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# Traders feast on Jamuna sand

Put the Bangabandhu Bridge under threat, authorities turn blind eye

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A syndicate of influential traders has been illegally extracting sand from the Jamuna for around three months, putting the Bangabandhu Bridge under serious threat as the site is just about a kilometre away from the bridge.

Some 12 traders with political clout have employed eight powerful dredgers at the east end of the bridge in Kalihati upazila of Tangail to extract sand. The machines operate round the clock at the spot under the jurisdiction of Bangladesh Bridges Authority (BBA). This has been going on even though dredging within six kilometres of the bridge is prohibited.

Experts feared the dredging could change the course of the Jamuna and harm the livelihoods of villagers along the river.

Visiting the area recently, this correspondent saw extraction of sand by dredgers at Beltia, Shamshoil, Char Sindur and Alipur mouzas in Kalihati upazila.

Traders also built a road across the New Dhaleswari, a tributary of the Jamuna, at the east side of the bridge at Beltia to carry the sand by over 400 trucks. The makeshift road has halted the flow of the New Dhaleswari. Several chars have formed too because of this.

Engr Mohammad Ali, an expert on river dredging, said: "The Jamuna could change its course and the bridge might collapse entirely if sand is lifted from the riverbed by dredgers from a spot so close to the bridge."

None from the Tangail district administration, the site office of BBA, and the Bangladesh-China joint venture firm, tasked with operation and maintenance of the bridge, would shoulder the responsibility of the illegal extraction of sand.

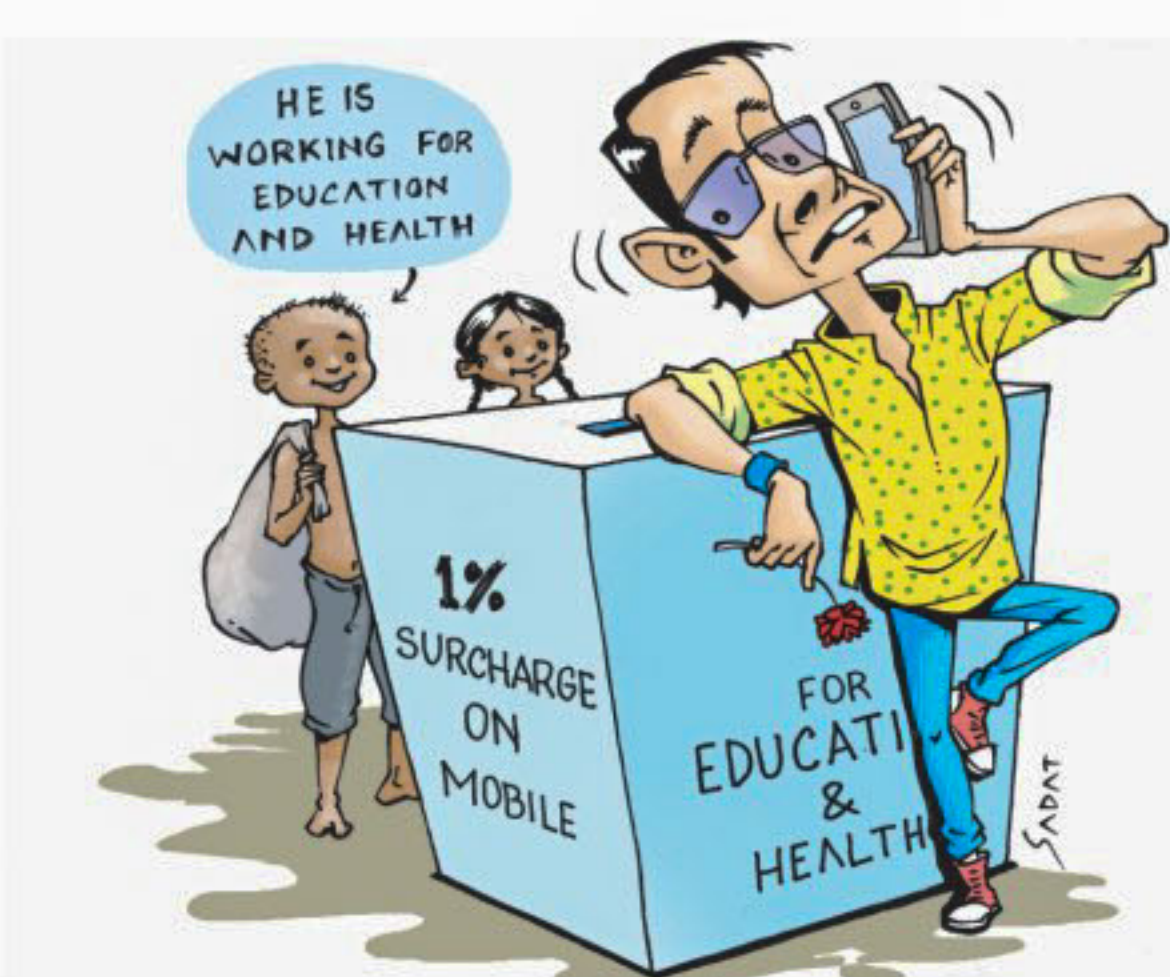
Sand-lifting at the site was suspended only a few months ago after The SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



Sand lifting by dredgers continues unabated in the Jamuna, a few hundred metres from the Bangabandhu bridge. The act is prohibited within six kilometres from the bridge. Inset, a road built by traders across the new Dhaleshwari river, a tributary of the Jamuna, for transporting the lifted sand by trucks. The photos have been taken recently.



PHOTO: COLLECTED



# Surcharge imposed on mobile talk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved a new draft law that would impose one percent surcharge on the use of mobile phone—a move that drew mixed reactions from subscribers.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

# 21 charged with Burdwan blast

4 'Bangladeshis' among the accused

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) yesterday filed a charge sheet against 21 people, including four alleged Bangladeshi nationals, in the Burdwan blast case.

The Indian security agency suspected Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) to be involved in the blast.

The Bangladeshi nationals named in the charge sheet, which was filed by the NIA in the court of NIA Special Judge, Kolkata, are Sheikh Rahamatullah, 19, alias Sajid alias Burhan Sekh, Talha Sheikh, 20, alias Talha Sekh, Kausar, 21, and Nasirullah alias Nasrulla alias Sahadat Seikh alias Sohail alias Hathkata.

They resided in Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia and Burdwan districts of West Bengal, the charge sheet said.

Of them, only Rahamatullah was arrested by the NIA and the other three have been cited as absconding in the three-page charge sheet filed six months after a blast had taken place in a house at Khagrachar in Burdwan on October 2 last year.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

# Dhaka backs Saudi efforts in Yemen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday declared its support to the Saudi-led coalition which launched air strikes against Shia Houthis rebels in Yemen on Thursday after the rebels took control of large parts of the country.

"Bangladesh strongly condemns actions by the Houthis against the legitimate government led by President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi of Yemen. It deplores acts of violence perpetrated by them on the people of Yemen resulting in humanitarian crisis," said a foreign ministry statement.

The Bangladesh government backed all efforts led by Saudi Arabia in restoring the legitimate state authority and realisation of aspirations of the people of Yemen, as well as upholding the sovereignty and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

# HSC exams must go on

Nahid vows to hold exams even if hartal extended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 10,73,884 students are all set to appear for their HSC and equivalent exams from tomorrow morning, barely three hours after the expiry of the BNP-led 20-party alliance's 48-hour countrywide hartal.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, however, said the exams would be held as per the schedule even if the shutdown had been extended.

"We have taken a firm stance on holding the exams this time and will take the tests overcoming all obstacles," he told a pre-examination press briefing at the secretariat yesterday.

Asked who will be responsible if anything bad happens to any candidate, Nahid said those who were carrying out criminal activities in the name of hartal or blockade would be held responsible.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



THE PHOTO HE WILL NEVER SEE: Cricketer Glenn Maxwell obliges a visually handicapped fan for a photograph during a public event to celebrate Australia's World Cup victory in Melbourne on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Busy days ahead for Tigers

Shakib permitted to play two IPL games

SPORTS REPORTER

The World Cup may now be over, but the excitement will continue for Bangladesh's cricket fans. Despite having spent a vigorous two months down under, the cricketers will barely get a break since they have a host of assignments coming up.

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, for one, will have to immediately leave for Kolkata in order to participate in the Indian Premier League, which begins from April 8. According to BCB officials, the all-rounder has been permitted to play two matches in the IPL. He has been asked to return by April 12 since that's when the Tigers will get busy with their preparations for the series against Pakistan.

"Shakib has been given the No Objection Certificate from the board because we feel that it will be good for him. The IPL is extremely competitive and it will be a good warm-up for him ahead of the important series against Pakistan at home," BCB director Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

As per the BCB permission, Shakib will be free to play Kolkata Knight Riders' games against Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore, on April 8 and 11 respectively.

On the other hand, the Pakistan team are scheduled to reach Dhaka on April 15. While the tour dates are yet to be finalised, they are scheduled to play three ODIs and a T20I at Mirpur first. The teams will then travel to Khulna to play

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

# Robber leader killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The head of a gang of robbers was killed in a gunfight between police and his cohorts at Jhaphopiar char in the district's Koyra upazila on Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Al Amin Hossain, 28, son of Shahid Sana of the upazila.

Al Amin used to lead a gang named after him in the SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING  
MARCH 31  
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-45 6-20 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 5-00 6-25 8-15  
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# BJP world's largest party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's ruling BJP has become the world's largest party with its membership crossing 8.8 crore mark on Sunday, surpassing the Communist Party of China which has 8.6 crore members.

BJP Vice President Dinesh Sharma said the party's one crore members signed up just in the last eight days.

The numbers swelled after a four-month

"dial-a-membership" drive that ends today. Party leaders are hoping to cross the 10-crore target set by the BJP chief Amit Shah.

It was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had launched the drive in November last year by dialling a mobile phone number to renew his membership.

The right wing party came to power in May last year sweeping general elections that ended ten-year-rule of Left-of-Centre Congress headed by Sonia Gandhi.

ONLINE POLL  
Do you think that the Election Commission would be able to create a congenial atmosphere prior to the City Corporation Elections?  
Yes (34%)  
No (66%)  
TOTAL VOTES: 91

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