

"It is very difficult to communicate with Mojtaba Khamenei at the moment, but in any case, his presence is a great source of strength for us..."

Iran President
Masoud Pezeshkian

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Christmas RMG exports slow on weak demand

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Political acumen is fine, but economic expertise is crucial

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Ukraine hits two Russian refineries

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Mohammedan capitalise on rivals' FIFA woes

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GANGES TREATY

Dhaka awaits Delhi's response to talks proposal

Delay raises concerns over already-strained ties

AT A GLANCE

- Bangladesh and India share 54 transboundary rivers
- The Ganges treaty, signed 30 years ago, is their only water-sharing treaty
- The agreement, set to expire on Dec 11, has governed dry-season water sharing since 1996
- About 37% of Bangladesh's land area depends on the Ganges (Padma)
- Experts say a new arrangement crucial for freshwater flow and ecological sustainability



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been waiting for nearly two months for India to respond to its proposal for talks on the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, which expires in December.

The foreign ministry in June sent a letter proposing the talks, following the government's formation of a 10-member technical committee on the Ganges treaty in April.

"We are waiting for India's response," Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's adviser on economic and planning affairs and head of the new committee, told The Daily Star recently.

No meeting date has been set so far, a foreign ministry official said.

Other members of the committee include Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus at BRAC University; Zahed Ur Rahman, the prime minister's adviser on information; AKM Shahabuddin, water resources secretary; Saimum Parvez, special assistant to the prime minister on environment; and Ataur Rahman, director general of the South Asia desk at the foreign ministry.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman recently met committee members to discuss broader water-sharing issues involving transboundary rivers.

Meanwhile, the government has reconstituted the 12-member Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), which will serve as the channel for the talks, with the water resources minister as chairman, according to a senior official familiar with the development.

What remains unclear, however, is Bangladesh's negotiating position -- whether it intends to renew the existing treaty, negotiate a new one, or seek a partial or full renegotiation of the current terms.

Several officials at the foreign ministry and the water resources ministry, along with water resources experts involved in the process,

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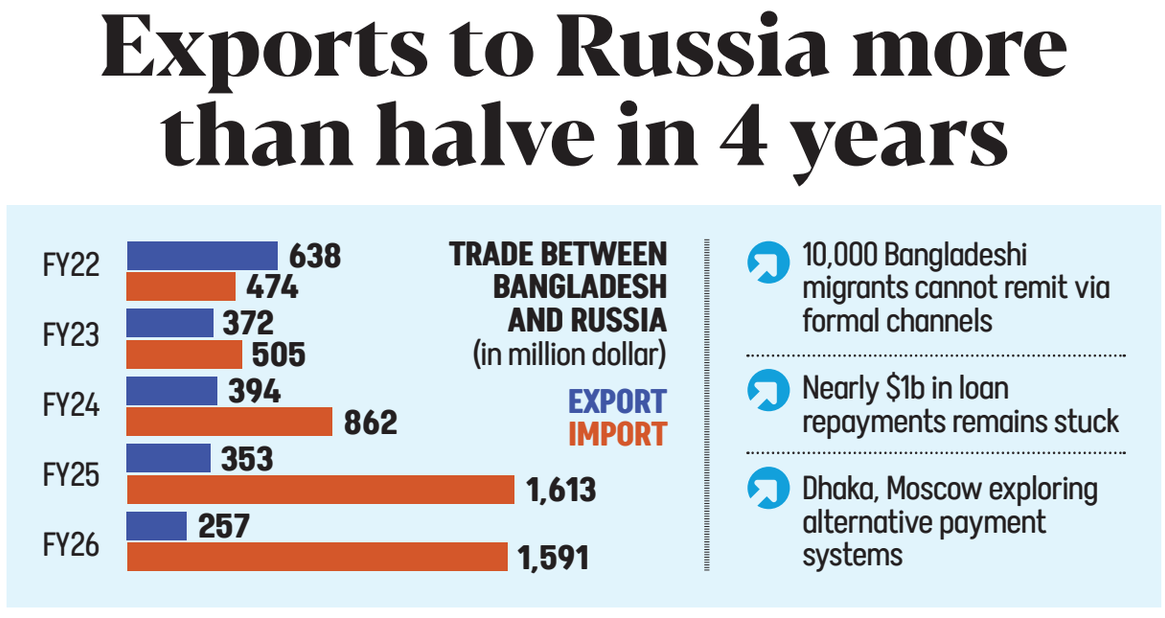
WEAKENED PADMA CHOKING IRRIGATION EFFORT -- PAGE 12



