



Building a stronger and safer nation for 70 years

Our victories are for the people



HIGHEST SELLING CEMENT for more than **15 years**



ENERGY SECTOR

India to step up co-op with neighbours

Says Jaishankar, conveys Modi's invitation for Hasina to visit India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said India will take lead in structuring partnership for production, transmission and trade of energy, especially hydropower, between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

"India looks forward to a stronger sub-regional cooperation on connectivity and energy sector and other areas. Particularly, the hydropower domain offers opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation between our countries in the region," he said.

Dhaka has been pushing for regional hydropower initiative as it aims to get more renewable energy to achieve climate mitigation target.

"India is a large producer and consumer of energy and we are very glad to work with our neighbours in that regard, including in the BBIN [a sub-regional grouping among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal] framework."



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Home-goers boarding speedboats at Munshiganj's Shimulia ferry terminal to cross the Padma. The pressure of passengers there started increasing after 4:00pm as Dhaka city dwellers left the capital in droves yesterday, the last working day before Eid. Despite it being a riskier mode of transport, people opted to journey by speedboat as it can cross the river quicker than ferries and launches.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

PADMA BRIDGE

Toll likely to be 1.5 times that of ferry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The toll of the under-construction Padma bridge may be at least 1.5 times higher than the average toll paid on ferries plying the Padma.

The Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday approved Bangladesh Bridge Authority's proposal in this regard.

The summary of the proposal was sent to the Prime Minister's Office for her approval yesterday, Quazi Muhammad Ferdous, chief engineer of BBA, told The Daily Star yesterday.

If the PM gives go-ahead, a private car will have to pay Tk 750 as toll, while the ferry toll is Tk 500.

A bike on the bridge would have to pay Tk 100, while on ferry it would pay Tk 70. A minibus on the bridge would pay Tk 1,400, while on the ferry Tk 950.

The construction work of the Padma Bridge, which is being built to establish direct connection between the capital and the southern region, is now at its final stage.

Once operational, the 6.15km bridge will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts by road and rail, providing relief to tens of thousands, who often struggle at the only two ferry terminals.

Both these terminals struggle with the amount of ferry passengers ahead of major festivals like Eid.

The bridge -- a dual carriageway with a single rail line on a separate level -- is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

After several revisions, the deadline of the project was set at June 2023, including a one-year defect liability period, for which the cost rose to Tk 30,193 crore from

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

EID HOME RUSH

Traffic snarl-ups at city's exit points

STAR REPORT

A huge number of city dwellers left the capital yesterday as it was their last working day before Eid-ul-Fitr.

The city's bus terminals, railway stations and the Sadarghat launch terminal, throughout the day, saw a mad rush of holidaymakers leaving Dhaka to celebrate the festival with their families.

Although no major tailback on highways was reported, passengers witnessed traffic gridlock at exit points.

Vehicular movement was slow on the Dhaka-Nabinagar highway in Savar. But traffic was smooth on all other highways across the country, said road transport and bridges ministry officials.

Meanwhile, many home-goers alleged that bus operators charged them higher than normal fares.

"Normally, I travel to Bonpara of Natore from Dhaka at Tk 500. But today [yesterday], I had to pay Tk 900," said Shihabuddin

while talking to The Daily Star at the Gabtoli bus terminal.

Faruk Hossain, an official of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association, said, "Usually, 700-800 buses leave the Gabtoli terminal daily. But we hope that over 1,300 buses will leave today [yesterday]."

A large number of holidaymakers started thronging the Kamalapur Railway Station after yesterday afternoon.

At least four trains were delayed for around half an hour to two hours due to the pressure of passengers, said railway officials.

Around 100 launches were scheduled to leave the Sadarghat terminal yesterday, while 70-75 ply daily normally, said Alamgir Kabir, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority. On the Paturia-Daulatdia and Aircha-Kazirhat ferry routes, the pressure of vehicles increased yesterday, though no long tailback was noticed there.

"I did not face much traffic at

the terminal today [yesterday]. I could board a ferry within an hour," said Abul Kashem, who was travelling to Faridpur.

The authorities concerned have made separate lanes for small and large vehicles near the terminals to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

Some 200 vehicles were seen waiting at the Paturia terminal around 2:00pm yesterday.

Currently, 20 ferries are operating on the Paturia-Daulatdia route and four on the Aricha-Kazirhat route, said BIWTC officials.

At the Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj, the pressure of vehicles was high in the morning, which resulted in a long tailback. Vehicles had to wait for around five to six hours to get to the ferries. But the situation improved later.

However, launches and speedboats faced high pressure of passengers the whole day.

[Our Munshiganj and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report.]

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Amend draft to ensure rights of citizens

Amnesty International, ASK urge government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft data protection act should be amended to ensure that citizen's rights to privacy are not violated, Amnesty International and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) said in separate statements.

While both organisations appreciated the steps taken to acknowledge the right to personal data protection, they both expressed concerns that certain vague provisions of the draft law will violate constitutional rights.

Amnesty International, which sent a statement as feedback to the ICT division, commented, "The provisions in their current forms may empower law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and other authorities of the state to access personal data of an individual on the basis of facilitating an investigation or court procedure without judicial oversight."

They said that these exemptions give authorities the legitimacy to violate an individual's right to privacy solely on the basis of preventing law and order deterioration.

Vague terminologies, such as "sovereignty", "integrity", and "friendly relations with foreign state" can be used to legitimise these actions, said

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

DUTCH EXHIBIT

Agri ministry defends its decision to send officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agricultural ministry defended the participation of officials', in phases, in a six-month-long exhibition in the Netherlands, without mentioning the exact number of delegates.

The day before, The Daily Star reported that at least 100 ministry officials will participate at the international horticulture exhibition.

The fair, which began on April 13, will continue til October 9 in the Dutch city of Almere.

It is held once every decade. This year, the theme is "Growing Green Cities". Thirty-three other countries apart from Bangladesh will be participating.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



PHOTO COURTESY: TUHIN WADUD

Two black-crowned night herons are infighting somewhere in Rangpur city. Although this bird is seen across the country, its population declined largely over the last few decades. The bird mostly lives on frog, fish, water insect and clam. The photo was taken recently.

Giant ancient reptile tooth found in Alps

AFP, Washington



The fossils of three ichthyosaurs -- giant marine reptiles that patrolled primordial oceans -- have been discovered high up in the Swiss Alps, and include the largest ever tooth found for the species, a study said yesterday.

With elongated bodies and small heads, the prehistoric leviathans weighed up to 80 metric tonnes (88 US tons) and grew to 20 metres (yards), making them among the largest animals to have ever lived.

They first appeared 250 million years ago in the early Triassic, and a smaller, dolphin-like subtype survived until 90 million years ago. But the gigantic ichthyosaurs, which comprised most of the species, died out 200 million years ago.

Unlike dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs barely left a trace of fossil remains, and "why that is remains a great mystery to this day," said Martin Sander of the University of Bonn, lead author of the paper in the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology.