

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
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## Many deals between two good friends

### What about Teesta?

WE appreciate the warm reception given by Prime Minister Modi to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She has been treated with the highest honour and respect indicating the long standing friendship between the two countries. Yet despite the signing of six agreements and 16 MOUs with India, we are disappointed that there was nothing more than articulation of optimism on the Teesta issue.

So far from what we have gleaned from news reports it seems that the area where Bangladesh will benefit is the energy sector where India will be supplying at least 600 MW of electricity in addition to the 500 MW it has already committed to. The revival of the Kolkata-Khulna train service is also a positive point as are the agreements of cooperation in the fields of IT, cyber security, science and technology and nuclear energy and nuclear safety. What use Bangladesh will make from the USD 5 billion line of credit from India that includes USD 500 million to procure military hardware is to be seen.

However, the pressing issues Bangladesh faces with India seem to have lost steam in the fanfare of this historic visit. These include Bangladesh's huge trade deficit with India and the latter's recent imposing of an anti-dumping duty on import of jute goods from our country — something our PM pointed out during her visit. The other overarching issue is of course the signing of the Teesta agreement which has not happened, due to Paschim Banga's Chief Minister's position on the issue.

Thus, while we think that the visit of our Prime Minister will add a new dimension to our bilateral relations we would hope that the issue of Teesta sharing will be resolved soon.

## Hazaribagh tanneries finally shut

### Now what?

THE utility lines of the tanneries in Hazaribagh have been disconnected on Saturday in keeping with the March 6 orders of the High Court. Numerous deadlines had been missed and there have been many delays in vacating Hazaribagh. The shifting was planned more than a decade ago, but a very good plan of the government came to naught due primarily to unnecessary foot dragging of the tannery owners. When in fact the relocation should have been completed by April 30, 2011, the deadline set by the court in October 2010, only 47 of the 154 tanneries, have shifted to the new site as of today.

But while all this time it was the tannery owners who had been the villain of the piece, all the relevant agencies of the government must also share the responsibility for the situation to have come to such a pass. We understand the Tannery Estate is not fully ready. Not all the factories have got gas connection as yet, and, more importantly, the CETP has no facility for treatment of saline water. It defies logic that such an important aspect of an effluent treatment plant should have been overlooked by the planners. Shouldn't those responsible for the blatant negligence be called to account?

We should not forget that we are dealing with an industry that exports in excess of a billion dollars annually with a potential of 5 billion dollars. At the same time, a slipshod arrangement and half-baked CETP that might cause the Dhaleswari to meet the same fate as the Buriganga is a prospect that no one wants to see, much less endure.

# And dry flows the Teesta . . . still

### STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN SHAHIDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

THE natural reaction to the remarks of Prime Minister Modi that the Teesta issue would be resolved during the tenure of the present incumbents in both countries, and it will be resolved soon is - how soon is soon. These words sound like a lullaby, being repeatedly regurgitated, that a mother sings to a truant child hoping she would fall asleep and forget the little demands that every child makes to her mother at bed time. Bangladesh has been made to look like the little child. And when the Indian prime minister talks about the matter being

development first, (and nobody can deny that Bangladesh has seen enviable development during the current AL tenure), the outcome of the next elections in India and Bangladesh, in their own ways, is a foregone conclusion. Thus, given the time India took to finally put its seal of approval on the land boundary agreement, 41 years after it was signed and the Bangladesh Parliament had approved it, we cannot but feel a little apprehensive about the perception of time of our neighbour.

It has been already six years since the Teesta deal was aborted at the last minute due to the intransigence of Mamata Banerjee who is never lacking in effusiveness while talking about 'Epaar Bangla, Opaar Bangla' and the need to enhance the ties between the two Bengals, but remains steadfastly unbending when it comes to the sharing

Apparently, Indian politics has beset the Teesta issue and that is not for Bangladesh to resolve. There is need to rise over petty politics to deliver on the Teesta as was done in 1996 when the statesmanship of Joyti Basu helped in signing the Ganges agreement. And if there is no water in the Teesta it is because, and I quote from an article in this paper, "The flow comes down to West Bengal where India has built a barrage at Gazaldoba from which 85 percent of water flow is reportedly diverted from Teesta River through a link-canal to the upper Mahananda River, which falls on in the Meichi River in Bihar that links the Fulhar River and reaches the Ganges River upstream of Farakka Barrage." Again that is a matter for India to resolve.

Of course Teesta is not the only issue between the two countries. Of course

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Indian PM Modi expressed his hope for an early solution to the Teesta issue during PM Hasina's visit to India.

PHOTO: AFP

solved during the tenure of the current governments in the two countries he does not say which tenure.

One can say with little chance of being contested that both the parties are likely to retain the reins of power in the next elections in their own countries. Modi, with his Hindutva agenda going down well with the majority of Indians, and Hasina riding on the slogan of

of the Teesta waters. Some aver that Mamata is doing exactly what a leader should do — standing for the interest of the people of her state. Is it only that? Therefore, put in the context of what the Paschim Banga Chief Minister said during her meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, that there is no water in the Teesta to share, one wonders what the reason for the Indian PM's optimism is.

there is the huge trade gap, but India is not the only country that we import from more than we export to. But slapping of anti-dumping duties or imposing countervailing taxes from time to time seems rather incongruous with India's decision to open its market to all our goods. That is a way of discouraging export from Bangladesh, and does impede our efforts to rectify the huge

anomaly in the mutual trade figures.

