

Flawed piling pillars force suspension of Rupsha Bridge construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Work on Rupsha Bridge project has been suspended as 'major faults in construction of piling pillars' have been detected.

Two of the 32 piling pillars already completed have 'failed to bear the capacity load', sources in the Rupsha Bridge Project (RBP) said.

"Redesigning of the whole project is now being planned. We are seriously thinking of an alternative strategy to avoid any further hurdle in the construction work", said one source.

After detection of the fault, engineers, consultants, the designer and the project director held an emergency meeting on Monday.

Soil samples from 120 metre deep into the river bed will be tested again, the project director said.

The managing director of Japanese consultant firm 'PSI' SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Lawyers demand withdrawal of enhanced court fees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawyers of different bar associations yesterday urged the government to meet their six-point demands, including withdrawal of enhanced court fees.

"The increased court fees are a burden on the people who go to court for justice. They tend to take the law into their own hands, being unable to pay the fees increased in the national budget," said Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, vice-chairman of the Bangladesh Bar Council at a press conference in the city yesterday.

The press conference was held after an extended meeting of the Bar Council in which members, presidents and general secretaries of 56 district bar associations and 30 tax bar associations took part.

At the meeting, they formed a council to implement the six-point demands -- cancellation of increased court fees, separation of the judiciary, appointment of independent, honest and skilled justices, expansion of areas of authority of district judges, repeal of black laws and abolition of inequity in income tax.

AL's anti-govt agitation begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) stages a demonstration at the city's Paltan Maidan today, beginning its anti-government agitation.

AL President Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to address a brief rally at 3.00pm before she leads a procession, protesting the kidnapping and killing, particularly of children, violence, wheat-scam, price-spiral of essentials and increased tariff on utilities like gas and electricity.

The recent arrest of former party lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumdar, police raid on the house of AL president member and former minister Amir Hussain Amu and indictment of some party leaders in a M-16 arms purchase case will intensify the agitation, sources said.

Hasina has already warned that the AL would enforce a hartal across the country, if government bars the opposition from staging its demonstration and rally today.

Meanwhile, the AL has got permission from the National Sports Council for using Paltan Maidan as the venue for the demonstration, party sources said.

An AL presidium member told The Daily Star yesterday that the party chief would lead a procession from Paltan Maidan to the Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi.

The sources said the AL presidium meeting on August 20 scheduled August 29 as a tentative date for shutdown.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 24		6-24 pm
Aug 25	5-37 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

WHEATGATE SCAM

Action after secretarial probe body report

REAZ AHMAD

The government will go for action against the "culprits" involved in the irregularities in this year's internal wheat procurement soon after getting the secretarial probe committee report, official sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

The irregularities took place in purchase of an extra one lakh MT of wheat worth Tk 90 crore at the fag end of the extended procurement drive from March 15 to July 31.

The initial procurement target of three lakh MT was raised by one lakh MT despite the fact that wheat production in the country was two lakh MT less this year than last year's.

The one-man secretarial probe body formed on August 10 following a prime ministerial directive to investigate the alleged wheat scam has been asked to submit its report on Sunday (August 25).

Secretary in-charge of Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Shafiqul Islam who heads the probe body will submit the report to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The prime minister has already in her hand another probe report on the alleged wheat scam, submitted to her by Food Secretary Abdul Latif Mandal on August 20.

Islam, who has already completed field investigations and collected wheat samples from food godowns in Pabna, Bogra, Satkhira and Mymensingh, worked in his office on weekly holiday yesterday so that he does not miss the August 25 deadline set for submission of his report.

Earlier, a four-member food ministry probe committee submitted its report to Food Secretary Abdul Latif Mandal on August 18. The report found involvement of one ruling party lawmaker -- Helaluzzaman Talukdar Lahu -- and 10 food department officials including Additional Director General of Food Directorate Entajul Huque in the scam.

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A ward for dengue patients at the Suhrawardy Hospital has filled with mosquito nets, giving a telltale sign of ever-raging dengue in the capital. Dengue has spread to other cities too.

PHOTO: STAR

Yashwant Sinha due today Official talks to focus on a number of issues

STAR REPORT

Indian Minister for External Affairs Yashwant Sinha arrives here today on a two-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh.

He is coming on a bilateral visit, the first by an India foreign minister after the BNP-led coalition government took over. Earlier Brajesh Mishra, national security adviser to the Indian prime minister visited Bangladesh.

Foreign ministry sources described the visit basically as "a good will and familiarization trip" by Indian's new foreign minister.

Observers say, since taking over, Yashwant Sinha is taking interest in knowing his neighbours to further improve Delhi's relations with them.

Sinha has already visited Sri Lanka and Maldives and is coming to Bangladesh after visiting Nepal.

He will be accompanied by, among others, Ms Nilam Deo, who is looking after Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives desk in India's foreign ministry.

Yashwant Sinha met his Bangladesh counterpart M Morshed Khan on the fringes of the just concluded meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers in Kathmandu.



Yashwant Sinha

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DENGUE ALERT

Three more patients die Onslaught to rage till late October

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons died of suspected dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) in Rangpur and Kurigram districts, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Besides, a dengue patient was shifted to Dhaka from Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday.

In the capital, one person died of dengue late Thursday night and 56 people were admitted to different hospitals yesterday.

The dengue control room said one Faruk aged about 25 died of the disease at Suhrawardy Hospital.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reported that the situation was discussed at an emergency meeting of the health department and the district administration with Deputy Commissioner Munirul Islam in the chair. The meeting expressed concern at the death of one person from dengue in the district and instructed health officials to be on

high alert.

The dead was identified as Abdul Latif, 32, of Pirganj upazila. Latif was a rickshaw-puller in the capital and he had returned home when fell sick a few days ago.

When contacted from Dhaka over telephone last night, Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Dr Mohaddes Hossain however denied that Abdul Latif died of DHF. But he admitted that they do not have required facilities to confirm this.

"We have not collected blood sample of the victim for test to confirm dengue, but we are quite sure he died of some other disease," Hossain claimed.

He also said that early this month, they had conducted a survey which showed "Aedes mosquitoes exist in Rangpur but the density is very low."

The dengue victim in Kurigram was identified as three-year-old

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India eyes gas pipeline projects in Bangladesh

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has bid for a crude oil pipeline project from Iraq to Jordan and is seeking refinery maintenance contracts in Oman and Bahrain, a senior official said Thursday.

The state-run IOC, India's only Fortune-500 firm, has teamed up with Stroytransgaz, of Russia for the crude pipeline and is also eyeing pipeline contracts in neighbouring Bangladesh, he said.

"In Jordan, we have bid jointly with a Russian company for a crude pipeline project worth more than \$100 million," the official, who did not want to be named, said.

Three other firms had bid for the project that also involved operation and maintenance of the pipeline for 30 years, he said.

The state-run IOC, India's largest refinery, has the largest network of pipelines carrying crude oil and petroleum products to different parts of the country.

Its 6,500-km (4,050-mile) net SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



Tendulkar overtakes The Don

SPORTS REPORTER

India's Sachin Tendulkar surpassed cricket's greatest player Sir Donald Bradman when the little genius scored his 30th Test hundred in the third Test against England at Headingley, Leeds on Friday.

Playing in his 99th match, 29-year-old Tendulkar reached the magical three-figure mark with an on-drive off off-spinner Ashley

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Jet fuel will be send back if conductivity remains high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government has decided to return a consignment of 10,300 metric tons of jet fuel containing excessive level of electric conductivity to its Kuwait based supplier, Energy International, unless the conductivity comes down to the acceptable level of below 460.

The decision was taken at a meeting held at the BPC (Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation) conference room with energy secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury in

the chair here in the city yesterday.

Attended by high officials of BPC, ERL and BPC's marketing agencies, the meeting also reviewed the present reserve of jet fuel in the country and directed the Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL) to immediately go for jet fuel production to handle any fuel crisis arising out of the problem. ERL's daily production capacity is around 300 MT of jet fuel as against a daily demand of 500 MT, sources in the meeting said.

According to sources, the six oil

installations of the country have a reserve of 7500 MTs of jet fuel (Jet A-1) against their total capacity of 27,183 MT. The supply would last for about a week.

Meanwhile, talking to a group of journalists at a dinner hosted by Jamuna Oil Company on Thursday night, energy secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury said, "We are under tremendous pressure to accept the fuel, but we won't give in." He however refused to comment any further on the consignment, adding that the technical committee would give the final decision on the matter.

On the other hand, the supplying firm and its local agents were continuing efforts for handing the consignment over to BPC.

A strong lobbying is underway to force the acceptance of the jet fuel when vice chairman Srinath of Energy International arrived in Dhaka Wednesday and held meetings with ministry officials.

The jet fuel worth around Tk 15 crore is awaiting delivery at the River Mooring No. 6 jetty of Padma Oil Company, one of the four marketing agencies of BPC which was supposed to receive the supply.

