Repair cost soars

FROM PAGE 1

Meghna bridge, with concrete blocks and sand bags, will cost around Tk 290 crore. The initial plan was to fill with concrete blocks at a cost of Tk 135 crore.

The Meghna-Gumti bridge has no scouring issues but many of its expansion joints and hinge bearings have been badly damaged and need replacements.

Recently, the army, entrusted with the repair job, carried out temporary patch ups on both the bridges at a cost of Tk 10 crore. They made temporary repairs to some of the joints and hinge bearings.

Earlier, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) prepared a proposal to repair only the Meghna bridge for Tk 150 crore. The work plan included replacing the damaged expansion joints and hinge bearings, and filling up of the riverbed scouring at three The RHD had then

decided to use concrete blocks in 2.50 lakh cubic metres around three piers of the Meghna bridge. In the new plan, the area

to be filled was reduced to 2.30 lakh cubic metres and Buet experts suggested that geo-textile and geosynthetic bags filled with sand be used in addition to some concrete blocks. The decision to con-

struct new bridges alongside the existing ones is a reason for the change in the way the riverbed is going to be filled. Experts say that con-

crete blocks will cause difficulties in piling work for the proposed bridges. The repair of the bridges

was scheduled to start this month.

However, filling up of the scoured riverbed will start next month.

Buet consultant for the project Prof Khan Mahmud Amanat said, "A large hole has been detected some 400 metres south of pier-8 of Meghna bridge during a recent survey, which is the main reason for the high cost in the RDPP [revised development project pro-

"We are assessing whether we at all need to fill the hole. The cost will come down significantly if it is not needed."

"We are looking into it [the cost] and will inform the communications ministry in a week or two," said Amanat, also a teacher of Buet's civil engineering department.

Meanwhile, several

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Jewel, Al-Amin

youth front of the ruling Awami League, brought out a procession on the court premises demanding release of their leader. Police on Thursday

arrested Molla less than two hours after the High Court asked the government to explain in a week as to why it should not be directed to arrest the alleged mastermind behind the kidnapping Amir Hossain. With the latest arrest, the

number of people detained in connection with the abduction stands at 10.

Armed criminals abducted Parag, shooting his mother, sister and their driver near their house in Shubhadda Paschimpara in Keraniganj while they were about to board their car for going to school on November 11 morning.

The boy was freed after three days reportedly on payment of a ransom of Tk 50 lakh.

Police and Parag's family

Parag is now home and keen on going back to school. His mother Lipi Mondol, who was shot in the leg, was getting better and could walk, said Bimol Mondol, father of Parag.

Pinaki Mondol, sister of Parag who was also shot in the leg, was getting better too. She would be taken back to the hospital today to dress her wound, Bimol said.

Officer-in-Charge Shakhawat Hossain of Dakkhin Keraniganj Police Station said three policemen were deployed to give protection to the family of Parag.

officials of the ministry while discussing the revised proposal recently expressed reservation about the cost. They questioned some issues of the fresh proposal including the procurement of three four-wheel-drive vehicles and a pick-up truck for Tk 12.7 crore.

Asked about the high cost, Communications Secretary MAN Siddique said the cost increased due to the plan to use sandbags.

He said the consultants of Buet and the army were assessing the cost. "We will prepare a proposal in line with their suggestions and send it to Ecnec for approval," Siddique told The Daily Star.

The Japanese-built bridges are crucial for uninterrupted road communication between Dhaka and Chittagong. The Meghna bridge was opened in 1991 while Meghna-Gumti bridge was opened in 1995.

Prothom Alo

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said, around 53 lakh people read the newspaper every day and around 1.24 crore every week. Since last April, its circulation has gone up by 1 lakh. Around 18 lakh read this

paper through website, epaper and mobile portal. Bangladeshis residing in 190 countries across the globe read Prothom Alo to know about the country, he added. Matiur Rahman also

urged all to dream of a democratic, noncommunal and progressing Bangladesh. He added among most of South Asian countries, Bangladesh is doing better in social sectors, including health and education. Latifur Rahman, chair-

man of Prothom Alo's publishing company Media Star Ltd, also addressed the function, held at the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in the capital. "When we started this

journey back in 1998, few would have imagined that it would rise to this preeminent position. I remember the average circulation at that time was about 52,000 copies a day, he said. "Now it's 5.5 lakh."

The paper and those associated with it have faced various obstacles, even intimidation. But still Prothom Alo stays on course, he said. "The readers have awarded the newspaper with this unique posi-

Later, a tuneful Tagore melody, presented by eight singers, added extra dimension to the evening.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Palestinian envoy seeks 'special role' for China

AFP, Beijing

China can play a "special role" in the Middle East, a Palestinian envoy said yesterday, following eight days of deadly conflict between Israel and militants in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

Bassam al-Salhi, a representative of Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, was speaking after talks in Beijing on efforts to upgrade his people's status at the United Nations and maintain calm in the region.

A cease-fire brokered by Egypt came into effect

solution to end hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians.

"We are very interested in the Chinese role in all the Middle East because all the Middle East needs more efforts from the international community," he said.

IMF for fresh fuel price hike

FROM PAGE 1

but did not settle on the amount, according to a finance ministry official. Another official of the ministry said the prime minister would make the final decision. Both the officials spoke on condition of anonymity. The IMF will send a mis-

sion to Dhaka towards the end of this month to review the government's response to its conditions. The issue of increasing fuel prices is likely to top the agenda during the discussion. At present, kerosene sells

Tk 61 a litre, petrol Tk 91, octane Tk 94 and furnace oil The government last time hiked fuel prices by Tk 5 per litre flat on November 29 last

year. On November 10 the same year, prices of all fuel oils rose by Tk 5 a litre. Earlier in September that year, the

price of furnace oil by Tk 8 a litre while the prices of kerosene, diesel, petrol and octane by Tk 5 per litre.

Last month, the finance minister held several meetings with top IMF officials on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF annual meeting in Tokyo. During the talks, the IMF urged the minister to increase prices of fuel oil, fertiliser and electricity to ease the subsidy pressure. The total subsidy alloca-

tion in the current fiscal year's budget stands at Tk 37,000 crore. Of the sum, Tk 20,000 crore is meant for power and energy sector and Tk 6,000 crore for fertiliser.

Meanwhile, the finance ministry has prepared the draft Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP), outlining

government increased the various plans to cut subsidy on energy and fertiliser.

The MEFP is the financial reform strategies to be undertaken by the government and to be sent to the IMF. It is a prerequisite for getting the second tranche of the IMF's Extended Credit Facility. The draft says the

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, the Bangladesh Power Development Board and the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation will gradually bring down subsidy related loans from the state-owned banks to zero. It, however, does not

mention a timeframe for that.

Also, dependence on rental power units will be reduced at the soonest to slash subsidy on electricity, according to the draft.

Phulbari tense

The restriction on gathering stood in the way of a scheduled rally of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports to protest the government move. In the face of the restric-

tion, the oil-gas protection committee called a dawnto-dusk strike in Phulbari for today. Prof Anu Mohammad, secretary of the committee, announced the strike at a press conference in Nimtola More around 3:30 pm. Minutes later, the

Phulbari Chamber of Commerce and Industries called an indefinite strike and blockades in the upazila from today at a press conference saying that Section 144 had hampered businesses in the upazila. Sources said the Phulbari

upazila administration decided to impose Section 144 in the scheduled meeting area around 11:30am. Initially, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Moniruzzaman imposed the restriction on gathering from 12:00pm to 7:00pm which was later extended until the midnight.

Protesting the action, Prof Anu Mohammad alleged at 144.

the press conference that the resources through a chaos. "But the people of the country will thwart the attempt as they are the real owner of the resources," he added. He demanded that the

government cancel the decision of allowing the Asia Energy resume its survey. He also announced a demonstration for November 28 and warned the government of a tougher agitation if it did not meet their demand.

Tension brewed up in the area after the announcement of the hartals. Around 4:30pm, local traders led by Md Manik Sarker, Mayor of Phulbari municipality and president of Phulbari Chamber of Commerce and Industries, brought out a procession ignoring Section

Police dispersed the procession triggering more tension in the area. Around 500 policemen had been deployed in Phulbari to maintain law and order.

As of midnight yesterday, Phulbari police were preparing to file a case against those who violated Section

Earlier on August 26, government had proved that 2006, thousands of people of it wanted to sell national Phulbari led by leaders of the oil-gas protection committee staged demonstration centring the coal mine issue. Three persons were killed

and around a hundred injured in the demonstration when members of then Bangladesh Rifles [now Border Guard Bangladesh opened fire at the protestors.

The deadlock ended following a negotiation between the locals and representatives of the then BNP government. A sixpoint agreement was signed. Locals allege that the agreement is yet to be imple-

mented. Meanwhile, Workers Party of Bangladesh Communist Party of Bangladesh, Samajtantrik Dal of Bangladesh,

Gonotantrik Bam Morcha

and Gonosonghati Andolan

in separate statements condemned the imposition of Section 144 in Phulbari. The Gonotantrik Bam Morcha and the oil-gas protection committee are to organise protest rallies and processions in front of Jatiya Press Club today at 3:00pm

and 3:30pm, respectively.

New addition to public import around 1,000 buses

per trip from early morning to late evening every day. The likely routes are Mirpur-Motijheel and Uttara-Motijheel, the BRTC sources

A new ticketing system, like that in Western countries, will also be introduced. Passengers will have to insert coins or notes into vending machines on the articulated buses to get their tickets. The doors will not open until the machine reads the ticket. The system is expected to help stop passengers travelling free.

Iftekhar Ahmed, chairman of IFAD Autos Ltd, the firm that has won the import contract of the buses and is the sole agent of Ashok Leyland, said, "A special feature of this bus is that it will have higher standing capacity [70 persons] than the seating [58 persons]."

Each bus would cost Tk 84 lakh, excluding taxes, he

Asked if the vehicles

would have difficulty negoti-

ating the city's already crowded roads, Iftekhar said from different countries. the buses would ply the roads enough for making turns.

Talking to The Daily Star, Communications Secretary MAN Siddique said that recently the buses had been run on trial on some Indian roads similar to the major thoroughfares of Dhaka.

"We can now say that there will be no problem in operating articulated buses in Dhaka," he added.

The secretary also said a select group of drivers were being sent to Kolkata to learn how to drive and maintain the buses.

Due to their higher capacity, bendy buses are often used as part of bus rapid transit (BRT) schemes. However, the government's planned BRT scheme is still at a primary stage.

To meet the growing demand of passenger transport in the country, the government in 2010 decided to The first lot of 275 single-

without any trouble, as their deckers was imported from two carriages are flexible China in late 2010, followed by 255 single-deck buses from South Korea in 2011. Recently, 290 double-

deckers have been bought from Ashok Leyland. Many of the doubledeckers are now operating in

other districts. IFAD Chairman Iftekhar Ahmed said 10 more doubledeckers would arrive in mid-2013 as the Indian company is supposed to supply 300

Dhaka, Chittagong and some

Also in the pipeline is a fleet of 100 air-conditioned single-deckers. "Ashok Leyland will start supplying the vehicles in January and complete it by June," he mentioned.

The state-run BRTC has a fleet of 1,263 buses including 399 double-deckers. The company's strength will grow with the arrival of the new

FBCCI polls today person election board, said

in the capital.

A total of 63 candidates are contesting for the posts of 30 directors (15 from chamber group and 15 from association group) under the banner of two panels for the 2012-14 term elec-

Ahmed is leading his own panel while former FBCCI president Annisul Huq is leading Ganatantrik Parishad panel. Huq, however, is not contesting the

election. Abu Bakar Siddique (Dilip), a member of the three-

yesterday that the voting would begin at 9:00am and would continue until 4:30pm without any break at the FBCCI building at Motijheel

the building," Dilip said.

would try to complete the vote count within the day. Annisul Huq told The Daily Star the FBCCI election usu-

ally takes place peacefully held in a peaceful manner.

and this year too, it would be

arranging direct polling system in the future elections. This is my priority,' Huq said. Kazi Akramuddin Ahmed

also hoped that a peaceful

environment would exist during the polling day.

"If my panel wins the polls, with technological facilities. again. I will also try to introduce direct election system in the

1953 Korean War.

conspiracy against the party. "The ACC has become an

It's part

FROM PAGE 1

agent of the government.... On behalf of the government, the ACC has started assassinating the characters of the leaders and activists of BNP," he told newsmen after visiting the injured leaders of Shariatpur district BNP at a private hospital in the capital. The anti-graft body has

done it to draw people's

attention away from the

failure of the government, he

complained. "The move is politically motivated." The ACC on Thursday claimed that it has brought back from Singapore around S\$20.41 lakh laundered by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son Koko and

his associate.

