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'CHANGING INEQUITY'
 It's the whole idea behind Brac,
 Sir Fazle Abed says in an interview
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TEARFUL 'BROMANCE'
 In surprise farewell, Obama awards
 Biden the Presidential Medal of Freedom
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Coal danger for Sundarbans

Vessel with 1,000 tonne of coal sinks near the forest; experts fear environmental threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another coal-laden vessel sank near the Sundarbans yesterday morning, a reminder of the danger of transporting coal for the Rampal power plant.

MV Aichgati, a lighterage ship carrying over 1,000 tonnes of coal to Noapara in Jessore, sank in the estuary of the Pasur river and the Bay of Bengal, to the west of Zulfikar channel near Hiron Point in the Chandpai range.

All the crew were rescued by another lighterage vessel passing by at the time of the incident.

Expressing concern, environmentalists said such incidents could be disastrous for the Sundarbans, world's largest mangrove forest, especially for the aquatic life.

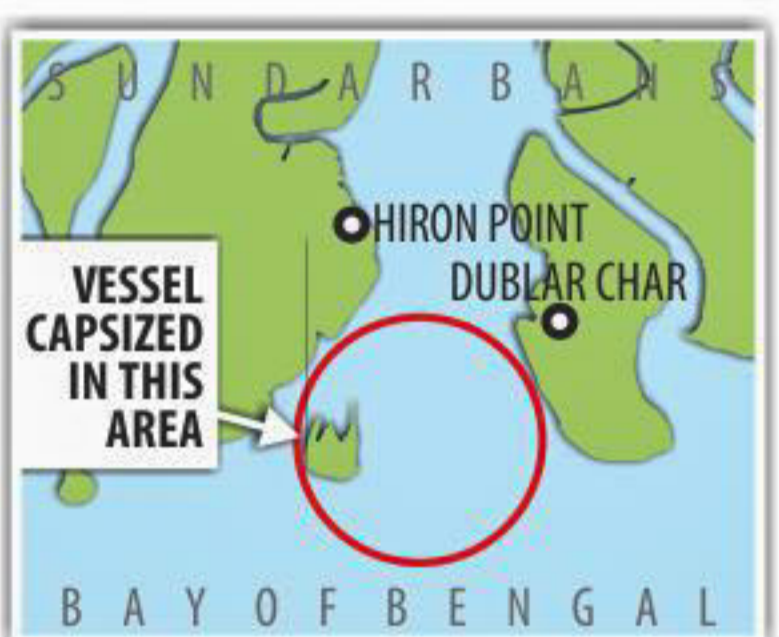
Asked whether this coal can harm the forest, Prof Harun ur Rashid of Environmental Science Discipline at Khulna University said this is basically low-quality pit coal brought for brick kilns.

Such low-graded coal contains several types of heavy metals, including sulphur, lead, cadmium, mercury and barium, and many others toxic materials, he said.

"One microgram of mercury can poison 100-litre water. We do not know the quantity of toxic materials in the coal [the ship was carrying]. But certainly it is going to be harmful to the Sundarbans and its species."

Without carrying out a study, nobody can claim that this accident would

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Shakib Al Hasan walks off to raucous applause from the fans after scoring a Bangladesh-record 217 on the second day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Shakib, Mushy roar like never before

AL-AMIN from Wellington

We have so many streets in Dhaka or elsewhere in the country with names that invoke little interest about the story behind it. What about naming a street 359 SM Road?

Curious? Turn your focus to Wellington and in particular the Basin Reserve, where a monumental fifth-wicket stand of 359 runs between Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim rattled the Black Caps and scripted one of the best days in Bangladesh cricket. For the record books, it is the highest partnership for any wicket for Bangladesh and the fourth-highest fifth-wicket stand in the history of Test cricket.

And the impact of the partnership is colossal. Bangladesh posted a massive 542 for seven at stumps on the second day of the first Test against New Zealand. Interestingly, the innings which is yet to be completed is already more than the Tigers managed in their previous two Tests at this very ground, the combined total of which comes to 523 for 40 wickets in four innings.

This is something too good to believe if you are a follower of Bangladesh cricket and have spent many days watching the other team achieving these sorts of milestones. The sunny Friday hot on the heels of a turbulent Thursday, when the Tigers battled their way against extreme wind, was the odyssey of Shakib-Mushfiqur. Along the way Shakib scored an imperious 217, the highest score by a Bangladeshi, and skipper Mushfiqur a sumptuous 159.

