

Govt gives nod to suspended bridge over Surma river

Rail-road bridge to be built over Karnaphuli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to set up a suspended bridge over the river Surma in Sylhet and a rail-cum-road bridge over the river Karnaphuli near the Kalurghat bridge in Chittagong.

The bridge would be the fourth one over the river Karnaphuli as the third bridge is also under government's active consideration. Bangladesh Railway will install the fourth bridge. The government is trying to attract foreign donors for financing the bridge construction.

A high-powered meeting at the Ministry of Communication yesterday took the decisions. The Roads and Highways Department has been asked to prepare the design of the bridge and appoint a foreign consultant for technical evaluation of the bridges.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda chaired the meeting attended by the ministry high officials and Director General of

Bangladesh Railway.

The meeting was told that the previous decision on building a bridge on the Surma would be put on hold and a suspended bridge installed instead in light of the demand of the local people.

Huda told the meeting that the government would build the bridges on a priority basis. He hoped that the process of the Surma bridge construction would start within the tenure of the present government.

The rail-cum-road bridge over river Karnaphuli would be built on railway land keeping intact the Kalurghat bridge set up around 80 years ago.

The new rail bridge would help establish smooth road communication with the southern districts of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban. It would also help establish Trans-Asian direct rail link between Bangladesh and other countries of South Asia and South-East Asia.

PM's principal secretary blasts energy officials for gas crisis

UNB, Dhaka

A top bureaucrat yesterday grilled his colleagues at Energy and Power Divisions and Petrobangla for pushing the country into serious gas and electricity crises.

Kamaluddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the prime minister, blasted the officials for "virtually" welcoming the crises, "sitting almost idle" during the past few years.

"Why didn't you raise the problem in past two and a half years? Why did we have to call you after getting complaints from the investors?" an official present in the meeting quoted him as saying.

Being instructed by the top level, the principal secretary convened the meeting of officials from Energy, Power and Finance Divisions, and state-run oil gas corporation Petrobangla, Power Development Board and Board of Investment (Boi).

Sources concerned said as the Petrobangla Chairman SR Osmani presented a short, mid-and long-term planning to face the situation, Siddiqui asked him to come up with concrete proposals.

"We don't want to listen to a wishful list, come up with time-bound work programme," he was quoted by the sources as asking the Petrobangla's Planning Division.

Siddiqui suggested to submit a "real" mid-and long-term planning to the prime minister within 15 days and a "true work programme" within three days to face the crisis.

He also raised questions about integrity and honesty of the gas-power sector officials, saying that if certain officials were not corrupt, the dishonest quarters would not dare to go for illegal connections.

The principal secretary asked the officials concerned to launch a drive to snap illegal gas and power connections to ensure uninterrupted supplies to the real customers. He also called for realising the long outstanding bills or snap connections of the defaulting customers.

Fuel station owners call off strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The owners and workers of petrol pumps and tank lorries yesterday called off their indefinite strike following fruitful discussion with State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

The indefinite strike was to start from today in Dhaka division to protest extortion and harassment by police in the capital.

According to meeting sources, the state minister agreed to meet their demands including stopping police extortion and bribe-taking.

Tank lorries with 25-year-old fitness certificates will also be able to move throughout the country instead of only in particular districts, according to a decision of the meeting.

Iqbal Aziz Biju, coordinator of the agitation programme, said from now on police sergeants will not be able to prevent the tank lorries from running in any district.

The minister assured the leaders of the owners and workers to meet their other demands through discussion.

Shafiqul Islam, secretary of the communications ministry, Mohammad Omar Farooq, secretary of the home ministry, Nazrul Islam, secretary of the energy ministry, and Syed Sazzadul Karim, convener of the owners and workers body, were present.

JCD leader threatens UNO with death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) has been threatened with death as he rejected a Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader's forged bill of Tk 3.96 lakh submitted Saturday.

Ishaque Mia, UNO of Chitalmari in Bagerhat, has stopped going to his office for fear of his life. Armed police have been deployed at his office and house for his security.

Shafiqul Islam Babu, general secretary of JCD Chitalmari unit and owner of Shajib Enterprise, won a tender for construction of Kalihati bridge in Shibpur at an estimated cost of Tk 3.96 lakh.

