

RAJSHAHI DIVISION Tk 2,135cr road dev projects underway

BSS, Rajshahi
Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has been implementing seven mega road development projects involving around Tk 2,135.37 crore in Rajshahi division.

Implementation of a project including median on the Natore town's main road from Harishpur bypass to Banbelghoria crossing is underway with an estimated cost of Tk 58.33 crore, said RHD sources.

"We are developing 74km regional highways at an estimated cost of Tk 439 crore," said Habibur Rahman, additional chief engineer of RHD.

He said the work on the unfinished 19.5km Naogaon-Atrai-Natore highway is progressing fast at a cost of Tk 201.29 crore. The four-lane and rest two-lane elevation work on 21.74km of Nolda-Sirajganj-Saidabad regional highway is going on, involving Tk 264.26 crore.

Construction works under a project (266.57-metre Ullapara Railway Overpass in Sirajganj and 81.97km one regional and two district highways in Naogaon) at a cost of Tk 406.94 crore was already approved in an Ecne meeting, he added.

Also, building 14 bridges and culverts on regional and national highways (Tk 17.63 crore) is progressing under periodic maintenance programme.

Besides, repairing and maintenance works on 152.89km roads (Tk 1.91 crore) are either complete or nearing completion under 13 packages. Tree plantation along the roads are also progressing successfully.

Work on six important projects was completed at a cost of around Tk 456.24 crore during previous term of the current government.

In addition to construction of 12.5km Shaheed Mansur Ali road from Pipulbaria to Dhunat via Sonamukhi at a cost of Tk 67.94 crore, reconstruction and widening work on a 51.63km road from Kansat to Bholahat via Rohanpur was also completed at a cost of Tk 31.50 crore.

The development work on 24.58km road including a 263-metre bridge (Naogaon-Badalgachi-Patnitala), 67.59km Patnitala-Shapahar-Rohanpur and Godagari-Amnura-Nachole-Parbatipur-Adda roads was implemented at Tk 247.06 crore. District road development project has been executed with an estimated cost of Tk 109.75 crore, said the additional chief engineer.

Fani's silver lining A blessing for mangoes

ANWAR ALI AND RABIUL HASAN

The rain that the weakened cyclonic storm Fani brought yesterday has made the mango farmers of Rajshahi region happy, considering prospect of a good yield.

Mango researchers say the rainfall during Fani would boost the early varieties of mangoes like Gopalbhog and Khirsapat that are expected to appear in markets in about three weeks. However, the late varieties like Fazli, widely known as the "king of mangoes", would need irrigation.

Meanwhile, eye of the cyclonic storm was weak when it swept over Chalan Beel in Natore yesterday, blowing heavy wind and rain across Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Natore, and Naogaon districts.

Mango orchards in the region usually remain dry and the abscission layer on the peduncles of mangoes remain weak due to lack of water during this period, said Dr Sorof Uddin, senior scientific officer at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, who has been transferred to Moulvibazar from Chapainawabganj, recently.

"Thanks to the rain, mango farmers will not need any irrigation to orchards of the early varieties," Dr Sorof said, adding, "and the rain water will make the fruits stronger, bigger and sweeter."

Mangoes suffered a blow during the budding period when it rained in the month of Falgun, and in the last couple of weeks mangoes were dropping due to lack of rain, Hasan Al Sadi, owner of a mango orchard in Chapainawabganj's Chhotrajipur,



A tree bearing mango is surely a welcoming sight for all. Farmers are hopeful that rainfall during Fani would boost the early varieties of this juicy summer fruit.

PHOTO: STAR

said. "I regained hope with the rain," he said.

He said rains coupled with wind would also free the mango trees from pests.

"The rains were a blessing for us," Sadikul Islam, owner of a mango orchard in Chapainawabganj town's Mistripara area, said. "The mangoes will grow better. We won't need any irrigation," he said.

Dr Saifur Rahman, deputy director of Chapainawabganj Horticulture Centre, said the rains would also delay ripening of the mangoes, thus buying the farmers more time for harvest.

Department of Agriculture Extension increases their targets of mango cultivation and production

every year, but following calamities, they have kept the targets same as last year's.

