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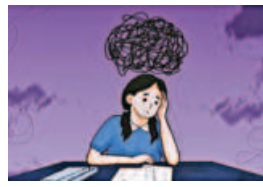
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Agriculture labourers sun drying Boro rice, after collecting them from local farmers at a price of Tk 1,100-1,200 per maund. After purchase, they boil, dry and thresh the rice before selling them to wholesalers at Tk 40-50 per kg. The photo was taken in Ghona village of Khulna's Dumuria upazila recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

IMF approves 3rd tranche of \$1.15b loans

The funds will be added to the reserves in two days

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund yesterday approved the third tranche of \$1.15 billion loans in a boost to Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves.

Mezbaul Haque, spokesperson for Bangladesh Bank, told TheDailyStar, "The IMF board has approved the third instalment of our credit. We are expecting \$1.15 billion to be released by the next two days."

The money would be added to the foreign currency reserves, he added.

The multilateral lender reviewed Bangladesh's progress in reaching the goals set in December last year and granted the instalment of its \$4.7 billion loan programme for the country.

"Periodic reviews of the crawling peg would be important to ensure its effectiveness."

ANTOINETTE M SAYEH, IMF Deputy Managing Director

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'Not feasible to share Teesta water'

Mamata writes to Modi, also asks not to hold talks on Teesta, Farakka without involving West Bengal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday said no discussion on sharing the Teesta and Ganges waters should be held with Bangladesh without the involvement of the West Bengal government.

Sharing Teesta water with Bangladesh is not feasible, she wrote in a letter to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The interest of people in West Bengal is paramount which should not be compromised at any cost," she wrote.

If Teesta water is shared with Bangladesh, "lakhs of people in North Bengal will get severely impacted due to inadequate availability of irrigation water".

Teesta water is also needed for meeting drinking water requirements of the residents of North Bengal, she said.

She wrote the letter a couple of days after prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi held talks in New Delhi where the Indian PM announced a technical team would be sent to Bangladesh soon for conservation and management of water in the Teesta and discussions would soon start on the renewal of the 1996 Ganges water-sharing treaty which expires in 2026.

Mamata also stated that West Bengal shares "a very close relationship with Bangladesh geographically, culturally and economically. I love and respect people of Bangladesh and always wish for their well-being".

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Benazir's wife, daughters skip ACC quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wife of former police chief Benazir Ahmed and her two daughters yesterday skipped the Anti-Corruption Commission's questioning over the allegations of amassing wealth illegally.

Jissan Mirza and her two daughters Farheen Rishta Binte Benazir and Tahseen Raisa Binte Benazir were scheduled to appear before the ACC at its headquarters yesterday.

Speaking to reporters, ACC Secretary Khorshedha Yasmin said the three did not submit any time petitions. However, they sent written statements to the commission on Thursday explaining their positions on the corruption allegations.

"The ACC inquiry team is taking necessary actions in line with the law. We hope to submit the inquiry report within the stipulated time," Khorshedha said.

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TAKEAWAYS: HASINA-MODI TALKS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting in New Delhi on June 22, in which they discussed both bilateral and regional cooperation. Former foreign secretary Md Touhid Hossain and former ambassador M Humayun Kabir shared their views with The Daily Star's Porimol Palma.

Our concerns were largely unaddressed

The statements from the two leaders of Bangladesh and India appear to be quite ambitious. However, they don't address the challenges that the people of Bangladesh face.

The issue of sharing Teesta water did not come up. India has spoken about sending a technical team to look into how the Teesta water in Bangladesh can be conserved and managed, but how long it will actually take to ensure that the people in Bangladesh get enough water in the northwestern region remains a serious question. We know that China was interested to fund the Teesta



Md Touhid Hossain

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Visit long on visions, short on details

The statements from the meeting suggest we have moved from resolving smaller bilateral issues, which traditionally dominate the relations, to bigger visions and broader strategic aspects. There are definitely some positive outcomes from the visit, on which both Bangladesh and India can build up the future cooperation. At the same time, some of the lofty ideas are too complex to have their possible implications deciphered.

Energy cooperation with Nepal and Bhutan through India could open up a strategic window for all four countries. We have never tried to look into regional



M Humayun Kabir

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Court slaps travel ban on Matiur, family

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday imposed a travel ban on Matiur Rahman, former member of the National Board of Revenue, his wife and son in connection with allegations of corruption against them.

The travel ban was requested by Anwar Hossain, deputy director of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

As per the order issued by Judge Mohammed Ash-Shams Joglul Hossain, Matiur, his first wife Laila Kaniz Lucky, and their son Ahmed Taufiqur Rahman Arnob cannot leave the country unless the restriction is lifted.

The commission's lawyer Mir Ahmed Ali Salam wrote in the application that the family was making arrangements to leave the country and syphon money out of Bangladesh.

Matiur is a former president of the NBR's Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal and his wife is the upazila parishad chairman of Narsingdi's Raipura.

A three-member team of the ACC is investigating allegations of corruption made against them.

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Mid-day meal in primary schools returns in Aug

The project to cost Tk 4,700cr

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is likely to reintroduce mid-day meals at primary schools in 150 upazilas after a gap of two years with the view to ramping up school attendance and bringing down the dropout rate.

The school feeding programme is expected to resume in August. The Daily Star has learnt from primary and mass education ministry officials informed of the proceedings.

The three year project, which will cover about 37 lakh students at 19,000 government primary schools in mostly poverty prone areas, will cost about Tk 4,700 crore, according to the ministry's development project proposal.

Of the estimated cost, Tk 4,181 crore will go towards food procurement and the rest will be spent on paying contractors, transport, service charges, food distribution and packaging.

The World Bank will provide assistance for the project, said Farid Ahmed, secretary of the primary and mass education ministry.

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MEAL MENU

- Fortified biscuits
- Eggs
- Bananas
- Bread
- Seasonal fruits



The water of the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara lake wears a slimy, green look due to extensive pollution from household waste. The stench from the lake has become so unbearable that people have to cover their noses from far away to avoid it. The photo was taken from the capital's Kemal Ataturk Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Khaleda now stable, shifted to cabin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who just had a pacemaker implanted in her chest, was shifted from the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) to a cabin at Evercare Hospital in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Her physician, AZM Zahid Hossain, said, "Madam Khaleda Zia has been moved to a cabin with CCU facilities on the advice of the medical board at 4:45pm."

The medical board made the decision after evaluating her condition, he said, adding that Khaleda would continue to receive treatment in the cabin under the close observation of doctors.

He also said that Khaleda underwent further medical tests as advised by the board.

"They [medical board] reviewed the BNP chairperson's test reports and subsequently visited Begum Zia in the CCU. Following this, they decided to shift her to the cabin."

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