

## Saifur condemns hartal on foundation-laying day

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 10: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman condemned the opposition for calling hartal on the memorable day of the laying of the foundation of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB), a dream of millions of people, aimed at bridging the two isolated parts of the country, reports UNB.

He called upon all to shun hartals, strikes, blockades and other anti-development activities in the greater national interest.

Addressing the foundation-laying ceremony at Syedabad on the western bank of the Jamuna river this morning, the Finance Minister said it was an historic event in the development history of Bangladesh because, the long-awaited Jamuna Bridge is going to be a reality, burying all confusion and differences of opinion.

"As the Finance Minister, my first task was to prove the feasibility of the Jamuna Bridge to the donors. We succeeded in proving the feasibility beyond doubt, as well as our strong resolve to go ahead with the bridge."

The Finance Minister said on construction of the bridge, the economy of the northern region would gain dynamism, production would increase and marketing would become easier.

Saifur Rahman assured those people whose lands have been acquired that they would be properly rehabilitated and receive adequate compensation.

### Aminul Huq

State Minister for Establishment Aminul Huq, who hails from northern Bangladesh, said a particular political party called the hartal to mar the memorable occasion.

The hartal had frustrated the people because they could not reach the venue due to the shutdown. "Lakhs of people from Pabna, Bogra and Rajshahi might have come to join this historic event," he said.

Representatives of donor agencies at the foundation-laying ceremony congratulated the government for venturing to undertake the gigantic project so courageously and hoped it would be implemented

smoothly.

### Willoughby

"Today is the outcome of a century-old demand. The World Bank is happy to participate in the project. It's the largest project of the WB in Bangladesh," said World Bank Resident Mission Chief in Dhaka C R Willoughby.

"We have looked into every aspect of feasibility of the bridge and then taken decision to finance it," he added.

He hoped that the bridge would have a long-term and large-scale impact on the national economy.

Willoughby noted with satisfaction that a national consensus had emerged on way to implementation of the JMB project and expressed his optimism that such consensus would also be created for development of the country.

### Thomson

Senior Vice President of the Asian Development Bank W R Thomson said the ADB took honour in joining the JMB project and expected the bridge to be built in time.

"This is the highest-funded project of the ADB in the world since its inception," Thomson said and added the people of this region would be benefited and their socio-economic condition improved following implementation of the project.

The ADB would closely monitor the implementation of the project, Thomson said, and assured that his bank would assist and continue co-operation in development projects of Bangladesh.

### Shigeo Takenaka

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shigeo Takenaka said the Jamuna bridge had long been a dream of the people of Bangladesh, but it is now coming true.

"This is the highest-funded project of Japan in the country," he said, adding the people of Bangladesh would get a fresh opportunity of economic development.

He hoped that the JMB project would be implemented as safely, efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

## JMB will build national economy, says Oli

SYEDABAD (Sirajganj), Apr 10: Communications Minister Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed said today that the construction of the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge (JMB) would lead to epoch-making contributions towards building the national economy of the country, reports BSS.

Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremonies of the Jamuna Bridge here and at Shyamsail in Tangail, the Minister said it would not only establish road link between the eastern region and north western region of the country but would also contribute to setting up industries in the north-western region through power and gas transmission.

Besides, the commodities produced in one part would easily be marketed in the other region thus ensuring fair price to the peasants for their products, he said.

This bridge, he said, would immensely contribute towards economic growth and help in raising the standard of living.

Col (ret'd) Oli said in future there will be provision for setting up rail and telecommunication connection over this bridge. The Communications Minister said the laying of foundation stone today has been possible as a result of firm determination, all-out initiative and sincere efforts of the present government.

Oli Ahmed said the government of Begum Khaleda Zia has taken two very significant steps for implementation of JMB projects in April 1991. The government, he said, approved the project document and took necessary administrative and financial matters for implementation of the project. Before that, the minister said, there was no procedural basis for the implementation of the Jamuna Bridge Project.

The minister said in the second phase, the government included this project in the three-year core programme. The importance and the priority of the programme were determined and 2250 crore Taka was earmarked under this programme.

Col Oli said although the consultants of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project in its report in 1989 mentioned that the bridge was technically and economically feasible, the donor agencies raised the question of economic justifica-

tion and various other points.

To meet the situation, he said, an expert panel comprising four Bangladesh economists was constituted by the Communications Ministry and the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority to determine "correct ERR (economic rate of return)" in 1992.

The panel through detailed explanations and analysis proved that the Jamuna Bridge was also profitable from the economic point of view, he said, adding that the World Bank and the donor countries and agencies accepted the explanations.

The Communications Minister said four contracts of the project such as the main bridge, river training, the link roads of the eastern bank and the western bank will be implemented.

Referring to the steps of the government taken in this regard, he said the appraisal of the project was held in Dhaka from September 6 to 20, 1993, and the appraisal team of World Bank and the OECF fact finding mission of Japan found the project to be feasible from technical and economic points of view.

### The name game!

By Staff Correspondent

SHYAMSHOIL, Tangail, Apr 10: Soon after the unveiling of the foundation stones of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, the people of Sirajganj and Tangail started a tug-of-war regarding the naming of the bridge.

The people of Sirajganj demanded that the bridge be named after Khwaja Enayet-puri, a local saint, while the people of Tangail said the bridge should be named after Maulana Bhasani.

Both groups hung banners and carried placards at the function sites on both banks on the mighty river.

Shahjahan Siraj, the MP from Tangail's Kalihati thana, however, requested the Prime Minister not to bring the revered persons who are no more into a controversy and said the bridge should be named simply as the Jamuna bridge because the river was such a source of inspiration during the war of independence in 1971.



Braving the scorching Chaitra sun, a large number of men, women and children thronged to Syedabad, six miles from Sirajganj town, yesterday to attend the founding ceremony of the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge. — Star photo

## A red-letter day

By Asiuzzaman

SHYAMSHOIL, Tangail, Apr 10: Today has been a red-letter day for more than five lakh people of Kalihati and Bhupur thanas as Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia formally unveiled the foundation stone of the long-cherished Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB). I am happy that the bridge is finally being constructed.

Abdul Bari Talukder, a peasant of the nearby Sharifabad village told The Daily Star.

"We've heard about the bridge for years but now the bridge is going to see the light of day," he said.

At the same time he called for timely resettlement of the affected people, as promised by the government.

Despite the opposition-call for a hartal, men, women and children gathered at the meeting venue at Shyamsail village where a huge canopy was erected for the foundation-laying ceremony.

Jubilant and enthusiastic people broke a security cordon and took their seats under the canopy to see the charismatic Prime Minister.

"I am here to see the Prime Minister who will give us the Jamuna Bridge," 12-year-old Selina told this correspondent.

Elderly Mati Mandal's reaction was a bit different. He said "All the people of the country will be benefited, so the question of my happiness is immaterial."

The hartal did not affect anything today as this desert-like vast charland.

Even opposition MP Shahjahan Siraj of the Gano Forum went to the area and helped in organising the programmes for the function.

"It was like an Eid for the children," said a woman who declined to be named. Beside the historic occasion, a five-helicopter fleet, which carried the Prime Minister's entourage, was an additional attraction for the village people who had braved the scorching sun and waited patiently for hours to be present at such a momentous occasion.

## Azizul Hoq MP

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upheld the cause of the people and worked for the consolidation of democracy in the country, he added.

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last night also went to the Dhanmondi residence of Azizul Hoq to pay her last respect to the late parliamentarian.

Begum Zia spent there for some time and consoled the members of the bereaved family.

In a condolence message she said in his death the country had lost a prominent parliamentarian and the BNP a very sincere and dedicated politician.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, ministers, members of Parliament, a large number of leaders of various political parties also went to the residence of late Hoq.

Hoq was born at village Dewgaon under Kahlali police station of Bogra district on July 1, 1931. He passed matriculation examination from the Bogra Coronation Institution in 1948 and studied in the Rajshahi Government College.

He was the chairman of the Rupali Bank.

He was the vice chairman of the Bogra Municipality from 1965 to 1970. He was also the Managing Director of the Readymade Battery Industry of Bogra from 1964 to 1970.

Hoq was elected a Member of Parliament in 1979 and 1991 as a BNP candidate.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, four daughters and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

## JMB nation's symbol of hope

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Dhaka C R Willoughby, vice-president of the Asian Development Bank W R Thomson, Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shigeo Takenaka, local MPs Shahjahan Siraj and Abdus Salam Pintu and the Executive Director of the JMBA Mohammad Ali spoke on the occasion, attended by ministers, diplomats, chiefs of the three Services, MPs and senior government officials.

The Prime Minister said, "I thank Almighty Allah for giving me the opportunity to lay the foundation of the bridge. On this historic occasion, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all my countrymen."

Begum Zia said the mighty Jamuna was an obstacle to the development of an integrated transport network and had led to disparity between the socio-economic structures of the eastern and north-western regions of our country.

Due to frequent changes in the course of the Jamuna, recurring expenditure for construction of new ferry ghats and terminal buildings have always been on the rise, the Prime Minister said.

"Considering all these aspects, the Jamuna bridge has become essential and unavoidable for us," Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister said, the bridge would contribute to strengthening national unity and sovereignty. A revolutionary change will take place in our transport sector when this

bridge is completed, she added.

"With the supply of gas through the bridge, the felling of trees would stop which would help maintain the environmental balance. Besides, this bridge will act as a development catalyst for the entire economy of the country."

She expressed gratitude to all friendly countries, international agencies and individuals helping Bangladesh in implementing the gigantic project.

Begum Zia said, necessary arrangements have been made to compensate and rehabilitate the people to be affected by the construction of the bridge.

To face the challenge of a new century, the world at large has adopted a new strategy for development. The gateway to competitive market-economy has been thrown wide open. All countries of the world are today united on the universal agenda of democracy and market economy, she said.

"We cannot remain isolated from this global trend. The 21st century will be a century for survival of the fittest."

The implementation of the Jamuna Bridge will carry forward the endeavours of development further, she said, seeking cooperation from all for timely implementation of the project.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior JMBA official said, the actual construction work of the bridge was expected to start later this year after issuance of

the work orders to the foreign construction firms.

Hyundai of South Korea will construct the bridge and approach viaduct. Hamvanordacz of the Netherlands will complete the river training works and reclamation while two approach roads in east and west will be constructed by another South Korean firm, Samwhan Corporation.

Meanwhile, the rehabilitation of the eastern flood embankment-cum-access road has already been completed by a local firm in August last year.

The project would need the acquisition of 5,680 acres of land along both banks. Of this, 3,800 acres have already been acquired by the government after payment of proper compensation. The JMBA has allocated Tk 36 crore for this purpose and payment is being made on the spot by the Sirajganj and Tangail district administrations.

Some 72,000 people of 12,000 families would be displaced by the construction work and the JMBA has taken up a resettlement programme 46 million dollars for the affected people.

It may be recalled that deposed president H M Ershad had laid a foundation stone a few kilometers from the present site on February 1, 1988 at a time when the project was far from being finalised. At that time, not a fraction of foreign financial assistance was committed by the donors.

## Hartal paralyses normal life

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were seen proceeding on foot to these places of work. Attendance in government offices and in the Secretariat, was rather poor. Many officers of the Secretariat had to stay overnight at their offices.

The authorities deployed hundreds of riot police, Ansars and para-military Bangladesh Rifles to guard important offices and maintain security.

A member of processions were brought out in the capital. The processionists should "Down with Khaleda Zia ... Unseat the BNP."

Three people were injured when a pro-Awami League Chhatra League (BCL) procession came under attack by a rival student organisation near Section-11 bus stand at Mirpur at 11 am.

Police picked up Nazrul Islam, a BCL leader of Dhaka College, from a procession at about 12:45 pm near the New Market.

