

# Oklahoma bridge collapses as barge hits it: 24 killed

AFF, Washington

US investigators in eastern Oklahoma were seeking answers yesterday to why a 180-meter section of a busy highway bridge crumbled when struck by a barge, claiming as many as two dozen lives.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said it has dispatched a 14-member team of highway and marine investigators to the site.

"We will be looking into every aspect of the accident," NTSB spokesman George Black said, after arriving in Oklahoma late Sunday.

The barge knocked a huge wedge out of the interstate highway span in eastern Oklahoma, sending 10 or so vehicles plunging into the Arkansas river.

Several people were rescued and taken to hospital, but perhaps a dozen others perished in the accident, authorities said. The vehicles are submerged in about 3.5 meters of water.

Efforts to recover bodies and vehicles was to resume at daybreak  
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A large span of Interstate 40 in Oklahoma lies in the Arkansas River on Sunday after a barge hit the moorings and pitched as many as 12 vehicles into rain-swollen waters below the heavily travelled highway bridge. The 500-foot section of the bridge gave way after being rammed by an empty oil barge.

# Govt has lost moral right to rule: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the alliance government lost the moral right to hang on to power due to its "inability" to halt political persecution, rape, murder and other criminal acts in its seven-month rule.

"When a government is compelled to admit in parliament that 10 people were murdered daily over the last seven months for political and other reasons, when a government fails to nab declared terrorists, obviously that government loses its moral right to be in power," she said in support of her viewpoint.

Although Hasina did not straightaway seek resignation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government, she issued a long statement depicting how her party men were allegedly killed and harassed across the country and how people became helpless under this government's rule.

She alleged that criminals belonging to the coalition government were killing leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations, religious minorities as well as carrying out political repression, loot, rape and murder.

The AL chief cited how "BNP terrorists" attacked ex-Home  
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# Next budget will be reviewed mid-term

Saifur promises expenditure review commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will go for a mid-term review of the budget in the next fiscal and will also constitute an expenditure review commission.

"I will take up the issue with the prime minister after she returns from the USA. I want a special session of the parliament for mid-term review and will also set up a public expenditure review commission," Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday.

Earlier, the immediate past finance minister, SAMS Kibria, in his last budget speech in June 2001 said the government would set up such a commission, which was however not formed.

Saifur was speaking as chief guest at a workshop on 'budget and budget reporting' jointly organised by the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) and Parliament Journalists Association (PJA) sponsored by Citibank NA in the city.

Former finance advisor of the caretaker government Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, former secretary Dr Moshirur Rahman, journalist Ataus Samad, Editor of The Financial Express Moazzem Hossain, former additional secretary to the Parliament secretariat Khondokar Abdul Haque, CEO of the Citibank NA David E Rees, ERF President Shamsul Huq Zahid and PJA President Shafiqur Rahman spoke on the occasion.

Saifur said through the mid-term review of the budget the lawmakers will get the chance to discuss the progress of budget implementation.  
The minister also said he would form another bank

reform committee to overhaul the ailing banking system.

Earlier, the Awami League government also formed a bank reform committee headed by Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud. The committee submitted its report to the government in 1999.

Talking on the next budget, Saifur indicated that revenue expenditure would be higher like in the previous years.

"We haven't taken any noticeable reform measures to bridge revenue expenditure for the next fiscal," he added.

The minister said the next budget will focus on the rural economy, agro-based industries, infrastructure building and job creation.

Talking on the annual development programme (ADP), Dr Mahmud said there should not be too many projects in the development programme. He stressed the need for a way of knowing how much benefit the nation gets from every penny spent on the ADP.

He termed pervasive corruption the major problem in project implementation.

He observed that the country's interest payment obligation is still low. "I do not think Bangladesh has reached as bad a situation as Argentina has," he said.

Dr Mahmud also said India spends about 40 per cent of its revenue expenditure for servicing domestic interest payment while Bangladesh's overall interest payment (domestic and foreign borrowing) obligation is about 21 per cent of revenue expenditure.

# Bina murder case: 8 shown arrested

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Eight people, held on suspicion, were shown arrested in the ward commissioner Binoy Krishna Sarkar Bina Murder Case yesterday.

The arrested are -- Mohammad Liton, Ahmed Parvez Kabir, Shahjahan, Moshirur Rahman, Rahim Uddin Ahmed alias Felu, Selim, Ranajit Chandra Nandi and Mohammad Al-Amin.

They were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3 pm yesterday after a two-day remand. DB police did not seek further remand for the accused as they were FIR-named accused in the Bina murder case.

