

## Teesta deal

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organised by the BRAC University Business Club.

Terming the existing Teesta negotiation policy a "wrong" one, Akbar Ali said now that both Dhaka and Delhi have agreed on basin-wise management of the Teesta river, it has created the opportunity for negotiations also on the dams built on it.

Speaking at the discussion, eminent water resources expert and Vice Chancellor of the university Dr Ainun Nishat urged the government to think about a permanent treaty on the Teesta water sharing.

He noted that the final draft agreement on sharing the river water is for an interim period.

Dr Nishat, who was in the government negotiation team on the Teesta in 1989, said the Teesta issue has become a political one, and it needs political commitment of both the governments to solve it.

He emphasised conducting a proper scientific study on the flow of the Teesta, and said the flood management issue should come up in the ongoing negotiation process.

Both the speakers said while negotiating water sharing of an international river, the countries concerned have to take into account a "third party"--the river itself -- which also needs water for its own survival. So, the negotiators should keep adequate water for the river itself.

Akbar Ali said, "I will not be happy even if Bangladesh gets more water than India but the environmental aspect of the Teesta is not taken care of in the negotiations." The river has to be kept alive for the survival of Bangladesh, he added.

Air Commodore (Rtd) Ishfaq Elahi Choudhury, registrar of BRAC University, asked the students to know more about the rivers in the country.

He said rivers and waterways have not received due priority under successive governments. "The present shipping minister seems busier dealing with driving licence of bus and truck drivers than maintaining navigability of the waterways," he added.

## 700 students

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700 students from three high schools participating.

Director General of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Noman-ur-Rashid inaugurated the daylong fair among students from St Joseph School, Mohammadpur Preparatory Higher Secondary School and Tejgaon Govt Girls High School and their teachers and family members.

The initiative, aiming at improving English learning skills of the secondary-level students, is being carried out under English in Schools (EIS) programme of The Daily Star and Robi Axiata Ltd, a leading mobile phone operator.

The fair -- targeting to cover students of 1,000 schools across the country -- is set to be arranged in 300 schools, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, till April next year. Adcomm Ltd is the creative and event partner of the fair.

Popular movie Lion King was screened at the beginning of the fair, based on which the students took part in several interesting activities including spot quiz, vocabulary test, one-word question and extempore speech, writing competition and etiquette test.

Winners of the competitions were awarded prizes at the end of the function that turned joyous amid students' enthusiasm and jubilation.

The three-year EIS programme, initiated two years ago, aims to cover some seven lakh students in 1,000 schools -- 317 public and 683 non-government schools -- across the country. Three complimentary copies of The Daily Star with a special page of English lessons are given to these schools five days a week under the EIS initiative.

## Stock slump

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a set of protest programmes including human chain, rally, sit-in and hunger strike unto death.

The market lost around 600 points in the last one month, and 3,500 points from its peak at 8,918 points recorded on December 5 last year.

The SEC chief has informed the government of the measures it has already taken to improve the market situation.

He also sat with the National Board of Revenue yesterday morning when he requested the NBR authorities to reduce tax at source on brokerage commission by half to 0.05 percent.

The government doubled the ratio to 0.1 percent from this fiscal year.

"The NBR has agreed to reduce the tax at source on brokerage commission.

"We assured them that the investors will benefit

from the tax cut," Khairul Hossain said.

The market regulator will send letters to the stock exchanges, stockbrokers and Central Depository of Bangladesh Limited.

"If any stockbroker violates the instruction or if any investor does not get the tax reduction benefit, we will take action against the stockbroker," he said.

The SEC also requested the NBR to withdraw the 10 percent tax on mutual funds also imposed from this fiscal year.

At a meeting with asset management companies in the afternoon, the NBR in principle decided to withdraw the tax, said Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat, chairman of Race Asset Management.

The NBR also decided in principle to withdraw the five percent tax on private placement of mutual fund units.

## Century-old trees

**FROM PAGE 20**  
trees yesterday following vigorous protest and resentment from the people of Durgapur and Purbadhola upazila.

Chief Executive Officer of Netrakona Zila Parishad Aftab Ali told The Daily Star yesterday that his office did not receive any order from the High Court; therefore he could not order the workers to stop chopping down the trees. Two trees, each over 150 years old, were felled yesterday amid protest from locals, including the Garo community.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Quamruzzaman Mia said he could not do much because the trees belong to the zila parishad.

Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Durgapur, said he can do nothing until the aggrieved party lodges a complaint.

The Netrakona Zila Parishad and Netrakona Forest Department had decided to sell over 1,600 trees, including 200 century-old trees, in the name of developing a 37km road connecting Durgapur upazila and Shamgonj Bazar in Purbadhola upazila.

Tender were floated by the Netrakona Forest Department and Netrakona Zila Parishad on June 20 and August 24. It is alleged that 35 organisations won the tenders at throw-away prices.

Locals including the leaders of different indigenous groups expressed disapproval of felling tree felling. Swapan Hajong, leader of Hajong community, said the cutting of trees will affect the balance of the environment and natural beauty of the area, including

the Durgapur tourist spot.

Meanwhile, Liton Mrong, general secretary of Garo Baptists Convention, said 26 of the century-old trees belong to the GBC and they have been sold without informing the GBC. He termed the act of selling the trees of GBC a violation of the laws of the land.

According to Netrakona Roads and Highways Department, the government allocated Tk 27 crore for developing the road. Sub-Assistant Engineer of Netrakona RHD Sayeeduddin said the trees were sold through due tender process to make the road 5.5 metres wide from 3.7 metre.

Locals urged the government not to cut and sell the trees including the century-old trees. They said the road could be widened mostly without felling trees and in one or two places trees on one side of the road could be chopped down for widening the road.

Jalaluddin Talukder, former lawmaker from Netrakona-1 constituency, said there is no need to cut the trees to widen the road but it was done to satisfy a vested group.

Abdur Razzak, a mayoral candidate for the Durgapur municipality polls, said the area would hardly attract tourists if the century-old trees are chopped down.

Chief Executive Officer of Netrakona Zila Parishad Aftab Ali, however, said there is no way the road could be widened without cutting the trees. The Roads and Highways Department issued a letter to clear the roadside of trees, he claimed.

## Fictitious

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happened in the Padma Bridge project," he told a group of reporters at his Secretariat office.

The allegation of corruption is fictitious as no contract for the construction work of the bridge was signed and no donor's fund was released or spent under the project, the minister said, adding that even the construction work of the bridge has not started yet.

Abul Hossain's comment came against the backdrop of World Bank's allegation of corruption in the project. World Bank (WB), which has signed a \$1.2 billion loan deal with the government, claimed that it has proof of corruption.

The WB has informed the government of the matter in a letter, but neither the WB nor the government made it public and thus nothing specific about the WB's allegation could be known.

Sources from different quarters indicate that a company of an influential minister might be involved in the corruption.

The communications minister alleged that a quarter has been conspiring against the implementation of the project. "This quarter also tried to delay loan signing with the donors," he said.

About the WB's claim that

it has evidence of corruption, the minister said, "If they have evidence, they should provide it to us. We will not be able to do anything if they do not provide us with evidence but only seek action."

Since the allegation has already been raised, he suggested the WB carry out a joint investigation along with the Anti-Corruption Commission and Transparency International Bangladesh.

"If they do, they will come to know that much transparency and integrity is being maintained in the project," the minister said.

In this regard, he pointed out that there is no allegation against the government-funded spending in the project. "We could easily inquire if any allegation is raised," said the minister, adding that the government has so far spent more than Tk 1,000 crore for land-acquisition, compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement works under the project.

Asked about the sources of fund if the WB does not give its promised loan, Abul Hossain said, "It is up to the government to make the decision."

He, however, hoped that all the donors would provide their fund, and construction work of the bridge would begin within the tenure of the present government.

## Young Turks

**FROM PAGE 20**  
wins the next general elections.

Khaleda at a grand rally in Sylhet on Tuesday said the younger generation will take the helm of the country if her party is voted to power.

An influential mid-level BNP leader Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu termed the party chairperson's announcement as timely. "It will have a great impact on party politics. The young leaders will be able to do their best to ensure country's welfare."

He said people and party men have already accepted Tarique Rahman's leadership. Besides, he has visited the country vastly which has helped him to develop leadership qualities.

Tarique, senior vice-chairman of BNP, is currently in London on bail in several corruption cases. He left the country on September 2008 for treatment.

Party standing committee member Tariqul Islam said the country's youth have got a message from the opposition leader's statement.

