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# PADMA BRIDGE

## Rail work lacks pace

Train service over the Padma bridge may not start with its opening in 2018 as the construction of two link tracks is still at a very early stage.

Although the construction of the 6.15km road-rail bridge is going on in full swing to meet the 2018 deadline, the government and the railway ministry so far have made very little progress in laying the new lines.

The link tracks one from Dhaka to Mawa and the other from Janjira to Bhanga in Faridpur -- will have to be built to begin train service over the bridge. To get it done, the authorities will have to acquire land, demolish establishments and arrange a huge compensation for the land owners, which would be a lengthy process.

Railway officials said 76.17 kilometres of railway line will have to be built on either side of the Padma. Of the length, the Dhaka-Mawa line will take 44.32km and the Janjira-Bhanga line 31.85km.

According to a draft feasibility study done in April, the government will have to acquire an estimated 273 hectares of private land in addition to taking possession of 92.10 hectares.

Twenty-three km of the link line will be elevated. Starting from Nimtala of Keraniganj, it will end at Gandaria in Dhaka, connecting the line with the existing Kamalapur-Narayanganj line, said the study.

Besides, four large railway bridges, including on the Buriganga and Shitalakhya, 56 small railway bridges, five level crossings and three flyovers will have to be built. A large number of establishments, including houses, mosques, and schools, will have to be razed.

The government in April signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China on financing the \$2.2b project.

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Workers of Karwan Bazar wholesale market take a nap on the floor yesterday afternoon as they try to deal with the sweltering heat. The temperature was recorded at 36 degrees Celsius in Dhaka yesterday, the highest of the week. There is no good news about the heat cooling down anytime soon. The Met office says the sultry weather will continue until there is rain.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Salahuddin's condition now stable

Say doctors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors at a Shillong hospital in India, where BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed is being treated, yesterday said his condition was stable but he would have to stay a few more days there due to some minor health complications.

"Examining the reports of all the medical tests carried out on him [Salahuddin] since May 12, the medical board formed for his treatment found

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## Question marks over charge sheet

RASHIDUL HASAN and EMRAN HOSSAIN

**N'GANJ 7-MURDER**

The charge sheet in the Narayanganj seven-murder case has been termed "flawed" by legal experts.

There are a number of loose ends in the charge sheet that the experts believe were kept "deliberately" and "in an unprofessional manner" to save "certain officials of a state force".

For example, police completed the investigation without even questioning the prime accused -- Nur Hossain, now in an Indian jail after he was caught by Indian police a year ago

for intruding into the country following the murders.

"An investigation done without quizzing the prime accused can never be called conclusive," said Prof Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, chairman of Criminology department of Dhaka University.

"Whatever it took, the government should have brought back Nur Hossain or the investigation officer should have reached him in India for his statement," he added.

On April 27 last year, Narayanganj panel mayor Nazrul Islam, his four associates,

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## No border for vehicles by end of 2015

Bangladesh to sign deal with India, Nepal, Bhutan June 15

REZAUL KARIM

In a major push towards sub-regional cooperation, four South Asian countries are set to sign an agreement on June 15, which would allow movement of vehicles through their borders just like in the 27 European Union countries.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) have finalised the deal for a seamless transit of passenger, personal and cargo vehicles between

their countries by end of 2015.

The agreement will allow vehicles to ply designated routes in the four countries and reduce cost and time of unloading and loading of people and goods at the borders, making cross-border trade more efficient, officials said.

Diplomatic sources in Dhaka yesterday told The Daily Star that transport ministers of the four Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries would meet in Thimphu, Bhutan, on June 15 and sign

the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA).

Though there are several procedural matters to implement the agreement, officials, however, were confident of expeditiously completing all negotiations and start plying of vehicles by the end of this year.

"This connectivity between the four countries will be considered as a milestone in regional communication and development," said Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister.

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## Mobin out on bail

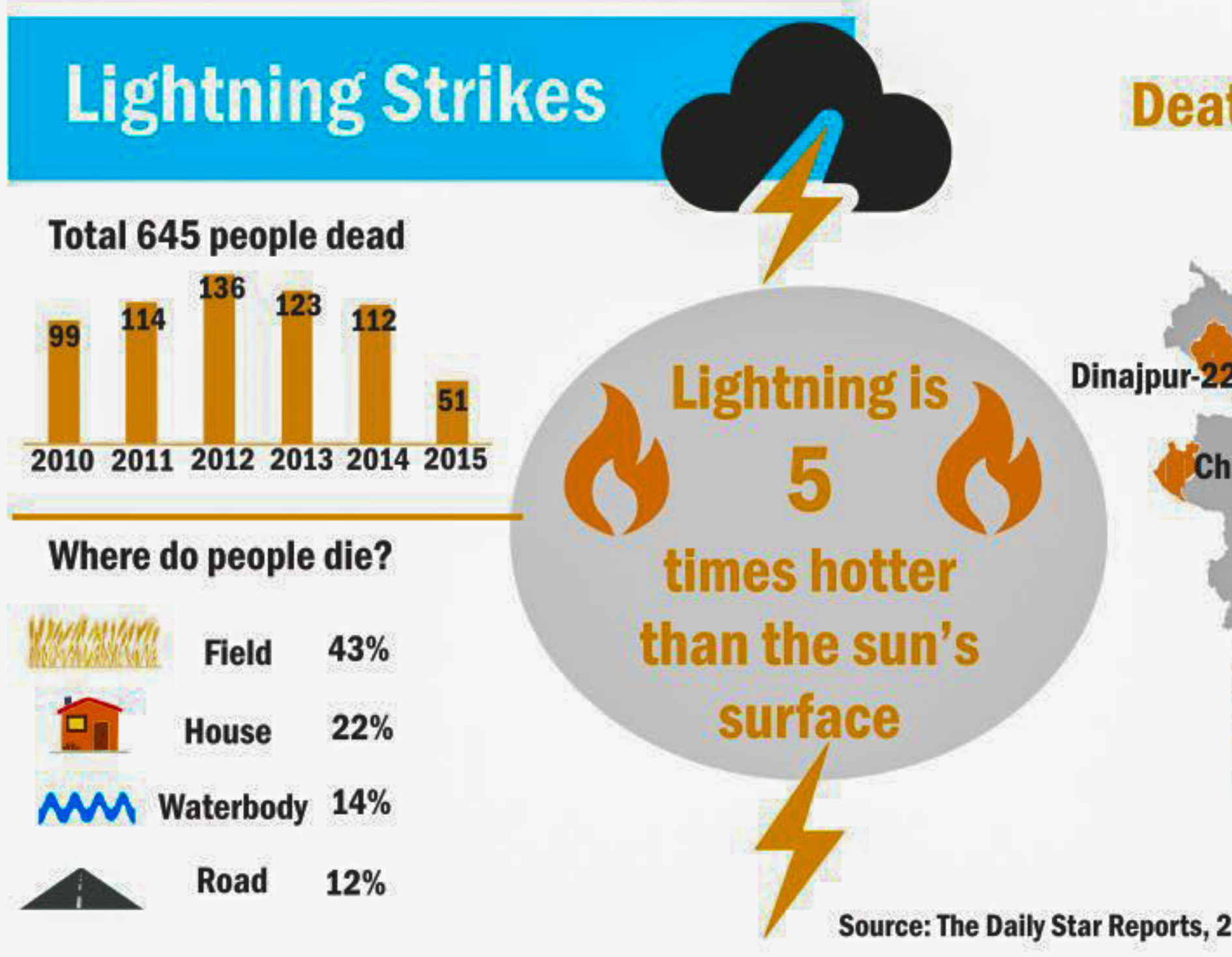
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury was released from jail yesterday, three days after the apex court upheld his High Court's bail order in two criminal cases.

Kashipur prison Jailer Nasir Ahmed told The Daily Star that Shamsher's bail papers reached the jail on Thursday night. "After scrutinising the papers, he was freed around 1:30pm today [yesterday]."

The BNP leader was kept at Gazipur's Kashipur Jail-2. Only family members were present at the jail

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## Lightning strikes most in May

FAARIA TASIN and PINAKI ROY

What is five times hotter than the surface of the sun and is capable of killing a person in a split second? It's lightning.

And you should be careful if you are out in gloomy weather because May has the highest number of lightning-strike deaths in a year in Bangladesh.

Every year at least 117 people get killed by lightning strikes, according to reports published in The Daily Star between January 2010, and May 2015. The actual number is much higher since many incidents go unreported.

However, people in cities are relatively safer than the ones in rural areas.

The Daily Star study suggests that the majority of lightning-strike victims are farmers, 51 percent, and most of them had died while working in their fields.

Some 11 percent are students -- who were struck on their way to or from school.

According to the study, staying indoors during a thunderstorm may not guarantee safety in rural areas. In fact, 22 percent of those killed were inside their houses when they were struck.

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## ISIS consolidates 'caliphate'

Captures last Iraq-Syria border crossing, executes 17 in Palmyra; Obama plays down 'setback', denies coalition losing war with militants

AFP, Damascus

The Islamic State group consolidated its control of the Iraq-Syria border yesterday after capturing an Iraqi provincial capital and a famed Syrian heritage site in an offensive that has forced a review of US strategy.

The jihadists, who now control roughly half of Syria, reinforced their self-declared transfrontier "caliphate" with the capture of the Al-Tanaf to Al-Walid crossing on the

Damascus-Baghdad highway late on Thursday. It was the last border crossing with Iraq still held by the Damascus government. Except for a short section of frontier in the north under Kurdish control, all the rest are now held by ISIS.

The jihadist surge, which has also seen them capture Anbar capital Ramadi and the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra in the past week, comes despite eight months of US-led

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## Brain implant senses 'intent' to move robotic arm

REUTERS, Washington

More than a decade after becoming paralysed from the neck down, Erik Sorto has been unable to perform even the simplest of daily tasks.

"That was the ultimate goal: to drink a beer by myself," said Sorto, a 34-year-old from Los Angeles who became a quadriplegic after a 2002 gunshot wound.

Things may be looking up for Sorto and others with similar disabilities. Scientists on Thursday described a better way to harness mind power to move prosthetic limbs.

Microelectrodes, implanted in the part of the

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Erik uses a robotic arm controlled by his thoughts to operate a blender.

PHOTO: AFP

**PRAYER TIMING**  
MAY 23

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4-05	12-45	5-00	6-40	8-00
JAMAAT	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-45
				8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION