

DHAKA-TANGAIL HIGHWAY

Eid journey to be longer than usual

Construction of 7 underpasses may cause tailbacks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Transport workers fear that Eid holidaymakers will suffer delays on the Dhaka-Tangail highway, known as the gateway to northern districts, as the construction of seven out of ten underpasses still remains incomplete.

They also expressed worries that long tailbacks could be seen at both sides of the Bangabandhu Bridge due to lack of proper traffic management at the western side of the bridge.

The authorities, however, assured that they will take necessary measures to ensure trouble-free journeys for holidaymakers.

Visiting a 55-kilometre stretch of the highway from Chandra in Gazipur to Elega in Tangail on May 18, this correspondent found that vehicles were stuck in tailbacks near the construction sites.

Construction of underpasses is going on in Taratia and Karatia of Tangail Sadar upazila, Baoikhola and Natiapara in Basail upazila and Jamurki, Kurni and Dhalla in Mirzapur upazila.

The condition of the highway was bad at many places. Workers were seen fixing potholes on the road.

Saiful Islam, driver of a Dhaka-Pabna bus, said he faces long tailbacks near the construction sites almost every day. The traffic situation becomes worse during the rainy days when the highway gets almost covered with mud in those areas, he added.

SP Shafiqul Islam of Gazipur Highway Police said they were taking preparations to make sure that Eid holidaymakers could travel without facing any trouble.

Amit Kumar Chakrabarty, project manager of Joydevpur-Chandra-Tangail-Elega Four Lane Project, said building diversions of the highway at both sides of some underpasses will be complete before the Eid.

The repair work of the highway would also be done before the Eid, he added.

The Eid-ul-Fitr will be observed in the country either on June 5 or 6.

POLICE SEEK BBA SUPPORT

Sirajganj police has recently sent a letter to Bangladesh Bridge Authority with some recommendations, including repairing of the damaged part of the highway and road marking, to ensure trouble-free movement of vehicles during the Eid holidays, said

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MODI'S SWEARING-IN

President arrives in New Delhi

BSS, New Delhi

A red carpet was rolled out to welcome President Abdul Hamid in New Delhi yesterday afternoon.

A VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, carrying the president and his entourage, landed at Indira Gandhi International Airport around 7:30pm (local time) yesterday.

The head of the state arrived in India on a three-day visit to join the swearing-in ceremony of Narendra Modi as prime minister of India for a second consecutive term.

On his arrival at the airport, the president was received by High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India Syed Moazzem Ali, Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of India TS Tirumurti, High Commissioner of India in Dhaka Riva Ganguly Das and other officials of the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh.

Earlier, the president left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for India by a VVIP flight (BG-1513) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 5:45pm.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, the cabinet secretary, chiefs of the three services, the dean of the diplomatic corps, and top civil and military officials were present at the airport to see the president off.

The president's wife Rashida Khanam and Liberation War Affairs

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President Abdul Hamid yesterday handed out crests to family members of those who were killed or injured while on peace keeping mission in different countries.

PHOTO: PTI

Mamata to skip Modi's swearing-in

One more TMC MLA joins BJP

NDTV ONLINE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, after claiming she would try to attend Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's oath ceremony in Delhi as a constitutional duty, pulled a 180-degree yesterday saying: "Please excuse me".

The West Bengal CM, in a curt letter posted on Twitter, referred to the BJP's allegation that 54 of its workers had been killed in political violence in the state and called it "completely untrue". "The ceremony is an august occasion to celebrate democracy, not one that should be devalued by any political party that uses it as an opportunity to score political points," Mamata Banerjee wrote on her Twitter page, referring to the BJP's move to invite the family of the workers.

The BJP said, following a decision taken by PM Modi and Amit Shah last night, it had decided to invite the families of workers allegedly killed in Bengal over the last six years.

That the families were special invitees was seen as a blunt message for the Bengal chief minister. The BJP alleges its workers were killed by Trinamool members during Panchayat or local body polls and the national election. With the invitation, the party said, it wants to convey to its cadre in Bengal that the central leadership cares and stands by them against "violence by Trinamool Congress workers".

Hours after the BJP's move came Mamata Banerjee's acrid response.

"Congratulations, new Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. It was my plan to accept the 'constitutional invitation' and attend the oath-taking ceremony. However, in the last one hour, I am seeing media reports that the BJP are claiming 54 people have been murdered in political violence in Bengal. This is completely untrue. There have been no political murders in Bengal," said the Chief Minister, adding that the deaths may have taken place due to personal enmity, family quarrels and other disputes, "nothing related to politics".

"So, I am sorry, Narendra Modi Ji, this has compelled me not to attend the ceremony," she wrote.

Police press

FROM PAGE 1 said, "We will check for weaknesses or loopholes in the charge sheet and discuss with our lawyer before taking any further step."

Asked why former Sonagazi OC Moazzem Hossain was not named in the charge sheet, SP Iqbal said a probe team formed by the PBI headquarters had submitted a report on Moazzem. Necessary legal action would be taken in line with the information present in that report.

While briefing the press on Tuesday, PBI chief Banaj Kumar Majumder divulged how the killing was plotted and executed.

Nusrat Jahan Rafi, a student of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa, was set ablaze on April 6 for refusing to withdraw a sexual harassment case against her principal Siraj Ud Doula.

Metro won't open before Dec 2021

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Once completed, the 20.10km rail service with 16 stations will carry 60,000 passengers per hour and significantly reduce travel time from at least two hours to 36 minutes.

Meanwhile, people's suffering on key city streets, due to the construction work, is likely to persist.

The officials at the meeting did not say why the DMTCCL was failing to implement the first part by this year and the second part by 2020.

However, MAN Siddique hoped that the construction work of the first part would be completed within December and the second part within December next year. Work on installation of electric components on the viaducts would start in October, he said.

He said that they are hopeful that they would start receiving the trains from Japan, where they are being built, from June 15 next year.

When all trains reach the country, the DMTCCL would run integrated tests and trial runs, he said.

TRAFFIC MESS TO REMAIN

With just one metro rail line operational, the city's traffic congestion problem will not be solved completely, said Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at the meeting.

He said the government would build six MRT lines in Dhaka and its adjacent areas within 2030 and MRT line-6 is the first.

"The six lines are a well-thought-out package aimed at reducing congestion. But people think opening one line will solve the problem but this is not right.

"Perhaps, many of us will not get the benefit but the next generation of Bangladesh will get the benefit," he said.

The ongoing construction of the metro rail on capital's key thoroughfares has made the chaotic traffic even worse, largely because engineering solutions have not been implemented to better use the narrowed down streets, causing people's sufferings, experts and officials

have said.

Quader urged people to have patience and tolerate the temporary difficulties to get permanent relief. He sought journalists' cooperation in this regard so that people understand the situation.

Replying to question on whether the government had any specific plan to deal with the traffic problems that may arise during implementations of metro lines, neither Quader nor MAN Siddique gave a direct answer.

Quader said they would implement those in phases.

Some parts of other MRT lines would be underground while some parts in Narayanganj, Bhatara, and Hemayetpur areas would not impede traffic.

Both of them hinted that the cost of implementing the MRT Line-6 could reduce.

MAN Siddique claimed that Singapore built metro rail network in the shortest time, 25 years, but Bangladesh would establish the network in 18 years.



Ain O Salish Kendra Executive Director Sheepa Hafiza speaks at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday with Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam on her right and Acid Survivors Foundation Executive Director Selina Ahmed on her left. They talked about forming committees even at village level to protect children from sex crimes. Story on page 14.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Hosts kick off

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Bairstow at the top and the likes of Jos Buttler, captain Eoin Morgan, all-rounders Ben Stokes and Moeen Ali to ensure the fireworks continue through the 50 overs, while the classy Joe Root is given the role to hold things together while scoring at a fair clip. In the recent ODI series against Pakistan, they have made chasing totals over 350 look like a cakewalk and have even been talking of breaching the 500-mark.

They also have a varied bowling attack with Ali bowling off-spin, Adil Rashid bowling leg-spin and the likes of Stokes, Curran and Plunkett providing pace. It is however latest entrant Jofra Archer, newly eligible to play for his adopted country, who may steal the show with his high pace.

South Africa will take the field having suffered a setback as pace supreme Dale Steyn was ruled out of the opener due to injury. They will still have the fearsome Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi and Andile

Phehlukwayo to man the pace attack while Imran Tahir will try to beguile England with his leg-spin. Their batting is slightly less explosive than their opposition's, but Hashim Amla and Quinton de Kock are one of the best opening pairs in the world and can lay any attack to the sword, setting the scene for skipper Faf du Plessis, JP Duminy, David Miller and Chris Morris to take the team to a huge total, which is expected to be the norm on flat tracks in this World Cup.

Closer to home Bangladesh will also play their first World Cup match against South Africa on June 2, also at The Oval. With the venue traditionally known to offer a bit of spin, the Tigers will have their eyes glued on today's match to take pointers on how to tackle Proteas. Judging by their relative strengths and their respective recent records, the match should be a humdinger and England should be able to show Bangladesh the way forward.

Australia pilots hit by lasers during South China Sea flights

AFP, Sydney

Australia's military has confirmed that Navy pilots were targeted with lasers during flights in the hotly contested South China Sea, with informal Chinese militia vessels believed to be behind the attacks.

Beijing has become more assertive in the area, stoking tensions with rival claimants in Southeast Asia as well as Canberra and Washington -- traditionally the dominant naval and air power in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Australian Defence Force said "assets operating across the region have observed an increase in the use of hand-held lasers by some vessels".

In this specific incident, helicopter pilots flying from the HMAS Canberra were marked with lasers as they took part in the months-long Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2019 exercise.

\$2.5b for 4 projects

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Both the prime ministers pledged to work together against terrorism and violent extremism at the national and international levels.

