

SOMETHING FOR BURIGANGA

University students attempt to clean a portion of the river

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2ND ROUND NOT IMPOSSIBLE

Shakib optimistic about Bangladesh's chances in the T20 World Cup

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RELIGION NOT ADEQUATE

The Dalai Lama says time has come to think about spirituality, ethics

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Teesta deal anytime soon

Says Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-awaited deal on Teesta water-sharing will be signed with India anytime soon, said Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi yesterday.

"India's central government is trying to bring the West Bengal government into such a position that it agrees with the Teesta deal," Rizvi said at a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

India and Bangladesh were expected to sign the treaty during Indian Premier Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in early September last year. But the effort fell through due to last-minute objections from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over "percentage of water".

"Though the deal is yet to be signed, Bangladesh is getting its share of water," said the adviser while addressing the discussion on regional unity for harmony and prosperity.

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HALL-MARK'S MORTGAGED LAND Value inflated abnormally

Savar police, admin always turned a deaf ear to complaints of land-grabbing against Hall-Mark in Janata Housing project

TAWFIQUE ALI

The controversial Hall-Mark Group now claims an abnormally inflated price for the 47 acres of land it has mortgaged to Sonali Bank for the Tk 2,686-crore loan it has taken using forged papers.

Through public advertisements over the last few days, the company has been claiming the market price of the land is Tk 2,000 crore, which is nearly four times the official estimate.

Sonali Bank in its primary evaluation put the price at Tk 500-600 crore, a bank official told The Daily Star.

According to another estimate by National Bank, the land is worth Tk 425 crore. (National Bank is not a party to the loan scam. The bank has done a mortgage valuation for a piece of land owned by one of its clients on the same site. The estimate is cited for the readers to see the contrast between the market price and Hall-Mark's claim.)

Hall-Mark's mortgaged land is at Janata Housing at Hemayetpur and Tentuljhora of Savar, said group General Manager Tushar Ahmed.

The housing project was taken up in 1978, but most of the area remains vacant in the absence of basic civic amenities and utility services.

In the city master plan the entire site is shown as wetland and rural homestead. But violating the environment

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It may be designed for barely 12 people but at least 20 heads can be counted riding this *chander gari* just on the outside alone. Hard to tell how many are inside. People are even sitting on the rickshaw, which was somehow placed on the roof. Vehicles such as this one dominate rural communication in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and people travel risking their lives as there is almost no alternative. The photo was taken in Bandarban yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

NEWS ANALYSIS

A telling refusal

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

The refusal, for that is what it is, by Tofail Ahmed and Rashed Khan Menon to accept the offer of places in Sheikh Hasina's cabinet is telling. While Menon has been clear about the reasons behind his unwillingness to be a minister, Tofail has been more diplomatic in his explanation of why he did not want to be one.

Fundamentally, though, the ground on which these two men have not accepted ministerial positions is the same. One has only to read between the lines to know that they are not willing to be part of a system which is now in its final stretch of governance before the next general election is upon the country.

The surprise, however, is not that Tofail Ahmed and Rashed Khan Menon do not wish to be ministers at this stage. The surprise is couched in the question of why

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The 2 needed for 2 reasons

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wanted to kill two birds with one stone by inducting some top leaders like Tofail Ahmed and Rashed Khan Menon in her cabinet, with only a year of the government's five-year term remaining.

On the one hand, she wanted to salvage the image of the cabinet through the expansion, and on the other, silence the dissenting voices within the party and the alliance.

Tofail and Menon are among the few



Tofail



Menon

ruling alliance lawmakers to have publicly criticised the government on its handling of issues like stockmarket debacle and Sonali Bank loan scam.

At a 14-party meeting on May 27, for instance, the duo expressed resentment over the deteriorating law and order, rise in killings and disappearances and frequent load shedding.

If they were to stop, what better ways could there be than to include them in the cabinet?

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WAR CRIMES PROBE Mir Quashem to be quizzed at safe home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The investigation agency of International Crimes Tribunals will interrogate Jamaat leader Mir Quashem Ali at a "safe house" at Dhanmondi today in connection with the crimes against humanity allegedly committed during the Liberation War.

Top officials of the investigation agency will quiz the Jamaat central leader from 10:00am to 5:00pm with a one-hour break, an official of the agency told The Daily Star yesterday.

In response to a prosecution petition on July 8, International Crimes Tribunal-1 allowed the investigation agency to interrogate the Jamaat central executive committee member at the "safe house".

As per the tribunal's order, a physician and a defence lawyer would be

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MRP PILFERAGE

2 top passport men involved

Finds probe; 11 MRP project staff still in hiding

M RAHMAN

A probe pointed finger at 13 people, including two passport office high-ups, for the pilferage of machine readable passports (MRP) at Agargaon office.

The names of Major Mohammad Shariful Islam, an assistant director of MRP project, and Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun, a deputy director of Agargaon passport office, came in the probe report for negligence of duty.

They work in the Personalisation Centre of the passport office.

The other suspects are the former and current employees of iPeople, local agent of Malaysian firm IRIS JV, which is implementing the MRP project. They are former iPeople manager Mosharraf Hossain, former manager-in-charge Samiul Huq, manager SZ Arefin, senior officer and sorting in-charge Mirajul Islam, senior officers Zahid Hassan and Shahjada, assistant officers Iqbal Hossain and Ahmed Ali, machine room officers Dewan Sadequl Islam and Al-amin, and former IRIS JV employee Mohammad Tiash.

The probe report recommended actions against the assistant project director and the deputy director for their negligence in duty and also against the other 11 suspects, who or some of whom cashed on the negligence.

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PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Dry hilsa, popularly known as *nona ilish*, is being prepared at Fishery Ghat of Firingi Bazar in Chittagong. The national fish, albeit a little pricy, is desired on the dinner table in both forms, fresh and dried. The demand for *nona ilish* (salted hilsa) is high and the fish in the photo is to be shipped to districts across the country.

