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# India cuts water flow through Baglihar dam

Say media reports after Delhi suspends Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan

**AGENCIES**

Days after placing the Indus Waters Treaty into abeyance to punish Pakistan over the Pahalgalam terror attack, India has curtailed the flow of water through the Baglihar dam on the Chenab river and is planning similar measures at the Kishanganga dam on the Jhelum River, PTI reported, citing a source.

India has taken several punitive measures against Pakistan following the cold-blooded killings of 26 people – mostly tourists – in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgalam on April 22, including downgrading diplomatic ties, banning Pakistani ships from Indian ports and stopping imports.

Pakistan had objected to India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, declaring that any attempt to stop waters flowing into the country would be deemed an act of war.

The source familiar with the matter told the news agency these hydroelectric

dams – Baglihar in Ramban in Jammu and Kishanganga in north Kashmir – offer India the ability to regulate the timing of water releases, reports Hindustan Times online.

The Baglihar dam has been a longstanding point of contention between the two neighbours, with Pakistan having sought World Bank arbitration in the past. The Kishanganga dam has faced legal and diplomatic scrutiny, especially regarding its impact on the Neelum River, a tributary of the Jhelum.

On Saturday, Pakistan banned Indian flag carriers from using its ports hours after New Delhi announced a similar measure as a fresh punitive step against the neighbouring country for its role in the April 22 attack.

"In view of the recent development of maritime situation with neighbouring country, Pakistan in order to safeguard

- » India planning similar measures with Jhelum river
- » Pakistan bans Indian flag carriers at all ports
- » Modi meets Indian Air Chief Marshal



Despite several incidents of deaths from riding on train roofs in the past, many people continue the practice. The lack of awareness among the general public also leads them to cross rail lines without using footbridges. The photo was taken yesterday at the Airport Railway Station in the capital. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Scientists found another source of gold in the cosmos

CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have been trying to determine the cosmic origins of the heaviest elements, like gold, for decades. Now, new research based on a signal uncovered in archival space mission data may point to a potential clue: magnetars, or highly magnetised neutron stars.



Scientists believe lighter elements such as hydrogen and helium, and even a small amount of lithium, likely existed early on after the big bang created the universe 13.8 billion years ago. Then, exploding stars released heavier elements like iron, which became incorporated in newborn stars and planets.

But the distribution of gold, which is heavier than iron, throughout the universe has posed a mystery to astrophysicists.

"It's a pretty fundamental question in terms of the origin of complex matter in the universe," said Anirudh Patel, lead author of the study published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters and a doctoral student of physics at Columbia University in New York City, in a statement. "It's a fun puzzle that hasn't actually been solved."

Astronomers observed a collision between two neutron stars in 2017. The cataclysmic clash released ripples in space-time, known as gravitational waves, as well as light from a gamma-ray burst. The collision event, known as a kilonova, also created heavy elements like gold, platinum and lead. Kilonovas have been likened to gold "factories" in space.

## Meeting with IMF today to break deadlock

Exchange rate flexibility main hold-up

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government and the International Monetary Fund are set to meet again today for another round of negotiations over the release of the fourth and fifth tranches of a \$4.7 billion loan programme.

The two sides will meet virtually to break the deadlock over the issue of liberalising the exchange rate, which has been holding up the authorisation of the two instalments, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

If Bangladesh accepts the IMF's prescription for a more flexible exchange rate, the foreign exchange market may turn volatile. So, the country sought a \$1 billion stabilisation fund for prompt intervention in the market, the officials said.

The IMF did not respond immediately to Bangladesh's request in the series of in-person meetings between the two sides in Washington, DC in the last week of April.

Earlier, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told journalists on his return from Washington that the IMF has agreed to a \$500 million stabilisation fund.

"They [IMF] told us to remove the band under the crawling peg. If the band is removed, the dollar would appreciate unsustainably," he added.

**IMF-BANGLADESH NEGOTIATIONS SO FAR**

- ➔ Bangladesh proposed \$1b stabilisation fund
- ➔ IMF prescribed boosting NBR's revenue collection by 0.7 percent of GDP in next fiscal
- ➔ NBR plans to collect additional Tk 30,000 crore with new tax measures
- ➔ Another Tk 10,000cr to be collected through administrative measures
- ➔ ADB also wants updates of IMF negotiations

Under the crawling peg system at present, the exchange rate fluctuates within a narrow range.

