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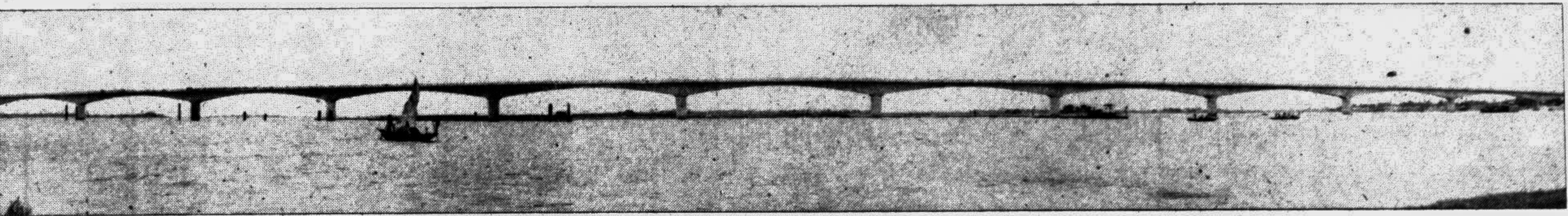
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A memorable day in development: PM Longest Meghna-Gumti Bridge opens



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, accompanied by Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, takes a look at the river below from the Meghna-Gumti bridge on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway which she formally opened to traffic yesterday.

By Staff Correspondent

BAUSHIA GHAT (Munshiganj), Nov 1: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia opened the Meghna-Gumti Bridge, in a ceremony here today, establishing direct road link between the capital and the port city of Chittagong.

The 1.41 kilometre-long second Bangladesh-Japan Friendship Bridge at the confluence of the Meghna and Gumti rivers, separating Munshiganj and Comilla districts, was jointly financed by Japan and Bangladesh at a cost of Tk 313 crore. The Japanese government provided a 8.2 billion yen grant for the project.

"Today is a memorable day in our quest for development, a revolutionary progress in the field of communication," the Prime Minister said while inaugurating the bridge, the longest in the country. "With this, Bangladesh has moved one step forward in its communication network."

The opening ceremony was attended by a visiting Japanese Parliamentary delegation led by Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, president of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Association, members of the cabinet, diplomats and other dignitaries.

It was also addressed by Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a member of Parliament elected from Daudkandi, Deputy Minister for LGED and Cooperatives Abdul Hal, an MP from Baushia and Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shigeo Takenaka. Syed Rezaul Hayat, Secretary of the Road Communications Division, read out the address of welcome.

The opening of the bridge to traffic has shortened the 257km journey from the capital to Chittagong, dubbed as the commercial capital, by at least one hour as it removed the last major hurdle on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Earlier, the Prime Minister and the leader of the Japanese delegation unveiled a plaque at the entrance of the bridge.

Describing the bridge as a symbol of Bangladesh-Japan friendship, the Prime Minister noted that it would facilitate speedier movement and would also have a favourable socio-economic impact.

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Hasina threatens at public meeting Accept demand or MPs will resign en masse

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Sheikh Hasina yesterday warned that the Opposition MPs would resign en masse if the ruling party did not accept the demand for a caretaker government immediately.

"We will be compelled to resign if you do not accept the demand and table a Bill in the House proposing a caretaker government," Hasina told a huge rally at Manik Mia Avenue amid cheers.

"Don't force us to resign by showing continual intransigence," the AL chief warned, adding that as the people had started an agitation and taken to the streets they would not go back without realising the demand.

She urged the people to start a 'one-point' movement to 'dislodge' this government if it ignores the people's demand.

Sheikh Hasina accused the ruling party of spoiling the atmosphere of dialogue by deviating from the original agenda.

"You know how the first round of dialogue ended. The ruling BNP returned to the discussion table on October 27 to discuss the caretaker issue but on October 29 they proposed their own interim government formula, creating an impasse," she complained.

She said Bangladesh being a member-country of the Commonwealth, the opposition parties agreed to attend the dialogue to resolve the impasse.

She said our agitation is aimed at ensuring free and fair elections, not to share power.

Thousands of people attended the rally organised as part of the AL's month-long anti-government agitation to force the BNP to accept the demand of caretaker government.

The sprawling Manik Mia Avenue was packed with slogan-chanting supporters. Some of them were carrying banners and festoons and some were carrying the portraits of Sheikh Hasina and her late father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A number of enthusiastic party workers brought large replicas of the country boat — the AL's election symbol.

The podium was erected at the Asad Gate-end of the broad avenue.

Earlier, people started thronging the meeting venue since 2 pm. Several hundred vehicles ferried the party members to the venue.

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JP MPs asked to submit resignation to party chief

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party, at a public meeting in the city yesterday, said, all its MPs would resign from Parliament if the demand for national elections under a neutral, caretaker administration is not accepted by the government immediately.

Acting Chairman of the party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury asked all the Parliament members of his party to submit their resignation letters to him by November 7.

The JP leader also announced a programme of country-wide demonstrations on November 8 and a 'gherao' programme before the Prime Minister's office on November 9 to press home its demands for a caretaker government and release of deposed president and party chief Ershad.

Held at the Shapla Square the meeting was also addressed by JP presidium members Moudud Ahmed, Kazi

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68 killed in US plane crash

ROSELAWN, Nov 1: A large commuter plane crashed Monday in a field during a driving rainstorm, killing all 68 people aboard, reports AP.

American Eagle Flight 4184 from Indianapolis to Chicago had been circling in a holding pattern before it began its descent and disappeared from the radar, said Tim Smith, a spokesman for American Eagle. It was not immediately clear how long the plane had been waiting to land.

The plane went down 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Gary in northwest Indiana around 4 pm (2000 GMT). It had left Indianapolis 45 minutes late because of heavy traffic in Chicago.

"It came down, almost straight down, not at an angle — just straight down," said Larry Midkiff, who saw the crash as he was driving along the highway.

He said he saw a black puff of smoke and the plane banking sharply before it plunged to the ground.

"It didn't look like it had a left wing on it," Midkiff said. "It just looked like a black streak coming down."

The plane was a nearly new French-Italian Super ATR, a high-wing, twin-engine project. American Eagle is a sister company of American Airlines. The plane's pilot had been with the airline seven years and the co-pilot five years.

As midnight approached, authorities said searches had been halted because of heavy rain. A high school was set aside to be used as a temporary morgue.

It was the third major US plane crash this year.

State police and airline officials said none of the 64 passengers or four crew members survived.

Ninian continues efforts to resume dialogue

Commonwealth envoy Sir Ninian Stephen continued his efforts to bring back the government and the recalcitrant Opposition to the negotiating table for reaching an agreed formula to end the present political crisis, reports BNP.

Political sources indicated that Sir Ninian may sit with Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and Deputy Opposition Leader Abdus Samad Azad separately today or tomorrow.

They said progress in those meetings may lead to resumption of the government Opposition talks.

The sources said Sir Ninian would continue his efforts to bring back the government and the recalcitrant Opposition to the negotiating table for reaching an agreed formula to end the present political crisis, reports BNP.

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Charge against Taslima: Order on Nov 5

By Court Correspondent

After more than two hours of hearing on the framing of charges against controversial writer Taslima Nasreen yesterday, the court fixed November 5 for order.

The court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM), Dhaka, A K M Kanul Hossain, heard both prosecution and defence arguments.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Pry school teachers' meet postponed

The Private Primary School Teachers' Association yesterday postponed its meeting scheduled to be held in Dhaka on November 3. In a joint statement the association's adviser Haris Chowdhury, president Mofiqul Hasan Tripti and general secretary Akkas Ali Sheikh said due to unavoidable reasons the meeting has been postponed and the new date would be announced soon, reports BSS.

Newspaper holiday Nov 7

All newspaper offices will remain closed on November 7 on the occasion of the National Revolution and Solidarity Day, according to a Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad press release yesterday. No newspaper will be published on November 8, reports BSS.

Cooperative Day Nov 5

National Cooperative Day and Week will be observed on November 5 throughout the country. The Bangladesh Jatiya Samabaya Union had drawn up a week-long programme in this connection. It will bring out a colourful rally from the Jatiya Press Club at 9 am on the day, reports BSS.

Solar eclipse tomorrow

A total solar eclipse will occur tomorrow, the Bangladesh Meteorological department said yesterday. The eclipse of five hours and eight minutes duration will not be visible anywhere in Bangladesh. The eclipse will start at 5:05 pm (BST) and will end at 10:13 pm. The central eclipse will begin at 6:03 pm and will end 9:15 pm while the greatest eclipse will occur at 7:39 pm. The maximum duration of the total phase of the eclipse will be four minutes and 27.5 seconds. Magnitude of the eclipse will be 1.055, reports BSS.



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at the Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday.

DPRK starts freezing N-programme

SEOUL, Nov 1: North Korea's government said today it has begun to freeze its nuclear programme in compliance with the accord it signed with the United States, reports AP.

But the North also condemned US and South Korean troops for beginning the first major field exercise this year and said it could bring the Korean Peninsula back to the brink of war.

In the agreement that Washington and Pyongyang signed in Geneva on October 21, the North agreed to freeze, then dismantle a nuclear system suspected of building atomic weapons.

In return for modern technology, aid and diplomatic ties with the United States, the North also promised to eventually open its nuclear installations to full international inspections.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry told the official Korea Central News Agency Tuesday that it has stopped building two nuclear reactors, one of 50 megawatts and one of 200 megawatts.

During 17 months of negotiations with the North, US officials warned that if the plants were finished, they could produce 10,000 nuclear weapons.

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Biman to lease two Airbus

By Asiuzzaman

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided to lease two Airbus for an interim period because the bidders for supply of new Airbus have sought until 1996 and 1997 to deliver their aircraft.

Tenders will be floated next week inviting offers to supply two mid-haul Airbus 310-300 aircraft by January 31 on wet lease, a high Biman official told The Daily Star.

The Biman management has been studying financial offers of two bidders — the Airbus Industrie and Atlas Airlines — which offered brand new aircraft in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

The national carrier had advertised for two brand new Airbus to be purchased with its own resources. Four firms participated in the bid, two of which submitted technically sound offers.

The source, on condition of anonymity, said, Biman now badly needs at least two mid-haul aircraft to maintain the schedule on its 29 international and regional routes.

The national carrier is now running the risk of a major bomb hurled at AL truck procession: 25 hurt

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Bomb hurled at AL truck procession: 25 hurt

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 1: Some 25 Awami League activists were injured when a group of teenagers allegedly hurled cocktails at a truck rally of the party on the Dhaka-Narayanganj Road at around 2:30 pm today.

The injured include the Narayanganj district Awami League (AL) joint secretary, Ansur Rahman Dipu, office secretary Khokan Saha and secretary of the Government Tolaram College Students' Union Zakir Alam Helal.

Witnesses said about one hundred trucks were carrying AL supporters from Narayan-

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