

Indian home boss due today

Security issues to top agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh arrives in Dhaka this evening on a three-day official tour of Bangladesh to facilitate a comprehensive review of current bilateral relations and sign deals for further liberalising the existing visa regime and cooperation between the two countries' police forces.

During the visit, he will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and will co-chair the 6th meeting of India-Bangladesh home minister-level talks which is expected to cover wide range of security-related issues.

He is coming at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Asaduzzaman Khan.

Apart from his meetings with Hasina and Asaduzzaman, Rajnath will tomorrow visit Bangladesh Police Academy in Rajshahi's Sardah where he along with Asaduzzaman will inaugurate India-Bangladesh Friendship IT Building. The four-storey building was built under a joint financing arrangement for providing sophisticated IT facilities.

In Sardah, a Memorandum of Cooperation will also be inked between Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad and Bangladesh Police Academy to institutionalise and intensify cooperation between the two countries' police forces.

The home minister-level talks on Sunday will be concluded by signing of

Revised Travel Arrangements 2018 to facilitate further easing the visa process to encourage, especially the youth and students, higher studies in India.

The meeting will discuss issues related to security, border management, cooperation in countering illegal activities, counter-terrorism cooperation, and youth being influenced by extremist groups.

As per the programme schedule, Rajnath will arrive in Dhaka at 6:30pm and attend a dinner to be hosted by Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Harsh Vardhan Shringla and it will be followed by a cultural programme.

The next day, the Indian home minister will call on Hasina at the Gono Bhaban at 10:00am.

He will then go to Jamuna Future Park to inaugurate state-of-the-art Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) with Asaduzzaman. This new IVAC will be the largest visa application centre in the country with some 50 application counters.

Rajnath will then fly to Rajshahi and attend the programmes at Bangladesh Police Academy at Sardah.

On the concluding day of his visit on Sunday, he will first visit the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi and lay a wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. After that, he will go to the Dhakeshwari Temple.

He will join the home minister-level talks held on a regular basis

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Autism prevalence

FROM PAGE 1
Professor Shaheen Akhter, director of the Institute of Pediatric Neurodisorder and Autism (IPNA) at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

People should be encouraged to have their babies screened at an early stage if they detect any signs of the disorder, she told The Daily Star.

Autism, a development disability, has a wide range of symptoms that include difficulty with social interaction and repetitive behaviour. It is a lifelong condition.

Findings of the recent survey, conducted by IPNA and supported by Directorate General of Health Services and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, were presented yesterday in the capital's BSMMU.

The survey has found that maternal illness, including hypertension, diabetes, asthma, fever with rash and urinary tract infections, during pregnancy is related to high prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Jannatara Shefa, research medical officer of IPNA, said, "This study will help us find areas to focus on and know the extent to which autism facilities should be expanded. All autism related services in Bangladesh are in urban areas. There is nothing in rural areas."

She also said the DGHS had an interest in autism and it could take

steps to detect ASD cases and provide some therapies in upazila and union level facilities.

The study has also found premature births associated with higher ASD prevalence.

Babies born through C-section are more than twice as likely to have ASD as the ones born normally. There is also high ASD prevalence in babies, who cry over five minutes after birth, according to the report.

Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS, said, "We found autism prevalence higher in rich, educated and wealthy families. This trend is similar around the world. We will continue to conduct surveys on a regular basis and if we find the same association again, we will do a research on the issue."

In 2013, Dhaka Shishu Hospital conducted a survey that reported autism prevalence to be 15 per 10,000 children aged below nine years.

In 2016, an IPNA survey conducted in rural areas reported autism prevalence to be 7.5 per 10,000 children aged between 18 and 36 months.

The recent study was designed to assess the prevalence of the condition among young children. It was aimed at determining the socio-economic and demographic associations of ASD in Bangladesh, researchers said.

It's not coming home

FROM PAGE 1
footballers stepped harder on the gas to clinch the winner with only two minutes to go for the penalty decider.

In the dying minutes, the two opponents were in contrasting mood: England worn-out and Croatia reinvigorated. Winning the ball from a header, Croatian marksman Mario Mandzukic swiftly capitalised on lapses in concentration at the back. He drifted in behind an England defender before beating an otherwise rock-solid custodian Pickford with a cool, low strike into the net.

Quite understandably though, expectation was running high among England fans at home and in Russia as

not come up against quality opponents till Wednesday. It was undoubtedly a high-pressure game that tested team character. Under pressure, the character of both teams came to the fore: Croatia delivered and England choked.

