

Manmohan condoles Saifur's death

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh yesterday expressed his deep shock at the death of former finance minister M Saifur Rahman, who was killed in a road accident in Brahmanbaria on Saturday.

In a condolence message to Naser Rahman, elder son of the late leader, Manmohan said he has lost one of his old and true friends at the death of Saifur Rahman.

"Bangladesh has lost a true and a patriotic leader and the region has lost an able leader," he said.

Recalling the contributions of Saifur Rahman, the Indian PM in his message said Saifur has a lot of contributions in establishing modern economy and agro-based economy in Bangladesh.

He also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed his sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Staggering 242m population in 2078!

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Population would grow to an astounding 242 million in 2078, even if the country achieves the policy goal of two-child family within 2021, according to a research conducted by Dr MA Mabud, professor of the department of Public Health at North South University, recently.

The study projected that in the middle of this century, population density within 55,000 square miles of the country would be 4,500 people per square mile, when availability of land per person would be reduced to eight decimal as against 15 decimal per person now.

The researcher warned of a 'demographic catastrophe' and says that the divisional headquarters of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna may become totally uninhabitable as their population is set to double within the next 23 years.

People's mobility through capacity development must be ensured. Development of peripheral towns

and cities with modern facilities is vital to prevent rural migration as well as to ensure balanced distribution of urban-rural population.

Mabud, also president of the Organisation of Population and Poverty Alleviation, suggested relocation of industries from big cities in order to minimise congestion in the cities.

This phenomenal growth is set to seriously strain the man-land ratio and the labor market unless massive investments are made to develop skilled manpower for the demanding world market.

Present and all future governments have the challenging tasks of creating modern police forces, healthcare, schools, spacious roads, public transportation facilities and supply of gas, electricity and water for the huge population within such a small area.

In 100 years between 1901 and 2001, the population of Bangladesh rose from 29 million to 130 million, a rise of more than 100 million people. But the country would experience a

population growth of over 100 million within the next 75 years. Every year, some 2.3 million people are added to the population, the study showed.

Mabud, also an author of several books on the issue, said if the two-child family goal is sustained over time, there would be a considerable shift in the age structure of the population. For instance, population under five years of age and the ages between five and 14 would gradually start decreasing.

The size of the working population between the ages of 15 to 64 would increase. Like in developed countries, the elderly population (65 plus) of the country would also increase. The study revealed that the size of the working age population would, however, start decreasing in 2060.

Mabud's projection based mainly on data and trends revealed that in 2051, there would be one elderly person in every eight persons and in 2101, there would be one elderly person in every five persons.

The swarming population comes to a zero growth anytime between 2068 and 2070 subject to achievement of two-child family goal within 2021. The study revealed that by the middle of the century, 50 percent of the population would be living in urban areas as against 27 percent at present.

The first official programme to contain population growth in the country was started in 1965. The goal was to reduce a booming fertility rate that was recorded at seven children per woman at the time.

The then government employed thousands of midwives or 'dais' to visit households and sell contraceptives at a nominal price. The programme, however, did not achieve much other than creating some awareness among the rural poor.

After the independence of the country, family planning programme was redesigned. The traditional 'dais' were replaced by 23,500 family welfare assistants at ward level and 4,500 supervisory

staff at union level.

The programme involved several ministries to complement the ministry of health and family welfare to create awareness and enlist public support. The information ministry alone ran five separate projects for creating mass support and awareness through media.

According to Mabud, the 'all-out efforts' to contain population showed a 'remarkable success'. A survey conducted in 1990 showed that contraceptive prevalence rate rose from 8.5 percent in mid 70s to 40 percent.

In another survey in 2007, contraceptive prevalence rate was found to be 56 percent and fertility rate dropped from 6.3 percent in mid seventies to 2.7 percent.

"We need to achieve 2.1 fertility rate per woman within 2021 to contain our population within 242 million in the middle of the century, but it is always difficult to manage such a population in a small and dwindling land space like Bangladesh," said Mabud.

Sahara joins office, vows to eliminate militants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday vowed to eliminate extremists and militants from the country at any cost.

"We have directed the law enforcers to take any kind of action to root out the outlawed party men and militants," Sahara, who joined her office after a 45-day bed rest, told the reporters at the ministry.

The declaration comes at a time when a crackdown in the southern region has been going on against the outlawed party men.

