



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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24 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

REGD. NO. DA 781 | VOL. XXV No. 68 | CHAITRA 8, 1421 BS | JAMADIUL AWAL 30, 1436 HIJRI



WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

City polls could offer some ray of hope in this political situation

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'DRAUPADI' IN DHAKA

India theatre troupe Kalakshetra Manipur stages its acclaimed play at Shilpakala

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IT'S NOT ISIS

Rather, Gen Petraeus says, Shia militias are the biggest long-term threat to Iraq

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Precious yet we pollute

Water of over 300 rivers stinks with industrial, human waste

TAWFIQUE ALI

Natural sources of fresh water, especially rivers, are becoming highly contaminated with industrial effluents and human waste, causing serious hazards to public health and ecological system, warn experts.

The rivers around the capital in particular are polluted due to mindless dumping of untreated waste and effluents that contain heavy metals and residues of toxic chemical, they observe.

"As a natural resource, sweet water is as valuable as minerals like coal and natural gas," Hasin Jahan, policy advocacy director of WaterAid Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

"The rivers, the prime sources of sweet water, are being contaminated heavily with lethal effluents," she observed.

Besides, rainwater, the purest form of natural water, is callously wasted by letting it run off and merge with polluted rivers in the absence of a harvesting system, she said.

Of the 80,000 tonnes of human waste generated a day in the country, at best two percent (1,600 tonnes) is treated at Pagla treatment plant near the capital, and the rest eventually ends up in rivers, said Hasin.

Most industries in and around the capital release untreated effluents directly into the Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Balu and Turag rivers, taking advantage of the authorities' lax attitude towards enforcing environmental laws and regulations, she added.

Prof Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology said.

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Smog covers the sky over the dark murky water of the Buriganga river in the capital. The water is so polluted that launches plying the river leave a trail of foam and the stench of the water is unbearable. Today is World Water Day.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PARTICIPATION IN DHAKA, CTG POLLS

BNP waits for Khaleda's nod

RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP leaders and activists are now waiting to get the final nod from party chief Khaleda Zia on endorsing party candidates for elections to the country's three key city corporations.

A number of BNP leaders yesterday told The Daily Star that after consulting with party policymakers, well-wishers and pro-BNP intellectuals, the BNP chairperson is now positive on backing party candidates for the polls to Dhaka North, Dhaka South and Chittagong city corporations to be held

on April 28.

"The chairperson thinks participating in the city polls will be part of our ongoing movement. She also could read sentiments of the party leaders and activists, many of whom are in favour of contesting the elections," Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told this paper.

The BNP standing committee member thinks that the party might lose its dominance in the country's two largest cities -- Dhaka and Chittagong -- if it gives the ruling party "a free ride" in the elections.

Once Khaleda formally gives the go-ahead, BNP leaders will sit with the Election Commission to discuss a range of issues, including ways to make the elections free and fair and arrest of opposition leaders on political grounds, he said.

"How will our men carry out campaigns when many of them are either behind bars or on the run to avoid police harassment? We will have to raise these issues to the Election Commission," said the former army chief.

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WORLD WATER DAY TODAY

Call for saving groundwater

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite being the world's largest delta having an estimated 1,210 billion cubic metres of fresh water, the country depends mostly on groundwater for drinking and dry season irrigation in the absence of a sustainable water use plan.

About 98 percent of drinking water and 80 percent of dry season irrigation water comes from the 21 billion cubic metres of groundwater reserve.

This was stated by Anwar Zahid, deputy director of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), at a press conference yesterday on the eve of

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- Renewable freshwater 1,210 billion cubic metres
- Groundwater 21 billion cubic metres
- 98% of drinking water, 80% of irrigation water in dry season come from groundwater
- 97% people had access to drinking water in early 90s
- Present national water coverage 86%
- 20 million people at risk of arsenic contamination



In excruciating pain, one of the nine victims of an arson attack on a truck in Magura sits on the floor of Magura Sadar Hospital as medicine is applied to his burn injuries yesterday. The photo has intentionally been blurred to cover the ghastly wounds.

PHOTO: STAR

9 hurt in Magura arson

Injured freedom fighter dies a day after Feni bomb attack; BNP calls fresh 72-hour hartal for 'Salauddin's release'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yusuf Khan, who fought for the country's independence in his youth, lost his battle for life yesterday, a day after he suffered burns in a petrol bomb attack in Daganbhuiyan of Feni.

He breathed his last at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 9:30pm. Meanwhile, nine people suffered severe

burns in yet another petrol bomb attack on a truck in Magura yesterday.

The incident took place on the Magura-Jessore highway around 7:45pm, hours after the BNP-led 20-party alliance announced a fresh spell of 72-hour countrywide hartal from today.

Criminals hurled two petrol bombs at the Magura-bound truck from Moghirdal

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TOP QUOTE

"BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is now in a political coma. To get out of this state, she should part from Jamaat-e-Islami; quit politics of killing and take the opportunity to return to democracy."

SHIPPING MINISTER SHAJAHAN KHAN AT A PROGRAMME IN CHITTAGONG

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The last date for taking part in the competition is **March 25, 2015**
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For any queries, please contact **The Daily Star Circulation Dept: Cell 01711623906**

DNCC MAYOR POLLS Bobby Hajjaj joins the race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bobby Hajjaj, special adviser to Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, yesterday declared his mayoral candidacy for the upcoming Dhaka North City Corporation polls.



His announcement came despite the party's

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Today is World Water Day '2015
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- Uttara, Sector-7, Road-16, Rabindra Shoroni
- Gulshan-2, DCC Market
- Mirpur-14, Police Fari Field, Bou Bazar
- Chittagong, Muslim Hall
- Chittagong Shopping Complex, 2 no. Gate
- Narayanganj, Chashara, Infront of Zia Hall (22-24, 27-28 March)

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