Coach Zlatko Dalic inspired Croatia to their first ever final in their fifth appearance in World Cup finals. And the ultimate glory is now one match away and with one team standing in the way. Croatia came out the better side in all aspects of the game Wednesday. But, on July 15, they need to do even better against the more fancied France, who knocked them out of their previous World Cup semifinal

in 1998.

Morning shows the day... but not always. England took the lead only five minutes into the match from a scintillating curling free kick over the defence wall by Kieran Trippier, and held on till Ivan Perisic steered a cross into the net in the 68th minute.

Croatia just went on to lord over England after the goal with forays of attacks. England had no clue about how to counter the skills of the midfield duo of Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic.

Happy final, Croatia!

The writer is former Sports Editor of The Daily Star

"As far as my knowledge goes, no named Suhel has been detained. The information [regarding Suhel] is probably incorrect," Devdas told this correspondent over the phone around 11:40am.

While speaking, he took a small pause to recheck what he just said and reconfirmed it.

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Hundreds of trucks queue on the Dhaka-Mawa highway, waiting to cross the Padma near Shimulia Ferry Terminal. Strong currents and fewer vessels in service are causing delays in the crossings. PHOTO: FARHANA MIRZA

Effective yet ignored

FROM PAGE 1

implementing the projects, officials and experts said.

U-loops on Mirpur Road and Airport Road, and four underpasses on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, were the shelved projects.

The government did build an overpass at the level crossing on Banani Staff Road and Kuril interchange on Airport Road, both of which hugely benefited commuters.

"... U-loops can greatly ease traffic congestion but, unfortunately, we find one kind of apathy among all governments to go for the low-cost and easily doable initiatives," said Prof Shamsul Hoque, transportation consultant and road safety expert.

He said large projects like flyovers and expansion of roads could not eradicate congestion, be it in the capital or on a highway.

"The glaring example of a low cost but hugely effective initiative is the Kuril intersection," Prof Hoque, who is involved in over a dozen large and small transport network plans in the country, told The Daily Star last night.

BANGABANDHU CORRIDOR

In 2010, the government moved to ease congestion on Mirpur Road and Buet experts, after carrying out a study in 2011, suggested building elevated U-turns and underpasses.

They said a drive to Ghatoli from Azimpur would take only 11 minutes instead of the 78 minutes it took then.

All relevant departments of the government and Buet approved the project titled Bangabandhu Corridor in March 2012.

"The move was perhaps one of the finest ideas. Instead of going for a costly flyover or elevated expressway, experts put forward a simple design for

uninterrupted traffic flow on the corridor with an estimated budget of Tk 775 crore," said Prof Moazzem Hossain of Buet's civil engineering department, who was involved in the project.

The project was included in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Cell, and the Prime Minister's Office in March of last year asked the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) to implement it.

However, no one came forward to fund the project and experts recommended the government funds it.

The government then shelved the project due to lack of funds.

Another reason behind halting the project was the consideration of building an expensive elevated expressway proposed by ruling Awami League lawmaker Aslamul Haq on the same stretch of road.

Aslam's company submitted a proposal for building a four-lane elevated expressway from Amin Bazar to Azimpur, at an estimated cost of Tk 4,000 crore, well over five times the cost of the Bangabandhu Corridor.

The DSCC moved to appoint a consultant to conduct a feasibility study and prepare a design.

Aslam then said he would go for a joint venture with a Chinese company to implement the project but he could not arrange the funds.

THE PLAN

Now vehicles are stopped at the set of lights and have to wait for minutes before making right and U-turns, ultimately causing congestion on the Mirpur Road and the streets connected to it.

Under the plan, two elevated U-turns (loops) were to be built at the heavily congested Ghatoli Bus

Terminal to help buses enter and exit the terminal without getting in the way of other vehicles.

Another loop was planned at Mazar Road intersection for traffic heading towards Mirpur-1, -2 and -10 from the south. Traffic from Mazar Road and Mirpur-1, -2 and -10 would get an elevated U-turn at Technical intersection for a smooth run towards Ghatoli.

One other U-loop was supposed to be constructed over the Kalyanpur canal for easy exit of vehicles coming from Shyamoli Link Road and New Market and heading for Agargaon or Rokeya Sarani. Vehicles en route Ghatoli from Rokeya Sarani and Agargaon were to use a loop near Shishu Mela.

Those driving from Mohammadpur, Lalmatia, and Dhanmondi areas would use another loop to enter Suhrawardhi Hospital or to head for Bijoy Sarani and Farmgate using an underpass at the Ghatoli Bus

Terminal.

Vehicles on Crescent Road and Bijoy

Sarani could use the underpass to go to Mohammadpur or Ghatoli-Shyamoli areas, while traffic from Manik Mia Avenue would have a loop at Dhanmondi 27-Mirpur Road intersection to go towards Dhanmondi 27 and Lalmatia.

Two underpasses at Nilkhel intersection would ensure a smooth exit of vehicles to and from Azimpur and Science Laboratory ends.

"The project is more cost-effective.

Unfortunately, Bangabandhu Corridor did not see the light of day,"

said Prof Moazzem Hossain, who now

heads Buet's Accident Research Institute. He was involved in the planning and designing of Bangabandhu

Corridor.

Dhaka North City Corporation too

planned for several U-loops from Sat Rasta to Abdullahpur in 2015 but not a single one could be built.

However, there is hope.

Upon consultation with experts, road transport and bridges ministry decided to build two U-loops to bring an end to the recurring gridlocks at Kanchpur Bridge.

"Such small initiatives could be executed in six months," said Prof Hoque. "Good to see the ministry is finally going to implement the idea."

Traffic coming from the capital, Chittagong and Sylhet often face congestion while crossing this particular intersection.

OVERPASSES, UNDERPASSES

Another low-cost and viable initiative was constructing underpasses for vehicles to ease congestion at intersections between Shahbagh and Sonargaon Hotel on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

Only Tk 170 crore was needed to make the four-lane underpasses that would have enabled uninterrupted vehicular movement.

Buet's experts conducted the feasibility study and the design was also finalised but the move was abandoned due to the Metro Rail project. However, experts say such move can be taken for other city streets.

Construction of such low-cost and sustainable projects has been discussed for a decade now. Experts have also been pressing the authorities to go for these projects.

Prof Moazzem said they have solutions for each city intersection which could be implemented with little hassle but would yield a result like that of the Rampur TV station U-loop.

Arrest admitted after daylong DMP denial

FROM PAGE 1
joint convenor of Bangladesh Shadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakshan Parishad, the platform that spearheaded the quota reform movement.

Yesterday's incident happened at a time when four other central leaders of the platform had already been arrested in different cases and many quota reform protesters had come under attack by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) men across the country.

Suhel, 23, was also beaten up allegedly by some leaders and activists of the pro-Awami League student body near his campus on May 23 for participating in the movement, said his friends and other quota reform leaders.

Later, he filed a general diary with Sutrapur Police Station in this regard, they said.

In a Facebook post, Lucky Akter, a former president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, wrote that a group of men introduced themselves as detectives and picked up Suhel from her house around 5:45am yesterday.

Throughout the day, detectives, however, kept denying detaining Suhel, said his younger brother Sumon Islam, a college student.

Sumon said he along with some of Suhel's friends stayed in front of the DB office on Mintu Road from 9:00am to 5:00pm. They repeatedly asked those stationed at the gate about Suhel's whereabouts but they said he was not there.

Talking to The Daily Star around noon, Devdas Bhattacharya, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and Najmul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of the cyber security unit of the DMP, also said they did not pick up anyone named Suhel.

"As far as my knowledge goes, no named Suhel has been detained. The information [regarding Suhel] is probably incorrect," Devdas told this correspondent over the phone around 11:40am.

While speaking, he took a small pause to recheck what he just said and reconfirmed it.

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Suhel's arrest was disclosed on DMP's news portal dmpnews.org around 6:30pm. "The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has arrested one of the members of anti-quota movement. The arrestee is Suhel Islam," the portal said.

In the Facebook post, uploaded at 8:41am, Lucky said, "DB police raided my home around 4:15am. They were a team of eight to 10 men ... at one point, they threatened that they will break open my door. I told them to come in the morning. I opened the door after they arrived along with the landlord uncle around 4:30am."

As the law enforcers came inside, they handcuffed Suhel and took him to another room for interrogation, she said.

"... They seized all our phones. They checked my phone as well ... while they were taking Suhel away, I asked them about the charges against him. They said they were taking him for interrogation over the quota reform protests.

"Before leaving [along with Suhel] they checked the [browsing] history of the computer at the house. They also thoroughly checked the room where Suhel was staying. They did not get anything apart from Suhel's [mobile] phone," added Lucky, also a leader of Gonojagor Mancha, a platform that spearheaded the Shahbagh Movement in 2013.

She said Suhel requested her not to disclose anything about the incident to his mother as the death of his father took a toll on her health.

As the news spread,