

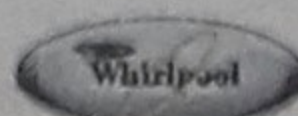


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## MONEY-WHITENING Muhith slams critics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday came down heavily on the people who criticised him for keeping the provision of whitening money, saying many of them had taken the advantage in the past.

"Many of those who are now opposing the provision of whitening money took the opportunity in the past. Where was their sense of morality then?" Muhith said this to the press at his secretariat office.

The finance minister said in April 1976, during the martial law regime, the opportunity was given for the first time. Later, during the 80s, 90s, and for last several years the provision had been kept almost continuously.

Asked whether the provision would be changed, Muhith said, "It is not my decision. It has been placed in the parliament and the cabinet will make final decision."

He also said, there would be an option for whitening

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

When bird watchers go to extreme lengths to have even a glimpse of a rare bird, this cuckoo pair sharing a meal on a tree in the botanical garden in the capital went (almost) unnoticed.

## Break-in at city money changer

Tk 14 lakh currency  
looted in afternoon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted local and foreign currency worth Tk 14.5 lakh from a money exchange centre in city's Malibagh yesterday.

A gang of seven in guise of customers looted Abdullah Money Exchange on DIT road around 2:15pm keeping its owner Abdullah-al-Harun and three others at gunpoint, Sub-inspector (SI) Aslam Hossain of Khilgaon Police Station told The Daily Star.

While speaking with the press Abdullah said the robbers in two groups entered the centre through two doors. One of them enquired about dollar-rate. Within moments some of them started shutting the doors and windows while the rest pulling pistols from their pockets held all at gunpoint and took them to the locker room.

The burglars tied the men at the centre inside the locker room and taped their mouths

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## Emajuddin summoned for contempt

SC passes no order  
on appeal against  
independence verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed to appear before it on July 2 in connection with a contempt of court petition against him.

The petition contained charges of making 'derogatory' statement against the HC judges who delivered the

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## Nat'l interest first

Reaffirms PM on Tipai issue; asks BNP to send its own team to site, submit report to JS for discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging main opposition BNP to send its own delegation to the Tipaimukh Dam site, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said decision on giving consent to the dam's construction would be made with the country's interest in mind.

"I request the BNP to send its own team there and submit its report to the parliament after returning. The parliamentary standing committee team too will go there and submit report. The Awami League government will then decide what will be good for the country,"

she said.

The prime minister was speaking at a discussion at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital. Awami League (AL) organised the programme to mark its 60th founding anniversary, which was on June 23.

Hasina, president of the AL, said no decision regarding Tipaimukh Dam would be made that would put the national interest in question.

The AL chief alleged that the BNP is trying to make the Tipaimukh Dam a political issue to mislead people. "But I have my belief that

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## Tannery relocation needs more time

Industries ministry says HC's 8-month  
deadline not enough

SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

Uncertainty looms large over relocation of tanneries in Hazaribagh within the next eight months, a deadline given by the High Court, as the industries ministry yesterday said at least 18 months will be needed to complete the job.

Being apprised of the present state of the government's move to relocate the tanneries to Savar from Hazaribagh, a parliamentary body yesterday observed it might not be possible to relocate the tanneries even in 18 months. It said

legal and financial complexities over setting up of a central effluent treatment plant (ETP) have been raised and these could delay the move.

"It is not wise to wait for eight months. The condition of the Buriganga is so bad that even bacteria cannot survive there," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chief of the parliamentary sub-committee formed by the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry to find out causes for river pollution and recommend solutions.

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## EMERGENCY PERIOD Khaleda for probe into 'repression'

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the government to immediately take effective steps to investigate each incident of 'repression' on politicians, businessmen, and citizens' during the emergency period and hold trials of the people responsible.

In a statement issued on the occasion of International Day Against

Torture to be observed

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## JS body pulls for cars, mobile sets

Recommends tax-cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended that the government reduce the proposed import tax on different commodities including second-hand cars of up to 2,000cc, cellphone sets and raw materials for furniture.

"We have recommended reduction of the import tax on second-hand cars of up to 2,000cc considering the middle-income group," said AHM Mostafa Kamal, popularly known as Lotus Kamal.

Kamal, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry, was talking to reporters after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

The committee at the same time recommended that the finance minister rethink the proposed import tax rate on mobile

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## Low-cost nat'l gas entities ignored as IOCs thrive

Petrobangla paying int'l oil cos half a billion dollars  
a year; energy sector's financial health at risk

SHARIER KHAN

Due to Petrobangla and the government's extreme reliance on foreign investors since the nineties, international oil companies (IOCs) are now supplying the major share of the country's gas needs, relegating the output of the low-cost national operators and creating huge financial pressure on the nation.

Latest Petrobangla data shows oil companies are producing 970 million

cubic feet gas per day (mmcf), while national entities like Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and the Sylhet Gas Field companies are pumping up to 885 mmcf.

Consequently, the oil companies are taking around \$40 million as payment and tax benefit from Petrobangla for their gas sales. This totals a bill of around \$480 million or more than Tk 3,300 crore.

This monthly bill would have been double if Petrobangla, under the

Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with the oil companies, did not have enough 'free gas'. Luckily, Petrobangla's share of gas in the massive Bibiyana field, Jalalabad and Moulavibazar are dominating.

Yet Petrobangla's earning profile cannot make enough profit to justify increasing the reliance on oil companies' gas from, at least, onshore areas where the national companies also operate.

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## 6 more swine flu cases confirmed

Health experts still find  
no reason to panic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six more persons were diagnosed with deadly swine flu caused by H1N1 virus on Tuesday, the government confirmed yesterday within a week of announcing the first detection in the country.

But people need not panic as the condition of the infected is not critical at all, health experts said.

The infected are aged between two and a half years and 20 years and most of them have recently returned from the USA in the same flight as the first victim—a youth aged 19 who was diagnosed with the deadly flu on June 18.

All the seven infected persons returned from the US in the same flight last Thursday, said Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director

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