Workers pass the time chatting beside idle machines at Little Star Spinning Mills Ltd in Jamgora, Savar, yesterday, as low gas pressure keeps production curtailed to 30-40 percent of capacity. Officials say the mill receives gas at only 1 to 2.4 PSI against a requirement of 10 PSI. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

FALLOUT FROM US SANCTIONS

Exports to Russia more than halve in 4 years



- 10,000 Bangladeshi migrants cannot remit via formal channels
- Nearly $1b in loan repayments remains stuck
- Dhaka, Moscow exploring alternative payment systems

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is struggling to sustain exports, labour migration and major development cooperation with Russia as US-led financial sanctions imposed after the Russia-Ukraine war continue to disrupt payment settlements.

The sanctions have sharply reduced Bangladesh's exports to Russia, prevented around 10,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers from sending remittances through formal banking channels and stalled repayments of the Russian loan for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Officials said Dhaka even approached Washington seeking a waiver for Russia-related financial transactions, but without success.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh and Russia are discussing alternative payment mechanisms, including opening a branch of Russia's state-owned Sber Bank in Dhaka to facilitate settlements in national currencies, following a model already operating between Russia and India.

Finding a payment solution was one of the key issues discussed during Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit to Moscow in early June, officials said.

Asked about the impact of geopolitical tensions on international trade, Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, told The Daily Star, "Geopolitics is directly affecting

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Presidential election on August 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will elect its 23rd president on August 20, with voting scheduled from 2:00pm to 5:00pm, after the Election Commission announced the poll schedule yesterday.

Nomination papers will be submitted between 10:00am and 4:00pm on August 13. Candidates may withdraw their nominations by 4:00pm on August 18.

Announcing the schedule at the EC's headquarters in Agargaon, its Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said scrutiny of nomination forms will begin at 10:00am on August 16 and continue until completion.

He added that the schedule was announced in accordance with the Presidential Election Act, 1991, following consultations between the chief election commissioner and the Speaker of parliament.

Akhtar said the EC received the 349-member electoral roll from the Parliament Secretariat for the presidential election.

The commission yesterday held a meeting to finalise preparations ahead of the polls, he said, adding that the remaining administrative procedures

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Quader told BCL to beat students in July

Verified audio clip played before ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday played before the International Crimes Tribunal-2 a forensic-verified audio recording in which then Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader was heard instructing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leaders to "beat" student protesters during the July uprising.

Presenting arguments on the second day of the prosecution's hearing in a crimes against humanity case against Quader and six others, Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim said the recorded conversation showed Quader directly inciting violence against protesters.

In the audio clip played in court, Quader was heard telling then BCL President

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A rain-soaked girl carries a bucket of kadam flowers for sale near Dhaka University's Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) yesterday. Regarded as a symbol of the monsoon in Bangladesh, the seasonal blooms are sold on city streets, especially at traffic lights. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

HASINA AT DELHI MEDIA EVENT

An affront to July martyrs, sovereignty

Say BNP, NCP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Allowing deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to address a news conference in New Delhi on the anniversary of the July uprising was an attempt to insult the movement's martyrs and undermine Bangladesh's sovereignty, BNP and NCP leaders alleged yesterday.

They accused India of using Hasina as a political tool to destabilise Bangladesh and urged New Delhi to clarify why it was allowing her, who remains in India, to engage in political activities.

Hasina addressed the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia in New Delhi via audio link on Wednesday, marking two years since the fall of the Awami League government. She also answered questions from journalists.

Ahead of the event, Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir had urged India to prevent Hasina's media appearance, warning that it could affect bilateral relations.

India's Ministry of External Affairs, however, said the government had no involvement, describing it as an event organised by a private media body.

BNP leaders dismissed that explanation.

Prime Minister's Political Adviser and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said allowing

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