At 11:35 am police arrested Faruk, Samad and Abul Hossain — three Awami League workers — from Telgaon.

An attack on an Awami League procession at Kala-chandpur, near Gulshan at about 10 am left four people injured.

Ayub Ali and Muhammad Ali, two AL activists, were hospitalised.

Awami League sources say at least 20 of their activists were seriously injured during attacks on processions by the workers of the BNP.

Many others were either beaten up or detained by police, they said.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent said at least three persons were injured seriously when fire crackers exploded at a pro-hartal procession of the Jatiya Party-backed Jubo Sanghati workers.

The injured were identified as Kamal, 20, Manik, 21, and Matur Rahman Mukti, 22.

about 12:30 pm. Jubo Sanghati leaders alleged the crackers were hurled at the procession by the pro-government miscreants.

Barring this incident, the dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed almost peacefully in the district town and its surrounding areas. However, rail communications between Dhaka and Narayanganj was normal.

Mills and factories in the industrial belt operated normally.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds: The

## Student shot in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A student, A B M Golam Mostafa Masood, was shot near the Jonaki Cinema Hall in the city last night.

Masood, a second year student of Islamic History of the Jagannath University College, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with a bullet wound in his right thigh.

## Rejoinder

By Staff Correspondent

A statement in the name of Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Health and Environmental Affairs Secretary of the Bangladesh Awami League, signed by the party's Assistant Office Secretary Siddique Rouf Khan, yesterday protested the publication of the photograph and news item in The Daily Star regarding the injury to AL leader Abdus Samad Azad and claimed that Samad Azad and some other leaders were injured in a police baton-charge Thursday.

The statement also claimed that the photograph, which was published in the paper along with the AL's rejoinder, clearly shows that Samad Azad was injured in the presence of the police and that 'the role of the police is very clear'.

Dr Mohiuddin also stated that he, along with several other AL leaders, were injured in police action.

He, however, hoped that a responsible paper like The Daily Star would follow the ethics of neutral journalism.

## The Midnight File

### NATO planes strike Gorazde

BRUSSELS, Apr 10: NATO warplanes today carried out airstrikes over the Serb-besieged Muslim town of Gorazde in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a NATO spokesman said here. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation carried out the attacks at the request of UN forces, the spokesman said, reports AFP.

### Fighting abates in Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda, Apr 10: Fighting abated Sunday in the capital of Rwanda, but the streets were still strewn with bodies and there were reports that soldiers had slaughtered wounded in their hospital beds. Foreign troops scrambled to transport their nationals away from the carnage. Thousands — perhaps tens of thousands — have died in the latest outbreak of slaughter between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, one of Africa's longest and bloodiest feuds, reports AP.

## PM brackets AL with autocratic forces

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 10: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today, without quite naming it, bracketed the Awami League with the autocratic forces for obstructing development activities and subverting democracy, reports UNB.

"When the entire nation demands the vital Jamuna Bridge, a political party has joined hands with the ousted autocratic force and called for a hartal in a bid to frustrate the aspirations of the people," Begum Zia told a mammoth gathering that attended the foundation-laying ceremony of the Jamuna Bridge.

The Awami League and the Jatiya Party of deposed president Ershad called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal all over the country today.

Making a dig at the Awami League, the Prime Minister said they did not want the welfare of the people and development of the country. They create obstacles in the path of others who are making all-out efforts to improve the lot of the people.

## JP terms it a 'foundation stone dacoity'

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party yesterday demanded resignation of the government for its alleged inefficiency and corruption and the holding of the next parliamentary polls under a caretaker administration.

At a rally in front of the National Press Club during the hartal hours, the JP leaders also demanded resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner for his alleged partisan role in the Magura-2 by polls last month.

Presided over by Khaledur Rahman Tito, JP secretary general, the rally was addressed by Nital Roy Chowdhury, Shah Mohammad Abu Jafar, Saifur Rahman and others.

