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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

**STAR**  
WEEKEND

## KAMAR WINS IT AGAIN

The award-winning documentary maker gets prestigious World Cinema Fund

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## ARE YOU MY SURREAL DAD?

Dali to be exhumed as a fortune teller claims the famous surrealist is her father

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### 4 DHAKA RIVERS

## Little care to keep them alive

Authorities turn a blind eye to encroachment, waste dumping, filling up of canals

TAWFIQUE ALI

Blessed with a 110km waterway network of four rivers, Dhaka could have been one of the world's best cities with rich environmental and ecological diversity and great sources of drinking water.

The reality, however, is simply the opposite as the city is slowly sinking due to years of encroachment, pollution, improper demarcation and inadequate dredging.

Faulty demarcation of the rivers by their custodians, including two district administrations, the inland water transport authority and the environment department, has only sped up the process of their destruction.

Also, canals had been a significant part of the city's landscape once. Even in the 1970s and 80s, over 50 canals weaved the city's river network together.

Today, more than half of them simply vanished and in their place now stand buildings and other structures.

Some 26 still survive, but they are in their death throes because of continued grabbing, obstruction and dumping of indus-

trial and household wastes.

And with the city's precious sweet water bodies in a deplorable state, the government has embarked on fetching drinking water to the capital from far away rivers – the Padma and the Meghna.

At many points, the waters of the four Dhaka rivers have become so polluted that they are unbreathable.

The Daily Star has been doggedly reporting on the deliberate destruction of the rivers since 2002 and launched a campaign called Save River, Save Dhaka in 2009.

In the last eight years since 2009, government and its judicial body, a number of initiatives to protect the capital's lifelines – the Buriganga, the Turag, the Balu and the Shitalakshya.

But the measures proved too little too late. The destruction of the Turag and the Balu has reached such a level that they may soon become things of the past.

Visiting the rivers at regular intervals, this paper has found, and reported, that the encroachment could go unabated due to lax surveillance by their custodians.

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PHOTO: ANUSIS RAHMAN

Sand traders continue mindless filling of the Turag river in Dhaka Udyan area of the capital. The grabbing became rampant after authorities installed incorrect river demarcations. A fenced off area, inset, encroaching on the Buriganga in Boshila. The photos were taken recently.

Editors want section 57 fully repealed  
Ask govt not to include it in any new law  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

## Rice stocked illegally

Finds probe into seizure of 'rice from govt silos in Ctg'

As there are no valid documents for 63.1 tonnes of rice, it is evident that the rice was stocked in the depot illegally.

JAHIRUL ISLAM  
CHITTAGONG CONTROLLER OF FOOD

ARUN BIKASH DEY AND PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY, Chittagong

A departmental probe body yesterday said there was 63.1 tonnes of excess rice in Chittagong silos, a day after the regional controller of food claimed the stock was intact.

The additional rice was found at silo no-50 of the central storage depot (CSD) in Halishahar, said Jahirul Islam, Chittagong controller of food and also the chief of a three-member probe committee.

He said the silo should have been empty as per the ledger.

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## World Bank ready to help transform Dhaka

Now is the time to invest in planned expansion, says the global lender's chief economist for South Asia in an interview with The Daily Star

HASAN JAHID TUSHAR AND REAUZ KARIM BYRON

If the government comes up with a clear vision and a new comprehensive plan, the World Bank is ready to support and finance the transformation of Dhaka, said Martin Rama, the WB chief economist for South Asia.

"If there is a request or interest from the government, I am sure there will be willingness from us," he said during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star at the Dhaka Sonargaon Hotel.

"If you think about good opportunities and the availability of resources, this is a very good



Martin Rama

time. Now, we have the resources to help [Bangladesh]," he said, adding that the WB had "relatively abundant resources" for Bangladesh in the last six years.

Martin, who came to Dhaka to attend an international conference on development options for

Dhaka towards 2035, said they could provide technical inputs to transform Dhaka.

"The vision is there. If it involves a few critical and important projects, we want to express our willingness to support them. Let's have a new comprehensive plan," he said.

"There have been many plans. If you are strategic, if you [government] think about Dhaka, there are three or four things that are needed to be done, and we will be happy to help."

"Dhaka is an unplanned city not because it does not have any plans. There are many plans," he said.

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## Kovind India's new president

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Ram Nath Kovind, the candidate of India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, was yesterday elected as the country's 14th president with an overwhelming majority of votes from lawmakers.

Kovind, 72, defeated opposition nominee Meira Kumar, a former diplomat and parliament speaker, getting more than 95 percent of the votes in an electoral college. Returning Officer for the polls Arunoch Mishra announced after manual counting of votes.

Kovind will be sworn in as president on July 25, a day after the five-year tenure of President Pranab Mukherjee ends. A commerce graduate and a lawyer by training, Kovind, who will be the second Dalit to hold the top constitutional position



Ram Nath Kovind

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Terrorism rose in Bangladesh last year: US

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Department of State has said while terrorist attacks in 2016 increased by 9 percent, at the same time Bangladesh experienced a significant increase in such activities.

However, the department praised Bangladesh's efforts and cooperation with the United States and international community in counter terrorism, law enforcement and strengthening control of its borders.

The US, in its annual "Country Report on Terrorism" released in Washington on Wednesday, said Bangladesh government articulated a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and made numerous arrests of terrorist suspects.

It observed that the Government of Bangladesh often attributed extremist violence to the political opposition and local



Fatema, on the rickshaw van, is an entrepreneur who started a business by collecting waste garments and turning them into clothes for children. She sells them to roadside shoppers in the capital. The photo was taken yesterday at Jatrabari, where she usually begins her journey back home after collecting scrap fabrics.

PHOTO: ANUSIS RAHMAN

## GULSHAN CAFÉ ATTACK 2 suspects killed in raid months ago

Say CTTC officials in meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Key "Neo-JMB" militants Basharuzzaman Chocolate and Mizanur Rahman alias Chhoto Mizan were killed during a raid by police on a militant den in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj about three months ago, a top counterterrorism official disclosed yesterday.

Basharuzzaman was a fund collector for "Neo-JMB" and Mizan was one of the suppliers of grenades and firearms used in the Gulshan café attack on July 1 last year, according to a police source.

Mosinul Islam, chief of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), confirmed the death of the two, sources of DMP's crime conference said.

Four militant suspects blew themselves up during the 12-hour raid on April 27 on the den at a mango orchard in Chapainawabganj, where they were holed up. At that time police only confirmed that Rafiqul Islam alias Abu, a member of the militant outfit, was among the dead.

Police learnt about the identities of two other suspects, Basharuzzaman and Mafizur, by interrogating a key militant suspect Sohel Mafizur, who was arrested earlier this month. There was also "circumstantial evidence" supporting Sohel's claim, said CTTC officials.

There will be DNA tests to formally identify them, they said.

Basharuzzaman had been on the run since he evaded

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