Massive turnouts in the two-day road march to Sylhet proved that BNP is on the right track, insisted the former minister. "Our plan to involve the people with our movement has been successful through the first road march."

While talking to The Daily Star, several senior BNP leaders hoped the enthusiasm received from Sylhet road march will boost the morale of leaders and workers of the other regions.

Party rank and file believe this success will contribute to make the upcoming road marches towards Rajshahi, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Rangpur even more successful.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will lead the next road march towards Rajshahi on October 18. She will address three major rallies at Bogra, Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj during the three-day programme.

A group of party leaders led by standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan have already left the capital for Bogra and Rajshahi to coordinate the event.

## Envoy

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Bangladeshis who were working in a road construction project in Riyadh.

The HC also asked the ministries of foreign and labour affairs to investigate the role of Bangladesh embassy officials in saving the workers' lives and submit the investigation reports in eight weeks.

The court issued a rule upon the embassy officials to explain in four weeks why their 'inaction or failure' to save the lives of the Bangladeshi citizens should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, it asked the officials to explain why they should not be directed to provide adequate support and legal assistance to all Bangladeshi citizens abroad in future, if necessary.

The HC bench of Justice Farid Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif came up with the order and rule following the writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

Deputy Attorney General Motahar Hossain Sajú opposed the writ petition, saying that the government officials concerned had taken necessary steps to save the lives of Bangladeshi citizens in Saudi Arabia.

Despite Bangladesh's repeated pleas for clemency, Saudi authorities executed the eight Bangladeshi workers for their involvement in a robbery and murder of an Egyptian security guard in Riyadh in 2007.

Meanwhile, Caram Asia, a regional rights body for migrants, yesterday demanded that Saudi Arabia temporarily stops executing death penalties and review cases of the prisoners currently under death sentence.

It made the call in a statement to the Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and Minister of the Interior Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

## AL fails to back either candidate

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contest the October 30 election. The returning officer will allocate polls symbols today.

A number of senior AL leaders had earlier said either of the two would pull out on the last date for withdrawal.

The AL high command, including party President Sheikh Hasina, held a series of meetings with Shamim and Ivy to cajole one of the two into quitting. Hasina herself sat thrice with the two separately.

On Sunday, the party at a meeting between Hasina and some senior leaders at Gono Bhavan "unofficially decided" to back Ivy in the polls. As a "reward" for pulling out, meeting sources had told The Daily Star, Shamim would be offered posts in the party and in the government.

The move failed as Shamim, who now has no party post, reportedly refused to accept those "rewards".

Asked about the next

course of action, AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader said the party will soon decide on whom to give support.

"Both Shamim and Ivy are good candidates. As none of them withdrew, we'll decide in a day or two as to who will get party backing," he said yesterday.

However, Narayanganj lawmaker Abdullah-Al-Kaisar told The Daily Star on Tuesday night after a meeting with Sheikh Hasina that if Shamim and Ivy fail to reach an agreement, they will both be free to run in the election. "In that case, the party would neither support nor put pressure on either to step aside," he said.

Meanwhile, both Shamim and Ivy conducted campaigns on a limited scale in the newly-formed city corporation yesterday with supporters of both the camps expecting to eventually win the party support.

The main opposition BNP-affiliated candidate Taimur Alam Khandoker

also held door-to-door campaigns.

Asked about party backing, Ivy said, "My party never asked me to pull out. But I'm still facing pressure from different quarters to quit."

She said she would not yield to force.

Shamim, on the other hand, claimed that the party has already backed him.

Earlier in the morning, supporters of Shamim and Ivy gathered in front of the returning officer's office, each camp hoping the candidate of the other camp to step down.

Two other mayoral hopefuls -- SM Akram, convener of the district AL and Habibullah Kanchpuri, ousted president of Awami Olama League -- withdrew their candidatures. Seventeen ward councillor hopefuls also pulled out.

In another development, television programmes of local channels remained off-air from around 5:30pm to 6:45pm yesterday.

Abdul Karim Babu, who

controls the cable service in the town, said it happened due to technical glitches.

Locals, however, said that Babu is a close aide to Jatiya Party MP Nasim Osman, brother of Shamim Osman, and that he deliberately took the programmes off-air, as the local channels were running news that Ivy is still in the race.