However, Detective Branch (DB) of police later yesterday submitted a petition before the court, seeking  
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# Pakistan won't start war but ready for it: Musharraf

REUTERS, Islamabad, Pakistan

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said yesterday his nuclear-armed nation would not start a war with India, but was ready to respond with full force if attacked. In a toughly worded speech broadcast live on television, he insisted there was no infiltration taking place across the line of control that divides Pakistan- and Indian-ruled Kashmir.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Islamic militants in Kashmir, and attacks across the border have brought the neighbors to the brink of war.

"We do not want war. But if war is thrust upon us, we would respond with full might, and give a befitting reply," Musharraf said as interna-

tional pressure mounted on both sides to avert conflict. "Pakistan will not be the one to initiate war."

"We are faced with a grave situation and we are standing at the crossroads of history," Musharraf said after a weekend when Pakistan tested two ballistic missiles thought capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

"The danger of war is not yet over."

The two sides have massed about a million men along their border since a December attack on India's parliament that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Kashmiri militants.

Tension soared again after an attack by suspected Islamic militants on an Indian army camp in

Kashmir on May 14, prompting Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to tell his front-line troops to prepare for a "decisive fight."

Musharraf repeated his condemnation of both incidents, which he described as "terrorist attacks" also aimed at destabilizing Pakistan.

His speech was preceded by a recitation from the Koran that called upon Muslims to prepare themselves for war but to embrace peace if the enemy is also ready for peace - a sentiment which was echoed in the president's address.

The speech balanced angry rhetoric about "atrocities" being committed by "Hindu extremists and terrorists" against Muslims in

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# Trader knifed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A trader was stabbed to death by some fellow traders at Shahbagh in the city on Sunday following an altercation over a small amount of money.

The victim was identified as Bellal Hossain alias Julhas, aged about 20.

Sources said Bellal and two other traders-- Jewel and Babul-- had a hot exchange of words over repayment of a loan of Tk 600 taken by Bellal from Babu. At one stage, Babul stabbed Bellal in the abdomen.

Fatally injured, Bellal was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Ranna police later arrested Jewel and Babul for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Bellal hailed from Swadebour in  
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# EC wants an end to JS impasse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Commission has urged the 'political stakeholders' in Bangladesh to 'discard continued confrontation' to make the parliament effective in the greater interest of the people.

The parliament now lacks the 'pivotal element of every true parliament-- the opposition,' said Esko Kentrschynskiy, Head of Delegation in Bangladesh.

"I can only urge the political stakeholders in this country to have senses and reason prevail, to discard continued confrontation, and to adopt a constructive approach to make parliament a truly functioning democratic institution in

the greater interest of the people here, the development of the country and the fight against poverty," he said.

Kentrschynskiy was speaking as the guest of honour at the monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investor's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

"In a democracy, it is in parliament where the necessary democratic dispute unfolds, where the battle of political ideas and concepts is legitimately fought, where the government is to answer the queries of the representatives of the sovereign, the people of Bangladesh."

It is such a parliament, which will have the moral and political author-

ity in a country to enhance democratic process in all layers of the government and the society and to bring about necessary political and economic stability for successfully engaging in developing the country, he added.

"I believe that democratic principles have rooted well in Bangladesh. There is widespread recognition in the country that there is no viable alternative to parliamentary democracy. But democracy, securing the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights are a constant endeavour," he observed.

Speaking at the meeting, FICCI  
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# Bhiza awarded one-month detention

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

A reporter of a daily newspaper published from Kushtia was awarded a one-month detention by a district magistrate court in Kushtia yesterday.

Magistrate Mohammad Fakhru Islam, gave the order upon a petition by Kushtia Police seeking a month's detention of journalist Mizanur Rahman Bhiza of the daily 'Kushtia'.

Sources alleged that a gang leader SM Kaderi Sakil and his two brothers had severely beaten up  
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# Rajuk to develop 6 housing projects

BSS, Dhaka

Rajdhani Unnayan Katiripakkha (RAJUK) has decided to hand over plots and flats to owners after developing six housing projects soon.

A meeting of senior RAJUK officials with State Minister for Works Alamgir Kabir in the chair on Thursday decided to allocate Nikunja (South), Uttara (Third Phase), Purbachal, Baridhara J Block, Jhilmil and NAM Village and NAM Villa plots and flats removing all irregularities of the past.

"We hope that development of most of the housing projects would be completed by December this year and the plots will be distributed

in a transparent way," Kabir told BSS yesterday.

He said allocation of RAJUK plots in the past sparked allegations of corruption.

"We want to erase the bad name of RAJUK," he added.

Development of Nikunja (South) Residential Area began after its approval on June 26, 2000. The 68-acre project on the north of Airport Road and Progati Sarani crossing, will offer 692 three-katha plots.

