



A damaged section of the Jashore-Khulna highway.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

JASHORE-KHULNA HIGHWAY

Tk 321cr for a botched-up repair work?

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The Jashore-Khulna highway underwent a major overhauling at a cost of Tk 321 crore only last year. But the vital highway that connects country's northern districts with southwestern part of the country, especially with country's second busiest seaport Mongla, has already developed numerous potholes at many locations. The highway is crucial for maintaining supply of coal and fertiliser from Nowapara river port in Jashore to the rest of the country. In Basundia, Prembagh School Gate, Alipur, Bhangagate, Bengal Railgate and Station Bazar areas near Rajghat -- under Abhaynagar upazila of Jashore, the potholes on the

The highway is crucial for maintaining supply of coal and fertiliser from Nowapara river port in Jashore.

highway turn extremely hazardous when those are filled with water following light rain. Trader Nazrul Islam blamed irregularities during the repair work and plying of overloaded vehicles for the dilapidated condition of the Jashore-Khulna highway. Monir Hossain, manager of Toma

Construction, which carried out the repair work on the damaged portion of the highway, claimed that overloaded vehicles have damaged the highway after they completed their work. They were repairing the damaged parts of the highway again, he added. Among various reasons, plying of overloaded vehicles and stockpiling of coal alongside the highway has contributed to its deterioration between Basundia and Nowapara, said SM Moazzem Hossain, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department. Toma Construction is currently working to repair the damaged parts of the highway and the work will be finished soon, he also said.

Faridpur pumpkin farmers all smiles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Pumpkin farmers of Faridpur are elated as they are getting good profit by selling their produces this year. Vegetable traders from different districts including Dhaka, Chattogram, Chandpur and Barishal are purchasing pumpkins from different areas of Faridpur at fair prices. According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) of Faridpur, pumpkins have been cultivated on a total of 215 hectares of land in six upazilas of the district this year compared to 212 hectares last year. Due to the easy cultivation process and less production cost, pumpkin cultivation is gaining popularity among farmers. Sushanta Kumar Mandal, 60, a farmer of Charloujana village under Madhukhali upazila, said, "I have cultivated pumpkin on my 1.20 acres of land this year spending Tk 6,000. I have already sold 150 pumpkins, weighing 750 kg, at Tk 8 per kg compared to Tk 6 last year. I am hoping to sell 500 more this year." Md Ilias Khan, 35, another farmer of

Ashapur village under the same upazila, said that he has cultivated pumpkins on 60 decimals of land spending Tk 6,000. "I have already sold 300 pumpkins weighing 1500 kg, at Tk 10 per kg a week ago. I will be able to sell more pumpkins worth Tk 10,000 this year," he added. Another pumpkin farmer of the same area Md Zahid Sheikh said, "We are happy selling pumpkins this year as we are getting better prices than last year. I have cultivated two acres of land this year spending Tk 10,000. I have already sold pumpkins worth Tk 30,000. I hope I will get Tk 60,000 more from my land." Rafiqul Islam, 40, a vegetable trader from Madhukhali bazar area, said "The pumpkins of our area have a special demand at different markets in Dhaka, Chattogram, Chandpur and Barishal. We are also getting good profit by selling pumpkins." Hazrat Ali, deputy director of Faridpur DAE, said, "The pumpkin farmers have got desired production of pumpkin due to good quality seeds and favourable weather this year and they are happy to have got expected price."



A farmer shows a big pumpkin grown on his land. He brought his produce at a local bazar in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur to sell.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWS

Online

FROM PAGE 12 and video game streaming platforms, the findings showed. "We've been working hard to drive awareness and keep our future generations safe online to address these risks. There is no denying our future generation needs digital skills and are active users of the internet," Grameenphone CEO Yasir Azman reiterated the company's focus to address the issues outlined by the Telenor survey.

Migraine

FROM PAGE 12 It is a primary headache, meaning that it is not caused by a different medical condition. Migraines vary among people and in many, they happen in stages. The first stage can last from a few hours to days. This is known as the "pre-headache" phase. Symptoms during this phase include being sensitive to light, sound or smell, fatigue, mood changes, constipation or diarrhoea. The "aura" phase stems from the nervous system and often involves vision. It can last from 5-20 minutes to less than an hour. Most don't endure this phase but those who do may see black dots, wavy lines, flashes of light, or have tunnel vision. The migraine headache usually lasts from 4 to 72 hours if untreated. During a migraine, you may experience pain on one side of the head, but often on both sides, throbbing pain, sensitivity to light, sound, and nausea. Following a migraine attack, you may feel fatigued for up to a day. Migraines are often left untreated. If you frequently experience symptoms, keep a record and consult a doctor. Seek medical attention immediately if you experience an abrupt, severe headache or headache with fever, stiff neck, confusion, seizures, double vision, numbness or weakness, which could be a sign of a stroke.

War imminent: Yahya

FROM PAGE 12 capturing territory and installing a puppet Bangladesh regime that will be war". And if it comes to that, Yahya claimed, China would not tolerate an attack on Pakistan. "We will get all the weapons and ammunition we need, every assistance short of physical intervention," added Yahya. **INDIRA GANDHI CRITICISES US VIEW ON REFUGEE AID** Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today warned that the influx of East Pakistani refugees had strained India beyond breaking point. Criticising the US stand regarding the Bangladesh issue, she said, "I think the US is taking a rather short/term view of this situation. Perhaps this is because the countries involved are far from the West. But we are living with this horror from day to day -- this exodus of millions of helpless people."

2 judges offer unconditional

FROM PAGE 12 delivering verdict on the matter. On September 29, the bench led by Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam ordered judges Debbbrata and Atikul to submit further explanations before it about their conduct over granting the remand. Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, representing judges Debbbrata and Atikul, on the day requested the HC bench to pardon the lower court judges for their mistakes, saying they are very young officers and lack training. They were sorry and repented their error, he further said. On September 15, the HC bench expressed discontent at the explanations of the two lower court judges, saying that they had "undetermined" the HC. Golam Mostafa, investigation officer in the narcotics case filed against Pori Moni, yesterday appeared before the court in line with its September 29 order. Earlier, the two metropolitan magistrates had apologised to the HC for

'The last, best hope'

FROM PAGE 12 warming at "well below" 2C above pre-industrial levels, and 1.5C if possible. That deal left many crucial details to be worked out, while emissions reductions remain woefully insufficient to avert global warming. In August a bombshell "code red" report from the world's top climate science body warned that Earth's average temperature will hit the 1.5C threshold around 2030, a decade earlier than projected only three years ago. And last week a UN report said even the latest, most ambitious carbon cutting commitments would still lead to "catastrophic" warming of 2.7C. COP26 now marks the "last, best hope to keep 1.5C in reach", said Sharma. "If we act now and we act together we can protect our precious planet," he said. Much rests on commitment from

The Indian prime minister, on a three-week foreign tour, was spending five days in Britain to discuss the deteriorating situation in the sub-continent. **ON THE WAR FRONT** Mukti Bahini today killed one enemy soldier in Birishiri-Bijaipur road in Mymensingh district by mine explosion. Mukti Bahini also raided Dulirgaon area. In this action they killed 12 enemy soldiers and a large number of razakars. Freedom fighters removed telephone lines between Phulpur and Haluaghat on the same day. Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops in Kahur area in Dhaka district, killing two enemy soldiers and injuring three. Mukti Bahini also ambushed Pakistani troops in Noapara of Jashore district killing six and injuring four enemy soldiers. *Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com*

their "unintended mistakes and faults" in placing Pori Moni on remand for the second and third time, saying they had done it in "good faith". They offered apologies in two separate written explanations, which were earlier submitted before the HC. In the explanations, they said they had ordered police to execute the remand of Pori Moni in the presence of a female police officer as per the Supreme Court directives. The metropolitan magistrates also prayed to the HC bench to exonerate them from any proceedings, saying they will be more cautious when passing remand orders in the future. Leading rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) is providing legal assistance to Pori Moni. Lawyer ZI Khan Panna appeared for ASK, while Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, Deputy Attorney General Abu Yahiya Dulal and Assistant Attorney General Md Mizanur Rahman represented the state.

G20 leaders of richer nations -- whose economies account for about 80 percent of carbon pollution. They have collectively committed to the key goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and pledged action on the use of coal, but fell short on a target of zero emissions. **NO FIRM DATE** The pledges by the Group of 20 major economies, who emit nearly 80 percent of carbon emissions, are viewed as crucial to the success of make-or-break UN climate talks taking place in Glasgow over the next fortnight. According to a draft communique obtained by AFP, which several sources said was the final version due to be published later yesterday, the leaders agreed to keep in play key commitments agreed at the landmark 2015 Paris accords.

Rare, ancient

FROM PAGE 12 elaborately carved temples and towering pyramids. Measuring a little over 5 feet (1.6 meters) in length and 2-1/2 feet (80 cm) wide, the canoe was possibly used to transport water from the cenote or deposit ritual offerings, according to a statement from Mexican antiquities institute INAH. The institute described the extraordinary find as "the first complete canoe like this in the Maya area," adding that experts from Paris' Sorbonne University will help with an analysis of the well-preserved wood to pin-point its age and type. A three-dimensional model of the canoe will also be commissioned, the statement added, to facilitate further study and allow for replicas to be made. The canoe is tentatively dated to between 830-950 AD, near the end of the Maya civilization's classical zenith, when dozens of cities across present-day southern Mexico and Central America thrived amid major human achievements in math, writing and art.