But coming back to other Indo-Bangladesh issues, all other issues of Indian concern and of consequence to its strategic interests have been addressed by Bangladesh long ago. Prime Minister Hasina has lived up to her assurances that our soil would never be allowed to be used as a launching pad by anti-Indian elements. Huge savings are being made in goods transportation through Bangladesh as well as through Chittagong port. It is quite another thing whether we are getting a fair deal in the bargain.

We hope that India would realise that for Bangladesh Teesta is an issue that has the most far reaching consequences for us. And it may sound like whining, but the fact is that the dried up Teesta has wrought havoc to the northwestern part of Bangladesh with irredeemable consequences on the people and the environment. Mamata has come up with new alternatives but can we wait that long for any new arrangement that has only just been conceptualised? This is one way of putting Teesta in the back burner. No matter how many deals are made and what lines of credit are offered to Bangladesh, anything without a positive indication on the Teesta diminishes the magnitude of other mutual achievements. The Indian PM's assurances for Bangladesh is not positive enough.

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# For a more educated BANGLADESH

### MACRO MIRROR



FAHMIDA KHATUN

bringing more people under the umbrella of primary level education. Thus, international support has been less oriented towards higher education. While the objective of universal access to primary and secondary education is still crucial, the need for improving higher education is no less important. Given that Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the least developed country status in a few years and the government has also set its ambition to become a high income country by 2041, emphasis has to be on knowledge, technological progress and innovation much more than ever before.

Higher education, when compared to other emerging countries, has a long way to go. Barring a handful of students, most university graduates lack the quality that the market requires. Organisations are increasingly facing difficulties in getting the type of human resources that they require. Among the thousands of graduates, only a small section get any opportunity in the academic field, some go to the private sector, another group chooses self-employment, and a large number are left unemployed. Employability is of course determined by the supply and demand of graduates in the market. In a populated country with a small sized economy, there is an excess supply of university degree holders. However, employability also depends on other factors. Quality and standard are important factors for an employer.

In many private sector companies, a few top positions are being filled by people from neighbouring countries. Quality, productivity and reliability for delivery of services are the factors that Bangladeshi employers are now looking for. This is because the global economy is becoming increasingly competitive. Employers need a highly skilled workforce to compete. Bangladeshi graduates are falling short of the expectations of employers. This, despite

the fact that the key objective of all private universities is to offer degrees on business administration more than any other subject.

In academia, there is a general lack of interest to go for higher studies abroad, particularly for doctorate degrees. One has to spend four to five years to pursue a PhD degree at a reputed foreign university. The process is not only lengthy, but also rigorous and difficult. Individuals nowadays find the trade-off less worthy. The time they would spend abroad can be more rewarding, both

However, there is a new group of eager learners who avail the opportunity to get doctorate degrees from various sources and means. A few years back, a US university office located in Kakrail, Dhaka, was shut down by the authorities for carrying out the business of offering online PhD to candidates for a handsome amount of money. Although the university was closed down, its degree holders are still around. There are several doctorate degree holders in the country now who have obtained their degrees through sub-standard, non-

prefix of 'Dr' with their names. This has become an obsession and something of a status symbol for many. Some are acquiring the degree after their retirement from service. While this spirit is praiseworthy, the value is limited.

Mediocrity and sub-standard education cannot contribute to high productivity and economic growth. The current knowledge system in the country is not useful for steady progress. Leaving aside the developed countries of the West, the experience of East Asian countries such as China, Korea and

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Selective use of law

The Daily Star on April 4 published a report titled, "Suspension of Mayors, selective use of law". It revealed how suspension provisions by local governments were manipulated. Only mayors who support opposition groups of BNP and Jamaat were suspended. But ruling party-backed mayors who did have charge sheets against them were not. The Supreme Court stayed the suspension of Sylhet and Rajshahi mayors and gave them power to resume office. A municipality mayor backed by Awami League, didn't have to be suspended despite having a charge sheet against him.

If this partiality in the practice of law prevails, the public will continue to lose trust in the government. Local governments should strengthen their practice of democracy and service to the people of this country.  
Md. Selim Reza  
Jahangirnagar University Journalist Association (JUJA)

### Books must have accurate information

It is a matter of concern that academic curricula and contents in Bangladesh are frequently changed each year. Different textbooks contain different versions of the same information. For example, events of the liberation war are presented in different lights under each new government. How are students supposed to know which version of the events to believe? Instead of frequently changing the syllabi, the NCTB ought to focus on publishing textbooks with correct and consistent information. That is the only way our children will acquire proper knowledge.  
Sumon Kumar Paul  
Patuakhali Science & Technology University



IMAGE: EVENST.US

professionally and financially, in Bangladesh. They would be able to teach in a number of private universities, do consultancies, etc. There is no time to improve upon their sphere of knowledge or get updated on the latest study findings. Promotions at their universities do not require publication in internationally reputed peer reviewed journals. Joint publications with other colleagues in local journals fulfil the criterion for promotion. A large consultancy market is also out there which requires their services.

accredited western universities operating illegally. When they are asked about the thesis, there is hesitation in their response. When asked about their leave of absence for studies, there is silence. If the responsibility of teaching is bestowed upon these unearned PhD holders, one can imagine the outcome.

The Education Ministry has the tough job of monitoring college and university teachers who have not earned their doctorate degrees from accredited universities, but they are eager to use the

Singapore indicates a close relationship between high quality education and economic development. Reforms in their education sector have been geared towards developing a sound education system that brought about economic and social progress at a faster pace than many countries. It is time for us to appreciate the importance of good quality higher education and set it as a national priority.

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The writer is the Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue.