

Civil admin

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on the administration. In many cases, secretaries are being transferred without the knowledge of the ministers concerned. The sources cited the recent transfer of three secretaries to justify their contention.

"I don't know when my (ministry's) secretary is being transferred or who is coming next. I learn that from newspaper reports. My executive authority as minister is being challenged, which consequently weakens the chain of command," a senior minister said seeking anonymity.

He mentioned that four secretaries have been changed during his three-year tenure.

Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim's presence and speech at a political meeting at Islampur in Jamalpur on December 31 last evoked sharp reaction in the administration. Rumours are afloat that Halim will contest the next elections on BNP ticket. His contractual service will expire in August.

A former cabinet secretary, preferring not to be named, noted that such activities are a gross violation of government service rules. "Neutrality of the administration is destroyed in these ways. If a government employee wants to join politics, he must quit job or go into retirement," he said.

But many of the high government officials are found to engage in extra-administrative activities that are political in nature.

Meanwhile, the number of contractual appointments is also increasing and it now stands at more than 240. Most of such appointments and extension of contracts are being made on political grounds.

The same trend was also marked during the previous Awami League rule.

Officials who either got contractual appointment or extension of their contract include Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim, Principal Secretary to the PM Kamal Siddiqui, PMO Secretary Khandakar Shahidul Islam, Law Secretary Alauddin Sarder, Telecommunications Secretary Hasan Mansur, Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Chairman Omar Faruk, Director General of BIAM Foundation Shahidul Alam, National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury, Communications Secretary Shahidul Islam, Public Works Secretary Iqbal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury and Agriculture Secretary Kazi Abul Kashem.

PRO JAMAAT OFFICIALS
A persisting rumour in the Secretariat is that a number of important posts including those of secretaries and additional secretaries of different ministries are now held by officials inclined to the Jamaat-e-Islami.

A former secretary said about 20

percent of the officials promoted as secretaries and additional secretaries have soft corner for Jamaat. Ministries including establishment, education, industries, environment and forest, public works and housing, food and disaster management, social welfare and religious affairs are dominated by officials subscribing to Jamaat ideologies.

A newly promoted secretary on condition of anonymity said: "If one has to get good posting, he has to be Jamaat-minded. It is very dangerous for both BNP and the government."

It is believed that most of the top officials of the industries and social welfare ministries are loyal to Jamaat ideology. Jamaat's Ameer Matiur Rahman Nazim is in charge of the industries ministry while its Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid is in charge of the social welfare ministry.

PROMOTION AND POSTING
Last week's promotion of 378 senior assistant secretaries to the rank of deputy secretary (DS) has resulted in a large number of officials becoming officer on special duty (OSD).

The government officials now have to be concerned about posting besides promotion. A good number of officials who have been promoted as additional and joint secretaries have not yet got posting. Some of them even have got "green signal" from the ministry, but the files seem to get stuck at the PMO. There is allegation that if a particular official does not enjoy the PMO's confidence, he does not get posting.

Some 12 additional secretary level posts are now lying vacant. These include chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk), chairman of Power Development Board (PDB) chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), chairman of Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC), chief controller of import and export, and additional secretary to the water resources ministry.

The post of managing director (MD) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines has been lying vacant for more than one year. Biman's Director (Marketing) Mahmoodur Rahman is now the acting MD of the national airlines.

A number of additional secretaries when contacted said they are lobbying everybody including the PMO, but could not secure their posting.

On the other hand, the post of DG of the Department of Environment that is of additional secretary level has been filled in by a joint secretary when many of the additional secretaries are not getting posts.

3 die

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the sewer at Sanatgarh of Boubazar area under the Hazaribagh Police Station to clean it at 10:00am after failing to clean the clogged wastes with bamboo sticks.

"As there was no sign of them, some of us peeped through the manhole and found them lying inside," said a rescuer.

Sanwar and Keramat died on the spot while Rahman fell critically ill from poisonous gas inhalation. He was rushed to Sikder Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The police went to the spot at around 2:00pm to take the bodies to morgue for autopsy, but the locals prevented them. At one point, some 300 locals locked into a clash with the cops and around 50 were injured, the locals claimed.

The police later sent the bodies of Sanwar and Keramat to the Mitford Hospital morgue and the body of Rahman to the Dhaka Medical College morgue.

The locals alleged that three days ago they went to Commissioner Jasim Uddin of ward No. 47 of Dhaka City Corporation regarding cleaning of the clogged wastes.

"The commissioner refused to do it," said Kanchan Khan, a resident of the area. "He told us to leave our houses when we pleaded that it became intolerable to live amid the stink of the toxic wastes," he added.

Commissioner Jasim, however, denied the allegation and told The Daily Star that he sought time from the locals saying he would inform the government of the situation. He advised the locals to live somewhere else since the toxic gas might harm the children, he added.

SC upholds

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Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance and Section 54 of Criminal Code of Procedure (CrPC).

The Judge also observed in the modified order that Dhaka Metropolitan Police will have to follow the Supreme Court directives while arresting any person upon suspicion under Section 86 of the DMP Ordinance and Section 54 of Criminal Code of Procedure (CrPC).

On February 5, a High Court bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir imposed the injunction upon the government in carrying out blanket arrests of people and directed the government to submit a report within two weeks detailing the names and particulars of the persons arrested under Section 86 of the DMP Ordinance and Section 54 of the CrPC.

The High Court's injunction came following a writ petition filed as public interest litigation (PIL) by Advocate ZI Khan Panna, chairman of Human Rights and Legal Aid Committee of Bangladesh Bar Council.

The High Court bench also issued a rule upon the government asking it to explain why the blanket arrests of the opposition activists and common people should not be declared illegal and the government should not be directed to compensate the arrestees.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Abdur Razzak Khan and Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Helaluddin Mollah moved for the government while Dr Kamal Hossain for the writ petitioner.

Govt commits

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government said, "We will also prepare a report quantifying the quasi-fiscal costs arising from prices below the international levels in the energy and power sector, including the implicit subsidies and revenue foregone by underpricing of natural gas."

Submission of the report by April has become a condition, besides three others, for Bangladesh to get the sixth tranche of the PRGF loan, scheduled to be disbursed in June.

One of the other three conditions is to make the Large Taxpayers' Unit at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) more functional by introducing risk-based taxpayer audit procedures and a system of uniform taxpayer identification numbers by April 30.

Finalisation of a comprehensive report reviewing all the tax exemptions and incentives, and evaluating the associated revenue losses is another condition.

The last condition is to name a preferred bidder for Rupali Bank in line with the agreed tender procedures and selection process for technical and financial evaluations.

A letter of Finance Minister Saifur Rahman to IMF Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato accompanied the memorandum explaining why Bangladesh had failed to meet some of the IMF conditions for getting the fifth tranche of its Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) loan.

In the letter, Saifur said, "Owing to delays in the disbursement of external program assistance and in implementing structural reforms, several quantitative and structural performance criteria for the fourth review were not observed. The targets for net international reserves, net domestic assets of the central bank, and net bank credit and total domestic financing of the government were missed."

JMB men caught

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who led the drives said, "The militants admitted that they had rented the house to carry out attacks in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur region soon."

Following intelligence report, a Rab team from Dhaka arrested three JMB men at Saidpur Railway Station around 11:00pm on February 6, reports our Nilphamari correspondent.

The arrestees are Nilphamari district commander Wahidul Islam alias Sayem alias Al Mamun alias Sajjad Hossain, 24, of Thakurgaon, Birampur upazila commander Faruque Hossen alias Amzad, 32, of Nilphamari and ehstar member Rabiul Islam alias Kamal Hossain, 17.

Squeezing information out of the three, the Rab yesterday raided Asif's rented house in Kazi Para in Saidpur around 1:00am and arrested six other JMB leaders.

The arrestees are Asif, former district commander of Rangpur and Nilphamari Mahfuzur Rahman Ibrahim, 26, of Rangpur, Rangpur district commander Moniruz-zaman alias Iqbal, 25, of Thakurgaon, Kurigram district commander Abu Bakar Siddiq alias Nahid, 32, of Dinajpur, ehstar members Ehsanul Haq alias Mesbah, 18, of Dinajpur

and Shahabuddin alias Ahmed Musa, 19, of Lalmonirhat who is also in charge of Rangpur sadar upazila.

The Rab also seized 84 detonators, four packs of power jel, two pipe guns, four cartridges, 12 circuits, three dozen batteries, five pieces of insulation tape, four kgs of chemical substances, 10 kgs of inflammable substances, four books on jihad, electric wire, three cellphone sets, a motorcycle, two dozen torch bulbs and Tk 47,000.

Rab sources said Sayem, Moniruzzaman and Nahid led the bomb blasts in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram on August 17 last year. The Rab turned all the arrestees in to Nilphamari police.

Landlord Gani Mridha told The Daily Star Asif rented two tin-shed rooms of his house around one month ago at Tk 800 a month, identifying himself as a medical representative.