The project will also have corner shops, mosques, schools, playgrounds and an Eidgah.  
RAJUK Board of Director Member (Estate) Mostafizur Rahman said 64.35 per cent work of

the project has been completed so far.

He said the project would be implemented by December this year with an estimated cost of about Tk 36.40 crore.

The implementation of Uttara Ideal Housing Town (Third Phase) began after ECNEC approval on March 25, 2000.

The project is being built on 2,100 acres of land at an estimated cost of about Tk 2,044.08 crore.

Under the project, 6,640 housing plots, including 432 plots of 2.5 katha each, 4,996 of 3 katha each, 872 of 5 katha each, 340 of 7.5 katha each, will be developed.  
Moreover, a 12-floor block of flats

will be constructed on 400.36 acres. The block will house 40,000 apartments.

The project will also earmark 168 acres of land for the diplomatic zone and 40.51 acres for the destitutes.

Mostafizur Rahman said 675 acres of land were acquired in the first phase and the rest are under the acquisition process.

Work on the acquired land would start soon, he added.

The Purbachal project will be implemented at an estimated cost of about Taka 1,765 crore to build a new town on 6,150 acres.

The project will house 28,800 plots including 1,000 10-katha and  
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# Subscribers of CityCell face trouble

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CityCell mobile phone subscribers faced trouble in making and receiving calls in the capital and Chittagong during the last 24 hours ending yesterday.

Subscribers alleged that the problem started on Sunday and continued till yesterday.

"I have become handicapped as I can't make or receive calls," said a disturbed subscriber of Pacific Telecom Bangladesh Limited (PBT), service provider of CityCell.

When contacted, CityCell officials said the problem was due to the beginning of the upgrading of its system in Dhaka and Chittagong on May 25 to enhance the capacity, coverage and quality of service.

The officials said subscribers of Dhaka and Chittagong may face temporary difficulties in call processing during the period.  
"The whole team of the PBT is working round the clock to complete the upgrading within the shortest possible time," said one official, who asked not to be named. He would not however say when the work would be complete.

# EC Shafiuur gets bail in sedition case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted ad-interim bail to former home secretary and incumbent Election Commissioner Shafiuur Rahman and four others in a sedition case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa granted bail to the accused till June 19. The court also fixed the same date for hearing on the case.

The four other accused are former students relationship officer in the education ministry and incumbent officer on special duty (OSD) in the establishment ministry Abu Alam Mohammad Shahid Khan, former joint secretary to the women's affairs ministry and incumbent member of Public Service Commission Sirajuddin Ahmed, former senior assistant secretary and incumbent OSD in the establishment ministry Rabiul Alam Mohammad Obaidul Muktadir Chowdhury and former president of Secretariat Karmachari Sangjukta Parishad Syed Mohiuddin.

The petitioners along with more than 100 lawyers, including Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister M Amir-ul-Islam, and advocates Khondakar Mahbub Hossain, Rahamat Ali MP, Abu Syed Sagor, Qamrul Islam, SM Altaf Hossain, Mohammad Ali, and Momtazuddin Ahmed Mehedi appeared before the court and prayed for bail.

Moving the petition, Dr Kamal Hossain stated that the accused earlier filed separate applications with the High Court Division seeking anticipatory bail. Hearing both sides, the bench comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Mohammad Mamtazuddin Ahmed on April 16 directed the petitioners to  
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# Rejoinder and our reply

The energy ministry in a rejoinder to a report headlined "Petrobangla Refutes Unocal's Compensation Payment Claim" published on Wednesday in The Daily Star denied the part of the report which said the state minister for energy is unwilling to submit Petrobangla's compensation claim to Unocal.

The rejoinder said, "The state minister never issued any instruction to Petrobangla in this regard.

"In another para, you have mentioned that Unocal is lobbying with the state minister, which is totally false and fabricated. The Energy Division emphatically states that the state minister has not interfered in the matter at all. Rather, the Energy Division has already given its approval for submission of the claim to Unocal.

"It is very unfortunate that your paper also published some news recently regarding political patron  
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# MBA admission: Injunction on KU VC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Batiaghata Upazila Court has issued an ad-interim injunction on the vice-chancellor of Khulna University restraining any admission to MBA discipline, which violates the prospectus and admission test results on merit.

The injunction was handed down on May 23 by Assistant Judge Diruba Sultana following a student's petition filed with the court.

Naznin Nahar, the admission seeker and resident of 89 Sher-e-Bangla Road, Khulna, alleged that the vice-chancellor as chairman of the Academic Council has 'illegally' curtailed her right to enrolment in MBA discipline.

Naznin Nahar qualified for admission and was placed in the 29th position. Her name was published in the result sheet prepared  
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Election Commissioner Shafiuur Rahman comes out of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday after being granted ad-interim bail in a sedition case.