

214KM DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY

ADB to fund its expansion into four lanes

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The impasse over financing of the expansion of 214-kilometre Dhaka-Sylhet Highway into four lanes is likely to end soon, as Asian Development Bank has given "consent" to fund the project, officials said.

After a programme on Sunday, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told reporters that "ADB will finance the project."

In that case, a new feasibility study and detail design has to be prepared and project cost will increase, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) officials said.

At first the authority wanted to implement the project with Chinese loan. But the government later decided to do the work using their own resources, following failed negotiations

with a Chinese company. But the Road Transport and Highway Division (RTHD) later changed decision and asked the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to find a foreign financier.

Recently, ADB gave their "consent" to finance the project, a top official of the ERD told The Daily Star yesterday.

An official of the RHD, which is the implementing authority of the project, said the government will now send a formal request to ADB through the ERD.

The organisation will then send its appraisal mission in Bangladesh and on the basis of the mission's report, ADB will take the final decision in this regard, the official said, requesting anonymity.

"These are all formalities... But ADB

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ROHINGYA RETURN TO RAKHINE

Work more to create right environment

Dhaka urges United Nations

UNB, Dhaka

Expecting to see the commencement of Rohingya repatriation before September, Bangladesh has urged the UN to work more in Rakhine State of Myanmar to help create a conducive environment so that the Rohingyas can return to their place of origin.

"You should work more in Rakhine rather than in Bangladesh. I conveyed this," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters at his office.

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Big thugs of a small town

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Over the last few days, The Daily Star has spoken to at least 15 people who have seen them transform from students into drug abusers and then some sort of gangsters. These people include police officers, journalists, lawyers, political party leaders, townspeople, victims and witnesses of their criminal activities.

THE RISE

Rifat Farazi, elder of the two brothers, completed his SSC from Barguna Zila School and got admitted to Infra Polytechnic Institute in Barishal in 2014. Rishan, who passed SSC from the same school, is a second-year student at Barguna Govt College.

During his time at the Polytechnic, Rifat started taking drugs resulting in his poor show in exams.

"Rifat Farazi was not regular in class and he used to flunk in exams," said Amir Hossain, a director at the institute.

His association with Sabbir Hossain Nayan, also known as Nayan Bond, the prime suspect in Rifat Sharif murder, began in 2015, according to his accomplices. (Nayan was killed in a so-called gunfight.)

Rifat Farazi left the institute in 2016 without completing his course after his uncle Delwar Hossain became chairman of the district council.

The Farazi brothers looked after a part of the drug supply network run by Nayan, according to the sources.

They were also involved in mugging and extortion, snatching people's phone and laptops, according to a local Chhatra League leader. Other sources echoed his claim.

"Rifat snatched at least two dozen phone sets in the last six months from the students living in the hostel of Barguna Government College," said the Chhatra League leader.

"They returned the phones only after getting money from the students," he added.

"REIGN OF TERROR"

Except for a police officer, now posted in a different district, and a local ward councillor, none of the 15 plus people The Daily Star spoke to would go on record, an indication how they fear reprisal. They said the patrons of the two brothers were politically influential, but would not give any name.

In October last year, just two months before the national elections, a local man found himself in trouble after he lodged a complaint against Rifat Farazi for "demanding extortion money".

"Police had detained him after I informed them about the matter. But he managed to get out within hours and then started threatening me. I could not come out of my home for a few days," he said.

"I doubt the brothers will face punishment in the Rifat killing case. If they come out on bail, they would be more ferocious," he said.

About three years ago, Rifat Farazi attacked the house of Delwar Hossain,

Momen said he had conveyed the message to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the UN agencies during his recent meetings in New York.

The minister also highlighted how the entire region would be affected if the problem remained unresolved.

"The UN Secretary General is very keen to see a solution to the Rohingya crisis as quickly as possible," Momen said.

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a sub-inspector of Barguna Police Station at the time, on DKP Road in the town.

"Once my family members asked Rifat and his followers not to loiter around my house as they would take drugs openly," said Delwar, now posted in Jhalakathi.

"Rifat attacked my house with a machete and damaged the door. Police had arrested him, but he was freed soon on bail," he said.

A businessman in the College Street area said, "The two brothers, along with Nayan Bond, created a reign of terror in the town. Everyone is afraid of them. We don't feel safe even after their arrest as we know they will get bail. They have some influential leaders to have their back."

Faruk Sikder, a councillor of Ward-8 of Barguna municipality, shares this view.

"An influential leader has been patronising them for their criminal activities," he said, but declined to name the leader.

Locals and police sources said they used to get backing from their uncle Delwar, also former Awami League MP from Barguna-1.

Multiple police officials said Delwar would intervene every time police detained the two brothers.

Two days before the killing, Rifat Sharif had a heated exchange with Rifat Farazi about returning a cell-phone that Rifat Sharif had snatched from a man. At one stage of the altercation, Rifat Sharif used offensive language referring to Rifat Farazi's parents, a top police official said, citing Rifat Farazi's statement during interrogation.

"For this reason, Rifat Farazi was demanding an answer from Rifat Sharif during the attack," said the official, asking not to be named.

Delwar said he never requested police to free them from custody.

He said they were only in touch with Rishan, younger of the two brothers, for the last couple of years.

"I even asked Rifat not to visit my home for his criminal activities," he said.

Barguna Police Superintendent Maruf Hossain said he was new to the post and could not say why police failed to take stronger actions against them all these years.

CASES AGAINST THEM

Rifat Farazi faced his first attempted murder charges in 2015, but subsequent investigation did not find his link to the murder and was cleared of the charges, according to police records.

Of the four other cases filed against him between 2017 and 2018, police pressed charges against him in one. But police never arrested him in that case.

Family members and locals said Rifat brought his younger brother Rishan into his world.

In 2017, Rishan was charged with an attempted murder, and police named him as an accused in the charge sheet.

He too was never arrested in this case, records show.

Rest four officials, one is on retirement while three others are enjoying PRL, he said, adding that different action would be taken



Fishermen load supplies on a boat at Fishery Ghat in Chattogram City as they prepare to go fishing in the Bay of Bengal. The photo was taken on Tuesday, the day a 65-day ban on fishing at seas ended.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAJHAN

Police suspect militants' hand

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The explosion in Gulistan on April 29 left two traffic constables and a community police member injured. A female assistant sub-inspector and two others were wounded after an IED went off near a police pickup in Malibagh on May 26.

Hours after both explosions, SITE Intelligence Group, an American company that tracks online activity of white supremacists and jihadists, claimed responsibility for the attacks.

No one been detained in connection with the Gulistan and Malibagh attacks yet.

Earlier, CTTC chief Monirul Islam said militants have the strength to carry out stray incidents. They, however, do not have the ability to organise large attacks.

About yesterday's incident, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary said, "Local militant groups, which were active earlier, might be behind the incident."

Replying to a query at a press conference at the Police Headquarters

yesterday, the IGP said police would conduct tests to determine how the bombs were put together and what ingredients were used. "It will take us some time," he said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of the CTTC's Special Action Group Sanwar Hossain said they would be able to say more about the bombs after analysing the materials collected from the spot.

"We will also be clear about its trigger, whether those were remote controlled or timed devices..." he added.

HOW THEY WERE FOUND

A traffic constable said they noticed a carton left beside the police box in Khamar Bari intersection around 5:00pm on Tuesday.

"One of our colleagues took the carton inside the police box thinking it might belong to one of the policemen. When no one claimed it, we thought it was a container of biscuits. We opened it around 7:00pm and saw the cans tied with tapes," the constable said.

They informed higher officials about the carton and kept it behind

the police box. Specialised teams later cordoned off the area.

One of the two bomb-disposal robots bought from Germany last year was used for the first time. "The remote-controlled robot sent us pictures and gave us an idea about how the IED should be destroyed," said an official of the CTTC's Bomb Disposal Unit.

The robot carried the bomb several meters away before it was detonated.

"The area is under CCTV coverage. Our teams are looking into who might have left the bombs there," a traffic sergeant told The Daily Star.

At Paltan intersection, the bomb was put inside a thick polythene packet beside the traffic police box close to the Bangladesh Secretariat, said Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

The traffic police discovered it around 10:45pm on Tuesday. Later a bomb disposal team detonated it around 1:00am yesterday.

