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## 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 BBN [a sub-regional grouping among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal] framework."



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## 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

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## 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 till 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.

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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.



PHOTO COURTESY: TUFIN WAUDU

# 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.