20 BNP men

FROM PAGE 12 of the victims of enforced disappearance. "Police suddenly besieged our house when the doa mahfil was going on. At least 20 persons were picked up from the house," Sumon's sister Sanjida Islam Tuli told The Daily Star. BNP North City unit Convener Amanullah Aman and Member Secretary Aminul Haque were present at the house during the incident. Md Shohidullah, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police, said they picked up several persons from the house. "Some of them are accused in different cases. Besides, we have information that they were planning subversive activities," he said. "Legal action against them is underway," he said.

After China spurns, govt up

FROM PAGE 1 These three are among the projects for which Dhaka and Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during Chinese President Xi Jinping's Dhaka visit in October 2016. Joydebpur-Ishwardi and Akhaura-Sylhet projects were approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnecc) around three years ago. The Chinese contractors were selected through direct procurement method without any competitive bidding. The Joydebpur-Mymensingh-Jamalpur dual gauge conversion project has not been approved by the Ecnecc, and negotiations with China Railway International Group has yet to be completed. The latest developments will result in further delay in the implementation of the projects and prolong people's wait for better train services from the capital to the north-east and north-west regions, officials told this newspaper. Some 27 projects, including multiple mega-projects, were earmarked for implementation with the \$20 billion pledged from China, but getting the funds from China has been a dawdling process. So far, loan agreements have been signed for only eight of the projects. Four, out of 27 projects, were about the railways sector. But, only the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project could win China's loan. In November 2018, the government took up a project to turn the 174km Joydebpur-Ishwardi rail line into dual-gauge double lines. The project deadline was set in December 2024. The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation was supposed to implement the project and the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase in December 2018 approved a Tk 11,586.68 crore proposal for it. The BR in March 2019 sought a loan for the project from the Chinese embassy in Dhaka through the ERD. On seven occasions in the last two years, the BR reminded the embassy about the loan. In the last letter sent in January this year, the BR asked the Chinese government to expedite the process of signing the loan deal, stressing the importance of synchronisation of the two projects -- the rail lines and the under-construction Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Railway Bridge on the Jamuna river -- in reaping the desired benefits. In another development, the PMO in October last year, formed a committee to review the negotiated contract prices of three projects involving China. As part of measures to bring down the cost of the Joydebpur-Ishwardi double-line project, the PMO in November last year directed the BR to slash Tk 1,495.52 crore (12.91 percent) from the project's contract price of Tk 11,586.68 crore approved by the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase. China was supposed to provide Tk 8,756.75 crore for the Tk 14,250.61-crore project.

It also asked the BR to reduce the cost of the Akhaura-Sylhet project by Tk 3,354.31 crore which is 20.8 percent of the total estimated cost. The Ecnecc in April 2019 approved the Tk 16,104.45-crore project to convert the metre-gauge railway line into dual gauge from Akhaura to the Sylhet section linking the capital to the Sylhet divisional headquarters. The project titled "Conversion of Metre Gauge Rail into Dual Gauge in Akhaura-Sylhet Section of Bangladesh Railway" aims to convert 225km metre-gauge line into 239km dual gauge line by June 2025. China is supposed to finance 66.16 percent of the total project cost. Both the Chinese contractors disagreed with the revised costs and conveyed the message to the BR earlier this year. Moreover, the PMO also asked the department concerned to slash Tk 1851.28 crore from the proposed contract price of Tk 8,808.88 crore for the Joydebpur-Mymensingh-Jamalpur project. **THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT** In August this year, the Railways Ministry, through ER, wrote to the Chinese government to re-evaluate its decision, but China, through its High Commission in Dhaka, last month informed the ERD that it would not change its decision. Meanwhile, the railways ministry, following a meeting on June 9 this year, apprised the PMO over the problems regarding the Akhaura-Sylhet project. The PMO recently conveyed to the Railways Ministry the prime minister's directives to search alternative funds for the two projects, BR sources said. This correspondent talked with three BR officials to know whether China formally informed Bangladesh that it would not fund these projects. But they could not give any information about it. However, in Wednesday's letter sent to the ERD, the railways ministry said China has declined to fund the Akhaura-Sylhet project. Meanwhile, the BR already started talking with Japan for funding the Joydebpur-Ishwardi project and JICA representatives recently held a meeting with the railway secretary over the issue, a BR official said. "Japan is funding the Bangabandhu Railway Bridge and they are aware that the bridge would not be effective without the expansion of the rail link. So, we have started the talks with a positive note. But it would take some more time to know whether Japan will actually finance the project or not," the official said, wishing not to be named. Meanwhile, IRCON International Limited, an Indian government company, in March this year wrote to Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujaan expressing interest to execute two railway projects, including Akhaura-Sylhet, through funding from Exim Bank of India. But officials said they did not receive any formal proposal from the Indian government in this regard.