He said Asif was to live with his family and parents, but he only brought his wife and one child, but sent them elsewhere after 15 days.

As his wife and child left, many strangers started visiting his house frequently, he added.

Cellphone operators

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on how it can be done within the shortest possible time.

The cell operators have been asked to complete re-registration for the existing subscribers within two months. BTRC has assured them of considering time extension after reviewing the progress of the two-month deadline.

The operators earlier requested the commission to give at least a six-month time to complete registration of around 10 million subscribers, of whom 90 per cent are clients.

The telecom regulator has made mandatory a "certificate" issued by an elected public representative or a first class government officer for new subscription. If any subscriber provides false information in personal details, the official or the public representative attesting the form will be taken to task.

Those who have passports, driving licences or other forms of identity documents will not require the certificate. Connection of an existing subscriber will be snapped in case of failure to register with the operators within the scheduled time and restored after completing the process.

The operators fear that manda-

tory certificate for fresh subscription would deal a severe blow to the growth of the mobile phone market in Bangladesh.

Cell phone companies have been asked to record personal details of their clients in electronic databases.

It is said that the current system does not ensure correct information of pre-paid clients, creating opportunities for criminals to use the mobile phone network for their operations.

The government on December 11, 2005 amended the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001 and promulgated an ordinance with immediate effect, allowing intelligence and law enforcement personnel to tap the telephonic conversations of any individual.

The government amended it again on January 30 and added provision for punishment of the mobile operators who will not comply with the directives. The government has placed the ordinance in the current session of parliament for approval.

Journo Harun killing

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present in the court to hear the judgement, will be released from Khulna district jail today morning if he is not wanted in any other case, jail sources said.

The accused have been acquitted, as their involvement in the murder could not be proved from statements of prosecution witnesses recorded during the trial, the judge observed in his judgement.

Shaikh Harun-ar-Rashid, a senior reporter of Dainik Purbanchal published from Khulna city, was gunned down at 7:30pm on March 2, 2002 at Mujgunni under Khalishpur thana when he was going to his office by motorcycle.

His brother-in-law Morol lodged an FIR with Khalishpur Police Station on March 3 naming none as accused.

The case was later transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for investigation. Assistant Superintendent of Police Mawla Bux, who investigated the case, submitted charge sheet against the three on March 3 last year.

Ten others, including Gazi Kamrul, the second-in-command of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party, were also arrested as suspects in the murder case but their names

were not included in the charge sheet.

The case was transferred to Speedy Trial Tribunal on September 29 last year from the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge-2.

Statements of 12 out of 29 prosecution witnesses were recorded during the trial, tribunal sources said.

Complainant of the murder case Morol broke down in tears hearing the judgement that acquitted the accused.

Wife of the slain journalist Minara Begum expressed her sense of insecurity as one of the three acquitted gave her death threats several times for not withdrawing the case.

"I have not got justice," she said. Khulna Press Club leaders demanded re-investigation of the case and necessary steps for holding the trial again.

The accused in the murder case were acquitted due to failure of the state to conduct the case properly and CID's defective investigation, Khulna Press Club President Liaquat Ali and General Secretary A K Hiru said in a statement to the press.

ALCWC

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electoral laws and the legal matters, party sources said.

The meeting will also fix the date for Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) meeting that will finally take decision of returning to the House, ending a 16-month boycott.

The party lawmakers may return to the House on February 12, sources said.

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina will lose her membership if she does not return to the House by February 13.

With the opposition leader's declaration of returning to the House, the AL lawmakers have started bringing adjournment notices on various issues from price spiral of essentials to power crisis, fertiliser shortage, terrorism, militancy, and electoral reforms.

AL Whip Faruk Khan yesterday said their members have submitted notices for discussion on the issues and he himself submitted a notice on discussing the issue of electoral reforms to ensure free and fair polls.

"I had also submitted a similar notice in the last session, but the Speaker rejected it," he said.

SC stays

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Dr Kamal Hossain and advocate Mahbubey Alam moved for the petitioner while Additional Attorney General Abdur Razzak Khan assisted by Helaluddin Mollah for the government.

TRIAL BEGINS IN SYLHET
As trial of the Kibira murder case began in the Speedy Trial Tribunal of Sylhet yesterday, defence lawyers challenged the charge sheet terming it "incomplete and faulty" and appealed to the court not to accept it.