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TEXTBOOK BLUNDERS

Editors' panel kept in the dark about changes

WASIM BIN HABIB

The four-member panel, which compiled and edited two Bangla textbooks for class-I and III, was not notified about some changes in the books distributed among students this year.

Published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the books mention that the contents were fine-tuned and modified by five persons.

None of the five, mostly NCTB officials, was in the panel.

The textbooks were written on the basis of the new curriculum developed in 2012 in line with the National Education Policy 2010 for the students of 2013 academic session, Dr Mahbubul Haque, convener of the panel, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Following the distribution of the books among students in 2013, opinions were sought from class teachers, guardians and other stakeholders, and some corrections were made in those later, he said.

"Now the books contain the names of persons who modified the

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Biswa Ijtema begins on Turag banks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Lakhs of devotees from home and abroad yesterday joined the first day of the first phase of Biswa Ijtema under the open sky amid chilling winter breeze on the bank of the Turag in Tongi.

The first phase, which will conclude with Akheri Munajat (final prayers) tomorrow, began with delivering religious sermons after Fazr prayers by India's noted scholar Maulana Obaidullah Khorshed.

The second phase of the largest congregation of the Muslims after Hajj will be held on January 20-22.

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PHOTO ON PAGE 16

3 YEARS OF GOVT: DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE

Big pledges remain largely ignored

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Awami League promised democracy and good governance.

However, the present state of democracy and governance tells a story of how the promises remained largely ignored.

Ailing democracy and poor governance have raised serious questions about the AL-led government's capacity to deliver on its electoral pledges in these areas.

Amid such a situation, the AL-led government stepped into fourth year of its tenure on Thursday.

In the run up to the January 2014 parliamentary polls, the ruling party pledged various measures for good governance, strengthening democracy and consolidation of independence of judiciary.

It also promised to make parliament

effective and pledged to ensure accountability of lawmakers' functions in and outside parliament.

But the current parliament began its journey with a handmaiden main opposition. Three of its MPs were inducted into the cabinet. Its chief was made special envoy to the prime minister with the status of a minister.

The main opposition Jatiya Party has been suffering from identity crisis. It failed to play its due role in parliament. It never said "no" to any of the bills placed by the government in the last three years.

In the absence of a strong opposition, the government remains largely unchallenged in parliament.

The AL pledged to forge a national consensus on important issues like upholding democratic process among different

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'JMB man' held, explosives seized in Natore



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police arrested a suspected JMB operative and recovered arms and bomb-making materials from his Pabnapara home in Natore last night.

The arrestee, Fazlur Rahman Taher, alias Raj, is a mobile phone and TV mechanic. The 23-year-old had a plan to carry out subversive activities at the Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi on the outskirts of the capital, said law enforcers.

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WEF MEETING PM leaves for Davos tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka tomorrow for a week-long visit to Switzerland to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

She will address the annual meeting on January 17-20 in Davos-Klosters under the theme "Responsive and Responsible Leadership".

Around 3,000 global leaders from the fields of politics, finance, business and science are expected to participate in over 300 sessions of the meeting to discuss the world's most pressing issues.

Bangladesh foreign ministry sources said the PM would address a number of sessions of the WEF meeting in Davos, and on the sidelines, she is expected to hold bilateral talks with some "global leaders".

She would lead a high-profile delegation comprising ministers and officials from different ministries.

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Women from Dalit communities attend computer and sewing classes at a training centre of social services department in Barisal city recently. To be self-reliant, members of the Dalit, Harijan and Bede communities are receiving training under the community livelihood programme launched in September last yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Struggling Dalits trained to be self-reliant

SUSHANTA GHOSH with ANDREW EAGLE

To thrive in this modern world computer training is helpful to anybody. But when offered to members of the Dalit, Harijan and Bede communities -- groups traditionally excluded from the mainstream economy -- it has the potential to break centuries-old barriers to self-reliance and material wellbeing. At the social services training centre in Barisal city, along with training in sewing, such a project is underway, and it's proving popular.

"Nowadays computer training is necessity," says recent Higher School Certificate graduate Dola Das. "But until now we had no opportunity. This programme has given us a great chance."

"Our family really struggles," says a Dalit participant in the sewing programme, Sima Das. "But if I can receive good training in sewing, the whole family will benefit."

"I have three children. Two of them attend school while the third has special needs, and requires extra care that I can't afford," says Nila Vakta. "I came here for training because I want to do something. I hope to be self-employed."

"We are gaining more technical knowledge in this programme," says class-VIII student and programme participant Tapon Doam.

A life experience of relentless material struggle is common to many of the students. The community livelihood development programme launched in the last week of September last year and run by the social

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