

# PM ON PADMA BRIDGE PROJECT WB provoked into cancelling funding

UNB, Dhaka



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the World Bank (WB) had cancelled its funding in the Padma bridge project being provoked by the US and a vested quarter in the country.

The government asked the WB to provide proof in support of its allegations of corruption in the project, she said while addressing high officials of the communications ministry at the secretariat.

"They [WB] couldn't provide any solid proof... they just provided some pages of a diary where it was stated who would get what commission.

"This is not enough to prove there was corruption in the project," Hasina said.

She expressed her determination to complete the construction work of the bridge in time, saying the government had already started construction work with its own funds.

In this connection, she directed the authorities for a rapid completion of

the project so that no one could obstruct the process further.

Hasina hoped that the people could commute through metro rail by 2019 as budgetary allocation for the project had been made in the current fiscal.

She directed the authorities concerned to take initiatives for constructing the underground railway line in the capital to ensure a smooth journey for commuters.

The PM announced that the Dhaka-Sylhet highway would be upgraded to a four-lane one, and a multipurpose tunnel with road and railway lines would be built under the river Jamuna to link Gaibandha and Jamalpur districts.

The prime minister also asked communications ministry officials to put emphasis on the proper maintenance of roads and also on the construction of new ones.

She hoped that the ministry officials would take the communication

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Formalin-tainted fruits seized by Dhaka Metropolitan Police from shops in the capital's Mirpur-10 area yesterday are being dumped on the road. The fruits, including mangoes, were destroyed on the spot.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH



## This is war!

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unpredictable and insane group stage, results have been pretty much as expected from the knockout stage on through. Four national powerhouses stand left, with the surprise teams brushed to the side, staying true to the South America vs Europe theme.

After all of the tests and all of the early upsets, one-half of the brackets have ended up just as most expected -- Brazil vs. Germany for a spot in the final.

Luiz Felipe Scolari's men have been tested mightily throughout the group stage and again in elimination matches against Chile and Colombia, but they have stood tall through the South American quarter of the bracket. It hasn't quite been convincing, but the hosts are just 180 minutes away from their sixth world championship.

In the machine-like fashion that you'd expect, Germany have churned on

toward a fourth consecutive trip to the World Cup semifinals. They topped the group of death, and after an extra-time test against the Algerians, they ousted France 1-0 in the quarters.

But with one story that developed in the wake of Brazil's quarterfinal win, the entire scope of this matchup changed, Neymar is out for the rest of the World Cup, and without their talisman who leads the squad in goals, shots and nearly every offensive statistic will be sorely missed. The Barcelona man leads the attack, and the Brazilians will struggle to find direction without him. Even if Brazil had Neymar, struggles for the host nation against the Germans should be expected. Joachim Low's side have only conceded one goal in the last three matches, and that was in extra time against Algeria after two German goals. Their defense is at a different level, with four centre-backs

magnificently balancing the duties on the back line. Brazil have found magic in stretches throughout play in the World Cup, and they certainly could pull some more magic out even without Neymar. But the depth of quality talent across the 23-man roster for Germany will prove to be too much.

After a Saturday slate complete with two exciting affairs and one goal between them, the favorites advanced to the semifinals, as Argentina and the Netherlands will clash for a spot against either Brazil or Germany for the crown.

Led by Lionel Messi, Argentina have made it into the final four of the bracket for the first time since 1990 -- a shocking statistic considering the talent on the Argentinian side.

But for the first time since the Diego Maradona days Argentina are making a serious case for winning it all.

The Argentines haven't given up a goal since the group stage, but that will prove easier said than done through 90 minutes against the Dutch. Even so, one of the world's most potent attacks is trying to find its way.

The Netherlands made it through on penalties against Costa Rica, but they were held scoreless through 120 minutes. Chance after chance came and went, and none crossed the goal line, thanks to five Costa Rican defenders.

Although both teams are undoubtedly happy to be going through, each has a problem area or two to work with. The Netherlands have to be worried that their endless scoring chances haven't paid off in the last two games other than two late moments against Mexico, and Argentina have found little offensive success themselves as of late.

Plus, Argentina have a serious absence

to worry about, as winger Angel Di Maria will be unavailable.

In a battle between two elite offenses, it's safer to go with the one in the best form. Although they didn't score, the Netherlands torched Costa Rica with 20 shots -- eight on goal -- and 67 per cent possession. With more of a finishing touch, the Dutch could have won by three or four goals.