The OC said they were analysing the CCTV footage of the area.

Hospitals outside Dhaka not ready

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between January 1 and yesterday, and 179 of them were from outside Dhaka.

Five of all the total dengue patients have died, it shows.

In 24 hours since 8:00am on Monday, 560 new dengue cases were reported at hospitals, which is the highest for a single day, show the data.

Doctors and hospital officials, however, said the numbers could be higher as many dengue cases go unreported.

Talking about the doctors dealing with dengue patients outside the capital, DGHS officials said the physicians did not have the NS1 kit to diagnose dengue instantly.

NS1 antigen test (nonstructural protein 1), is a test for dengue, introduced in 2006, which allows rapid detection on the first day of fever, before antibodies appear some five or more days later.

Earlier, doctors used to wait for four to five days before carrying out any medical test on a patient to detect dengue. But this year, doctors are suggesting to have the examination on the first day of the fever, saying the pattern of the disease has changed.

The physicians say the treatment should begin right away.

Ferdousi Akhtar, assistant director of DGHS, (Khulna division), said doctors at district and upazila levels did not get training in dengue management and the kit.

She said they were providing treatment based on their experience.

Several other doctors in other districts said the same.

Asked, Prof Sanya Tahmina, director of communicable disease control at the DGHS, said, "Dengue cases are being reported outside Dhaka as well. We will train doctors outside Dhaka through video conferencing from next week."

Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director

of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said they were yet to provide the NS1 kit to the doctors as the number of dengue cases outside the capital was still comparatively low.

Talking to this correspondent, AHM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor of Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital and also one of the core editors of preparing a national guideline for clinical management of dengue syndrome, said most of the dengue cases were found in Dhaka.

But as people go from one place to another, dengue cases are being reported in other areas as well, he said, adding that doctors outside the capital also must have proper training in dengue management.

"There is a national guideline and we tried to give it to almost every doctor. If a doctor follows the guideline properly, he or she will not face any problem in treating dengue patients," he said.

CONFUSION OVER DEATH TOLL

Though the number of people who have died of dengue has increased, the DGHS still says the figure is five.

This figure is, however, disputed by other experts.

Savio Rogerio, a nine-year-old boy, died of the disease at a hospital in the capital yesterday, said the hospital authorities. They said it was the second such case in the last few days.

The private hospital's Managing Director Kumar Chakrabarty said six people died of dengue at the hospital between June 1 and July 24.

Suffering from dengue, Civil Surgeon of Habiganj Dr Mohammad Shahadat Hossain Hajra died in Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital on July 22. Four similar cases were reported at the DMCH and two at Dhaka Shishu Hospital in recent months, said officials there.

The DGHS also does not have the records.

Asked, Dr Aysha Akther, assistant director at the DGHS control room, said they keep records on the deaths from dengue following a review of an IEDCR committee.

Analysing all necessary information and test results, they update the DGHS data, said sources there.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said dengue took a terrifying turn as lives were being lost in Dhaka and elsewhere.

"I have talked to both the mayors of Dhaka city. The Dhaka south mayor told me that the insecticide used for controlling mosquitoes is quite ineffective. I have asked the health minister to ensure that the mayors get effective mosquito repellent," he said at his office.

PM ON DENGUE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed the officials concerned to minimise sufferings of the dengue victims. PM's speech writer Md Nazrul Islam told a media briefing emerging from an inter-ministerial coordination meeting, reports BSS.

"The PMO asked the authorities concerned of the two Dhaka city corporations to strengthen their anti-mosquito drives to check dengue," he said.

She also instructed the health authorities to form a special medical team in each city hospital to ensure smooth and proper treatment of dengue patients. A decision was also taken to observe a "den-gue awareness week" from today.

The PMO asked all government officials to clean their respective offices and to prevent dengue, alongside motivating people to keep their residences and neighbourhoods clean by removing stagnant clean water from different pots, particularly flower tubs, air conditioners and refrigerators.

16 officials suspended over graft

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are from the housing and public works ministry while the remaining four are from the science and technology ministry, he said.