The ongoing drive in the southwest is based on a list prepared by the law enforcement agencies, the minister said, adding that a new list of outlawed party men has been prepared and massive crackdown will be launched soon to weed them out.

Replying to a query the home minister claimed that no extra-judicial killing was taking place during the drive.

"Those who are being killed are dying in gun battles with the law enforcers," she said.

The home minister also sought cooperation of all to nab the outlawed party men.

Sahara suffered waist injuries as she fell in the washroom of her official residence on June 29.

She was first given treatment at the Trauma Centre in the capital and later she had undergone operation at

Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

The home minister returned Dhaka on July 21 and had been in bed rest upon doctor's suggestion since then.

Depression weakens gradually

UNB, Dhaka

The monsoon depression formed over the coastal areas of West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh moved slightly north-northwestwards and now it lies over West Bengal and adjoining area.

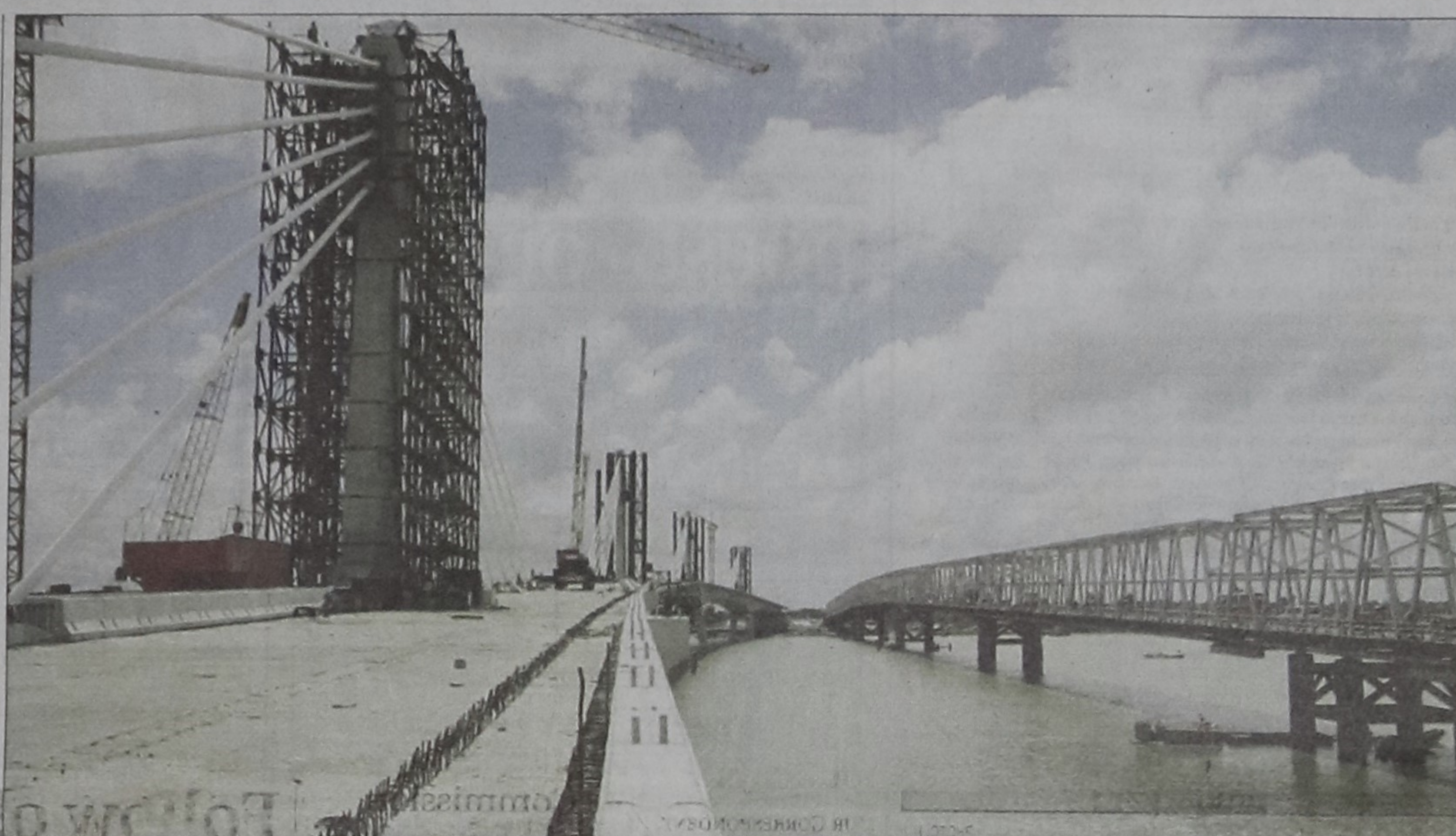
A latest Met Office special bulletin said, "It is likely to move in a north-northwesterly direction further and weaken gradually."