Hasina urged Abe to recruit skilled manpower from Bangladesh as his country introduced a new immigration law. She proposed opening a skill development institute in Bangladesh.

Responding very positively to the proposal, Abe said officials of the two counties would discuss the issue to make a decision.

The two leaders discussed ways to find a durable and early solution to the humanitarian and political crisis that has emanated from the displacement of over one million Rohingyas from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

Hasina said Japan understands that the solution to this crisis lies in the early, safe and dignified return of the displaced people to their homeland Myanmar.

She said it is necessary for Myanmar to create a conducive atmosphere in Rakhine for the return of the displaced people.

The PM thanked the Japanese government for its generous support to handle the crisis, and for its efforts to support early repatriation.

Speaking at a joint press meet, Hasina said they decided to strengthen mutual cooperation in international platforms to fight terrorism and violent extremism and to mitigate risk emanating from climate change, and ensure denuclearisation to keep children safe.

She said Japan occupies a very special place in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh. "The level of commitment that Japan has been showing since our independence in 1971 is truly remarkable."

The PM said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dreamt of making Bangladesh a prosperous country and his vision of

development was greatly influenced by the development history of Japan.

"After more than 48 years since our independence in 1971, we can now confidently say that we are moving in the right direction to fulfill that dream. And it is reassuring to have Japan by our side always."

Hasina said she and Abe agreed on several new ideas to strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

She said Bangladesh met all the criteria to graduate from the Least Developed Country category to a developing country and it has set a goal to become a developed country by 2041. "Prime Minister Abe has assured me that Japan will stand by Bangladesh and extend necessary support to reach that goal."

The premier said their discussion was greatly focused on enhancing regional connectivity to harness the full potentials of the countries. Improving physical infrastructure would be a critical factor in establishing effective connectivity, she observed.

Hasina extended her warmest felicitations to Emperor Naruhito, members of the imperial family and the Japanese people on the joyous occasion of his enthronement.

She said she was deeply moved by the hospitality that the government of Japan has extended to her and her delegation.

Hasina invited her Japanese counterpart to attend the "Mujib Borsho" to be celebrated in 2020 and Abe accepted the invitation saying he would consider it positively.

Japan will contest the UN Security Council election in 2022, and Bangladesh will help the country in this regard.

Japan also extended its support to the Bangladesh candidate for the post of deputy director general of International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Bangladesh has nominated its foreign secretary for the post.

Hasina later joined an official dinner hosted by Japanese premier Abe at his Tokyo residence.

Six killed

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The four were identified as members of a gang accused of poaching in one of the largest habitats of the endangered Bengal tigers and Irrawaddy dolphins, local Rab official Tajul Islam told AFP.

"These gangs have become a major threat to wildlife conservation [in the mangroves]," the Rab official said.

Rab claimed to have recovered 11 firearms and several sharp weapons from the scene.

In Cumilla, two suspected drug dealers were killed in a similar incident with BGB members at Noapara of Chaudhagram upazila.

They were Md Selim alias Salimullah, 38 and Rubel, 43.

On information, a team of Border Guard Bangladesh conducted a drive in Noapara around 1:00am, said a press release issued by Lt Col Abu Mohammad Mohiuddin, commanding officer of BGB-10 Battalion.

Sensing the BGB men's presence, the criminals opened fire. The BGB members returned fire, triggering the "gun battle".

The "drug dealers" were hit and they were taken to a local hospital where doctors declared them dead, the release added.

In another incident, two alleged drug peddlers sustained bullet injuries in a "shootout" with BGB members at Cumilla Sadar (south) upazila around 10:30pm yesterday, the release said.

The injured -- Bokul, 43, of Narayanganj, and Abdul Karim, 37, of Kurigram -- were admitted to Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

BGB claimed to have recovered 5,850 yaba tablets from the two spots. (Our correspondents in Bagerhat and Cumilla contributed to this report.)

Traders given

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conditions, said the NBR.

Kanon Kumar Roy, member of tax policy at the NBR, said, "We will not raise any question about the source of gold if they [traders] declare their stock by the deadline."

Almost all jewellers have gold in stock that they cannot show in their income tax returns as they do not have valid sources of purchasing those, Roy said, adding that this first came into notice after Apan Jewellers failed to show their papers to the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate.

In November last year, the government framed a new gold policy to make import and export of the precious metal easy and transparent.

The NBR, in its notice, said traders will have to maintain inventories of declared gold, silver and diamond in separate books. Sales from the inventories should also be recorded in separate books. The traders will have to submit these books along with income tax returns.

Ganga Charan Malakar, president of Bangladesh Jewellers' Samity, said the government's decision would yield good results.

According to Malakar, more than 50,000 jewellers and gold traders across the country. Of them, there are 1,500 in Dhaka.

The annual demand for gold in Bangladesh is between 20 and 40 tonnes. Almost 80 percent of it is met by smuggled gold as traders face difficulties in importing the precious metal due to its complex procedure, according to Gold Policy 2018.