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The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

Your Right to Know

28 PAGES PLUS STAR INSIGHT PRICE: Tk 10.00

REGD. NO. DA 781 | VOL. XXI No. 247 | ASHWIN 9, 1418 BS | SHAWAL 25, 1432 HIJRI



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Turag pillars to be reset

Fresh move to ascertain foreshores as Gazipur dist administration set up pillars wrongly along dry-season waterline

TAWFIQUE ALI
Gazipur district administration is to remove all boundary pillars set up wrongly along the dry-season waterline of the Turag and Balu rivers, as they excluded foreshores while demarcating the rivers. The district administration failed to comply with a High Court direction which identifies foreshores as integral part of rivers, says a special ministerial committee report submitted in late May. As per a decision of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority in mid-August, a team comprised of four authorities will now fix the flawed markings. Officials of the district administration, BIWTA, land survey and records and Public Works Department will be in the team. The joint team is going to identify the

high water level and actual foreshores within a week, said Kamal Uddin Talukder, deputy commissioner of Gazipur, last Monday. Resetting the pillars would imply a waste of nearly Tk 1 crore, said an official wishing anonymity. Talukder admitted leasing out of foreshores to private ownership over time even though those are government land and integral part of the rivers. He said recovering the land will cancel private ownerships. A 10-member special committee, headed by State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman, visited the Turag and Balu starting from Kamarpara Bridge in Tongi on May 20 to see whether the pillars were set up correctly.

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This river-boundary pillar of the Turag was seen almost submerged by the river last month, testifying how the authorities concerned got it wrong when they were demarking the river area. The inset photo taken in April shows the pillars placed inside its foreshores.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

PM addresses UN today
Seeks Qatar's support in UNSC membership bid
UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is set to deliver a speech at the 66th United Nations General Assembly in New York today. Like the previous year, the prime minister's address will be in Bangla spoken by more than 300 million people across the world. She is likely to reiterate her appeal to the UNGA to declare her mother tongue as one of the official languages of the United Nations. Meanwhile, Hasina has urged Qatar to help Bangladesh get the UN Security Council membership. The premier made the request when she met President of the 66th UNGA Abdulaziz

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Flight debacle hits Biman

Passengers face ordeal

SHARIFUL ISLAM
With every minute Azizur Rahman's frustration grew and it was evident in his pacing inside a hotel room in Dhaka. He was really worried that his job in London could be gone by the time he reaches the United Kingdom. Jobs are really hard to get these days of sluggish world economy. "I was supposed to join work today," said Azizur later that Thursday afternoon before meeting the Biman managing director. His flight to London scheduled for early Wednesday was cancelled. Azizur, who works for a fashion designer house, was among 230 Biman passengers who had got stranded in different hotels in Dhaka and among 30 who were staying at Hotel Aero-Link International Ltd in Uttara. Azizur was lucky. His two brothers, a cousin and he were able to get on a flight of another airline Thursday night after having talks with the Biman managing director. He and his brothers came to Bangladesh on a 10-day leave to see their ailing grandmother. While Azizur and his brothers left for London, the other passengers were still stuck in Dhaka. Their ordeals started triggering strong resentment and anger. Nazrul Islam Chowdhury, who is still languishing in a hotel in Uttara, said, "Once I get back to London, I'll sit

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TEESTA DEAL NEGOTIATIONS

Mamata was never ignored

REZAUL KARIM

A chronology of events and diplomatic moves suggests that Bangladesh never ignored Paschim Banga Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the negotiations with India over the failed deal on sharing the Teesta river's water. Dhaka and New Delhi were rather in constant touch with Kolkata during the entire process of negotiations, diplomatic sources in both capitals told The Daily Star as the paper tried to understand why Mamata opposed the deal in a last-minute change of heart. The deal was scheduled to be signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's official visit to Bangladesh in the first week of September. But it fell through after Mamata objected to the deal and pulled out from Manmohan's Dhaka



Mamata Banerjee

entourage. Mamata said she was not consulted about the final version of the deal that reportedly contained a 50-50 sharing formula. The Teesta failure embarrassed both New Delhi and Dhaka and overshadowed whatever successes Manmohan's trip produced. Mamata was aware of the proportion of water to be shared by the two countries since the negotiations had started, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the dispute. Manmohan publicly said he himself was in touch with Mamata for a long time on the Teesta issue, and sent National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon twice to Kolkata. He said all technical

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AL revs up grassroots

Holds councils of all ward and union units from next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League will start holding councils at ward and union levels early next month to elect new leadership for the grassroots. The party took the decision at a meeting yesterday. Acting AL president Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury presided over the meeting, held at Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi. Briefing journalists afterwards, Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said, "We want to complete all grassroots councils before holding the national council in July next year. Through the councils, party workers will elect honest, competent and tested leadership." The last national council was held on July 24, 2009, when Hasina was re-elected president and Ashraf was elected general secretary. According to the party constitution, the national council must be held in every three years. Hanif said councils at ward and union levels will begin in the first week of October to be completed by

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PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian youth holding his national flag hurls a stone at an Israeli army watchtower in a checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah yesterday. Israeli police were on high alert across the country, poised to respond to any unrest resulting from a Palestinian bid to seek UN membership.

Palestine makes history at UN

Seeks full UN membership; Israel regrets

AFP, United Nations

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas made history in his people's long quest for statehood as he formally asked the United Nations on Friday to admit Palestine as a full member state. Snubbing fierce opposition from Israel and its regional ally the United States, Abbas handed a formal application to UN chief Ban Ki-moon at 11:35am (1535 GMT) buoyed by more than 120 nations which have already recognised a Palestinian state. He won huge applause and a partial standing ovation as he later stepped up to address the UN General Assembly and vowed the Palestinians were ready to return to peace talks if Israeli settlement activities cease. Waving a copy of the request, Abbas said he had submitted an "application for the admission of Palestine on the basis of the June 4, 1967 borders" with Jerusalem as its capital. Explaining why he had pressed the Palestinian bid despite the opposition,

Abbas said all previous peace efforts "were repeatedly smashed against the rocks of the positions of the Israeli government." But the Palestinian leader stressed the Palestinians did not want to "isolate or delegitimise" Israel. The Palestinians only wanted to end Israel's settlement policy which he said will "destroy chances" of a two-state solution to the decades-only conflict. "This settlement policy threatens to also undermine the structure of the Palestinian National Authority and even end its existence," he said. Reaction from Israel was swift, with a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu telling AFP, "We regret the step." Ban will now pass the landmark request to the UN Security Council, but a vote on admitting the Palestinians as a full member state could take weeks, leaving time for more diplomatic wrangling. UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said the

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