

Bangabandhu conference centre to get new look

UNB, Dhaka

China will renovate Bangladesh's largest multi-purpose convention centre, Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC), built by China about 15 years ago as a sign of friendship with Bangladesh.

An official at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works said Beijing Institute of Architectural Design has completed the design and will send a delegation headed by Wang Siyang to Bangladesh on June 17 to work with Bangladeshi technicians to review and confirm the design and sign the minutes of the meetings.

The official said an inter-ministerial meeting on the project of providing simultaneous interpretation equipment of BICC to renovate the conference centre ahead of the ninth Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) was held on June 6 at the ministry.

Third Secretary of Chinese Embassy to Bangladesh Lidong Chao along with a Chinese expert was present in the meeting.

The meeting was informed that the Chinese side will start the renovation work at the BICC and complete the work by October 2016.

The Bangladesh side will provide all necessary assistance in this regard.

It was decided that the Bangladesh side will hand over the full construction site to the Chinese side on July 17, 2016 while both sides will start their own works sharing the same premises.

The BICC renovation is taking place at a time when Bangladesh is slated to host the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) this year at the centre. Nearly 1,000 guests from around the world are expected to participate in the forum.



People look for clothing of their desire at shopping destinations having offers compatible with their income, be it the Bashundhara City shopping mall, left, or roadside shops near the Baitul Mukarram national mosque, top right, in the capital, where there are options available for all to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, each in their own unique way. Amidst all this, one trader, bottom right, sets up shop encroaching upon space meant for a water pump inside the Farmgate park. The photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, FIROZ AHMED

High sales at malls as Eid shoppers keep rushing in

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Shopping malls in major cities as well as marketplaces across the country are brimming with customers seeking items of their desire ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

With the country's largest festival drawing nearer, shoppers are flocking to markets in droves right when shutters of shops open in the morning, continuing their shopping spree until midnight.

"Sales are good and the crowd is growing every day," said Aminul Haque Bhuiyan, owner of Meem Fashion which sells garments for ladies and babies in the capital's New Market.

He said people started to come in greater numbers from the first day of Ramadan. "This is our season," said Tanuja Rahman Maya, owner of Jessore-based Rong Handicrafts, which has four outlets in Jessore and one in Dhaka.

AKM Abu Sayed, in-charge of a store of Lubnan, said sales of their panjabis had gone up. Grameen Uniqlo, a joint venture of the social business enterprise of Japan's Fast Retailing Co Ltd and Grameen Healthcare Trust, has opened a makeshift store on the ground floor of Bashundhara City Shopping Mall to meet the demand, although it already has a large outlet in the market.

The temporary store will serve

shoppers only during Ramadan, said one of its salespersons.

The Eid-ul-Fitr festival season in Bangladesh is marked by the highest amount of spending with most families of the predominantly Muslim nation buying clothes, footwear and other accessories.

Stores selling footwear however said their sales had not picked up at the rate

they had hoped for, but were hopeful it would gain momentum.

"The sales are reasonable. We hope it would gain pace," said Firoz Ahmed, a salesman of Apex Footwear's outlet in Farmgate. Firoz said their stores would remain open long after midnight as many people come to buy footwear at 3:00am or 4:00am on Eid day.

"This is the last thing they buy," he said, adding that the footwear

company has introduced a number of new designs marking Eid.

Mosharrar Hossain, a tailor at New Market who alters trousers, said he had received a lower number of orders this year. He however said he does not know why. Shoppers were seen pouring over electronic items and cellphones out for sale.

Golam Atwar Rahman, a branch manager of Transcom Electronics at its outlet in Karwan Bazar, said the outlet's sales had gone up 20 per cent this Ramadan compared to the last.

Refrigerators, televisions and cellphones are among the items shoppers are buying the most, he said.

The company is also offering discounts of up to Tk 30,000 on LED TVs and an air fryer for free with every unit of Samsung, Hitachi and Transtec refrigerators and Whirlpool and Panasonic air conditioners.

Furniture makers are also seeing an increase in sales. Arif Islam, a senior executive for sales of Navana Furniture Limited's Kazipara outlet, said sales of wooden furniture such as beds, sofas and dressing tables had gone up.

Shop owners in other parts of the country have reported a high turnout of shoppers also.

WASIM BIN HABIB

"Eksho, Eksho, Jai Nen Eksho!" ("100, 100, whatever you take 100!")

This loud yet rhythmic chorus overshadowed to some extent the high-pitched honking of vehicles passing the busy Farmgate intersection.

Be it night or day, the area reverberates with the loud chorus of hawkers trying to sell a wide array of commodities on a long stretch of pavements.

While the capital's shiny shopping arcades are abuzz with shoppers making an array of lavish, trendy and fancy buys just a couple of days before Eid-ul-Fitr, these makeshift stalls on footpaths are also bustling with customers, mostly low-income groups, from morning to late at night.

"The number of customers we are getting over the last few days is giving us encouragement. We hope sales will be good before Eid," said Jashim, who was selling shirts amid a cacophony of traders in front of Farmview Super Market yesterday.

These unlicensed street vendors, or hawkers, sell low-cost shirts, T-shirts, panjabis, sarees, lungis, salwar kameezes, cosmetics, footwear, utensils and household items. Any kind of merchandise that is sold here is cheap.

They said due to the long holiday this year starting Friday, they had expected a slight fall in the number of customers. However, that

did not happen and this gave them confidence.

These hawkers annoy pedestrians by narrowing down a major portion of the footpaths, yet they are an integral part of one of the biggest spending seasons in the country.

"The best part of our business is that every second someone walks by on the footpath and many of them become our customers," said Abul Hashem.

He was selling panjabis of a myriad of colours and qualities at different prices keeping those on a wooden box on the pavement of Farmview Super Market. Some of those he sold at Tk 300 per piece and others, whose quality was "better", at Tk 400.

"The sale is good so far," he said. A few feet away, Md Ripon was selling T-shirts at Tk 150. "Take this one. The quality is good," he told a customer who was going through a pile.

The customer picked one and offered to pay Tk 100. Ripon refused. "We cannot allow them to bargain," he said.

Taking a stroll on the pavement with a friend, restaurant worker Shafique made his way through the crowds until he found a panjabi which he eventually bought for Tk 400.

"I looked for a panjabi in nearly all of these footpath shops and finally got one. Its quality is good," he said.

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4-lane highways making Eid journey hassle-free, faster

BSS, Dhaka

The newly built two four-lane highways have brought relief to thousands of homebound people, especially during the Eid rush, as vehicles were plying the highways without facing heavy traffic congestions like before.

"Now, it takes five and a half hours to six hours in place of eight to nine to go to Chittagong from Dhaka," M Osman, member secretary of Dhaka-Chittagong Special Coach Malik Samity, told the news agency.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday inaugurated the two major expanded Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways at a function at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) in the capital.

"The traffic movements on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway have been smooth since its opening," a

constable of Comilla traffic control room said.

The agency's Comilla correspondent said the Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane highway is offering easy and congestion-free Eid journey to the homebound passengers.

"The home goers are reaching their destinations much earlier than before," he said, adding that it takes around two hours now to travel from Dhaka to Comilla in place of three to four hours.

Gazipur traffic control room operator Shah Alam told the news agency that this year there was no traffic jam on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and the vehicles were moving smoothly.

The news agency's Gazipur Correspondent said the homebound people of the area are enjoying their Eid journeys as they are not facing any traffic jam on the new four-lane highways.

Immediately after the inauguration, people have found the highways a major breakthrough to the country's road communication, connecting the two important cities of Chittagong and Mymensingh with the capital and providing quick, uninterrupted and safe journey to the homebound people marking the Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane highway has been developed at a cost of Tk 3,816.94 crore. The project included 23 bridges, 242 culverts, 3 railway overpasses, 14 bypass roads, underground pass, 34 steel foot overbridges and 61 bus stops.

On the other hand, 87.18km Dhaka-Mymensingh Four-Lane Highway cost Tk 1815.12 crore. Under the four-lane project, 155 culverts, five new bridges, one fly-over, one rail overpass and four steel foot overbridges have also been constructed.



Homeward bound! With only a few more days to go before Eid, holidaymakers wait patiently at the Gabtoli bus stand yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Law enforcers barring visitors coming to receive and/or see off their relatives from entering the capital's Shahjalal International Airport as part of the beefed-up security measures taken after the country encountered a deadly terrorist attack on Friday, which left 28 people dead, including 20 hostages, most of whom were foreign nationals. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Japanese victims wanted

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had worked on other JICA projects in Turkey, Indonesia and Thailand as well as in Bangladesh where he had many acquaintances, the aid agency said. Okamura was planning to get married, according to his father, Komakichi.

Another victim, Koyo Ogasawara, 56, of Tokyo-based construction consulting firm Katahira & Engineers International, was a veteran valued by his company as someone who had the "qualities of a leader."

Ogasawara flew to Bangladesh on June 20 and was set to return home on Tuesday, according to the company.

The three other fatalities — Hiroshi Tanaka, 80, Nobuhiro Kurosaki, 48, and Hideki Hashimoto, 65, — worked for the Tokyo-based consulting firm Oriental Consultants Global Co.

Tanaka's 72-year-old brother, Takashi, said Hiroshi was trying to share his knowledge of railway technology with people in Bangladesh. He was in Dhaka as part of a JICA project to study traffic congestion in the capital.

A former colleague of Kurosaki said he was an engineer involved in the structural design of roads and railway tracks, and underground tunnel projects. Kurosaki once said, "Hardships come with the territory, but that is why it is better to have fun and work with a smile on your face."

Restrictions don't stop rawhide supply

FROM PAGE 3

be able to start operation in Savar immediately after Eid-ul-Azha, while the remaining ones will be able to go there early next year," he told the news agency. The BTA chairman alleged that Central Effluent Treatment Plan (CETP) of the Savar Leather Estate is not fully ready for operation yet. "The government has also realised that relocation is not possible within a short time."

But Project Director of the Tannery Estate Abdul Quayum claimed that two units of the CETP were fully ready to go into operation since March 29 last. And effluent from at least 30 factories is essential to start

operation of the CETP.

He, however, declined to make any comment over the latest progress of the relocation process.

The government initially took the three-year project in 2003 to set up the industrial park to relocate some 205 tanneries from Hazaribagh. It has allotted 155 plots at a 200-acre leather estate among tanners and provided them Tk 250 crore as compensation for shifting their industrial units. Some 21,000 cubic metres of untreated toxic waste are released every day from the Hazaribagh tanneries into the Buriganga river, posing a serious risk to human and animal health.

Anti-terrorism strategy faltering

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He said the Gulshan attack is a testimony that the current counterterrorism strategy is faltering. "There were significant successes between 2006 and 2012. What changed since then is a question we must ask," he said.

Prof Riaz said violent extremism cannot be defeated by security operations alone while dismantling the network is an impor-

tant aspect.

"There're legal and judicial aspects, too. The enabling environment which allows militancy to fester must be addressed in earnest. We must acknowledge there's no full-proof strategy," he added. There is no single cause but both global and domestic factors are contributing to this kind of situation, Prof Riaz added.