Babu himself is a councillor hopeful in the October 30 polls.

## Berlusconi seeks confidence vote to save coalition

REUTERS, Rome

President Giorgio Napolitano expressed deep concern about the viability of Italy's government yesterday as Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi scrambled to quell an internal rebellion by calling a confidence vote.

Napolitano talked of "acute tensions and uncertainties" in the center-right coalition and commentators said there was a growing possibility of elections next spring, a year ahead of schedule.

In an unusually blunt statement, the president asked if the Berlusconi government still had the necessary unity to pass urgent measures for the country and demanded that Berlusconi offer "a credible response" to the nation.

Berlusconi will address parliament on Thursday and ask for a vote of confidence, Fabrizio Cicchitto, leader of center-right parliamentarians in the lower house, said.

The vote will likely be held on Friday after a parliamentary debate. Berlusconi would have to resign if he loses.

## 2 workers die

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Pirganj in Rangpur and Delwar, 19, son of Sultan Ahmad of Maniknagar in Bogra.

According to sources, the accident occurred when the workers entered the tank to work.

The injured Nizam Uddin, 23, and Khokan, 25, were admitted to a local private clinic.

## Stalker

**FROM PAGE 20**  
four-month-pregnant wife of army person Sohel Talukdar of Magura village under Rajshahi union. A teacher of Purbasha Shujonkathi Government Primary School, Sharmin was the daughter of Shahjahan Sarder of Shanuhar village under Goila union.

Gomosta of the same Shanuhar village is also married and known to be a drug addict, locals said.

Agitated over the death Sharmin's colleagues and locals staged a demonstration in the area demanding capital punishment to the killer and announced a mourning programme and closure of primary schools in Agoljehara today.

Locals and witnesses said Gomosta intercepted Sharmin around 4:15pm yesterday on her way to home from school. They engaged in altercation and when she refused to agree to marry him and he slapped her on the face.

As she protested the assault, Gomosta stabbed her repeatedly and fled the scene.

Locals rescued Sharmin and took her to Goila Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared her dead at 5:00pm.

Later, police raided different places and arrested Gomosta from Guptar Haat area in the evening.

Sharmin's body was sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for autopsy, said Ashok Kumar Nandi, officer-in-charge of Agoljehara Police Station.

The victim's family said being fed up of Gomosta's relentless stalking, they married her off to Sohel when she was just 17 years' old and lodged several general diaries with Agoljehara Police Station.

Upazila Awami League Convenor Yusuf Molla had warned Gomosta several times over harassing Sharmin, said one of her family members.

## Govt to seek WB help

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Presidency (INT), the WB's independent arm which investigates corruption, the ACC asked for documents and information on the project.

Under the rules, the INT will cooperate with the ACC only after receiving a formal request from either the finance minister or the Economic Relations Division (ERD) secretary, a finance ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The World Bank has recently written to the government about alleged corruption in the project, but the details were not made public.

However, in an e-mail reply yesterday to a query from The Daily Star, World Bank Country Director in Bangladesh Ellen Goldstein said, "We will not proceed until we are fully satisfied on the fraud and corruption front."

"This is in the interest of the people of Bangladesh," she said.

Bangladesh officials said the government would act only on the basis of the ACC investigation. To make the

ACC probe report acceptable to all parties, the finance minister is seeking the bank's cooperation

Farrukh Ahmed, director general of the ACC, told a press conference yesterday that the World Bank was yet to reply to its request for evidence. The ACC will conduct its probe on the basis of the WB's documents relating to the allegations.

The World Bank conveyed its decision about halting the loan in a letter to Muhiyeh during his visit to Washington to attend the WB's annual meeting last month.

Finance ministry sources have said the WB has recommended an investigation into the graft allegations and bringing about a change at the high level of the communications ministry.

On his return from Washington, the finance minister held a meeting with the prime minister. They have decided to issue a written statement through a press conference explaining the government's stand on the subject. It was also decided that the government would convey its position to the WB as well.

Officially said the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had been working on preparing the statement.

The government has decided against making any changes at the top level of the communications ministry merely on the perceived allegations of corruption. It, however, understands that such action is politically sensitive for the government, the finance ministry officials said.

In her e-mail reply to The Daily Star, the World Bank country director said: "The World Bank is committed to good governance and anti-corruption issues. As we have said from the outset, we will not proceed until we are fully satisfied on the fraud and corruption front. This is in the interests of the people of Bangladesh. We can confirm that our Vice President for South Asia has recently visited Bangladesh where she met with the Prime Minister and raised concerns about investigations regarding the Padma Bridge Project. Their dialogue is ongoing."

## Two processions

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Shamsul Alam Chowdhury.

Col Shamsul Alam, who is the fourth prosecution witness to the carnage case, also said two groups with three armed jawans in each made Maj Shahnewaj and Maj Saleh run with their hands up on February 25.

"After a few moments I heard gunshots," the witness, who was then a Lt Col and the then commanding officer of 44 Rifles Battalion in Pilkhana, told the Metropolitan Session Judge's court set up at Alia Madrasa playground in the capital.

The bodies of Maj Shahnewaj and Maj Saleh were later recovered.

During his deposition for over two hours, Col Shamsul Alam also narrated how before his very eyes two jawans gunned down Subeder Abul Kashem on the first day of the mutiny on a road near Darbar Hall in Pilkhana. All these took place before 11:30am, he continued.

Col Shamsul Alam watched the brutal acts through the windows of a room on the second floor, residence of Subeder Ismail, of JCO quarters near Darbar Hall. Ismail and four other JCOs (Junior Commanding Officer) kept him hidden there till around 4:00pm on February 26.

"On February 26 around noon, I heard some jawans shouting that BDR men were fleeing," said Col Shamsul Alam, adding that soon a procession entered Pilkhana through Gate-5 and took a detour after reaching a place between Darbar Hall and Rifles School.

Between 1:30pm and 2:00pm, another procession entered Pilkhana through

the same entrance and went out likewise the previous one after reaching Darbar Hall, the witness continued, "Perhaps, many people went out of the premises with the processions."

According to the witness, though power was disconnected in and around Darbar Hall after Maghrib prayers on February 25, he could see an ambulance and a pickup van, with their head lights off but signal lights blinking, were ferrying between Darbar Hall and 13 Rifles Battalion.

"Sweepers were seen going into Darbar Hall with dustcarts and buckets. Some of them were heading towards 13 Rifles Battalion carrying something heavy on ground sheets," added Col Shamsul Alam.

He said around 10:00am on the second day of the mutiny, he heard some jawans chanting slogan, "Long live DG Towhid", when the then deputy assistant director (DAD) of BDR reached the spot in a jeep.

During his deposition, Col Shamsul Alam expressed his earnest gratitude to Islamil, his family and four other JCOs who risked their lives to save his. The four JCOs are nayeab subeders Saiful and Rahim, Subeder Siraj and Havilder Zakir.

Sources said the five JCOs who saved Col Shamsul Alam's life during the carnage are all prosecution witnesses.

After recording the deposition, the makeshift court asked the counsel for prime accused Towhidul Islam, former DAD of BDR, to cross-examine the witness. However, the court was adjourned till October 19 just a question later.

Earlier in the day, the defence had completed

cross-examining the third prosecution witness Lt Col Mohammad Abu Tasnim. The court witnessed a pandemonium created with prosecution lawyers rebuking a defence lawyer. The defence lawyer asked the witness not to give explanations when asked for suggestions.

A total of 57 army officers were brutally killed in the mutiny at the BDR, now Border Guard Bangladesh, headquarters in Pilkhana. Seventeen others were also killed and most of their mutilated bodies were retrieved later from mass graves near the playground of 13 Rifles Battalion.

Col Shamsul Alam also gave a vivid description of how the mutiny broke out from Darbar hall and rebel jawans started firing arms and his agonising moments in Pilkhana and finally how he was set free at 4:00pm on February 26, 2009.

Meanwhile, police yesterday arrested a "fake" lawyer in the court while he was handing over Tk 30,000 and a cell phone to detained former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Pintu, who is also an accused in BDR mutiny cases.

The arrestee was identified as Nahidul Islam, general secretary of Lalbagh Police Station unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal. Police found no evidence of the detainee being a lawyer.

Additional deputy commissioner Masudur Rahman said Chawkbazar police arrested Nahid around 12:30 when he was trying to hand over the items identifying himself as a lawyer.

Police seized the money, cellphone set and a black cloak that Nahid used as a lawyer's outfit.