoll

Do you think former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar should be stripped of his MP status for his alleged graft?

- Yes (60.36%)
- No (22.14%)
- No Comments (17.50%)

Total votes: 840

TODAY'S POLL

Law enforcement agencies blamed Awami League men for deteriorating law and order situation. Do you agree?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Pakistan pounds Taliban hideouts

Humanitarian crisis escalates as militants bar civilians from fleeing

AGENCIES, Peshawar

Pakistani attack helicopters and warplanes pounded suspected Taliban hideouts Thursday, as thousands of people fled the deadliest fighting to erupt in the northwest district of Swat in months.

Aid workers warned that the humanitarian crisis was escalating in the area after families streamed out of the Taliban militant stronghold on foot or crammed into cars weighed down with provisions and household possessions.

"A mortar shell hit the outer wall of my house last night. Luckily, we survived. I feel God has given me an opportunity I can't miss. I'm leaving. Swat is not worth living in," Nasir Jamal, a medical shop owner, told AFP.

Security forces targeted militants holed up in Malam Jabba, Matta and Khawaza Khela of Swat, one day after 37 rebels were killed in the deadliest fighting to rock the area since a peace deal was reached in February.

Taliban militants blocked roads with rocks and trees, preventing terrified civilians from fleeing a Pakistani valley yesterday as the army stepped up a ground and air assault on the guerrillas that has been applauded by the US, witnesses said.

Destabilising violence is flaring in Pakistan just as its embattled president is appealing in Washington for more help to reverse the extension of Taliban-held territory to within 100km of the capital. The US is particularly concerned by the unrest because its troops are fighting an increasingly virulent

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