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Salinity seeping into northern groundwater

Finds WDB survey; excessive use of salt in fish farming blamed

PINAKI ROY

The salinity of the groundwater surrounding fish farms in the northern region has been on the rise as fish farmers have been using large quantities of salt in their ponds, a survey finds.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) surveyed the groundwater quality of around 40 monitoring wells in Puthia, Bagmara and Durgapur upazilas of Rajshahi; Singra and Naldanga upazilas in Natore; and Atrai upazila in Naogaon.

A monitoring well is used to measure or monitor the level, quality, quantity or movement of subsurface water.

The survey found that the EC (electric conductivity: the quantity of dissolved salt in water measured by an electronic device) of the water in those wells ranged from 400 to 1,400.

Anwar Zahid, director of groundwater hydrology of BWDB who led the survey, said, "We have found the EC

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3 MORE STORIES ON WORLD WATER DAY -- PAGE 3



RIPPLES OF POLLUTION ... As a vessel plies the Buriganga, the blackened ripples are proof of the intense pollution the waterbody is choking from. Once a mighty, thriving river, it has now become the dumping ground for various pollutants, including toxic chemicals, released from surrounding factories and homesteads -- hampering the biodiversity in and around the river. On this World Water Day, it is imperative to remember that the rivers are the country's lifeline.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Allow hassle-free return of 3 Transcom high-ups

SC asks authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

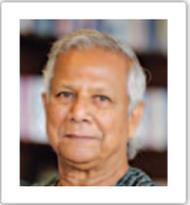
The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday granted protection for 72 hours to Transcom Group's Chairman Shahnaz Rahman and two other high-ups upon their return home from abroad and until their surrender before a lower court in connection with the cases filed over property disputes.

The two others who have been asked to surrender are Transcom Group's Chief Executive Officer Simeen Rahman and its Head of Strategy & Transformation Zaraf Aayat Hossain.

On February 22, Shahzreh Huq, younger daughter of Transcom Group's late chairman Latifur Rahman filed three cases with Gulshan Police Station bringing allegations of fraud and

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Prof Yunus honoured with Unesco award



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel peace laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus has been honoured with "The Tree of Peace" award from Unesco at the closing session of the XI Global Baku Forum.

Baku Forum is a renowned high-level event organised by the Nizami Ganjavi International Centre (NGIC), the Yunus Centre said in a press release yesterday.

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FIRST PHASE OF UPAZILA POLLS

Officials from EC, not admin, to be ROs, AROs

EC decision aimed at enhancing its capacity; election in 152 upazilas May 8

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has made its own officials the returning officers and assistant returning officers for the elections to 152 upazila parishads scheduled for May 8.

This is the first time the EC has asked its own workforce to conduct polls in so many places, EC officials said, adding that the tasks were usually shared by administration cadre officials.

For the May 8 elections, there are 59 returning officers (ROs), one for each district, and 152 assistant returning officers (AROs), one for each upazila.

Elections will be held in the rest 329 upazilas on May 23, May 29 and June 5.

District election officers or senior election officers are the ROs while upazila election officers are the AROs.

The commission has made the decision to develop the skills of its

officials, according to Ashok Kumar Debnath, additional secretary of the EC.

A notice regarding the development was issued last night.

In the next phases of the upazila parishad election, either the administration officials or the EC officials will do the task. They will not share the responsibility.

In the next phases of the upazila parishad election, either the administration officials or the EC officials will do the task. They will not

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

JnU suspends lecturer, relieves dept chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jagannath University yesterday suspended a lecturer following allegations that he sexually harassed a student.

During an emergency syndicate meeting, the JnU authorities decided to suspend Abu Shahed Emon, a lecturer at the film and television department, and relieve Prof Junaid Halim from the department chairman post for not helping the student after she filed a complaint.

Prof Abul Hossain of the social work department has been nominated to replace Prof Junaid, Vice

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GAZA CEASEFIRE

US moves draft resolution at UN

70 more Palestinians killed

AGENCIES

The United States has circulated for the first time a draft UN resolution calling for an "immediate" ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, as warnings grow of famine in besieged Gaza.

Washington had blocked previous Security Council texts using the word "immediate" but US top diplomat Antony Blinken confirmed the shift in position on Wednesday.

Blinken, who is to meet five Arab foreign ministers in Egypt yesterday, stressed any immediate truce must be linked to the release of hostages snatched by Palestinian militants during the October 7 attack that set off the war.

The Israeli bombardment of Gaza continued overnight with the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory saying at least 70 people had been killed, pushing the overall toll towards 32,000.

- Netanyahu tells US Republicans Gaza war will continue
- Death toll in enclave now 31,988

MV ABDULLAH

Negotiation with pirates yet to begin

Says ship-owning company

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Negotiations with the pirates who hijacked Bangladeshi bulk carrier MV Abdullah were yet to start, said the ship's owning firm.

It said there was no communication with the pirates yesterday. The 23 crew members are still hostages at the hands of the pirates.

Officials of the ship's owning company Kabir Group of Industries, popularly known as KSRM Group, had said that contact with the pirates was established through a third party on Wednesday.

Sources said the firm's

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Tigers bank on youth against experienced Lankans

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PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 22

Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:46	12:30	4:45	6:14	7:45
JAMAAT 4:56	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR
11	22		6:14
12	23	4:40	6:14
13	24	4:39	6:14



GIANTS OF THE SUNDARBANS

A saltwater crocodile spotted roaming the Sundarbans recently. Native to saltwater habitats, brackish wetlands and freshwater rivers, saltwater crocodiles are known as the largest living reptiles in the world. As a matter of fact, these opportunistic carnivores can prey on almost any animal that enters their territories, including sharks and humans. They often ambush their prey and swallow it whole. What is more interesting is that saltwater crocs have been found to sleep with one eye open, keeping one half of the brain awake and alert for predators. These giant but majestic beasts of the seas are often threatened by illegal killing and habitat loss, pushing them to the brink of endangerment.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

INDOMITABLE MARCH

The tripartite meeting: Mujib, Yahya, and Bhutto

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

March 22, 1971

On the morning of March 22, 1971, Bangabandhu called on Yahya. Bhutto was also present at the meeting. The three met face-to-face for the first time since the December elections. Bangabandhu was annoyed at the presence of Bhutto since he had told Yahya that direct negotiation with Bhutto was out of the question. Bhutto was also disturbed since he had the understanding from the "clarifications" sent by Yahya that such talks would be arranged once he was in Dhaka. [Richard Sisson and Leo E Rose, War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh, UCP 1990, pg-122]

Bhutto provides an account of the tripartite meeting in his memoir:

Mujibur Rahman then turned to the president and asked him if he had given his final approval to the proposals of the Awami League. The president reminded him that it was necessary for me [Bhutto] also to agree and for that reason I was present at the discussions. On that Mujibur Rahman remarked

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