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'THUMBS-UP' TO CTG PORT

It is considered most efficient in South Asia, Pascal Lamy says

PAGE 2

'IBLISH' RETURNS

Theatre troupe Aranyak stages one of its early plays after two decades

PAGE 10

IT WAS MAMATA

Rushdie says West Bengal CM barred his Kolkata visit

PAGE 7

THE PROJECT CHRONICLE

2011

Feb 24: The World Bank approves \$1.2 billion loan.

Apr 28: The government signs a loan deal with the WB.

August: The WB raises corruption allegations.

Sept 13: The global lender suspends the loan.

Sept 21: A WB report raises graft allegations against the then communications minister Abul Hossain and his company.

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PADMA BRIDGE PROJECT

No to WB funds

Govt finally withdraws loan request, asks co-financiers to retain fund; graft conspiracy probe to continue; govt to convene meeting of dev partners soon

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and SHARIER KHAN

The government has withdrawn its request to the World Bank for the Padma bridge loan, bringing to a close a saga over finance for the country's largest ever infrastructure project.

Dhaka communicated the decision to the global lender on Thursday, a day after the WB president in Washington said the financ-

ing for the project would not go ahead unless certain conditions were met.

In a statement issued yesterday evening, the government said it had kept maintaining for the last few days that it expected the WB financing within last month and that it was determined to take an alternative decision regarding the matter by that time.

"As per the decision, the govern-

ment yesterday [Thursday] informed the World Bank that it wanted to begin the work of Padma bridge project right now and without the World Bank finance," read the statement.

Earlier in the day, the WB released a press statement saying, "The World Bank has taken note of the government decision of not seeking

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THE BRIDGE

- To link southwest with rest of the country
- 6.15km with rail provision
- To raise GDP growth by 1.2 percentage points
- 21,000 to 41,000 vehicles to operate a day

LOAN PLEDGE

- WB \$1.2b, 0.75% interest
- ADB \$539m, 1.75%
- ADB \$76m, 1%
- JICA \$400m, 0.1%

ALLEGATIONS

- Centred on project's supervision job bid
- Syed Abul Hossain's seeking bribe
- Canadian firm favoured
- Lowest bidder deprived

ALTERNATIVES

- Malaysia proposal, 6% interest
- Chinese companies
- Own fund, sovereign bond
- Foreign credits, grants

What if Abul was included as accused

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Had the Anti-Corruption Commission accused former minister Syed Abul Hossain in the case filed for graft conspiracy in the Padma bridge project, the bridge construction would have started in May or June this year, according to a World Bank road map. A government official said the global lender in late December, 2012, sent a



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Bridge minus rail?

Govt looks for alternative fund sources; considers design change to cut cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following the withdrawal of its request to World Bank to finance the Padma bridge project, the government is set to revise the design of the bridge excluding the railway facilities to cut cost.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last week hinted that a new design of the bridge would be made.

However, experts said Bangladesh would lose a huge economic opportunity if provision

for rail lines was dropped.

"Transport of goods over long distances is done using rail due to cost benefits. Currently, our railway does not have the capacity and thus roads take the load, the cost of which is four times higher in comparison. We could have easily tapped into the opportunity establishing rail connectivity via Padma bridge," observed transport expert Rahmatullah.

Mongla Port would be better

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

ADB pulls out of Padma project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian Development Bank has pulled out of the much-talked Padma bridge project after the government wrote to the World Bank withdrawing its request for funding.

The World Bank was the main financier of the \$2.9 billion project and the ADB was a co-financier, alongside Japan

International Cooperation

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina browses the book stalls of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Bangla Academy after inaugurating the month-long book fair yesterday.



PHOTO: BSS

PM pulls for Bangla Opens Ekushey book fair

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday laid importance on translating the popular books of Bengali literature into other languages and vice versa to enrich Bangla.

"There is a wrong perception in a section of people that Bangla language will face debacle if we give importance to other languages," she said.

"I will be happy if our litterateurs and people don't suffer from the confusion and give importance to the learning of other important languages," she added.

The premier made the remarks while addressing the inaugural function of the month-long Ekushey Book Fair-2013 on the Bangla Academy premises in the capital.

Hasina said her government is trying to make Bangla one of the official languages of the United Nations. "I hope we would be able to earn the recognition."

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Dhirendranath rises for Bangla

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Ekushey is, and has always been, symbolic of the Bangalee national aspiration for self-expression. Just how important Bangla was to be was a theme already being discussed in the run-up to Partition.

There were, of course, those in the non-Bangalee Muslim community in pre-August 1947 India who for their part had begun to root for Urdu as the language of a future

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Bangladesh moving forward rapidly

WTO chief Lamy talks to The Daily Star on prospects and challenges ahead

UDAY SANKAR DAS, from Chittagong

Bangladesh is moving ahead rapidly showing cohesion in adjusting to various changes and demands, and has the potential to become an emerging economy, Pascal Lamy, director general of the World Trade Organisation, said yesterday.

"Bangladesh achieved a huge reduction in poverty; there has been growth in trade and education and also progress in gender streamlining, though many challenges still remain," Lamy told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview in Chittagong.

Replying to a query about the reasons for the stalemate in the Doha Round and the conflicting groups that may be involved in this, he said there was stalemate in only one of the 20 topics under negotiation, namely



Pascal Lamy

industrial tariff reduction.

He added the conflict was between the rich and the emerging countries, with the US and its allies on one side, and China and the like on the other. The US argues that China has become a bigger economy and trader, and so its tariffs have to go up. China, on the other hand, argues that this is not the right time for it to take this step.

Lamy thinks this issue has now become more of a political issue than anything else.

The Doha Round is the current trade-negotiation round of the WTO which commenced in November 2001. Its objective is to lower trade barriers around the world for facilitating the increase of global trade.

Although there is a belief that there

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

af Alliance Française de Chittagong

তোরা কন কন যাবি তাঁর সাম্পানত

Boat Technology & Culture in Chittagong and Bengal

This is a sequel of **আলফ্রাঙ্ক চিত্তাগঞ্জ** organised by The Daily Star

3 - 9 February 2013
Shilpakala Academy Chittagong & AFC Auditorium

Films - Songs - Conferences - Exhibitions

BEHIND THE SEA
Photo exhibition by Bruno Valentin, Julien Pannetier & Nazir Uddin Mahmud
Zeppelin photo agency

BOAT TECHNOLOGY & HISTORY IN CHITTAGONG & BENGAL
Exhibition by TaraTari, Watever, Gold of Bengal & Alliance Française de Chittagong

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তোরা কন কন যাবি তাঁর সাম্পানত

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Venue : Shilpakala Academy Chittagong Open Stage & Gallery
Alliance Française de Chittagong (AFC) Auditorium

3rd February, Sunday - 'Karnaphuli or nodi'

4.30 PM : Official Opening of the Festival at Shilpakala Academy Chittagong (Open Stage)
Chief Guest : Mahfuz Anam, Editor & Publisher, The Daily Star
7.00 PM : Film 'Titash Ekti Nadir Naam' by Ritwik Ghatak (Shilpakala)

4th February, Monday - 'Bangopasagar'

10.00 AM : Film 1- Samuel Berthel: Bengal Maritime History in Perspective (AFC)
11.00 AM : Jean-Francois Salles: The Bay of Bengal and the Ancient Maritime routes
11.30 AM : Film 'Christians and Spices' Portugal's search for India (AFC)
12.30 PM : Prof. Momin Chowdhury: History of Bengal. A Maritime Perspective (AFC)
2.30 PM : Film 'Bullion for goods' The Dutch come to trade (AFC)
3.30 PM : Yves Marre : Boats of Bengal yesterday and today (AFC)
7.00 PM : Film 'The River' by Jean Renoir (Shilpakala)

5th February, Tuesday - 'Kon Kon Zabi'

10.30 AM : Manzoorul Kibria: 'HaIda River' (AFC)
11.00 AM : Shahhaj H. J. Leena: Sea & sky wisdom of Chittagong Mariners (AFC)
12.00 PM : Film 'An affair of the State' French ambitions in India (AFC)
5.00 PM : Book Exhibition (Bishad Bangla)
6.00 PM : Concert Abdul Gafur Hall, Babul Jal Das, Proma Abritti Sangathon (Shilpakala)

6th February, Wednesday - 'Egiye Chalo'

10.00 AM : Chamber of commerce and industry: presentation TaraTari-Gold of Bengal-Watever
Marc Van Peteghem and team, Thibaut Saint-Olive - Alexandra Sourbier - Corentin de Chatelperron
7.00 PM : Film 'The Last Sailors' (Shilpakala)

7th February, Thursday - 'Shutki Khao'

7.00 PM : Bruno Valentin & Julien Pannetier: 'Behind the Sea' - Zeppelin photo agency (AFC)
8.00 PM : 3rd Slow Food Festival (AFC)

8th February, Friday - 'Sampana'

11.00 AM : Visit TaraTari Shipyard (Kalurghat-AK Khan)
3.00 PM : Launch of the 1st Fiber Boat - Gold of Bengal Watever
Chief Guest : Abdul Latif Siddiqui, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Textiles & Jute, Govt. of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Special Guest : His Excellency Michel Trinquier, French Ambassador to Bangladesh

9th Saturday - 'Dipot Zaimu'

12.00 PM-4.00 PM : Annual Game Sonadia Paschim Para School (Sonadia, Cox's Bazar)
Youth for Change - Biodiversity Club AFC

Photo Exhibition : 3-9 February (10 AM - 8 PM) at Shilpakala Gallery