However, Babu, brother of Manzoor Morshed Swapan, a central leader of the Jatiyatadabi Samajik Sangskritik Dal and Shibpur UP Chairman Badsha Alam, submitted the bill for full payment, although he was yet to start construction work.

"I have rejected the bill at the direction of Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Bagerhat, Peus Costa," Ishaque said yesterday, adding, legal action will be taken against Babu for submitting forged bill and giving death threat.

When asked, DC Peus Costa said the UNO carried out his orders properly.

The superintendent of police of Bagerhat has also admitted that ruling party cadres have threatened the UNO.

TV artiste

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floor house at Road No. 3 at around 2:45am.

"Sensing their presence, Tarana, her brother-in-law Ekram Ahmed, a deputy secretary, and her nephew Amab tried to resist the knife-wielding men," said an aunt of Tarana.

Tarana suffered injuries in her hands and Ekram in one hand. The attackers, however, retreated when Amab struck one of them with a chair, family sources said.

According to police, the attack was a planned incident, as the criminals did not seek for any valuables. They also suspect the attack on Tarana is a sequel to a previous enquiry.

Police said Tarana addressing a public rally in Feni on May 28 spoke about the role of Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami. She also handed some thieves over to police when they looted her gold ornaments two months back, sparking anger among their accomplices.

Investigators are examining whether there is a link between the attack on Tarana and the two incidents.

General Secretary of Main Opposition Awami League Abdul Jalil expressed concern over the attack on Tarana.

In a press release yesterday Jalil said anti-liberation forces carried out the attack as part of their plan to root out the pro-liberation forces.

PM asks JS

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The directives came when chairmen of five standing committees called on the prime minister at her office yesterday.

They are M Shajahan, chairman of the standing committee on disaster management and relief ministry, Nazir Hossain, chairman of the standing committee on expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry, A Mannan Talukdar, chairman of the standing committee on LGRD and cooperatives ministry, Mosharraf Hossain Mongu, chairman of the standing committee on food ministry and Akbar Ali, chairman of the standing committee on planning ministry.

The meeting was part of a routine interaction between the Leader of the House and the standing committee chairmen, said Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, who was also present at the meeting.

Referring to the merger of the food ministry and the disaster management and relief ministry, the prime minister told the chairmen that there would be one standing committee for the reconstituted ministry.

"This is a huge budget. Its proper implementation depends on concerted efforts by all concerned," she told the chairmen of the standing bodies.

Chairman of the standing committee on disaster management and relief ministry, M Shajahan, told reporters after the meeting that the prime minister asked them to take special care for implementation of the rural welfare-oriented new national budget.

He said the prime minister, during discussion, stressed identification of the real poor and proper utilisation of the VGF cards.

Nazir Hossain of the committee on expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry said the chairmen apprised the prime minister of the activities and achievements of their respective committees.

AL makes JS comeback

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bill that the Jatiya Sangsad passed on May 16 drew flak from the AL and other opposition parties.

With the crucial decisions, the main opposition has apparently shifted its focus onto parliament from street agitation, although Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said AL leaders would also be out in the streets to launch a fresh anti-government movement.

"We will debate important issues in the House and gear up a street agitation against the ruling alliance's misdeeds including political killings, other crimes and corruption," said Hasina, emerging from the three-hour meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban.

"We will try to speak for people... We want to unmask the corrupt and criminal face of the government," Hasina, also AL president, told newsmen.

In a change of heart, the main opposition party agreed to send a list of its lawmakers to Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar for induction into the parliamentary standing committees, a decision that came about one year after formation of the parliamentary bodies.

The committees were formed in July last year, but the AL did not nominate its members, saying the committees were constituted without prior discussion with the opposition.

Of the 51 Jatiya Sangsad bodies, 39 represent ministries and the AL has participation in only five committees that deal with parliamentary functioning and do not represent any ministry.

"The present parliamentary standing committees became illegal without the opposition's representation. A list of Awami League MPs is ready for induction into the committees," Hasina said, once again demanding proportionate committee chairmanship.

She directed her party deputies to play active roles in the House discussion and meetings of standing committees on ministries to bring to light what she said was corruption of the ruling coalition.

Hasina said the opposition lawmakers would demand discussions on the hot-button issues such as the killing of Ahsanullah Master, a grenade attack on the British high

Zidane grateful

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found the head of Frank Lampard seven minutes before the break it seemed as if the sultry Lisbon sky would fall in on the mercurial Frenchman.

But Beckham's second telling contribution was to place a second half penalty too close to former Manchester United colleague Fabien Barthez and thereafter Zidane emerged from his slumbers.

A typically self effacing Zidane praised Barthez for keeping them alive.

"We can thank Fabien Barthez for making the difference by saving the penalty as he allowed it to remain 1-0 and keep us believing we could still save the match," said Zidane.

Whereas Beckham failed to find his deadball range in contrast Zidane was accuracy personified, showing deadly skills to sweep a freekick past David James seconds into stoppage time after Emile Heskey fouled Patrick Vieira.

And with James then upending Thierry Henry in the final seconds Zidane, who else, stepped forward to bury the penalty for his 28th goal in French colours to leave Beckham and company feeling as blue as the Gallic superstar's shirt.

"We had not had a good match and then came a little bit of a surprise goal at the end," said Zidane.

"That meant that a match that had not at all been in our favour suddenly produced a positive result.

"It matches like this that forge the spirit of a team, especially ones that end like that," added Zidane, whose two goals in the 1998 World Cup final inspired the French to their 3-0 triumph over Brazil.

Maoists kill 21

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died were of high rank. The Maoists disappeared after the attack," senior police officer Ravi Raj Thapa told AFP.

He said 13 of the injured policemen were airlifted to a hospital in the capital Kathmandu, 440km away, and three others were treated locally after the ambush in Khairkholia village.

It was the deadliest attack in Nepal since King Gyanendra on June 3 swore back in Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, whom he had fired two years earlier and replaced with a hand-picked royalist government.

The king had accused Deuba in 2002 of "incompetence" at fighting the Maoists, who have taken control of much of the countryside in their "people's war" aimed at ending the monarchy and establishing a communist state.

The civil war has claimed more than 9,500 lives since 1996 and devastated the Himalayan kingdom's fragile tourism-dependent economy.

Deuba on June 9 used his first national address since his reappearance to appeal to the Maoists

commissioner to Bangladesh, arms seizure and terrorist training camps in Chittagong allegedly run by a state minister's cousin and activities of Bangla Bhai.

The AL marks its participation in the House, taking part in a discussion on the supplementary budget for the fiscal 2003-04.

Most AL lawmakers returned to parliament on May 12 after an 11-month boycott and took part in the obituary reference on Ahsanullah Master, gunned down at a roadside rally in the industrial town of Tongi. But Hasina could not join the House then, as she was in the United States.

Hasina said she would raise a question to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her question time in parliament on Wednesday on the government's failure to curb law and order downside, killings, violence, arms smuggling and corruption.

"We hope the speaker will allow the opposition MPs to speak on these issues and run the House in line with the rules of procedure," she said.

The AL began the House boycott on June 25 last year for what it said were abusive words by treasury bench members against Hasina. The AL lawmakers demanded an apology from the ruling BNP lawmakers as a condition for their return to the House.

"Despite ministers' abusive words against the Awami League president, we are going to parliament to speak for people," Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said.

Storm toll

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gusts up to 30 miles an hour. At least 20 trawlers capsized carrying an estimated 200 fishermen.

The police official said about 50 fishermen were picked up or managed to swim to safety.

"About 140 people were still missing, but we believe that many of them could be taking shelter in nearby islands, or were rescued by villagers," the official said.

Among the survivors were two brothers Nurul Amin and Noor Hossain who clung to a plastic water container for about 20 hours before reaching shore near Cox's Bazar.

Zidane's acrobatic brilliance brought Real their ninth European Cup two years ago but when he suffered injury going into the World Cup barely three weeks later a whole nation became gripped by worry and doubt, their talisman forced to suffer in silence in the stands.

On Sunday night, about 200 people encircled a house in Beelnathur village where Mizan, his son and Moju were staying, police said.

The angry mob pounded the notorious criminal and Moju before gouging out Mizan's eyes. However, Sezan dodged the enraged crowd, they added.

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Outlaws gun down trader, two rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Outlaws on Sunday night killed a businessperson and two of their rivals in separate incidents in Mirpur and Kumarkhali.

Police said about 10 cadres allegedly belonging to outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) Janajuddha faction attacked Bilal Hossain, 40, a tobacco trader of Lakshampur in Mirpur upazila.

