



A woman sits beside a handloom, holding a traditional hookah of the hills at the Parbatya Mela organised at Sheikh Hasina Chittagong Hill Tracts Complex in the capital yesterday. The four-day fair includes traditional food, clothes and other items of the hill tracts, and cultural performances by artists from Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A celebration of culture

4-day Parbatya Mela starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was as if a piece of life on hills were brought to the capital. In this carnival of exchanging cultures, the people of the hills gathered to give a glimpse of their lives to the citizens of living in concretes.

Dhakaites were seen busy browsing through traditional clothes or tasting the flavours brought fresh from the hills.

Such was the sight at "Parbatya Mela" currently ongoing at Sheikh Hasina Chittagong Hill Tracts Complex yesterday.

The four-day fair has been organised by the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, aiming to introduce and promote the products of the small ethnic communities.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan inaugurated the fair as chief guest with Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Minister Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing in the chair.

At the end of the inaugural event, people started gathering on the complex premises. The shops opened, with bits and pieces of Bandarban, Rangamati, Khagrachhari in them.

Traditionally cooked dishes from the hill tracts were being sold at some stalls, including the famous Kola Pitha, Bora Pitha, Sanni Pitha, bamboo chicken and bamboo fish.

Meanwhile, many were decorated with agricultural products and fruits, including Binni rice, jhum pineapple, orange, perennial jackfruit, coconut kachu and Banglakala.

Other stalls displayed traditional "Pahari" clothes and garments, popularly known as bahari khami, lungi, gamchha and ornaments like chokers, hansuli and jhumka.

A total of 91 stalls will be set up on the complex premises. The fair will be open for everyone from 10:00am to 9:00pm every day till Saturday. Cultural events have been scheduled for each evening where artists from Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari will perform.



AN ALTERNATIVE gateway to Dhaka

RHD, Chinese consortium to sign deal to turn Hatirjheel-Amulia-Demra highway into 4-lane expressway

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The project to upgrade Hatirjheel-Amulia-Demra highway into a four-lane expressway is finally moving forward. The planned thoroughfare will work as an alternative gateway to Dhaka's centre from Chattogram and Sylhet, and help reduce traffic congestion.

To implement the project under public-private partnership (PPP), Roads and Highways Department (RHD) will sign a contract with a Chinese consortium on Sunday, officials said.

After signing the contract, the consortium will get a nine-month period to start physical work. Within this time, project authorities will have to hand over land, and the consortium will have to manage funds, they said.

Once the work starts, it is expected to take four years to build the controlled-access expressway.

The consortium of China Communications Company Ltd and China Road and Bridge Corporation will invest Tk 2,094 crore, and the government Tk 1209.6 crore.

Once the expressway is open to public, the current 16.5 km route from Hatirjheel to Demra will be reduced to 13 km, and it will only take around 10 minutes to reach one end, instead of about an hour. However, people will

AT A GLANCE

- » Contract to be signed on Sunday
- » Consortium to get 9-month period to start physical work
- » Expected to take 4yrs to build the expressway
- » Consortium to invest Tk 2,094cr, govt Tk 1,209.6cr
- » Design of expressway almost finalised
- » Consortium will finance, build, operate, maintain road for 25yrs



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Once expressway is open to public, the current 16.5km route from Hatirjheel to Demra will be reduced to 13km, and it will only take around 10 minutes to reach one end, instead of about an hour. However, people will have to pay a toll for using the road.

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The development came five years after the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the project in principle in January 2016. This is the second PPP project under RHD that has reached this stage.

RHD is working on six PPP projects,

but physical work for only one, upgrading Dhaka Bypass Road into a four-lane expressway, has started. The other projects are at preparatory stages.

HOW WILL THE EXPRESSWAY BENEFIT TRAFFIC?

Dhaka is connected to two major cities, Chattogram and Sylhet, by two national

highways, Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet. But, entrance and exit points of the two busiest highways are located at the capital's Jatrahari area.

Vehicles, after entering Dhaka through the highways, put huge pressure on the roads and often create severe traffic congestion in the southern part of the city.

So, the government planned to turn the existing Hatirjheel-Rampura-Banasree-Shekher Jayga-Amulia-Demra route into a controlled-access expressway to reduce traffic congestion in Dhaka and provide an alternative gateway to the city's centre.

The expressway will be connected to Simrail area on Dhaka-Chattogram highway, where a multi-layer flyover will be built to keep traffic on the highway uninterrupted, officials said.

On two sides of the expressway, there would be toll-free roads, and four interchanges on Chattogram Road, at Demra Staff Quarter and Meradia, and on Rampura Bridge will be used to enter and exit the expressway and for toll collection, they added.

After the project was approved, PPP authorities appointed consultants to carry out feasibility studies and other work.

In January last year, Executive

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GRAFT CASE

Tufan Sarkar gets HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Tufan Sarkar, a suspended Srani League leader of Bogura, who came to the limelight after allegedly raping a college girl and shaving heads of the victim and her mother in July, 2017, got bail yesterday in a money laundering case.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice AKM Zahurul Huq granted the bail to Tufan, following a petition filed by him, seeking bail in the case.

Police lodged the case on October 29 last year with a Bogura Police Station against Tufan on charge of laundering Tk 33.34 lakh.

Yesterday, the HC granted him bail considering that Tufan has been in jail for a long period of time in different cases, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star.

He said the state will move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the HC judgement.

Lawyer Rafiqul Islam Sohel, who appeared for Tufan, could not say whether his client can walk out of jail following the verdict.

53pc drowning deaths go unreported: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Bangladesh has one of the highest under-five drowning rates in the world, and drowning remains the dominant reason for child deaths in the country, a recent media monitoring report revealed that 53 percent of drowning deaths go unreported.

Society for Media and Suitable Human-communication Techniques (SoMaSHTe), in association with Global Health Advocacy Incubator, conducted the report - analysing drowning incidents of 2021 in five upazilas of Chandpur, Cumilla and Patuakhali - and found that although 51 incidents of death by drowning occurred in the upazilas, media reported only 24.

The study also found that although 2,155 drowning deaths (including that of 1,799 children) occurred across the country in the past two years, the media only covered news on 1,426 deaths.

The data was revealed yesterday at a

national consultation programme titled "Role of Media in Preventing Child Drowning in Bangladesh", organised by SoMaSHTe at The Daily Star Centre.

Md Rezaul Haque, director (research and communication) at SoMaSHTe, presented the findings.

Eighty percent of children under five drowned within 20 metres of the family home, the report mentioned, adding that lack of adequate supervision results in 70 percent of deaths among under-five children.

Planning Minister MA Mannan joined the programme as chief guest. He said the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has developed a detailed, pro-forma project, with a budget of Tk 309 crore, which will enable institutional supervision of children under five through 8,000 community based day-care centres. The project is now awaiting approval from Eneec.

Rasheda K Chaudhury, executive director of CAMPE, said media can play a vital role in preventing these deaths.

At the event, the planning minister also distributed crests and certificates to three national-level media professionals - Nilima Jahan, staff reporter of The Daily Star; Zahidur Rahman, staff reporter of the Daily Samakal; and Partha Shankar Saha, senior reporter of the daily Prothom Alo, for their reports on child drowning issues, under SoMaSHTe media fellowship programme.



Demanding BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's immediate release and better treatment abroad, Dhaka north and south city units of the party formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

PRAYER
TIMING
JAN 6



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-30	12-45	4-00	5-30	7-00
Jamaat	6-05	1-15	4-15	5-35	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION