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PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK

Mawa-Bhanga route to open in June 2021

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to open a portion of the rail route connecting Dhaka to Jashore through the Padma bridge by June 2021 as the problems in the rail project's design have been resolved.

“We hope the 42-kilometer section of the rail line from Mawa to Bhanga will be opened at the time of the bridge's inauguration in June 2021,” Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said yesterday.

He was briefing reporters at the capital's Rail Bhaban on his recent visits to China and India.

On August 29, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said the Padma Bridge project saw an overall progress of 73 percent, and the bridge would be open to traffic by June 2021.

Sujan yesterday said the construction of the 172-km rail line began in July 2018 and is scheduled to be completed by December 2024. And they are now working on a priority basis to open the Mawa-Bhanga section by June 2021.

Bhanga has already been connected with the rail network, and people will be able to go to different parts of the country using the new route, he mentioned.

According to Bangladesh Railway's (BR) monthly progress report, the Tk 39,246.79 crore project witnessed 17.15 percent physical progress till last month.

In the last fiscal year, the BR had to return a huge amount of money to the state exchequer as the project

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits the cockpit of “Rajhangsha”, the fourth Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, after commissioning the new aircraft at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Suspended univ journo now ‘getting death threats’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The young journalist who was suspended from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University (BSMRSTU) started receiving death threats.

Fatema Tuz Zinia, who is also the university correspondent for the Daily Sun, filed a general diary with Gopalganj Sadar Police Station seeking security of her life, said Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

In the general diary, she wrote that she started feeling insecure after unknown people attacked her house around 11:00pm on September 1, the general diary added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Zinia said, she also received threats through different media.

“I started receiving phone calls of unknown people who threatened me of dire consequences. Some also threatened me on social

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ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Bangladesh to hold meet with China, Myanmar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will hold a meeting with China and Myanmar on the repatriation of Rohingyas on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next week.

“The meeting may be held on September 24 or 25,” a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star after a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

The meeting comes after two failed repatriation attempts on November 15 last year and August 22 this year as Rohingyas refused to return, citing that they don't have any guarantee of citizenship and safety in Rakhine.

Over 743,000 Rohingyas fled a military crackdown

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TALIBAN ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN

26 killed in blast at president's rally

Ghani unhurt; 22 killed as second explosion rocks central Kabul near US embassy; dozens hurt

AFP, Kabul

Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 48 people and wounded dozens more in two blasts yesterday -- one at a campaign rally for the president and the other in Kabul -- with the insurgents warning of more violence ahead of elections.

The first attack saw a motorcyclist detonate a suicide bomb at a checkpoint leading to a rally where President Ashraf Ghani was addressing supporters in central Parwan province, just north of the capital, killing 26 and wounding 42.

Just over an hour later another blast also claimed by the Taliban rocked central Kabul near the US embassy. Authorities initially did not give casualty figures, but later said 22 people had been killed and a further 38 wounded.

The explosions came after US President Donald Trump abruptly ended talks with the Taliban earlier this month over a deal that would have allowed the US to begin withdrawing troops from its longest war.



In a statement sent to media claiming responsibility for both blasts, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the attack near Ghani's rally was deliberately aimed at disrupting the September 28 elections.

“We already warned people not to attend election rallies, if they suffer any losses that is their own responsibility,” the statement said.

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BANDARBAN

Another case filed against Star reporter

STAR REPORT

Parbatya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad, a platform of Bangalee settlers in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT), filed another case against the Bandarban correspondent of The Daily Star for using the word “indigenous” in a report.

Md Ibrahim, former vice-president of the organisation, on Thursday filed the case with the Bandarban District Session Judge Court against Sanjoy Kumar Barua for using the word “indigenous” in a report titled “Three indigenous villages face land grabbing” published in the daily on July 28.

In the case statement, he alleged that the correspondent used the word by violating the articles 23 (A) and 36 (2) of the country's

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‘I am a kid at war’

Lilly, Asia's Greta Thunberg, on mission to clean Thailand



AFP, Bangkok

Skipping school to glide through a dirty Bangkok canal on a paddleboard, Lilly fishes out rubbish in her mission to clean up Thailand, where the average person uses eight plastic bags every single day.

“I am a kid at war,” the bubbly 12-year-old says after a painstaking hour-long routine picking up cans, bags and bottles bobbing in the canal.

“I try to stay optimistic but I am also angry. Our world is disappearing,” she adds.

Thailand is the sixth largest global contributor to ocean pollution, and plastic is a scourge.

Whether it's for wrapping up street food, takeaway coffees or for groceries, Thais use 3,000 single use bags per year -- 12 times more than someone from the European Union.

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Tigers seek more than a win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be looking for much more than just a win when they step out to take on Zimbabwe in the opener of the Chattogram leg of the ongoing tri-nation T20I series -- involving Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan -- at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium today.

Bangladesh, who were never the clear favourites in the tournament despite being the home side, have struggled throughout.

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PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 18

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:30 6:09 7:45
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 4:45 6:12 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

In the heart of conflict

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA, back from Mali

A loud, screeching alarm pierced through the otherwise peaceful evening in a stretch of the Malian desert in West Africa around 7:30pm. The resting Bangladeshi soldiers -- stationed in the Saharan country as part of a UN peacekeeping mission -- sprung into action at the siren.

Within seconds, the soldiers got on their feet. The air rang heavy with the sound of thumping boots. Those tasked with the safety of this super camp in Gao hurried into a 20 by 40 feet bunker made of empty containers and sand bags and set up defenses. It took them less than 20 seconds to do so, an act perfected by training.

This correspondent -- who had gone as part of a media team visiting the peacekeepers -- was caught in the midst of the action and feared for what was about to come.

Several minutes went by as the soldiers awaited the next signal. Then the

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Hearing a siren, Bangladeshi peacekeepers come out of a bunker to collect their arms to guard against a possible terrorist attack at Gao Super Camp in Mali. The UN Security Council had set up the mission in the Saharan country in 2013 to help maintain security and establish stability. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO:

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Britain's top court enters Brexit crisis

SC examines lawfulness of PM's parliament suspension

AFP, London

Britain's Supreme Court began considering legal challenges to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial decision to suspend parliament for over a month, as the country's political crisis over Brexit intensifies.

The court yesterday started hearing three days of arguments over Johnson's move to shutter, or prorogue, the House of Commons last week until October 14 -- just two weeks before the country is scheduled to leave the European Union.

The politically-charged case, unprecedented in Britain, could lead to parliament being recalled and Johnson's political hand severely weakened in the run-up to the October 31 departure date.

The appeals revolve around “whether it was lawful for the prime minister to advise Her Majesty to order prorogation,” Supreme Court President Brenda Hale said as she opened proceedings.

“This is a serious and difficult question of law. We are not concerned with the wider political issues. The determination of this legal issue will not determine when and how the UK leaves the EU.”

At a small demonstration outside, protesters held up placards reading “Defend Democracy”.

One was dressed as the Incredible Hulk -- a reference to an analogy made by Johnson between the comic book

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