Argentina are always one flash of Messi brilliance away from winning any match, and their strong defence helps to allow for that. But after being held scoreless the last couple of matches, the blueprint is set for a talented Dutch back four to keep him under wraps.

South America would explode for a matchup between Brazil and Argentina in the final, but it's looking more tilted toward an all-European affair.

## Criminals assault witness in SQ Chy's case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of armed men last night beat up and allegedly attempted to kidnap a prosecution witness in the case against convicted war criminal Salauddin Quader Chowdhury at Panchlaish in Chittagong city.

The victim, Abbas Uddin Ahmed, the seventh prosecution witness in a case against the BNP leader, said he could identify two of the attackers.

Babul Member and Hannan, known as followers of SQ Chowdhury, were among the seven to eight men who had swooped on him, Abbas said.

The attackers came to Mohammadpur in a taxi around 7:30pm and tried to drag him into the taxi at gunpoint when he was coming from a relative's house in the area, he said.

They also beat him up indiscriminately, but failed to abduct him as locals rushed to the scene, hearing his screams.

Abu Zafar Mohammad Omar Faruk, officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station, confirmed the incident.

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## Govt moves to amend law

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termed the Jamaat-e-Islami "a criminal organisation" for its role during the war. The court made the observation while delivering its verdict in the war crimes case against former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam, who has been sentenced to 90 years in prison.

In the wake of pressure from justice seekers for trying the Jamaat, the government in February last year amended the ICT Act, paving the way for trying organisations for war crimes. The law, however, lacks specific provisions for punishing the guilty organisation.

Nevertheless, some legal experts believe that a convicted organisation can be punished under the existing law. They say the General Clauses Act, under which an entity is treated as a person, can be applied in this case and the Jamaat can be duly punished.

Meanwhile, the investigation agency of the international crimes

tribunal has completed investigating the Jamaat and recommended banning it. The agency said it had found that this anti-liberation party was involved in grave war crimes.

After receiving the probe report and other documents in March, a seven-member prosecution team started preparing formal charges for initiating the trial against the Jamaat, and work is at the final stage now.

If the Jamaat is finally tried, Bangladesh will be the second country to bring an organisation to book for war crimes. In the first instance, trials of seven Nazi organisations were held at the historic Nuremberg trials after the Second World War.

THE FLAW

In May, the law minister told reporters that a political party could not be tried under the existing ICT law as it had no specific provision for punish-

ment.

His remarks sparked a huge outcry among justice seekers and war trial campaigners. Many also questioned the government's sincerity in trying the Islamist party. All this prompted the government to amend the act quickly, sources said.

Section 20(2) of the existing law says: "Upon conviction of an accused person, the tribunal shall award sentence of death or such other punishment proportionate to the gravity of the crime as appears to the tribunal to be just and proper."

According to the draft, this provision will remain unchanged.

In the case of any organisation, the draft says upon conviction of an organisation, the tribunal shall award sentence, declaring it banned and prohibiting its future activities.

The president or secretary or per-

sons holding such posts or any activist or representative of the convicted organisation, who had direct involvement in the commission of the offence shall be deemed to have committed the offence.

Besides the Jamaat, investigators have recommended banning six organisations that were associated with the Islamist party in 1971 and confiscating the assets of these organisations.

The six organisations were Islami Chhatra Sangha (ICS), Jamaat's then student wing, Shanti Committee, Razakar Bahini, Al-Badr Bahini, Al-Shams Bahini and Jamaat's mouth-piece daily Sangram.

The proposed law, however, has no provision for confiscating the assets of any guilty organisation, the sources said.

These organisations actively helped

the Pakistani occupation forces in carrying out widespread atrocities across the country for nine months, killing around 30 lakh people and raping more than 2 lakh women, investigators said.

Established by the highly controversial Abul Ala Moududi in 1941, the Jamaat had been banned twice, in 1959 and 1964, for creating communal violence.

In independent Bangladesh, the party was banned immediately after liberation, but was later allowed to do politics by late president Ziaur Rahman.

Last year, the High Court declared the Jamaat's registration with the Election Commission illegal on the ground that the party's constitution does not conform to the charter of the country. The case is now pending with the Supreme Court.

## Board dissolved

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main accused behind the current financial straits of BASIC Bank, to the ministry a day earlier.

Bacchu stepped down on Saturday, just two months before his second term as board chairman was to expire.

BASIC Bank was one of the best performing financial institutions till 2009. But it has been mired in financial irregularities since Bacchu assumed office in 2009.

During his tenure, the bank's indicators -- from capital adequacy ratio to nonperforming loans and credit rating -- had witnessed a free fall.

Interestingly, despite this dismal performance, Bacchu was offered a second

term in office in 2012.

It was during his new term that the magnitude of irregularities by the bank's board grew. The irregularities amounted to over Tk 4,500 crore, according to Bangladesh Bank.

He single-handedly controlled the bank and granted loans in defiance of recommendations from the bank's credit committee.

During his chairmanship, loans were extended to defaulters, and there were instances where loans were issued even before clients opened their bank accounts, among other irregularities.

The banking secretary said the finance ministry was taking initiatives to improve the performance of BASIC

Bank and all other state-run banks.

According to officials, a performance contract would be signed with the boards of all taxpayer-supported banks. Both the chairman and the managing director of the banks would be signatories to the deals and held accountable to the finance ministry.

"The ministry will review progress on a quarterly basis," Alam said.

Banking Division sources said the finance ministry had selected four directors for the BASIC Bank board. They also got a clean chit from the central bank that checked whether or not any of them was a loan defaulter.

They are: Prof Mojib Uddin Ahamed, chairperson of tourism and

hospitality department of Dhaka University, Hasan Mahmud, a chartered accountant, Md Asaduzzaman, deputy managing director of Bangladesh Commerce Bank, and Raihana Anisa Yusuf Ali, ex-managing director of state-run House Building Finance Corporation.

The government will issue today a circular regarding their appointment. Two directors from the finance and industries ministries will also be included on the board.

Meanwhile, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Badiuzzaman said the ACC would resume its suspended enquiry into the BASIC bank scam if the finance ministry or

Bangladesh Bank wanted it to.

"We suspended the investigation after Bangladesh Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the bank [BASIC Bank] to resolve the problem," told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have already served notices on two of the bank's officers and their family members, asking them to submit wealth statements," he said.

On May 25, the ACC issued notices to BASIC Bank Deputy Managing Director Monaem Khan and his wife Sahana Parvin, and its General Manager Mohammad Ali, his wife Kismat Ara and son Abdul Momin Chowdhury to turn in their wealth statements.

## DCs press for more powers

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and/or the director of local government to remove the public representatives at the lowest tier of local government in cases of illegal activities.

The proposal is on the agenda of the second day of the conference when the LGRD minister, the secretary and other officials of the Cabinet Division would be present.

The DC of Dhaka has proposed that the DCs be given the power to cancel declaration of a newspaper for publishing anti-state news or anything that hurts one's religious sentiment.

This issue is scheduled for discussion on the concluding day of the confer-

ence.

The recommendation was put forward in line with the discussion at a committee formed by the information ministry, according to a source in the committee.

In addition, the divisional commissioner of Rajshahi has demanded that the seven divisional chiefs of the administration be empowered to appoint and transfer the secretaries to the municipalities to ensure transparency and accountability in appointment and posting.

The DCs, who also work as district magistrates, have also demanded expansion of mobile court's jurisdiction so that executive magistrates could take

into cognisance more offences and try the offenders summarily.

They have proposed including more offences within the purview of the Mobile Court Act, 2009, which they think would ensure public safety and public health, insiders say.

The DC of Natore has called for empowering the divisional commissioners to appoint all employees of class one municipalities and authorise the DCs to appoint the staff of other municipalities.

Crucial issues like law and order, price hike, land management and power sharing at field level between elected and government representa-

tives would also be discussed during the conference, which has 20 business sessions to be held at the Secretariat with the cabinet secretary in the chair.

The field administrators have put forward as many as 307 recommendations to the Cabinet Division for placing in the sessions in presence of the ministers and secretaries concerned.

The DCs from 64 districts along with seven divisional commissioners would attend the conference.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the conference at her Tejgaon office. The conference would then shift to the Secretariat.

"The DCs' conference is a platform where field-level administrations known as government representatives will have direct communications with the policymakers to discuss issues face-to-face," Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told a press briefing at the Secretariat yesterday.

The DCs play an important role in implementing the government's policies and development work at field level, he added.

"They can also give feedback about that at the conference. They also get necessary instructions from the ministers and secretaries concerned about their role," said the cabinet secretary.

But interestingly, PDB qualified InterRao-Kharkovengoremont although its bid document did not include any authenticated end-user certificate.

To justify the qualification, the evaluation report notes: "But web address of end-user is mentioned in the certificate."

The report also said the bid did not mention "stake" of the joint venture partnership and it can be "assumed" that the joint venture partner Kharkovengoremont would have 25 per cent stake.

But findings of the evaluation can never be based on assumptions, said an official.