



The much-awaited Payra bridge is scheduled to be made open to public on October 24. But locals and transport businesses say the tolls for the bridge have been set unreasonably high.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bridge declared abandoned over a decade ago still in use

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Although it was declared abandoned over a decade ago, the bridge on the main canal of the Ganges-Kobadak (GK) Irrigation Project on Kushtia-Pragpur road in Bheramara upazila is yet to be removed and there is still no initiative to replace it with a new one. Vehicles are plying over the bridge taking an immense risk.

According to the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Kushtia, the bridge was built in 1962. The bridge is 63.785-metre-long and 10.25-metre-wide. It was declared abandoned in 2009. Cracks appeared in a part of the bridge in 2014. At that time, part of the crack was repaired with

patchwork.

When the concrete collapsed on the east side of the bridge in 2015, Kushtia RHD built a narrow steel bailey bridge on the damaged part of the bridge. Although the arrangement was supposed to be a temporary one, it is still in place. The bridge trembles, when vehicles pass through it.

Due to the narrowness of the bridge, two rows of vehicles cannot simultaneously cross the bridge.

Truck driver Motaleb Hossain said they feel the bridge trembling while climbing crossing the bridge.

"The bridge is a lurking danger and big accidents can happen anytime here especially when heavy vehicles move through it,"

the trucker said.

Mahabul Hasan Rana, president of the District Truck and Tank Lorry Workers Union, said vehicles cannot cross the bridge smoothly. When one passes, the other has to stand on the other side.

Bheramara Upazila Parishad Chairman Akhtaruzzaman Mithu said the bridge needs to be reconstructed soon.

"How much risk the vehicle will take and for how long? The RHD should take immediate action in this regard," he said.

Pius Kumar Sen, sub-divisional engineer of RHD in Kushtia said the bridge construction project has not been approved yet.

He said that they have

been trying to pass the bridge development project every fiscal year over the last six years but to no end.

"I submitted the project again in March this year. As far as I know, it may not be passed," the official said.

Sakirul Islam, the executive engineer of Kushtia RHD, said the project of the bridge has been submitted to the Roads Department through Khulna RHD Zone. From there it was sent to the ministry.

He said that it is probably not in the first list of the ministry's verification and selection.

However, efforts are being taken to include it in the list, he added.

## PM annoyed

FROM PAGE 12

Zahingir's statement went not only against the AL, but also against the country's constitution as Bangabandhu and Liberation War martyrs are part of it, meeting sources quoted Hasina as saying.

The AL chief also said the party's highest forum, the central working committee, in its meeting slated for November 19 will make a decision on the mayor.

Speaking at a programme, Zahingir recently made some comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the number of Liberation War martyrs. Footage of the mayor making the comments went viral on social media.

Incensed by the comments, leaders and activists of AL and its associated organisations demonstrated and demanded punishment for the mayor.

Zahingir, however, termed the allegations "a conspiracy against him" and blamed his political opponents for "spreading propaganda against him".

On October 2, a heated debate took place at the AL president's Dhanmondi office over the issue. The following day, the party issued the show cause notice to the mayor.

## Harder than 2015

FROM PAGE 12

The task will be made all the more difficult as Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin are not attending but sending delegations.

More than 120 world leaders and around 25,000 delegates are expected in Glasgow.

The Paris accord saw 197 nations agree to limit global heating to below 2 degrees but their "nationally determined contributions" (NDCs) -- national plans drawn up to implement the deal -- have been deemed inadequate.

Strengthening those plans will be a key part of negotiations.

"What we're potentially saying to countries is that if your NDC isn't good enough, you're going to have to come back to the table," said Sharma.

He called on the world's biggest emitter China, whose fractious relationship with the West is another obstacle to agreement, to present its NDC.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said Thursday that the current climate situation was "a one-way ticket for disaster" as he stressed the need to "avoid a failure" at COP26.

## India, Pakistan trade blame

FROM PAGE 12

Yahya Khan, alleged that India was eroding the authority of the world body by flaunting the principles of noninterference in neighbours' affairs.

Indian foreign minister Swaran Singh, at a UN day function in New Delhi, said today that Pakistan was unsuccessfully trying to divert the attention of the world by aggressive posturing and build-up of forces and tensions along Indian's borders to cover up its own responsibility for the tragic happenings in East Bengal.

"The international community must realise the urgency and gravity of the problem and the human suffering involved, and discharge a great responsibility devolved on it by acting in a concerted manner," he added.

ON THE WAR FRONT

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector, freedom fighters today demolished a railway culvert near Bhabanipur. Mukti Bahini captured eight Razakars along with a large

quantity of arms and ammunition near Lalpur Police Station. Mukti Bahini in another operation killed five enemy irregulars in the Jagatpur area.

In the Kushtia-Jashore-Khulna sector, Mukti Bahini today raided Shyamnagar Police Station of Satkhira district killing three enemy soldiers. A total of 24 Razakars were held today with 15 rifles by Mukti Bahini guerrillas near Kushtia's Shikarpur area.

In the Dhaka-Cumilla-Chattogram sector, Mukti Bahini guerrillas today ambushed occupation troops in Parshuram and killed six Pakistani Soldiers. On the same day, in another ambush on enemy soldiers near Rajapur, Mukti Bahini inflicted four casualties on the enemy. On the Cumilla-Daudkandi road, a Pakistan Army truck was blown up by Mukti Bahini today. In this action, six enemy soldiers were killed and the truck was completely destroyed.

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## Two workers die

FROM PAGE 12

Defence in Tangail, said the two might have died from inhalation of toxic gases accumulated in the septic tank.

A police team, led by Sarwar Hossain, additional superintendent of Defence in Tangail, visited the spot.

Sazzad Hossain, officer-in-charge

of Delduar Police Station, said the bodies were handed to the families of the deceased after autopsies were carried out on them at Tangail General Hospital.

Police filed an unnatural death case with Delduar Police Station in connection with the incident.

## Vikings explored

FROM PAGE 12

The journal Nature, were able to determine the date Vikings were present by analyzing three pieces of wood from three different trees that had been chopped by Vikings at L'Anse aux Meadows, a national historic site in Newfoundland, Canada. The site has long been revered for being the first known evidence of European presence in the Americas, according to Parks Canada, but the exact date Vikings were present was not known.

Researchers used radiocarbon dating -- a way to estimate age based on the amount of carbon-14 in a living thing -- on the wood to determine the Vikings' arrival. The method allows for a rough estimate, but what really narrowed it down for researchers was a massive solar storm that occurred in 992 AD. The huge bursts of energy emitted from the sun put additional carbon in the atmosphere, thus spiking the amount of carbon in living things for that period of time.

The wooden pieces the Vikings had chopped have still-visible tree rings. One of the rings matched up with the

solar storm, and had 29 growth rings that formed thereafter, meaning that the wood was chopped 29 years after the solar storm occurred in 992 AD -- in 1021.

All of the wooden pieces had been clearly chopped with metal tools, which was evident by their "characteristically clean, low angle-in cuts," researchers said. Tools such as this were not present in Indigenous communities in the area at that time.

In their paper, researchers said that 1021 AD now marks the "earliest known year by which human migration had encircled the planet," proving that Vikings arrived in North America 471 years before Christopher Columbus, who ventured to the Bahamas in 1492.

L'Anse aux Meadows is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, that the organization says has "exceptional archaeological" items, including eight timber-framed turf structures. Those structures, UNESCO says, are built in the same style as ones found in Norse Greenland and Iceland from the same period. Other artifacts found at the site indicate the Vikings produced iron and woodworking products.

## PAYRA BRIDGE

# High toll rates frustrate locals, transport companies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Locals as well as businesses operating transport services on Patuakhali-Barisal Highway, running across the Payra river, are urging the authorities to revise the steep toll rates that have been posted ahead of the formal inauguration of the newly-built Payra bridge.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the four-lane bridge, constructed at a cost of Tk 1,447 crore, today (October 24) via a virtual programme at her Ganobhaban office. With seven kilometres of approach roads on both sides, the bridge is 1.47 kilometres long and 19.7 metres wide. The PM laid its foundation stone on March 19, 2013.

