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Arid and barren

Over 100km stretch of Teesta has no water

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

If it were before 1983, people would be seen fishing at the exact same spot where children now play football, on Teesta's sandy floor lying arid and barren. The river is no longer blessed with water, except for a few months of the year.

Out of the 115km course of the river flowing inside Bangladesh, more than 100km (from Teesta Barrage to the river's confluence in Kurigram) has completely dried up this dry season. There are small pools of water here and there, and the rest is mere chars.

Habibur Rahman, 58, a farmer of Char Hokunda in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila, said, "Thousands of people living by the Teesta are entirely dependent on its water. Our suffering has known no bounds after the river dried up."

"Due to lack of water, we have to set up water pumps on the river bed to irrigate farms and grow crops like potato, ground nut, jute, maize and vegetables," he said.

Since the beginning of the dry season (March to May), there has been little water in the downstream of Teesta Barrage built in Dowani area of Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila.

"We are getting 1,500-2,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water at the Teesta barrage point for the last two months, which is the highest in 12 years. But it is barely enough," said Abdullah Al-Mamun, executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) in Nilphamari.

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Children have turned the Teesta river bed into a football pitch as it has dried up completely during this lean season. Officials at Water Development Board said there was no water in the downstream as 44 gates of the Teesta Barrage in Hatibandha upazila are kept closed for supplying irrigation water. The photo was taken near the Teesta Railway Bridge in Lalmonirhat on Friday.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO



HC comes down hard on BB

Orders it to submit loan defaulters' list in 15 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday came down heavily on Bangladesh Bank, directing it to submit a compliance report on its previous orders within 15 days, including one seeking the list of those defaulting on loans of over Tk 1 crore for more than 20 years.

Hearing a writ petition filed by the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader expressed deep dissatisfaction at the central bank for being non-responsive against a number of queries.

The queries, made around two and a half months ago, include the amount of loan interest waived and steps taken to stop irregularities in the waiving process.

The BB had also not responded to an HC rule for forming a banking commission to find ways on stopping corruption, irregularities and mismanagement in financial institutions,

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He wanted to carry out attack in India

Lanka bomber's follower tells police; Catholics to resume mass on Sunday

AFP, New Delhi

An alleged follower of Sri Lankan bombing mastermind Zahran Hashim was set to appear before an Indian court yesterday after admitting he wanted to carry out an attack in India, investigators said.

India has been concerned about Islamist extremists on its soil for some time and the April 21 Sri Lanka bombings that killed 253 people has left authorities alarmed that India might be at risk of a jihadist attack.

The Indian national, identified as Riyas A, alias Riyas Aboobacker, 29, was arrested on Monday by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), which handles counter-terrorism cases.

During interrogation, he "disclosed that he has been following speeches/videos of Zahran Hashim of Sri Lanka for more than a year", an NIA statement said.

"He admitted that he wanted to carry out a suicide attack in Kerala," a southern Indian state, it added.

Hashim was a Sri Lankan Muslim preacher who led the coordinated Easter Sunday suicide attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, in one of the world's deadliest terrorist attacks.

Military sources have said Hashim was not known to have visited Syria or Iraq, but travelled to India's Tamil Nadu state, which borders Kerala, and had been in contact with Islamists there.

Hashim also appeared in a video released by the Islamic State group, showing him leading others in pledging allegiance to IS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

IS has claimed responsibility for the Sri Lanka attacks.

India had warned Sri Lanka that suicide attacks were possible weeks

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NEWSPRINT IMPORT Noab seeks VAT relief

Urges govt to reduce corporate tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) yesterday urged the government to exempt Value Added Tax on newsprint imports and reduce corporate tax to enable the newspaper industry to survive.

The Noab said the government declared the newspaper industry as a service oriented industry, but it does not get any special benefit.

Newspapers have to pay 35 percent corporate tax although they do not earn enough and their goal and objective are different from other businesses.

"The newspaper industry is passing through a very tough time. It has become a sick industry," Noab President Matiur Rahman said at the

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Dog, owner held for polls campaigning



AFP, Mumbai

A pet pooch was detained for flouting India's election rules after it was spotted parading slogans supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi outside polling stations -- but "let off with a warning", authorities said yesterday.

Police seized the dog and its owner in the western state of Maharashtra on Monday just as voting was under way on the fourth voting day of India's mammoth election that runs to May 19.

"We detained the dog and its owner as it was a polling day and they were walking around promoting Modi and violating election campaigning rules," police official Ganpat Phil

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No progress so Rohingya can return home

Says UN aid chief

AP, United Nations

The UN humanitarian chief said Monday there has been "no progress" in dealing with the reasons why more than 700,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh from western Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Mark Lowcock, who recently visited Bangladesh, said Myanmar has failed "to put in place confidence-building measures that would persuade people it's

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 1

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-15 12-45 4-45 6-31 8-00
JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-00 6-35 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

'Fani' more furious now

UNB, Dhaka

"Fani", now classified as a "very severe cyclonic storm", intensified further, the Met office said yesterday afternoon.

The storm was over the southwest Bay and the adjoining southeast Bay.

"Fani" was centred about 1,270km southwest of Chattogram port,

1,210km southwest of Cox's Bazar port, 1,190km southwest of Mongla Port and 1,170km southwest of Payra port at noon, the Met office said.

It was likely to intensify further and move in a north/northwesterly direction.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 74 km of the storm centre was about 130kph, rising to 150kph in gusts or squalls.

Maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra were advised to hoist distant warning signal number 2.

All fishing boats and trawlers over the north Bay and deep sea were advised to stay close to the coast and proceed with caution

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Japan's Emperor Akihito (R) leaves the Kashikodokoro imperial sanctuary inside the Imperial Palace after a ritual to report the conduct of his abdication ceremony in Tokyo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan marks end of an era

Emperor Akihito prays for peace in first abdication in 200 yrs; his son Naruhito prepares to take the throne

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese Emperor Akihito, in his final remarks as his three-decade reign drew to a close yesterday, thanked the people for their support and expressed hope for a peaceful future.

Akihito, 85, the first monarch to abdicate in two centuries, had sought to ease the painful memories of World War Two and bring the monarchy closer to the people, including those marginalised in society.

The popular Akihito was the first monarch to take the Chrysanthemum Throne under a post-war constitution that defines the emperor as a symbol of the people without political power.

His father, Hirohito, in whose name Japanese troops fought World War Two, was considered a living deity until after Japan's defeat in 1945, when he renounced his divinity.

"To the people who accepted and supported me as a symbol, I express my heartfelt thanks," Akihito, wearing a Western-style morning coat, said at a brief abdication ceremony in the Imperial Palace's Matsu no ma, or Hall of Pine.

"Together with the empress, I hope from my heart that the new Reiwa era that begins tomorrow will be peaceful and fruitful, and pray for the peace and happiness of our country and the people of the world," said a solemn Akihito, referring to the new imperial era.

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