



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

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24 PAGES PLUS STAR INSIGHT PRICE: Tk 10.00



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Shrinking Teesta wreaks havoc on life in North

Withdrawal of upstream water by India drastically reduces flow in last 25 years severely affecting people in the region

PINAKI ROY
The withdrawal of Teesta waters by India continues to play havoc with the lives of the people in Bangladesh's northern region.
During the dry season, the flow of water in the river's downstream dwindles to 1,000 cusecs from around 5,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second), say sources at the Water Development Board's hydrology department.
It has been like this for the last 25 years for Gazoldoba barrage and some other dams built by India in the upper basin.
Though a signatory to the 1997 UN Watercourse Convention, which stipulates a "no-harm principle" in the use and conservation of trans-boundary rivers, India takes up most of the Teesta waters during the lean period, spelling disaster for the people in the land downstream.
"The Teesta has been shrinking fast for the last 10 years. Before 2000, we didn't dare to swim the river. Now we cross it by



walking," said Taher Mollah of Char Gobordhon in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat district.
Water board officials said the volume of water in the Teesta drops steeply in



Massive shoals are seen in the middle of the Teesta at Kaunia upazila in Rangpur as the river's downstream is shrinking fast. A Google Earth image, inset, shows how water of the river is being diverted through a canal from Gazoldoba barrage in the Indian state of Paschim Banga.

PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

This photo taken yesterday shows a segment of the Khilgaon Flyover subsided a few inches. Vehicular movement on the flyover was suspended yesterday evening.

SUBSIDENCE Khilgaon flyover closed for 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The authorities yesterday closed the Khilgaon flyover in the city for 24 hours after a part of the six-year-old structure slightly sank displacing three shuttering plates.
Visiting the spot, Syed Mahbur Rahman, superintendent engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), said concrete plates on the surface at the junction of the flyover subsided by a couple of centimetres at three places.
The authorities concerned formed a committee last night comprised of experts to find out why it sank and what can be done to fix it.
"Hopefully we will come to know by noon [Saturday noon] whether plying of light vehicles should be permitted or not," said DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka while visiting the spot around 10:00pm yesterday. "We cannot make any comment about the reason for such sinking before getting reports from the experts."
Mahbur told The Daily Star on the flyover last night, "The joints are supposed to be on the same level, but they are not." He said the shuttering plates (placed between segments of the structure) are supposed to expand in the summer and shrink in winter that is why there are gaps between plates. But one plate forcing

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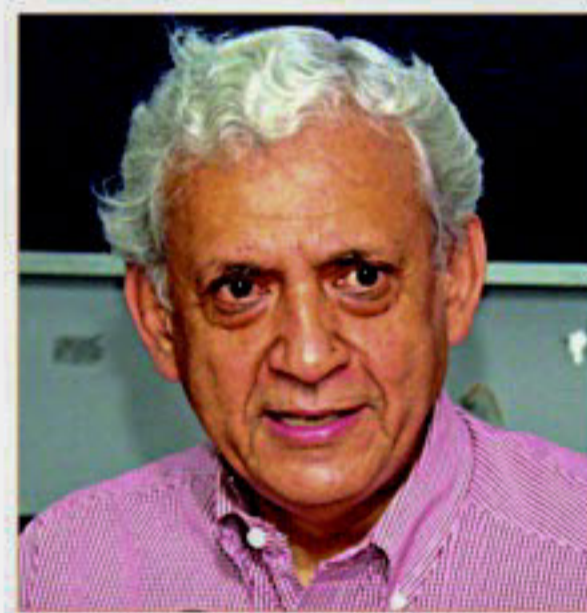
'Gang leader' confesses kidney trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Tareque Azam, a key figure of the ring involved in kidney trade, yesterday confessed to working as the coordinator among gangs active in the capital and in Joypurhat.
He got involved in the illicit business in 2006 and so far arranged transplants for 30 to 32 persons, he said. For each kidney, his gang received around three to five lakh taka but each victim was paid only Tk 20,000 to 40,000.
Detective Branch of Police arrested Tareque, son of MA Azam Chowdhury of South Hossainpur of Begumganj in Noakhali, at Fakirapool in the capital on Thursday

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Bangladesh gained a lot

Achievements dimmed by Teesta deal delay, says Gowher Rizvi
REJAUL KARIM BYRON and PORIMOL PALMA
Achievements made by Bangladesh during the Indian premier's visit are very substantial but they have been overshadowed by the postponement of the Teesta deal, said Prime Minister's International Affairs Governor Gowher Rizvi.
The adviser has successfully resolved longstanding issues that were believed to be beyond resolution and some of them date as far back as 1947, he claimed.
The problem of the enclaves and exclaves--which is of enormous significance to 55,000 people living there--has been solved. The people in those places are in a state of limbo without the benefits which citizens have a right to like healthcare, schools, security and transport. The unfettered 24-hour access through Tin Bigha to



Gowher Rizvi

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Taste of freedom Enclave dwellers rejoice as Tin Bigha opens for 24hrs

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat
Jalal Uddin, 58, of Angorpota village, had diarrhoea on 25 June. His condition turned critical at night and needed to be taken to a doctor. Seeing a doctor would require going to the mainland through the Tin Bigha Corridor. But India's Border Security Force did not allow him to cross the corridor for it was "night time" when movement through it was not allowed.
Jalal died that night at home without treatment, his son Taher Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday.
With India opening the corridor on Thursday allowing 24-hour access of Bangladeshis living in Dahagram-Angorpota enclave to mainland following an agreement with Bangladesh, some 16,000 of its people have now hopes of a better future.
"At least, none will die without treatment here because we are now connected with the mainland," Taher said in his reaction.
Yakub Ali, a schoolteacher of Dahagram High School, crossed the corridor seven times on Thursday night.
Not that he crossed it so many times on business. "All I was trying is to get the feeling of walking freely through the corridor. Before its opening, we didn't know how it feels to be free. We were somewhat confined during night," he said.

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AMINBAZAR TRAGEDY Locals want punishment of instigators

SHAHEEN MOLLAH
When the six students were bludgeoned to death mercilessly at Bardeshi village in Aminbazar about two months ago, almost every villager had branded them robbers. Even just before the judicial probe committee submitted its report on Thursday, the villagers were adamant that the boys were robbers.
But the impression of the villagers about the deceased started to change after media reports on the probe committee finding that the victims were innocent students, not robbers. They now realise their mistake.

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