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The impact of unregulated and unplanned urban development

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In conversation with Brac University English dept chair Firdous Azim

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## HARD BLOW FOR REGIME

A top Syrian general defects; the west piles pressure on Assad

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# It's part of int'l conspiracy

Ministers slam HR Watch report on BDR trial, Rab, human rights violation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Describing the Human Rights Watch report on rights violation as "totally false, baseless and imaginary," the government has said the rights body made the allegations as part of an international conspiracy.

In a statement, the home ministry yesterday demanded that the HRW withdraw the report that called upon the government to immediately halt the February 2009 BDR mutiny trial and disband the Rapid Action Battalion.

Meanwhile, three ministers in separate programmes on Thursday and yesterday said the HRW report amounted to "interference in the internal affairs of the country".

On July 4, the New York-based rights body in a report said the mass trial of the BDR mutiny suspects was fundamentally flawed and that the accused were subjected to gross human rights violations.

It also demanded that the government form a special

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Mutiny trial conforms to all laws

Says BGB, terms HRW remarks ill-motivated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the Human Rights Watch called for a halt to the BDR trials, the Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday said it had been conducting the BDR trials responsibly, transparently and following laws of the land.

On July 4, an HRW report claimed that the mass trials for the February, 2009 BDR mutiny was fundamentally flawed and the accused had been subjected to gross human rights violations.

Releasing the report at a press conference in the capital, officials of the

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The Second Buriganga Bridge in the capital is heavily congested even on the weekend yesterday. Huge crowds gather on the bridge obstructing traffic flow every Friday as an illegal bazaar sits there for all day long.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# FDI rises to \$1.13b

Unctad report on 2011 says textile, banking, energy, telecoms sectors attract most of the amount

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign direct investment in Bangladesh last year rose by 24.42 percent to \$1.13 billion, the highest in its history, according to Unctad's World Investment Report-2012.

The country received \$1.08 billion as its second highest FDI in 2008.

The report was released in Bangladesh by SA Samad, executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI), at his office on Thursday.

The United Nations Conference on

Trade and Development (Unctad) report also says the country's economic growth last year was slower compared to 2010 when FDI increased by 30 percent to \$913 million.

Globally, the FDI inflow last year soared by 16 percent and stood at \$1.5 trillion. Three largest FDI recipients were the US (\$227 billion), China (\$124b) and Belgium (\$89b).

FDI in India increased by 29 percent to \$31.55 billion while in Pakistan it plunged to \$1.32 billion falling by 52 percent.

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# Inflation eases further in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The overall inflation eased by 0.59 percentage points (point-to-point basis) to stand at 8.56 percent in June, mainly due to the fall in prices of both food and non-food items, government data shows.

Despite the point-to-point basis fall, the twelve-month average inflation rate is still high and it was 10.62 percent last month, up from 8.8 percent a year ago.

The government targets to bring down the average inflation rate to 7.5 percent in the current fiscal year.

In May this year, the overall inflation rate was 9.15 percent. Point to point inflation hovered around double

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# PM responds to people's queries on mobile phone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Soon after the disclosure of her cellphone numbers and e-mail address in parliament, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received a huge response from a cross section of people in the last two days.

Some callers expressed surprise while others showed nervousness while talking directly to the head of the government.

Some shared their problems in their locality while others talked about the most burning issues like Padma Bridge with the premier, Mahbulul Hoque Shakil, premier's special assistant (media), said.

"I cannot believe that you [premier] have received my call," Shakil quoted a caller as saying.

One of the callers was a female student of class VII from Kurigram district. She expressed her

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# Further delay to make Padma bridge costlier

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Delay, even by six months, in constructing the \$2.9 billion Padma bridge might escalate the project's cost by 4 to 5 percent, said Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, chief of the technical evaluation committee for the project.

"The longer the delay is, the costlier the construction will be. The bridge was scheduled to be finished between 2012 and 2016. If it now finishes between 2013 and 2017 the cost will obviously escalate," he told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

However, he said, the cost rise would be subjected to global development. "If there are huge construction works across the globe the prices of construction materials, especially of steel, would go up.

The leading engineer of the country said some local agents of foreign bidders in the Padma bridge project had triggered the corruption issue by sending dubious letters and documents to the World Bank. "There was an unholy competition among the local agents," he added.

"I also got some anonymous emails, which I have submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission. The companies who had failed to qualify sent numerous

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Muslims offer special prayers at Baitul Mukarram, the national mosque of Bangladesh, in the capital on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat (night of fortune) early yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

# Shab-e-Barat observed

UNB, Dhaka

Muslims across the country observed the holy Shab-e-Barat on Thursday night with religious fervour and due solemnity.

The devotees passed sleepless night at mosques and homes, offering prayers and reciting from the holy Quran on the occasion.

Muslims believe Allah, the almighty, writes the fate of all human beings on this night fixing their 'rizq' (livelihood) for the coming year.

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## PADMA BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

# Private insurers offer investment

Association chief tells govt Tk 11,000cr could be raised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA), a forum of private insurers, on Thursday stepped up to invest Tk 11,000 crore in the Padma bridge project.

BIA Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain, also a close relative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said the country's life insurance com-

panies have Tk 16,299 crore, of which, Tk 11,000 crore could be invested in the project. The remaining fund had already been invested in different government bonds and securities.

"We have offered the fund and now it is up to the government to decide on it," he told The Daily Star.

BIA's offer came just a day after

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# Bangladesh making rapid progress: Ban

UNB, Dhaka

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said Bangladesh is rapidly advancing towards development with successes in several sectors.

"In overall consideration, Bangladesh is marching towards development in women's empowerment, women's development, unemployment mitigation, employment generation and rural development," the UN chief said adding that the recent appointment of Bangladeshi citizen Ameerah Haq as the Under-Secretary-General bore the

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