Thousands of crores of taka have been looted in Hall-Mark, Railwaygate and sharemarket scams and Padma Bridge "fiasco," in which Awami League is involved, he mentioned adding, the ACC did not do anything in this respect, but filed cases against Koko and Tarique Rahman [elder son of Khaleda Zial.

Responding to a query from journalists, Fakhrul said the formation of the Election Commission (EC) is not valid. At the party's executive

decide whether it would join the dialogue with the EC, he added. The EC on November 20 decided to begin four-day

electoral talks with political

committee meeting BNP will

parties from Monday. Meanwhile, the central committee of Zia Sena in a press release yesterday rejected the ACC's claim of bringing back the laundered money from Singapore.

Shibir men

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stabbed and a coaching centre was torched allegedly by the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, a pro-Awami League student organisation. The attackers ransacked

Radar and Focus coaching

centres, operated by Shibir, at Eidgah intersection and torched Radar Coaching They stabbed Hafizur Rahman, a director of Radar; Shahadat Hossain, an employee; and Sujit Pal, an

employee of an advocate's

chamber which the attack

ers mistakenly ransacked. 23 JAMAAT-SHIBIR MEN

Law enforcers in the last two days arrested at least 23 more leaders and activists of Jamaat and Shibir from three other districts on charges of the recent attacks on police, involvement in acts of violence and suspected link to

subversive activities. Of the arrestees, 11 are from Narail, seven from Munshiganj and five from Narayanganj.

Our Correspondent from Narail reports that two Jamaat leaders including Jakir Hossain, ameer of Jamaat's Kotakol union unit, were arrested yesterday afternoon.

On Thursday, police arrested nine Jamaat and Shibir men including Lohagora upazila Jamaat Ameer Ali Ahmed Mollah.

In Munshiganj, police arrested seven Jamaat men from sadar and Gazaria upazilas with some booklets and non-lethal local arms, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

Our Narayanganj correspondent adds that law enforcers arrested five Jamaat men from Fatullah, Kashimpur, Sonargaon and Dewbhogh areas of the district yesterday and on Thursday night.

Pyongyang's threat to strike The November 23 attack

on Yeonpyeong island killed two South Korean marines and two civilians in one of the most serious border incidents since the 1950-

Glasses to ease

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however - thanks to what are claimed to be the world's first "time-control" spectacles.

The high-tech glasses emit a soft green glow which is said to work on the human body clock to change our sleep patterns. Using the device, called

the Re-Timer, means longhaul air passengers can step off the plane feeling fresh, even after a flight from Britain to Australia, say the sleep researchers who created it. Inventor Professor Leon Lack said the glasses could

also help insomnia sufferers, keep shift workers more alert and get teenagers out of bed in the morning. "The light from Re-Timer stimulates the part of the brain responsible for regu-

lating the 24-hour body clock," said Professor Lack, of Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia. "Using a light device allows you to transition your body clock to a new time

eliminates the sudden

change people experience

after flying and reduces the

symptoms of jet lag."

the UK on the Re-Timer website for £162, can be worn while completing normal daily tasks such as working on the computer or

passengers experience jet lag after a long flight. This is because travelling

through different time zones should be asleep or awake.

Morsi 'power grab' FROM PAGE 20

that forced veteran strong-

man Hosni Mubarak from power early last year, planned to march on Tahrir Square, Cairo's iconic protest hub, to demonstrate against the "new pharaoh". Morsi's backers led by

the powerful Muslim Brotherhood gathered outside the presidential palace in north Cairo in a show of support for his decision to temporarily place his decisions above judicial oversight. Morsi, who was feted on the international stage for

his key role in bringing to an end the violence in Gaza, issued a decree on Thursday, which also ordered the retrial of former president Hosni Mubarak and officials and security force members accused of killing protesters during the country's revolu-

The decree read out by his spokesman Yasser Ali on state television said, "The president can issue any decision or measure to protect the revolution," it said. "The constitutional declarations, decisions and laws issued by the president are final and not subject to appeal."

The decree won immediate praise from Morsi's allies but stoked fears among secular-minded Egyptians that the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies aim to dominate the new Egypt. Morsi already has both

executive and legislative powers since the dissolution of the parliament's lower assembly, and has now added what appears to be a monopoly of judicial authority, placing himself beyond the courts while appointing a hand-picked prosecutor without consultation. Leading secular politi-

cians Mohamed ElBaradei

accused Morsi on Twitter of

having "usurped all state

powers and appointed himself Egypt's new pharaoh". While some commentators have recognised the new powers appear to be aimed at removing the obstacle of a judiciary still dominated by remnants of the Mubarak era who have undermined progress towards a constitution, they

decree. In particular, critics point to Article 6, which states that the "president may take the necessary actions and measures to protect the country and the goals of the revolution" and places the president as the sovereign of the state, as he can "claim exception against all rules".

Anwar Sadat's use of a similar measure in 1979 that was used against opposition figures, writes The Guardian. The decree appeared to

The scientists say the light exposure changes the behaviour of a gland at the base of the brain which controls the body clock. It sends signals to the rest

of the body, triggering the production of hormones, which create daily cycles known as circadian rhythms. Those who wanted to sleep and wake up earlier

should wear the device for 50 minutes in the morning, while those who want to sleep and wake later should wear them for 50 minutes before bed to delay the body clock, say the researchers. The battery-powered glasses, which are on sale in

reading. Almost 94 percent of

confuses the body clock, zone in small steps. This which uses cues from the outside world -- such as light, dark, silence and noise -- to tell the body when it

> assembly writing the constitution. The body has faced a raft of legal challenges from plaintiffs who

Critics say its popular

legitimacy had been further

called into doubt by the

dispute its legality.

withdrawal of many of its non-Islamist members, who had complained their voices were not being heard. The constitution is a crucial element in Egypt's transition to democracy. New parliamentary elections will not be held until

and passed by a popular referendum. The decree also gave the body an additional two months to complete its work, meaning the drafting process could stretch until

the document is completed

February, pushing back elections. A number of political groups joined to condemn the decree and said the president "robbed the people and institutions of all the rights and powers", in a

statement issued late on Thursday night. Among popular measures in the decree, however, is the decision to retry Mubarak, 84, who was sentenced to life in prison in June for failing to prevent killings that claimed the lives of some 800 people that occurred during the upris-

ing that led to his fall in February last year and after. Critics, including demonstrators who have been protesting in Cairo this week, have been angry about the widespread impunity enjoyed by many officials and security force members who have largely

avoided justice for the killings of demonstrators. The removal of the Mubarak-era chief prosecutor and his replacement was designed to meet these

Morsi's opponents

poured into Tahrir Square

nuclear watchdog chief,

and Amr Mussa, a former

foreign minister and Arab

dictator," read the banner

headline in Friday's edition

after the main weekly Muslim prayers. They were expected to be joined by leading secular politicians Mohamed ElBaradei, a former UN

demands.

League chief. ElBaradei denounced Morsi as a "new pharaoh," the same term of derision used against Mubarak when he was in power. "Morsi is a 'temporary'

of independent daily Al-Masry Youm. All 13 valid

FROM PAGE 20 Other aspirants include

independent candidates

Mehedy Hasan and Ali Haydar Dulu, Kayser Zaman Babla, former president of Rangpur municipality unit BNP. The last day for with-

drawal of candidacy is remove any uncertainty still hanging over the fate of the November 29.

are also alarmed by the So far no untoward incidenied paying the ransom. S Korea marks Thursday in Gaza -- which dent centring the election The government has In the electoral process, 30 Abbas does not control. race has been reported, he already ensured adequate island attack elected directors along with said, hoping that a good security measures with the Al-Salhi, also general 18 nominated directors environment would prevail secretary of the Palestinian deployment of security AFP, Yeonpyeong (nine from chamber group People's Party, referred to forces, he said adding "I hope during the election day. nobody will try to spoil the Beijing as a "broker" and a and nine from association "We have taken adequate A South Korean island yesgroup) would choose the "mediator" after talks with election environment." security measures by deployterday marked the anniverpresident for two years' Chinese Foreign Minister ing members of the security sary of its 2010 shelling by Yang Jiechi. forces including Rab, police tenure. my first priority will be to North Korea, with its resi-Of the two panels, and intelligence agencies at establish the rights of the He said China could dents still haunted by the businessmen and set up a succeed where the United Chairman of Standard Bank assault and alarmed by Ltd Kazi Akramuddin States failed in finding a He said the election board modern FBCCI secretariat Some compared it to

> future," Ahmed said. FBCCI President AK Azad said "I hope the businessmen will exercise their voting "If my panel wins the elecrights in a democratic mantion, I will take measures for ner."