

Dhaka, Delhi to work together for regional dev

Says foreign minister; Bangladesh provides medical assistance to Sri Lanka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India will work together to strengthen regional cooperation and development -- an initiative that comes in the wake of Russia-Ukraine crisis and Covid-19 pandemic that have seriously affected the supply chains and disrupted economies.

"We have discussed the issue with India during the recent visit of Indian External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar. We discussed how to strengthen regional cooperation. We will be holding more regional meetings," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday. He said initially the two countries are discussing and then eventually it will be expanded to the other South Asian countries.

"Our prime minister wants not only the development of Bangladesh but also the regional development and cooperation because it is more sustainable," Momen said.

During his one-day visit to Dhaka on April 28, Jaishankar also spoke of improving regional value chain and energy cooperation, especially hydropower, in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN).

The foreign minister said this at a ceremony at the State Guest House Padma in the capital.

The event was organised to hand over a few boxes of medicine as a token to Sri Lankan High Commissioner

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana offer prayers at the graves of their martyred family members at Banani Graveyard in the capital on Wednesday, a day after Eid.

PHOTO: PID

Gas supply resumes in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Gas supply has resumed in different areas in Dhaka city and adjoining areas from yesterday afternoon, said a Titas Gas announcement.

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited suspended the gas supply at 10:00pm on May 3 (Eid Day) for a period of 48 hours in different areas including Amin Bazar, Hemayetpur, Savar EPZ, Ashulia, Manikganj, Dhamrai due to a maintenance work, according to the announcement.

It also said that some areas of the capital may experience low pressure in gas supply during the same period which include Gabtoli, Mazar Road, Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi.

Meanwhile, the Gas Transmission Company of Bangladesh (GTCL) in a public notice had also informed that it will suspend gas supply to two high-pressure pipelines for maintenance and replacement works for 48 hours from 10:00pm on May 3.

PRAYER
TIMING

MAY 6

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:15	12:30	4:45	6:21	7:45
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

‘Bilateral relations at risk’

ERD warns railways ministry over decision to cancel China’s funding for project



The move to find an alternative financier for the project, for converting the existing Akhaura-Sylhet metre-gauge (MG) railroad into a dual-gauge (DG) one, may also create problems in the future, when trying to undertake projects with Chinese funds.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Dhaka, Beijing sign MoU for Akhaura-Sylhet line in 2016
- Ecne approved project in April 2019
- PMO directed BR to slash cost by Tk 3,354.31cr in Nov 2020
- Contractors declined to work with reduced budget
- Railways ministry in Nov 2021 asked ERD for alternative funding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The finance ministry’s Economic Relations Division (ERD) has warned the railways ministry that a “unilateral” decision to cancel China’s funding for a Bangladesh Railway (BR) project may deteriorate bilateral relations between the two countries.

The move to find an alternative financier for the project, for converting the existing Akhaura-Sylhet metre-gauge (MG) railroad into a dual-gauge (DG) one, may also create problems in the future, when trying to undertake projects with Chinese funds, it said.

ERD, which deals with foreign-funding related issues on behalf of the government -- in a letter to the railways ministry on April 26 -- also mentioned that the Chinese embassy in Dhaka had expressed concerns over the project on several occasions.

ERD’s letter came around two weeks after the Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming wrote to the finance minister to revive negotiations between

BR and the selected Chinese company for signing a commercial deal for early commencement of the Tk 16,104.45-crore project.

Akhaura-Sylhet project was among those projects for which Dhaka and Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding -- during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s Dhaka visit in October 2016 -- for implementing them with Chinese assistance.

Ecne in April 2019 approved the project to convert the 225-km MG line into a 239-km DG line by June 2025, to improve rail link between the capital and Sylhet.

China is supposed to finance 66.16 percent of the total project cost, and China Railway Construction Bridge Engineering Bureau Group Co Ltd (CRBG) was appointed as the contractor to implement the project.

But, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) in October 2020 had formed a committee to review the negotiated contract prices of the three projects involving China, which included the Akhaura-Sylhet one.

The two other projects are Joydebpur-Ishwardi Double Line and Joydebpur-Mymensingh-Jamalpur DG Conversion. Ecne approved the Tk 14,250.61-crore project in November 2018 to make Joydebpur-Ishwardi section a DG double line. The third project has not been approved.

In November that year, PMO directed BR to slash the cost of Akhaura-Sylhet project by Tk 3,354.31 crore, 20.8 percent of the total outlay.

PMO also directed to slash the cost of two other projects. But contractors of all three projects declined to work with the reduced budget, BR document shows.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government in early last year informed Bangladesh that it would not fund the Joydebpur-Ishwardi project for a “lack of in-depth preliminary work and insufficient feasibility study”.

China declined to review the decision following Bangladesh’s request.

In this situation, the railways ministry in November last year wrote to ERD, asking

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Padma Bridge to open next month Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the much-awaited Padma Bridge will be inaugurated in June.

"Padma Bridge will be opened in June for vehicular movement," he told journalists after attending a programme at his Companiganj village home in Noakhali.

About BNP’s movement, Quader, also the Awami League general secretary, said BNP called for movement for 26 times in the last 13 years but they failed to do so. Now people laugh at BNP listening to its call for movement, he mentioned.

Quader, a member of parliament from Noakhali-5 (Companiganj-Kabirhat), also said, "I couldn't come to my area for a long time due to

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‘EMBEZZLING TK 304CR’ 5 members of NSU trustee board sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against five members of North South University’s (NSU) trustee board and the managing director of a development company for allegedly misappropriating about Tk 304 crore.

NSU Board of Trustees Chairperson Azim Uddin Ahmed, its members -- MA Kashem, Benajir Ahmed, Rehana Rahman and Mohammed Shajahan -- and Ashaloy Housing and Developers Managing Director Amin Md Hilaly were accused in the case.

ACC Deputy Director Farid Ahmed Patwary filed the case with its integrated district office in Dhaka yesterday.

According to the case statement, NSU made an agreement with the company for buying land in Jangir, Gutiab and Pitoganj mouza of Narayanganj’s Rupganj upazila.

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Only a handful of vehicles are seen in Motijheel area in the capital yesterday. As the Eid spirit has not yet died down, even on the first day after the holidays, Dhaka seemed to be comparatively empty and traffic-free.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ANANTA MURDER Death reference reaches HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The documents of writer and blogger Ananta Bijoy Das murder case, in which four persons were sentenced to death, have reached as death reference to the High Court for the examination of the trial court verdict.

Officials of the Sylhet tribunal brought the case documents, including the judgment, to the HC recently, Supreme Court Spokesman Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

If a lower court sentences any person

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Preparing to face possible cyclone Says state minister for disaster management

STAR REPORT

A cyclonic system that developed near India’s remote Andaman Islands on Wednesday could intensify and hit the coast of Bangladesh, said State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Md Enamur Rahman yesterday.

"The system is expected to turn into a depression on May 9 and will intensify gradually," he said at a media briefing in Dhaka.

"No prediction has been made yet over the landfall of the system. The authorities will be able to estimate the storm’s landfall time in Bangladesh after the low pressure and cyclone are formed," he added.

If the system develops into a storm, it will be called "Cyclone Asani", a name given by Sri Lanka.

The cyclone is likely to move northwards via Odisha and West Bengal and hit Satkhira in Bangladesh, said the state minister.

The government is taking all-out preparation

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