

PADMA BRIDGE

Pre-construction work begins

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday said the funds for construction of the much-awaited Padma Bridge are already in hands and earth filling began as part of its pre-construction work.

He said Tk 600 crore, which fell short so far, has been collected and pledges for another \$1200 million are already available for financing the construction of the bridge.

The minister said this at Mawa of Louhajang upazila while visiting the Padma Bridge project area. He was accompanied by the ambassadors of Japan and Kuwait and country directors of the World Bank, ADB, IDB and JAICA.

Replying to a question, he said no surcharge would be levied for the bridge, adding that the bridge would be constructed by donors' funds.

He further said that the project was started with the highest priority attached to it by the present government, adding that all the works,

including land requisition and acquisition, have almost been finalised.

Though the bridge is being constructed with loans from the donors, the loans could be paid from the income of the bridge in the next 15 to 20 years, Abul Hossain said.

The minister said as the bridge lies on the AH-1 of the Asian Highway, its implementation would revolutionise the internal communications in the country, he added.

Communications Secretary ASM Ali Kabir, Deputy Commissioner of Munshiganj Md Mosharraf Hossain, UNOs of Louhajang and Sreenagar upazilas were present during the visit.

They expressed views with the local people, local administration and consultants of the bridge.

A view exchange meeting on the progress of the bridge was held at the Road and Highways rest house at Mawa Point with the deputy commissioner in the chair.

Local lawmaker Sagufa Yasmin Emily was also present.



Gomostapur Upazila Adivasi Samannay Parishad takes out a procession in Rahanpur municipality area yesterday demanding steps to recover the cremation ground and arable lands of the indigenous people of Begpur village of the upazila from land grabbers.

AIDING MILITANCY

Two cases against former BNP ministers, 102 others recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The police on Saturday night recorded the two cases filed earlier with Rajshahi courts against 104 people, including two former BNP ministers and a former lawmaker, for aiding and abetting militancy.

Former post and telecommunications minister Aminul Haque, ex-deputy minister Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu and ex-BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa are among the 70 accused in one case.

Officer-in-Charge of Bagmara Police Station Harun-ur Rashid said the cases were recorded after primary investigations following the court orders.

Victims of JMB torture Abed Ali of Mirzapur and M Manik of Jhikra at Bagmara lodged the cases with the third court of judicial magistrate in Rajshahi on April 29 and May 6 respectively.

The court ordered the police to investigate the cases and take legal action against those responsible for the incidents.

In Abed Ali's case, some 70 people, including the BNP bigwigs, were accused, while the 34 accused of Manik's case include local JMB adviser

Lutfar Rahman.

Abed Ali, an UP member of Mirzapur village, lodged the complaint against them for abetting militants who maimed him as he denied paying them extortion money.

Aminul has been on the run since he was sentenced 31-and-a-half years in jail in a case filed by torture victim Fazlur Rahman on charge of patronising JMB. However, Dulu and Nadim are now freed on bail.

Other accused of Abed's case include Rajshahi district BNP General Secretary Shish Mohammad, union council chairman Rofikul Islam of Bihanali, Besaratuallah of Basupara union, JMB advisers Abdus Sattar and Lutfar Rahman and JMB's killing squad member Mostafizur Rahman Mostaq.

On April 13, 2004, JMB cadres abducted Abed from his house and took him to a JMB camp at Razakar Ramjan Kaya's house at Hamirkutsa. They demanded Tk one lakh from him.

As Abed denied paying the money, they tortured him for two days. Later, he had to pay Tk 50,000 and came out of the camp being crippled on the third day.

Similarly, Manik was also tortured at the same camp on April 6, 2004 when he was an SSC examinee.

Int'l confce on Latin American literature begins at JU

METRO DESK

A two-day international conference on 'Latin American Literature' organised by English department began at Senate Hall on the Jahangirnagar University campus yesterday, says a press release.

Highlighting the influence of Latin American literature, the speakers talked about the Latin America writers who have made a major contribution to the world literature.

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam inaugurated the programme as the chief guest, JU Pro-VC Dr Mohammed Muniruzzaman was present as the special guest. Dr Shamsad Mortuza chaired the session.

A total number of 20 papers will be presented by delegates and scholars from the UK, the US, Mexico, Argentina, India and Bangladesh.

Norman Thomas di Giovanni, who worked in collaboration with Argentine writer George Luis Borges, presented a keynote paper 'The Reflections on Latin American Literature'.

National Prof Kabir Chowdhury, former JU VC Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Fakrul Alam of DU, Prof Firdaus Azim of Brac University, poet Mohammad Rafiq of JU will chair different sessions.

Noted Indian novelist Debesh Roy's charter of Latin American novel is one of the highlights of the conference.

Sabbir Ahmed Chowdhury is the convener of the conference which will conclude with a cultural programme titled 'Adios Poeta' today.

President, PM greet Jordan counterparts

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have greeted their Jordan counterparts on the occasion of the Independence Day of that country.

In a message to Jordan King Abdullah-II Bin Al-Hussein, Zillur said, "I sincerely hope that the existing bonds of relationship between our two countries will be further strengthened in the days ahead".

In another message to Prime Minister Nader Dahabi, Hasina expressed her confidence that the existing bonds of friendship which have developed over the years would be further strengthened and consolidated for the mutual benefit of the two countries in the years to come.

The president and the prime minister also wished their good health, happiness and long life and for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of Jordan.



Students write their pledges on a banner on the Kurigram Women's College premises yesterday as part of the Prothom Alo's campaign for change.

People vow to change society

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from all walks of life in Pirojpur, Sunamganj, Bagerhat, Gopalganj, Sirajganj and Pabna yesterday pledged to change themselves to bring about a positive change in the society on the fourth day of the 'Bodle Jao, Bodle Dao' (Change yourself, change others) campaign of the daily Prothom Alo.

Three cars of the Prothom Alo carrying the banners inscribed with the pledges are visiting the country's 64 districts.

The cars started from Prothom Alo head office at Karwan Bazar on Thursday on the occasion of the newspaper's 10th anniversary.

Our correspondent in Pabna adds: To mark the concluding ceremony of the campaign in Pabna, a programme was organised on Pabna Central Shaheed Minar premises.

Noted educationalist of the district Prof Md Nurunnabi, veteran politician and columnist Ranaish Maitra, former principal of Pabna Govt Bulbul College Prof Shibojit Nag, Additional Deputy Magistrate (ADM) Md Imam Uddin Kabir, Deputy Editor of the Daily Prothom Alo Sajjad Sharif, Vice President of Pabna district AL Md Saiful Haque Chunnur, Vice President of Pabna district BNP Abdullah Al Mahmud Mannan and cultural activist Gopal Shanal spoke at the programme.

The speakers urged everyone to keep the pledges to change the entire society.

Road crashes kill five

METRO DESK

At least five people were killed and 23 others injured in separate road accidents in Jessore, Kishoreganj, Satkhira and Sirajganj yesterday.

A correspondent from Jessore reports: Two youths were killed in a road accident on Jessore-Magura road at Hasimpur yesterday.

One of the dead was identified as Anwar Hossain Mintu, 22, of Soto Khorda village under Bagherpara upazila in the district and the identity of another aged about 18 could not be known.

Police and locals said the accident occurred when a Jessore-bound bus collided head-on with a truck on Jessore-Magura road at Hasimpur, leaving 20 people injured.

The injured were rushed to Jessore General Hospital where Mintu and an unknown youth succumbed to their injuries at about 2:00pm.

A correspondent from Kishoreganj says: A minor boy was killed in a road accident at Araiboria under Hossainpur upazila yesterday in the district.

The deceased was identified as Robin Miah, 10, son of Suhrab Uddin of village Padur Gati under Hossainpur upazila.

Police and locals said the accident took place when a Gobindapur Bazar-bound three-wheeler (Tomtom) to Hassainpur Bazar hit the boy while he was crossing the road at Araiboria, leaving him dead on the spot.

Police seized the Tomtom but its driver

managed to escape.

Our correspondent from Satkhira adds: Six Business Management (BM) course examinees were injured, three of them seriously, in a road accident on Satkhira-Khulna road at Kukhrali in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Victims are the students of Safurunnesa Mahila College in the town and they appeared in the BM course examination from the college this year.

The injured identified as Lili Rani Biswas, Rita Rani Sana, Sulekha Rani Biswas, Sumi Rani Sana, Parul Rani Sana and Dipika Rani Biswas were rushed to Sadar hospital.

Quoting local people police said the accident occurred when a truck hit their rickshaw van while the students were returning to the college hostel after appearing the examination, leaving six injured.

UNB from Sirajganj adds: Two people were killed and 17 others injured in separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

An unidentified man was run over and killed by a Bogra-bound truck at Balshabari in Ullapara upazila at about 10:00am.

In another incident, a bus hit a man at Durganar in Ullapara upazila at the same time, killing him on the spot. Identity of the dead could not be known immediately.

Besides, 17 people were injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck at Mulibari on the western part of Jamuna bridge at about 11:00am.

One crushed under wheels of train

UNB, Sirajganj

One person was crushed under the wheels of a goods-laden train near the local rail station on Ishwardi-Dhaka route at about 7:00am yesterday.

Police said the victim was identified as Gopal Kumar, 55, of Bhadra Kawak village in Ullapara upazila.

Man killed in Australian floods

AFF, Sydney

A man died when his car was swamped by raging floodwaters in northeastern Australia, where tens of thousands of homes have been cut off by wild weather, officials said Saturday.

The 70-year-old's body was found near his submerged vehicle around midnight (1400 GMT) at Coff's Harbour, 540 kilometres (340 miles) north of Sydney, police said, bringing the death toll caused by the floods to two.

Emergency services estimated 21,500 people were isolated by the flooding, which has left two Australian states as disaster zones and forced widespread evacuations.

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