Last year, 8,66,361 tonnes of mangoes were produced on 70,361 hectares of land in the region's four districts -- Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon.

After the rain yesterday, DAE Deputy Director Md Shamsul Haque said they would reconsider setting the targets higher.

"We consider that some mangoes would naturally drop during this time of storms," he said.

During a visit to Paba upazila after the rain yesterday, some children were seen picking the mangoes that had dropped. Some of them were also selling those at Duari village.

AL to work for Fani victims: Hanif

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League acting general secretary Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif yesterday said AL will take part in the rehabilitation works for the victims of cyclone "Fani", side by side with the government.

"We are gathering information about the affected people from across the country... Along with government efforts, Awami League will work to rehabilitate the cyclone victims," he told a press conference at the AL President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office.

The senior AL leader added, "Awami League teams will visit different disaster-affected areas and help the government to rehabilitate the affected families."

Referring to the successful launch of Gangabandhu Satellite, Hanif said the government got necessary information about Fani and took preparation, resulting in less causality in the cyclone. "Besides, all the government institutions worked in a coordinated way to tackle the losses," he added. The AL spokesperson said the prime minister is keeping a close eye on the latest situation.

Replying to a query, Hanif said BNP leaders are involved in intra-party feud. "They are spreading falsehood against the government over disaster preparedness," he added.

AL joint general secretary and Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni; Advocate Jahangir Kabir Nanak; party organising secretary and Jatiya Sangsad Whip Abu Sayeed Al-Mahmood Swapon; organising secretary and Deputy Water Resources Minister AKM Enamul Haque Shamim; relief and social welfare secretary Sujit Ray Nandi; information and research secretary Advocate Afzal Hossain were also present.

Maiden M'singh city polls today

BSS, Dhaka

The first election to the Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC) will be held today with a total of 2,96,938 voters expected to exercise their voting rights.

All the voters will exercise their franchise through electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the polls, to be held from 8am to 4pm without any break at 127 polling centres under 33 wards.

"We have taken all-out preparations to hold a peaceful election. Defying inclement weather, election materials have been sent to polling centres," Returning Officer and Regional Election Officer Md Alimuzzaman told the news agency.

Awami League mayoral candidate Ekramul Haque Titu has already been elected mayor unopposed. Some 242 candidates will vie for councillor posts in 33 wards while 70 candidates will contest for councillor posts reserved for women.

He said 10 Ansar members and three policemen will be deployed in each polling centre while 22 platoon of Border Guard Bangladesh, 33 mobile teams of Rapid Action Battalion, 33 mobile teams of police and 11 striking forces will be deployed to avert any untoward incident.

Besides, one executive magistrate and three additional executive magistrates will discharge duties in each ward. Sixteen judicial magistrates will also perform their duties.

With AL candidate Ekramul already elected uncontested in the maiden MCC election, the polls have lost its appeal.

His only rival, Jatiya Party candidate Jahangir Ahmed, quit the race on April 17, the last date for withdrawing candidacy.

Ekramul, the incumbent administrator of MCC, is also the vice president of Mymensingh AL. He was also the former mayor of the now defunct Mymensingh municipality.



Artists capture the beauty of Abu Sina Hostel, inset -- an over 150-year-old structure used as a dormitory for medical students in Sylhet -- on canvas at an art camp on its premises yesterday. The event was organised to protest a government move to demolish the historic building to make way for a 250-bed Sylhet District Hospital. The photos were taken in the city's Chowhatta area in the afternoon. A mass signature campaign to protect the building started Thursday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

North Bengal Sugar Mills observing Shaheed Day

CITY DESK

North Bengal Sugar Mills will observe "Shaheed Day" today in memory of those who embraced martyrdom on this day (May 5) during the 1971 Liberation War.

The Pakistan occupation forces killed Language Movement veteran and freedom fighter Shaheed Lt Md Anwarul Azim, the then administrator of the sugar mill in Gopalpur of Lalpur in Natore, and over 150 officers and employees of the mill, says a press release.

Azim tried desperately to save others' lives. He even urged Pakistan army to kill him and spare the lives of mill employees.

The Pakistan forces took revenge on Azim and his fellow freedom fighters as they defeated Pakistani troops in a battle near Gopalpur railway station and blew up the Ishwardi airport.

In recognition of his role in the Liberation War, Gopalpur railway station was named "Azim Nagar" as per the direct instruction of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1974. A "commemorative stamp" was also published in 1994. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year bestowed upon Shaheed Azim the "Swadhinata Padak" (Independence Award) to honour his sacrifice.



Anwarul Azim

Two killed as pickup falls into ditch in Dhamrai

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SAVAR

Two people were killed as a pickup fell into a ditch beside Dhaka-Aricha highway in Cosmos area of Dhamrai upazila in Dhaka yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Mithu, 35, the pickup driver; and Tushar, 27, a passenger.

Police said they died on the spot.

The accident took place in the early hours when the Manikganj-bound pickup hit a roadside tree as the driver lost his control over the vehicle, said Sheikh Farid, sub-inspector of Dhamrai Police Station.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and salvaged the pickup, said the SI.

The bodies were handed over to the families of the victims, he added.

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Residents of KB Aman Ali Road area in port city's West Bakalia have been suffering from various problems as the adjacent Chaktai canal has been filled with polythene bags.

At the same time, they are aggrieved with the Conservancy Department of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) for not taking steps to clean it up.

"With the rainy season approaching, we are apprehending water-logging in the area like every year as the flow of water will be interrupted by the polythene bags," said Abdur Rashid, a retired school teacher and resident of Fultala area on KB Aman Ali Road.

"We don't know who dumps polythene into the canal but they are definitely some of our neighbours," he said, adding, "To make matters worse, traders from the makeshift kitchen market on the bank of the canal also dump waste here."

Tapati Bhattacharjee, a resident of the area, said they face mosquito menace every day, as the canal

A canal full of polythene

Locals fear severe water-logging as Chaktai canal remains clogged



Chaktai canal in the port city's Chawkbazar area is full to the brim with polythene and other waste products.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

has become a breeding ground for insects.

It was seen that the canal was filled with polythene bags and other waste materials, starting from Chawkbazar Dhunir Pool area to DC Road Miar Baper Bari area, around a kilometre in south,

and from Fultala area to Khalpar near Bogar Bill of Bakalia area, around a quarter kilometre in south-east.

It is estimated that around one lakh people live in DC Road and KB Aman Ali Road areas, adjacent to the banks of the canal.

Contacted, CCC Chief Conservancy Officer Shaiful Mannan Siddique said as the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) has undertaken a project to reduce water-logging in the city, it is their responsibility to clean up the canal.

Mannan said they had several meetings with CDA officials and they assured that the canal will be cleaned immediately.

Contacted, Hasan Bin Shams, executive engineer of CDA, said they were cleaning up all the canals in the city one by one.

"The issue of Chaktai canal has come to our notice," he said, adding, "We will take immediate steps to clean it."

He suggested talking to Lt Col Abu Sadat Md Tanvir, additional project director of the development project of re-excavation, expansion and cleaning up of canals.

Mentionable, although CDA has initiated the project, Bangladesh Army has been implementing it.

Contacted, Lt Col Tanvir said they have already started cleaning the canal in different portions.

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16 youths receive Nat Geo photography training

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the theme of "peaceful coexistence", a total of 16 youths from the Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar received training in photography and visual storytelling from National Geographic.

The five-day training titled "National Geographic Photo Camp" ended in the district's Ukhiya yesterday, through a presentation of the photographs taken by the participants, according to a press release.

Internews, an international organisation, in association with Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication and USAID, organised the photo camp with

an objective to provide basic knowledge of photojournalism among the youngsters.

Four instructors of the National Geographic conducted the training through several classroom and field-based activities to teach the youths primary lessons on digital photojournalism and editing.

Besides, a group of photographers and photo editors provided the participants with hands-on training on photography.

The National Geographic has been organising the photo camp since 2003. So far, the event has been held at more than 90 locations in different parts of the world, including USA, Uganda, Mexico and India.

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