

# Govt plans to introduce electric, high speed trains

Says PM, flags off Dhaka-Benapole train  
UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has a plan to introduce electric and high-speed trains in the country to make the railway services better and faster. "We've a plan to generate more electricity as we're now producing 22,000MW ... we'll be able to introduce electric trains in the near future ... we'll set up rail lines for remote areas as well to introduce speedy trains for easier communications," she said.

The PM said this while inaugurating "Benapole Express" for plying between the capital and Benapole and the extension service of Dhaka-Rajshahi nonstop intercity "Bonolata Express" train to Chapainawganj through a videoconference from the Gono Bhaban.

When the Awami League government came to power, she said, the country had only 1,600MW of electricity generation capacity, but it had now jumped to 22,000MW. Hasina mentioned that with the introduction of electric and



The Benapole Express train that would run between the land port and the capital via Jashore is inaugurated yesterday at the Benapole Railway Station. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the train via teleconference.

PHOTO: STAR

# US hopes N Korea talks will go ahead despite Pyongyang threat

The United States said Tuesday it hoped to hold denuclearization talks with North Korea, after Pyongyang warned that US-South Korean military exercises could affect their planned resumption.

The North had earlier Tuesday hinted it could even reconsider its moratorium on nuclear testing over next month's drills, which have been held for years but were scaled down to ease tensions with Pyongyang.

It was the North's first statement on the talks since US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to a resumption of dialogue at an impromptu meeting in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the two Koreas on June 30.

Responding to the North's statement, the State Department said it remained upbeat over commitments made by Kim and Trump during their June encounter and at a February summit in Vietnam.

"From our perspective, we would hope that no one would try to block, in their government or our government, the ability for President Trump and Chairman Kim to make progress on the commitments they made to each other in Vietnam," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus told reporters.

# Ctg power plant

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on July 8 after the upazila nirbahi officer lodged a complaint over the matter against the plant.

A DoE team later tested the water and found the allegations to be true.

Muktadir Hasan, assistant director of the Chattogram DoE, told The Daily Star that there were also other pollutants in the water.

"We collected water samples from the spot where a drain from the plant meets the canal. The result was shocking," he added.

The water samples were tested at a DoE laboratory, he added.

The power plant has long been accused of releasing untreated effluents in Morachora.

In 2012, the plant was fined Tk 10 lakh for the same offences. But the fine was waived on the condition that the plant would build its ETP.

The latest investigation also revealed that the plant did not have oil waste separators and there was mismanagement of sludge, which got washed away to the water body during rains.

Shafiqul Islam, managing director of the power plant, denied any wrongdoing.

Sometimes the sludge reservoir overflows a bit and the sludge gets washed away by rain, he said about the DoE findings.

Eminent Halda researcher Prof Manzoorul Kibria said, "The Halda is already a water body in jeopardy. It would be in more danger due to this pollution. The flora and fauna will be damaged if this pollution continues. It's a clear violation of the constitution, which protects biodiversity and environment."

# Court frames

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The court also asked Sayedul Haque Sumon, the lawyer who filed the case against Moazzem on April 15, to be present at the trial and narrate the incident.

The tribunal also dismissed the discharge petition submitted by the defence lawyers.

During yesterday's hearing, the defence lawyers said his client recorded Nusrat's statement for the sake of investigation. But his client had not circulated the clip on social media.

The lawyer added that a man named Sajol took the clip from his client's phone without permission and circulated it.

Moazzem's lawyer also said the complainant was not a member of the victim's family and as per law he had no right to file such a case.

The tribunal on June 17 sent Moazzem to jail in the case.

Nusrat, a student of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa in Feni, was set ablaze on April 6 allegedly after refusing to withdraw a case she had filed against her principal, Siraj Ud Doula, for sexually harassing her. She died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on April 10.

The OC was withdrawn on the same day after Nusrat's family alleged that he had not cooperated with them.

During that time, a video clip of Moazzem asking Nusrat several humiliating questions went viral on social media, drawing widespread criticism.

Moazzem was suspended on May 8 for negligence in duty.

Police later arrested him in the capital's Supreme Court area.

# Joint body

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the projects the neighbouring country had agreed to finance was not picking up steam. And the move is slowly but surely bearing fruit.

Bureaucratic red tape in both China and Bangladesh is largely at fault for the snail's pace of progress in the projects, said a finance ministry official.

In Bangladesh, the projects must get approval from several committees, which is a long-drawn-out exercise.

The situation is almost similar in case of China. For instance, if they do not agree to or fail to understand even a particular word in the project documents, they send the file back to Bangladesh for the process to start anew, mentioned the official.

Besides, China's Exim Bank has some limitations: only a few officials of the bank deal with foreign loans. Also, Chinese firms lobby hard in both the countries to get contracts, causing further delay, the official pointed out.

Furthermore, even after loan agreements are signed, which is the last step for projects bankrolled by China, funds are released slowly.

For example, of the 27 projects that China agreed to finance, five are at the implementation stage: the Padma Bridge rail link, Karnaphuli river tunnel, phase III of the Info-Sarkar project, installation of a single-point mooring with double pipeline in Maheshkhali and modernisation of telecommunication network for digital connectivity.

The loan agreements for all five projects involving \$3.9 billion were signed between October 2016 and April last year, but so far there has been little disbursement of funds.

The signing of the loan agreement for the \$689.35 million-Karnaphuli river tunnel project took place in October 2016, and thus far only \$194.81 million has been released.

Besides in November 2017, the loan agreement for the \$550.67 million-single point mooring project was signed and only \$82.73 million has been disbursed so far.

Only \$44.94 million was released for the \$224.96 million project on modernisation of telecommunication network for digital connectivity. The

# Pass rate up

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of over 30 percentage points in the pass rate in English as more than 95 percent students of these two boards passed the subject, the results show.

This success pushed up the overall pass rate, said an official.

It's the same with Physics.

The average pass rate in this subject rose by 8.47 percentage points in the eight boards.

In Dhaka board, the pass rate in physics leapt to 95.59 percent from last year's 86.15 percent.

This is one of the reasons students from science group did better than those from the two other -- business studies and humanities groups.

Their pass rate stood at 85.57 percent, followed by 73.51 percent in business studies and 65.09 percent in humanities group.

**JUBILATIONS**

The results, published 55 days after the end of the exams, were available in colleges and the websites of the education boards since 2:00pm. Students also got their results through text messages.

Colleges across the country wore a festive look ahead of the results

# Girls do better again in HSC

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teachers, students and their guardians behind the success.

Announcing the results at a crowded press conference at her ministry around 1:00pm, she said, "We have seen some positive signs in all the indicators this year. It is very encouraging for the overall education system."

About this year's results, she said, "The students took good preparation and did well. Besides, teachers have been given extensive training and they taught well in the classrooms. These all contributed to the result."

She urged the students, who could not pass, not to get frustrated. "I hope that you will take better preparation with new vigour and succeed."

"I request the guardians not to push their children towards unhealthy competition... Their education will not be meaningful if they don't learn to devote themselves to the wellbeing of others."

Earlier in the day, the minister handed over the copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban.

A total of 13,36,629 students -- 7,03,000 boys and 6,33,629 girls

# HSC RESULT CHART

BOARDS	PASS RATE 2019	PASS RATE 2018	GPA-5 2019	GPA-5 2018
DHAKA	71.09	66.13	18,187	12,938
RAJSHAHI	76.38	66.51	6,729	4,138
CUMILLA	77.74	65.42	2,375	944
JASHORE	75.65	60.40	5,312	2,089
CHATTGRAM	62.19	62.73	2,860	1,613
BARISHAL	70.65	70.55	1,201	670
SYLHET	67.05	62.11	1,094	873
DINAJPUR	71.78	60.21	4,049	2,297
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71.85</b>	<b>64.55</b>	<b>41,807</b>	<b>25,562</b>

yesterday.

Students and their parents, who had been on their nerves for some time, erupted in jubilation as soon as the results were out.

Some students danced and some showed victory signs. Some took selfies flashing the V-sign. A feeling of sheer happiness was writ large on their faces. Many students and their parents distributed sweets.

"All my wait and worries are gone now. I received the results I expected," said a jubilant Raisa who secured GPA-5 from a reputed college in the capital.

She gave her teachers the credit, saying they taught them very well throughout the year. "I would equally thank my parents for their constant support," she added.

Mohsina Begum, mother of another student named Ishan Rahman, shed tears of joy at her son's success.

"He worked very hard and all his efforts paid off," she said.

Education Minister Dipu Moni attributed the combined efforts of

-- from 8,985 institutions took this year's HSC and its equivalent examinations under the 10 boards. Of them 9,88,172 students passed the tests that began on April 1.

Of the 270 Bangladeshi students who sat for the tests under eight foreign centres, 254 came out successful, making the pass rate 94.07 percent. Twenty-six of them got GPA-5.

Cumilla board topped the charts in terms of success rate with 77.74 percent.

About the reason, the board chairman, Prof Md Abdus Salam, said, "We took several measures. We held workshops at every institution in our board and gave them [teachers] proper guidance."

Chattogram board was at the bottom with 62.19 percent examinee coming out successful.

Like last year, girls did better than boys as their pass rate was 4.77 percentage points higher than that of the male students in all 10 educational boards.

# Nothing short

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fell victim to the mosquito menace?"

A budget is allocated from the taxpayers' money every year to prevent mosquitoes but there is no visible result, the court observed.

The authorities used to spray medicine from plane earlier, but that is no longer evident, it added.

Nurunnahar Akter, lawyer for both DNCC and DSCC, said her clients did everything to prevent the menace.

Fresh tenders have already been floated by both the city corporations to import effective medicines for preventing mosquitoes. The process will take around six months to finish, she said.

The lawyer added that she felt bad hearing the news of so many deaths for dengue fever.

She also mentioned the awareness programmes undertaken by her clients to stop mosquito breeding and prevent dengue menace.

In response, the court said corrupt people did not feel bad as their children live abroad and not affected by dengue fever.

# Two killed

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Firefighters were informed soon afterwards.

After trying to rescue the "missing people" by removing the debris for hours, firefighters said they could see two motionless bodies under tonnes of rubble near midnight.

Several residents of the area said they heard a thudding noise around 2:00am yesterday. The building might have collapsed at the time, they added.

Seven units of firefighters have been working at the building, said Debashis Bardhan, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in

# French minister resigns after dinner scandal

AFP, Paris

A senior French cabinet minister and close ally of President Emmanuel Macron resigned on Tuesday after reports accused him of extravagant state-funded lobster dinners and misusing public housing in a blow to the centrist government.

Francois de Rugy, who was named environment minister in September 2018, announced his departure after a week of revelations from the leftwing website Mediapart.

"The attacks and media lynching targeting my family force me to take the necessary step back," said de Rugy, who also held the post of minister of state which made him number two in the government after Prime Minister Edouard Philippe.

Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne was appointed as France's new environment minister late Tuesday, the Elysee Palace said, however she will not hold the post of minister of state.