Since December, government and IMF officials have held multiple rounds of talks in Dhaka and Washington. Disagreements – particularly over exchange rate flexibility and efforts to raise the country's revenue-to-GDP ratio – had delayed the release of the fourth tranche.

However, the finance ministry officials

said a consensus has been reached on the issues regarding the National Board of Revenue (NBR) in Washington, including the revenue-to-GDP ratio.

The government has agreed to collect an additional Tk 30,000 crore in revenue in the next fiscal year under a new tax measure endorsed by the IMF.

Initially, the IMF had recommended raising additional taxes equivalent to 0.9 percent of the national GDP.

However, following a series of meetings, both sides settled on a lower target of 0.7 percent – an estimated Tk 40,000 crore in additional taxes – of which Tk 10,000 crore is expected to be collected through administrative measures.

Under the new tax plan, the government will raise the value-added tax (VAT) on several products to the standard rate of 15 percent, cut back on tax holidays and withdraw various exemptions.

There is no disagreement between the government and the IMF on NBR-related matters, a senior NBR official told The Daily Star.

"We plan to engage with the business community, and they may not be too unhappy, as inputting VAT credits could offset the higher tax rates and benefit them in the long run," he said.

In January, the NBR increased VAT and supplementary duties on nearly 100 goods and services in an effort to

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## Unconstitutional, unacceptable, irrational

Says Human Rights Forum about call to abolish women's affairs commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) has strongly condemned recent demands from certain groups calling for the abolition of the government-established Women's Affairs Reform Commission and the enactment of a blasphemy law in the country.

In a statement issued yesterday, HRFB labelled these demands as "irrational, unconstitutional, and unacceptable", expressing serious concern over the exploitation of religious sentiments to mislead the public and undermine progressive reforms.

HRFB stressed that while individuals have the right to critique any commission or its reports, calls for the outright abolition of such commissions are unjustifiable.

The organisation also condemned efforts to impose opinions through threats, violence, or hate speech under the guise of religious justifications, stating that such tactics are incompatible with democratic principles and human rights.

The Women's Affairs Reform Commission, HRFB noted, was formed as part of a broader governmental effort to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination.

Its recommendations were based on international human rights standards,

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## ACC probing 3 aides to 2 advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated an inquiry into corruption allegations against three former personal staffers of two government advisers.

The individuals under investigation are Md Moazzem Hossain, former assistant private secretary (APS) to LGRG Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain; and Tuhin Farabi and Mahmudul Hasan, former personal officers (POs) to Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum.

All three have recently been removed from their posts.

Meanwhile, the anti-graft body has also launched an investigation into allegations against ABM Gazi Salauddin Tanvir, former joint member secretary of the National Citizen Party.

Confirming the developments yesterday, ACC Director General Md Akhter Hossain told reporters: "We have initiated the investigations against the APS and POs of the two advisers, as well as Gazi Tanvir, in line with ACC laws and regulations."

"We began looking into the allegations after receiving complaints against them.

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Once the lifeline of Rajshahi, the bountiful Padma is now severely depleted, with little water and shallow depth. Where it roared, silent sandbars now occupy its breadth, making travel difficult. This fall in water levels can be attributed to a combination of factors, including reduced flow from upstream, increased deposition of silt, and poor rainfall. The photo was taken yesterday from the 1 dam in Rajshahi city. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Maldives president holds record 15-hr press conference

AFP, Colombo

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu addressed a press conference for nearly 15 hours, his office said yesterday, claiming it broke a previous record held by Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

Muizzu, 46, began the marathon press conference at 10:00 am (0500 GMT) on Saturday, and it continued for 14 hours and 54 minutes with brief pauses for prayers, his office said in a statement.

"The conference extended past midnight – a new world record by a president – with President Muizzu continuously responding to questions from journalists," the statement said.

In October 2019, Ukraine's National Records Agency claimed that Zelensky's 14-hour press conference had broken an earlier record of over seven hours held by Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

The government of the Indian Ocean archipelago said Muizzu's extended session was also intended to coincide with World Press Freedom Day on Saturday.

"He acknowledged the crucial role of the press in society and emphasised the importance of factual, balanced, and impartial reporting," the statement added.



Mohamed Muizzu

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