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GABKHAN CHANNEL

Vital river route losing navigability

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

The Gabkhan channel, the only international river in the southern part of the country, is losing navigability, hampering river traffic on the Bangladesh-India, Chittagong-Mongla and Dhaka-Khulna routes.

Also known as the “Suez Khal of Jhalakathi”, the canal would impede trade under the Bangladesh-India protocol agreement on river traffic if it becomes shallower.

The 18-kilometre-long canal was excavated between 1912 and 1918 to link the Sugandha river in Jhalakathi and the Kocha and Sandhya rivers of Pirojpur, said Md Harunur Rashid, pilot inspector of BIWTA in Barisal. The canal reduces up to eight hours of journey time between.

He said the Indian vessels would not be able to enter Bangladesh through this canal if the canal lost navigability

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The narrow and shallow Gabkhan canal near Gabkhan Bridge in Jhalakathi. A steamer passing under the bridge dangerously close to the shore and a pier, top right. Fearful of running aground, a goods laden vessel measures water depth as it plies the canal, bottom right.

PHOTO: STAR

GONOJAGORON MANCHA

Police foil rally, beat up activists

Six injured, five arrested

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least six Gonojagoron Mancha activists were injured yesterday afternoon when police charged truncheon on the anti-war criminal campaigners at Shahbagh intersection in the capital.

Police also detained five of the activists -- Joy, Dhiman, Farid, Titu, and Sohag -- from the spot.

The Mancha activists had gathered there to hold a rally protesting, what they claimed, attack on the Mancha supporters by some pro-Awami League men Thursday night.

Yesterday around 4:30pm, when some 20 to 25 activists of the Gonojagoron Mancha were marching towards Shahbagh intersection from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, police chased them towards Aziz Super Market.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

ALLEGED VOTE BUYING

Tower Hamlets mayor Lutfur faces probe

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The government has ordered outside auditors to examine allegations that an east London mayor sought to shore up his vote by diverting £2m in public grants to Bangladeshi and Somali groups.

The communities secretary, Eric Pickles, said staff from the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers were already in place at Tower Hamlets council. A file is being passed to the Metropolitan police.

This week a BBC Panorama documentary

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Campaign heats up for Lok Sabha polls

BJP releases 'charge sheet' on UPA's misrule; Sonia urges voters not to elect 'a big liar' as PM

AGENCIES

Indian poll rivals intensified their attacks on each other yesterday as the country braces for a record breaking election, what will be the biggest democratic exercise in history, tomorrow.

After 10 years of leftist rule by Congress and the Gandhi family dynasty, surveys show the young and increasingly aspirational electorate, worried about jobs and angry about corruption, yearning for change.

Upping the ante against the ruling party, The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) charged the Congress with corruption, destruction of economy, price rise and messing with the foreign policy in a chargesheet against the UPA government released yesterday.

BJP also targeted Congress president Sonia Gandhi and vice-president

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MORE ON PAGE 15

MUMBAI RAPE CASES

Death penalty for 3 repeat offenders

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian judge yesterday ordered three men to hang after they were convicted of two gang-rapes, the first death sentences to be handed down for multiple sex attacks since the law was toughened last year.

The sentences were announced at a court in Mumbai on the same day that a judge jailed 24 men in the southern state of Kerala over the gang-rape of a schoolgirl who was repeatedly sexually assaulted over a 40-day period in 1996.

A series of mass protests over the levels of sexual violence prompted the government

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

The Daily Star



Integral Energy Limited
ONLINE POLL
Do you agree with Election Working Group that the local administration and law enforcers showed patently unprofessional attitude in discharging their duties during upazila parishad polls?

Yes

(89%)

No

(11%)

TOTAL VOTES: 151

TODAY'S POLL
Do you think Bangladesh would be benefited by letting India use its soil for power corridor?
PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net

PRAYER TIMING April 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

A physically challenged organiser of Gonojagoron Mancha struggles to free himself from policemen while another activist tries to help him at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DEATHS AT SHIP BREAKING YARD

Contractors sued, owners spared

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday sued two contractors for hiring unskilled workers, four of whom were killed in a gas cylinder explosion at a ship breaking yard in Sitakunda of Chittagong the previous day.

However, owners of the firm were not accused in the case filed with Sitakunda Police Station.

“We have primarily accused the two contractors as they hired those unskilled workers. But if we find the owners responsible for the accident, we will include their names in the case,” Saiful Islam, assistant superintendent of police (Sitakunda), told The Daily Star.

Sub-inspector Md Mozammel filed the case under sections 304 (ka) and 287 of the penal code which deal with accidental deaths due to negligence. The two accused, Abul Bashar and Jasim Uddin, have been on the run.

The gas cylinder blasted when the victims were dismantling a scrap ship. All the four died for carbon dioxide inhalation.

The ship breaking yard Arafin Enterprise imported the toxic 5400 tonnes ship for scrapping. It sold some electrical equipment of the vessel to these contractors.

Talking to this newspaper, one of the owners of Arafin Enterprise Gias Uddin admitted that only 30 percent of around 200 to 250 workers at his ship breaking yard are skilled.

Asked about a court directive regarding cleaning of a ship before importing it, he said they made the scrap ship gas free before beaching it.

The victim workers were not supposed to dismantle the gas cylinder which caused the deaths, he added.

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TORTURE, KILLING OF BAU STUDENT

BCL bids to thwart protests

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) unit Chhatra League yesterday prevented male students from joining a demonstration of general students protesting the murder of a student on the campus on Tuesday.

Leaders of the pro-Awami League student body, who control the male dormitories of the public university, also compelled resident students to join their procession around 10:30am, overlapping the programme of the general students.

Saad Ibne Momtaz, 23, a final-year student, succumbed to injuries at a private clinic on April 1, a day after

Saad Ibne Momtaz

Chhatra League leaders had beaten him up with hockey sticks, iron rods and cricket stumps in room No-205 of Ashraful Haque Hall.

The media cited various motives behind the killing, including internal feud, as Saad too was a Chhatra

League activist.

“Our Friday's protest saw an unusually lesser number of male students compared to the previous days,” said a female resident student of Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall.

Yesterday around 11:00am, students of the university held a mass signature campaign and a procession demanding arrest and punishment of the killers.

“The BCL activity clearly sends us the signal not to wage a movement seeking justice for the murder, otherwise they would not have launched a counter programme,” said another student of the female dormitory.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Saturn moon hides great lake of water

THE TELEGRAPH ONLINE

A watery ocean that could support life lies deep under the icy surface of Saturn's tiny moon Enceladus, scientists have confirmed.

The ocean is buried beneath 18 to 24 miles of ice and could be larger than the biggest of North America's Great Lakes.

Scientists made the discovery after measuring gravitational anomalies picked up by the American space agency Nasa's Cassini

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