The outlaws shot Bilal point blank at a tea stall at Lakshampur Bazar at around 10:00 and left him dead on the spot.

Family sources said extortionists earlier demanded Tk 1 lakh from Bilal and threatened him with death if he failed to pay them.

In Kumarkhali, outlaws gunned down two from a rival outfit near Kachikata bridge in Kumarkhali upazila at around 11:00.

The victims are Jahangir, 35, of Bhuluapara village and Kolom Ali, 25, of Sanpukur village.

Police quoting locals said outlaws allegedly belonging to the Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF), armed wing of the Sramajibi Mukti Andolan (SMA), swooped on a meeting of 10 criminals and killed their leader Jahangir and Ali on the spot.

The SMA however denied its involvement with the killings.

Mizan Bahini leader lynched in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

The gang leader of notorious Mizan Bahini yesterday died at a local hospital at Sreepur upazila in Magura after locals had dug out his eyes before beating him up Sunday night.

Mizan, an accused in 25 criminal cases including those of murders, and his son Sezan abducted Ashraf Haider Badal, 14, on Saturday and demanded Tk 20 lakh ransom, locals said.

Badal's father Ehtesham lodged a case with Magura Sadar Police Station accusing the gang leader and his son, a classmate of Badal at Magura Collectorate School, of the abduction, sources said.

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Dhaka-10 by-polls

FROM PAGE 1

same, we must ask the authorities to take proper steps," Election Commissioner Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star.

Twenty-two candidates are vying for the seat, but pollsters say the fight will mainly be limited between the ruling alliance candidate Mosaddek Ali Falu and his key rival Mannan, who sought the support of the main opposition Awami League (AL) on the day.

CONTRASTING REMARKS Syed Election Commissioner MA Syed told reporters at his office that the EC would send a letter to the Armed Forces Division for army deployment in each of 130 centre.

But a top election official declined to ask for army deployment, bringing to light an apparent conflict in the EC.

"I will not send such a letter. I don't know anything about the decision on army deployment in each polling centre. The security measures will be taken as per the home ministry plan," said SM Zakaria, EC secretary.

If army men guard every polling centre it will be first ever such deployment since 1990 in Bangladesh that saw the servicemen to act as a strike force in previous polls.

Mohammad Ali said army personnel would be deployed in the constituency two days before the polling to stop any form of rigging and violence.

"The EC wants at least five army men to guard each polling centre along with regular law-enforcers."

The measure will be in addition to army and Bangladesh Rifles patrols close to polling centres.

According to the EC, the home ministry will chalk out the details of security arrangement in consultation with the Armed Forces Division.

Dhaka-10 and Munshiganj-1 seats of the Jatiya Sangsad fell vacant when Mannan and Mahi B Chowdhury resigned from parliament and the ruling party leader BNP to join the Bikalpa Dhara.

Mahi swept back to parliament from his family borough on June 6 on the platform of Bikalpa Dhara, founded by his father and former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Lying dead

FROM PAGE 1

The expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry however confirmed about 40 bodies are in Saudi Arabia at this moment.

The number was much higher in the past but now it will not be more than 40, said a high official of the ministry after contacting the Bangladesh Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

BAIRA officials said the number of bodies mentioned in yesterday's paper was based on previous estimates as they do not have any current estimates.

Officials of the expatriate welfare ministry pointed out many of the over 14 lakh Bangladeshis living in the kingdom die natural deaths every year. Besides, some become victims of road accidents and criminal activities or have unnatural deaths.

In case of deaths due to accidents and criminal activities and unnatural deaths, the bodies are kept in morgue for autopsy and other investigation. Sometimes, the bodies are not released before completion of the cases relating to the incidents.

So, it takes lot of time to get back the bodies. This is the main reason why so many bodies are now lying in the kingdom, the officials said.

The government normally brings back at its own cost the body of any Bangladeshi who dies abroad. There is also a compensation package for the family of the deceased, funded from the government wage earners welfare fund.

But sometimes the government faces tremendous difficulties to identify the dead and their families because of changes in the address mentioned in their passport. There are also some difficulties to identify actual nationality of the dead because of wrong passport, officials mentioned.

Many people, particularly Muslims, from a neighbouring country stay in the kingdom using Bangladeshi passport. In some

Suicide bomb