Under its influence, steep pressure gradient lies over the North Bay.

Monsoon is moderate to strong over the North Bay. Squally weather may affect the maritime ports and coastal regions of Bangladesh.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three repeat three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over North Bay have been advised to proceed with caution but not to venture into the deep sea.



The much-awaited 3rd bridge on the river Karnaphuli in the port city is unlikely to be opened to traffic this month as scheduled, because some finishing works are yet to be completed.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Third Karnaphuli Bridge unlikely to open to traffic this month

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

The much-awaited 3rd bridge on the river Karnaphuli in the port city is unlikely to be opened to traffic this month as scheduled.

Acknowledging the delay, Project Director Mohiuddin Ahmad said due to inclement weather and excessive rainfall

in August the work could not be completed.

Some finishing works like pavement and divider of the 950-metre-long and 24.47-metre-wide bridge are yet to be completed, he said expressing the hope that the bridge will now be ready for formal inauguration in December.

"We faced great difficulties in August to continue our work because of heavy rain. The pace of work will also be slowed down this month due to shortage of workers owing to Ramadan and Eid vacations," Mohiuddin told The Daily Star.

During a visit to the bridge site recently, some local work-

ers, however, expressed skepticism about the completion of the remaining work in next three to four months.

The Tk 598 crore project was undertaken in 2001 and the then prime minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of the bridge on April 19, 2004.

The China Major Bridge (CMB) Company started the construction work in August 2006 with a Tk 372 crore financial assistance from the Kuwait Fund and the bridge was scheduled to be completed by this month.

The project director said unless the work of approach roads is completed by October

or November they won't be able to go for formal opening of the bridge for vehicular movement in December.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) sources, however, claimed that nearly 85 percent work of the approach roads has already been completed and they will need another month at best for full completion.

The construction of the 3rd bridge became a necessity as movement of heavy vehicles was suspended on the Shah Amanat Bridge due to its dilapidated condition.

Besides, the century-old Kalurghat rail-cum-road

bridge has been in a sorry state for long.

When completed the bridge would immensely benefit millions of people of Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and southern upazilas of Chittagong and boost up economic activities there.

1,488 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,488 people on various charges in separate drives across the country in 24 hours until 6:00am yesterday.

Thirteen firearms and 30 bullets were also seized during the countrywide drive, said a release of police headquarters.

Besides, 63 motorbikes were seized during the drive for not having valid documents and 288 cases filed in this connection.

We Mourn

M. Saifur Rahman, former Finance Minister of Bangladesh, died in a tragic road accident on September 05, 2009. (Innallaha wa inna ilaihe rajiun). He will be remembered for his pivotal role in building a self reliant economy of Bangladesh.

We pray to Allah to bestow eternal peace.

AB Bank

Strengthen anti-adulteration drive: JS body

UNB, Dhaka

A parliamentary body yesterday gave directive to Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) for strengthening the anti-adulteration drive, as a shopping binge is now on stream ahead of Eid.

The parliamentary standing committee on industries ministry at a meeting advised the ministry to take necessary steps, including recruiting new manpower, for turning the limping BSTI into a modern and effective institution.

'Pay salary, bonus to workers before Eid'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari yesterday said paying salary and bonus to workers ahead of Eid is a moral responsibility of the owners.

Executive Director of Karmojibi Nari Rokeya Rafiq and General Secretary Sharmin Kabir in a joint statement said according to the ILO

Held at the Sangsad Bhaban, the meeting requested the establishment ministry to take steps for appointing necessary magistrates for conducting BSTI-led mobile courts to catch the fakers and cheaters who deceive the consumers.

Activities of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation also came up for discussion. Committee members Kamal Ahmed Majumder, Mohammad Meraj Uddin Molla, Mubibur Rahman Manik, Anwarul Ashraf Khan, Jahid Male, SM Abdul Mannan

and Sultana Bulbul attended the meeting, which was chaired by committee chairman Tofail Ahmed.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua was present on special invitation.

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