Locals said the toll rates, posted on both sides of the bridge recently, are unaffordable for the general public while transport business owners said if the toll rates are not lowered, the transport fares set by the authorities will also need to be increased to cover for the high toll charges.

The tolls set for different vehicles are as follows: trailer Tk 940, heavy truck Tk 750, medium truck Tk 375, large bus Tk 340, minibus Tk 190Tk 280, agricultural vehicle Tk 225, coaster Tk 190, microbus Tk 150, four-wheel drive Tk 150, sedan Tk 95, 3 to 4-wheeled mechanised vehicle Tk 40, motorcycle Tk 20, and rickshaw, rickshaw-van, bicycles or wheelbarrow Tk 10.

The tolls to cross the bridge are drawing

flak from all quarters concerned, as those have been set two to 7.5 times higher than the fares being charged to cross the river on ferries operated by the government.

Riaz Uddin Mridha, president of Patuakhali Bus Minibus Owners' Association, said transport services operating on the Patuakhali-Barisal route run the risk of getting closed unless the tolls are revised.

Either the tolls for the bridge have to be reduced or the current bus fare of Tk 80 per passenger has to be increased to make the service viable, he claimed.

The issue of high toll rates is also causing a stir in the social media.

Writing on Facebook, one Wahiduzzaman said the bridge is definitely a big achievement for the government. "But since the money will come out of people's pockets, we have objections to the toll charges."

Bus driver Alamgir Hossain said the toll rates for the bridge should be lowered to a reasonable level, as the current rates are set too high.

Asked, Executive Engineer Mir Kamrul Hasan of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Patuakhali said toll rates for a bridge and fares for ferry services are entirely different.

The RHD is no part of setting the tolls as high-ups in the Road Transport and Highways Division and the ministry concerned determine the toll charges, he added.

## Remembering Shamsur Rahman

FROM PAGE 4

He went on to work for a number of media organisations since then, including Radio Pakistan, Daily Pakistan -- later renamed Dainik Bangla after independence, later serving as the editor of Dainik Bangla and Weekly Bichitra from 1977-1987.

After starting at the age of 18, Shamsur penned 66 poetry books till his death on August 17, 2006.

He wrote the famous poem "Asad Er Shirt" during the mass uprising of 1969. During the 1971 Liberation War, he wrote

a number of poems, later published in his poetry collection "Bondi Shibir Theke" in 1972.

"Shadhinota Tumi" is one of his most popular poems, dedicated to the 1971 Liberation War heroes.

He has authored several short stories and novels too.

For his contribution to Bengali literature, he received many prestigious awards, including Bangla Academy Literary Award (1969), Ekushey Padak (1977), and Independence Award (1991).

## 9 killed in deadly

FROM PAGE 12

Police in Lahore would not comment on the claim, but on Friday night said two of its officers had died.

Rana Arif, a Lahore police spokesman told AFP earlier yesterday that officials were carrying out "a defensive operation against the mob... We are only doing shelling to control the crowd."

TLP leader Saad Rizvi was arrested in April when Pakistan's government outlawed the party in response to violent anti-France protests.

Thousands of protesters appeared to be moving toward the capital in a convoy but exact numbers are hard to verify with Police and TLP figures varying wildly.

Police have closed off major roads in Islamabad and Lahore using shipping

containers to block the march.

The party has vowed not to end the protests or enter talks with the government until their leader is released.

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, who had been in Dubai to watch Pakistan compete in the T20 cricket World Cup, returned home on Prime Minister Imran Khan's directive to monitor the situation.

The TLP has waged an anti-France campaign since President Emmanuel Macron defended the right of a satirical magazine to republish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed -- an act deemed blasphemous by many Muslims.

Six police officers were killed in April when the TLP staged days of rallies that shut roads and paralysed Lahore, a sprawling metropolis of over 10 million people.

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