Speaker's partisanship alleged Hamid to boycott CPA confce

UNB, Dhaka

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Md Abdul Hamid Advocate yesterday announced his decision not to attend the 48th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference scheduled for Sept 2-14 in Namibia as opposition MPs are not being included in the delegation.

"As an executive committee member of CPA, I can attend the CPA conference on my own, but I won't in protest against the naked politicisation of the issue by the acting speaker," he told newsmen at a press conference outside parliament building yesterday morning.

He held the news conference outside the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban also on protest, as TV cameramen were not allowed to enter the parliament building.

The former speaker said his name was incorporated in the 16-member delegation, likely to be headed by acting Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, only to "bluff" others because he is a CPA executive member.

Of the 16 members of the delegation, eight are MPs while the rest parliament officials. "Except me and the acting speaker, all other MPs have been chosen from the ruling BNP. Even there are no MPs from other parties of the four-party alliance," said the opposition leader.

He said in absence of Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, who is now the acting president, the acting speaker is going to lead the delegation.

Hamid said as a CPA executive committee member he had been invited personally and the cost would be borne by the organisation. CPA will only bear the cost of two delegation members -- leader of the delegation and deputy leader of the delegation (as member of EC).

"The expenses of others will have to be borne by parliament," he said, adding that the CPA has asked only for a four-member delegation.

He said the acting speaker included three MPs as observers and is taking eight officials arguing

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Most wanted, yet free to roam

STAR REPORT

At least eight of the country's 23 most wanted criminals freely roam the city, courtesy of 'secret deals' with some police high-ups and 'blessings' from political lobbies.

Political and police sources say that these men, wanted for multiple crimes, are often seen in 'their areas' but manage to stay beyond the reach of the law.

The rest are either abroad or hiding outside the capital. Some are in India, making frequent visits to the country.

They are only arrested when there is any 'misunderstanding' with

the law enforcers, sources said.

Police have so far arrested three on their most wanted list - Khorshed Alam Rashu, Khondokar Naim Ahmed Tilon and Freedom Sohul.

Another listed criminal, Pichchi Helal, was in jail when police prepared the list, while Kamal Pasha was handed over to police by his father on May 20.

Mohammad Alauddin, also on the list, was beaten to death by a Khilgaon mob last Saturday. Alauddin was on the run after killing a police officer, an industrialist and ruling party activist at Tejgaon on the same day.

Local people said the listed

criminal would have gone scot-free had he not killed a police officer. Alauddin used to pay protection money to Tejgaon police, they alleged.

Commissioner of Police Abdul Qayyum told The Daily Star on Monday that there would be an "all-out operation" to nab the most wanted criminals. "We have already taken special measures for different trouble spots in the capital."

A countrywide joint operation by the police and the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, which began on May 12 as per the decision of a national committee, has not yet been able to put them behind the

bars. Kala Jahangir, accused in 19 cases filed with Cantonment, Mirpur, Kafrul and Pallabi police stations for multiple murders, possession of explosives and other crimes, now stay at Mohakhali and is often spotted at the Sat Tala slum in the area, according to sources.

Kala Jahangir's mother is a schoolteacher and younger brother serves the Bangladesh Army.

Freedom Sohul, accused of murder and possession of explosives in two cases filed with Dhanmondi and Ramna police stations, stays in the city's Nayatola SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Two foreign ships held at Mongla port Chemical test of imported 'toxic' fertiliser ordered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two foreign ships loaded with 19,213 tonnes of Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) fertilizer have been detained at Mongla port following allegation that the fertilizer is poisonous.

The allegation was made by fertilizer dealers, customs sources said.

But the importers have refuted the allegation, saying it is a deep-rooted conspiracy to defame

Mongla port so that no foreign ship anchors there.

Customs officials said the importers are yet to show valid documents for unloading the cargo.

The total quantity has been imported by 15 importers of Noapara in Jessore. The importers include Uttara Traders Ltd owned by Girdhari Lal Modi, against whom there are allegations of hundi transaction, the sources said.

Of the quantity, 8,214 tonnes were brought by MV Du Man Gang

on August 12 and 11,000 tonnes by MV Heng Shun on August 16.

When contacted, local C&F agents however alleged that Customs Commissioner Helaluddin Ahmed asked for chemical test of the fertilizer even after submission of 'valid documents'. They also observed a token strike protesting what they called the customs commissioner's "highly improper attitude".

The sources said a high official of SEE PAGE 11 COL 8