Criticising Khaleda Zia for laying the foundation stone of the Jamuna Bridge, the JP leaders pointed out, "Ershad had laid the foundation stone on February 1, 1988."

"We have seen vote dacoity in the elections under this government. Now, we are witnessing the foundation stone dacoity," said the leaders.

## Hasina

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yesterday the Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said if the government had any respect for democracy and democratic norms, it would have accepted the people's demand.

"The country will plunge into a serious crisis if the government, tempted by power, continues to pursue the policy of running the country through arms and goons, ignoring the popular demand," she said and warned that the government would have to bear all responsibility.

Hasina alleged that the people-isolated BNP activists armed with guns and bombs had attacked processions of the Awami League in Dhaka and other places during the peaceful observance of the hartal yesterday.

The Bholia district Awami League office was attacked and set on fire and several party workers were injured. BNP and JCD terrorists also attacked her party workers at Bandura in Nawabganj thana and also in Manikganj, Hasina said.

She demanded release of those arrested during the peaceful siege on April 7.

Reiterating her vow to continue agitation, the Opposition leader said the 'corrupt and vote dacoit BNP government' would have to be resisted through mass agitation.

She said the Awami League would conduct mass campaign from today till April 19, gherao the district administrations on April 20 and observe another countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on April 26.

Hasina asked the people to observe the programmes to force the government to give parliamentary elections under a neutral, caretaker authority.

## AL should proceed cautiously, Hanif

By Staff Correspondent

City mayor Mohammad Hanif yesterday called upon the activists of the city unit of the Awami League (AL) to prepare for an all-out agitation against the government.

Hanif, while delivering his presidential speech at a post-hartal rally held in front of the central AL office, observed that democracy was no longer safe in the hands of the government headed by Begum Khaleda Zia.

Terming the results of the last mayoral polls as a partial victory for the AL, Hanif said the party activists had to work hard for a complete victory in the near future.

The mayor, however, felt that the Awami League should go ahead with the anti-government agitations in a very careful, calculated and disciplined manner.

"We cannot go one step forward now only to take two steps backward sometime later," Hanif told the rally.

Analysing the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)'s "so-called victory" in the recent parliamentary by-election in Magura the mayor said the BNP had eventually "earned fifty pennies at the cost of one pound." The AL had no reason to behave like a "penny-wise pound foolish party," the mayor observed.

Among others who addressed the rally were AL Presidium member Amir Hossain Amu, publicity secretary Mofazzal Hossain Paltu and Moinuddin Hasan Chowdhury of the AL-backed students' organisation the Chhatra League.

## BEXIMCO computer section gutted

By Staff Correspondent

The computer section of the BEXIMCO at Dhanmondi area in the city was gutted yesterday morning.

Two rooms on the ground floor at House No 9/A, Road No-2, Dhanmondi, came under fire which originated from electric short circuit at around 7 in the morning, according to both police and BEXIMCO officials.

Computers, printers, furniture and other valuables in the rooms were burned as flame spread very fast. However, the total loss could not be estimated immediately.

Fire service men brought the flame under control within a short time.

A case was lodged with the Dhanmondi police.

## SAPTA talks

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meeting in Colombo and the consequent CEC meeting in Dhaka suggests that at least at this point of time, it is unwilling to involve itself with the arrangement for Preferential Trade in the South Asian region. Pakistan's inability to hold the fourth IGG meeting in Islamabad also confirms this belief, the official commented.

Another official of the ministry said Pakistan's hopes of benefiting from the regional deal in terms no less than India might also have led it to take more time to prepare the request lists.

He also said Pakistan has a disadvantageous position in the trade deal compared to India because Islamabad would get less concessions for having a higher per capita income than India as per the trade agreement.

A two-member delegation comprising Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce M A Rouf and Trade Consultant M Shahidullah will represent Bangladesh in the fourth IGG meeting in Male.

According to Commerce Ministry sources, the request list submitted by Bangladesh to India includes 56 items, while the lists submitted to the Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan include 56, 55, 51, 23 and 22 items respectively.

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