However, the court discharged the prayer and charges were framed against eight out of 10 accused in the case. Judge Biplob Goswami then fixed February 22 and 23 for recording depositions of the witnesses, reports our staff correspondent at Sylhet.

The lawyers later told newsmen that they would move to the High Court soon and pray for cancellation of the charge sheet. During the court proceedings, all the accused claimed themselves as innocent.

The eight accused, who had been in different jails were brought to the Sylhet Central Jail last week and produced before the trial court yesterday. They are Abdul Quaiyum, Jamir Ali, Shahed Ali, Jainal Abedin Jalal, Tajul Islam, Selim Ahmed, Ayat Ali and Jainal Abedin Momin.

Two other accused, Muhibur Rahman and Kajol, have been absconding since the January 27, 2005 grenade attack that killed Kibria and four others moments after the Awami League lawmaker addressed a public meeting at Baiddar Bazar in Habiganj Sadar upazila.

The authorities took tight security measures in and around the court building where the accused were brought with helmets on their heads.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Munshi Atiqur Rahman on March 20, 2005, submitted the charge sheet in the case accusing 10 people -- all are leaders, activists and supporters of the ruling BNP.

After the grenade attack, Advocate Majid filed two cases -- one for murder of the former minister and another under Explosive Substances Act. The charge sheet in the second case was submitted on April 20 last year accusing the same 10 people. Its trial is yet to begin.

BSF kills 1

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Confirming the incident, local BDR Commander Shahidul Islam said the BSF agreed to return the body of Alamgir today.

Four people were killed in BSF firing over the last five weeks when 11 people were killed last year in Thakurgaon border.

Gang kills

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Jalal Uddin Rumi, owner of New Fashion Cloth Store, said he saw a gang coming towards the bazaar immediately after hearing some gunshots.

The group opened fire on two youths who were having tea. Jalal was also bullet hit in the left leg and abdomen. He said he saw two youths falling to the ground but could not name them.

The gang later gunned down another youth at Nanibari of South Badda, locals said.

The six were rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where on duty doctors declared four of them dead. Kamrul and Jalal are undergoing treatment there.

Locals suspect one Mahbub, who came out of jail recently, to have masterminded the killings. They said the four might have had rivalry with Mahbub over supremacy in the area.

AL MPs

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During the scrutiny at the standing committee yesterday, AL lawmakers Abdul Hye and Panchanan Biswas said the law would severely hamper private life of the people as well as curb their freedom of speech.

"People will be afraid of using telephones which will also affect the growing telecommunication sector of the country," Abdul Hye told newsmen.

The AL lawmaker quoting his meeting statement said, "Those in charge of tapping telephonic conversation will become corrupt and will start blackmailing the innocent people."

A meeting source said BNP lawmaker and member of the committee Mehedi Ahmed Rumi also said there are possibilities of corruption and misuse of the law by those who will tap conversations. He suggested including a protection clause in the bill to avert such misuse.

In response, the telecommunications minister said there is nothing to be worried about. "If someone is involved in such ill-practice, we will have amendment to check the crime," he assured the members.

QUORUM CRISIS

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed an acute quorum crisis thanks to the absence of most ruling party lawmakers including the front bench members.

The session began 35 minutes late as 60 lawmakers, needed for the quorum, were not present in the 345-member parliament. The proceedings resumed 25 minutes late after the Maghrib prayer break.

US consortium

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cern how you'll manage the money, but we can ensure other cooperation and encourage you to go for Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) system."

As the US delegation members said they have come here to see the investment climate and prefer investment in the transport sector of capital Dhaka, the communications minister advised them to invest in Chittagong, Bogra and Sylhet. "These cities also have huge economic potentials," he said.

He also asked the delegation to submit their proposal to the government so that it could assess the prospect and feasibility of this project.

Nazmul Huda informed the US team that the government is already implementing a World Bank-financed project, "Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP)," and the sky train project must not make any problem to the DUTP.

In reply, the ATSC chairman and CEO requested the communications minister to give them a copy of that project and assured that their project would not cause any problem to the DUTP.

The minister also advised ATSC to think about any other mode of transportation apart from the sky train.

When ATSC proposed for installing

trams in Dhaka city, the communications minister said it could be installed on road islands, but BRTC Chairman Advocate Taimur Alam Khandoker sharply opposed it.

After the meeting, Huda told reporters that the US delegation is here on a fact-finding mission. "They have realised that there is a lot of commuters in this sprawling mega city, they are verifying all options sky train, tram etc," he said.

Norbort Von Boode said it is just the beginning of the project. "We are so far happy and if we see the project is profitable to us then we'll invest."

Earlier, the US delegation met Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka at his office.

After the meeting, Khoka said Dhaka is already an overcrowded city. "If we don't take any decision right now, the situation will get worse in the next 10 to 20 years," he said.

About ATSC's proposal, he said, "We have asked them to submit a complete proposal and the government will then take the final decision."

The delegation is scheduled to hold another meeting with Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI) Mahmudur Rahman today, a BoI official told the news agency.

RU teacher held

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fession before the arrest of Mohiuddin.

Jahangir said he along with his brother Salam, relative Nazmul committed the murder in presence of Mohiuddin and Salekin.

He said Mohiuddin asked him several months ago if he would kill Taher, who used to live alone after his family shifted to Dhaka.

He claimed Mohiuddin went to Taher's house during his absence and masterminded the murder, offering Jahangir money and a computer and Salam and Nazmul jobs at RU.

After the murder was committed, Mohiuddin and Salekin asked them to dump the body into a sewer, he added.

MOHIUDDIN'S PROFILE
Mohiuddin, a resident of Faridpur, joined the RU as a lecturer in 1990 and went to Belgium for higher education in 1992.

He did his PhD from Japan's Tsukuba University in 1997 and was made assistant professor in 1998. He went to Japan again for a postdoctoral degree on geological survey.

He was a visiting professor of

TSUKUBA UNIVERSITY for two years since 2001.

He applied for the post of professor in March last year and was denied repeatedly for lack of random 12 years in service, quality publications and expert opinions in favour of him.

TAHER, ONLY BARRIER
RU sources said Prof Taher was the only impediment to the promotion of Mohiuddin, who might have orchestrated the murder to remove the obstacle.

He being the senior most teacher with a considerable influence on his colleagues, most of who were his students, disagreed many times with Mohiuddin's application for the post of a professor.

Tata
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Now it depends on the government whether it really wants to sign the investment agreement, Manzer said.

During the daylong meeting, issues including lease agreement on Barapukuria coal mine, sovereign guarantee for gas supplies, gas field reserves data and joint venture investment were also discussed.

Earlier in the morning the Tata Group representatives called on Energy Ministry Adviser Mahmudur Rahman to brief him on the development of the negotiation.

Mahmudur Rahman said if the Tata Group remains rigid on its 'unrealistic' demands the government will not be able to reach an agreement with it.

He said the final decision will come from government high-ups. "It needs a political decision to sign such an agreement. We will send a summary of the negotiation to the ministry committee headed by the industries minister."

Rahman said in India and the USA, investors buy per thousand cubic feet of gas at a rate of US\$3.0 to \$3.5 from the governments.

Tata will again sit with the main negotiation committee headed by Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam in his office today.

On April 20 last year, Tata submitted its \$2.5 billion investment proposal for setting up a 1,000 MW power station, a steel mill with an annual production capacity of 420,000 tonnes and a one million-tonne fertiliser unit.

Later on May 9, the government and Tata agreed to begin negotiations from May 25, to conclude it by August 31 and to sign the agreements before November 30 the same year.

5 more bodies

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Karnaphuli with nine trucks and 10 people aboard early Sunday.

Fire Brigade and Roads and Highways Department teams continued the salvage operation from 10:00am to 4:00pm yesterday. They found two bodies floating while three others inside the salvaged trucks.

Meanwhile, the two probe committees separately visited the site of the ferry capsized and continued the investigation for the second day yesterday. The committees have been asked to submit reports within seven days from Monday.

Karnaphuli police on Tuesday sent the driver of the capsized ferry to jail.

HR bodies

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Press Club yesterday.

The other organisations are Nanipokkho, Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh Manabadhikar Bastobayon Sangstha, ActionAid Bangladesh, Sammilito Samajik Andolon, Nari O Manabadhikar Foundation, Bangladesh Coalition for Child Rights, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, Odhakar, and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

Expressing deep concern over the Khatme Nabuwat declaration of attacking the Ahmadiyyas of Dhanikhola, the rights groups urged the government to take appropriate measures so that the attackers cannot enter within 10 kilometres of the area on February 10.

In a written speech, Sharif said the Khatme Nabuwat demonstration in Mymensingh city on February 3 demanding declaration of the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims is a threat to the freedom of speech, democracy and the sovereignty of the country as the constitution ensures religious freedom in the land.

Padma Bridge

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leaders at the state guesthouse, Meghna.

The LGRD minister said, "China has constructed many bridges in Bangladesh and we told the delegation that we need to construct more bridges."