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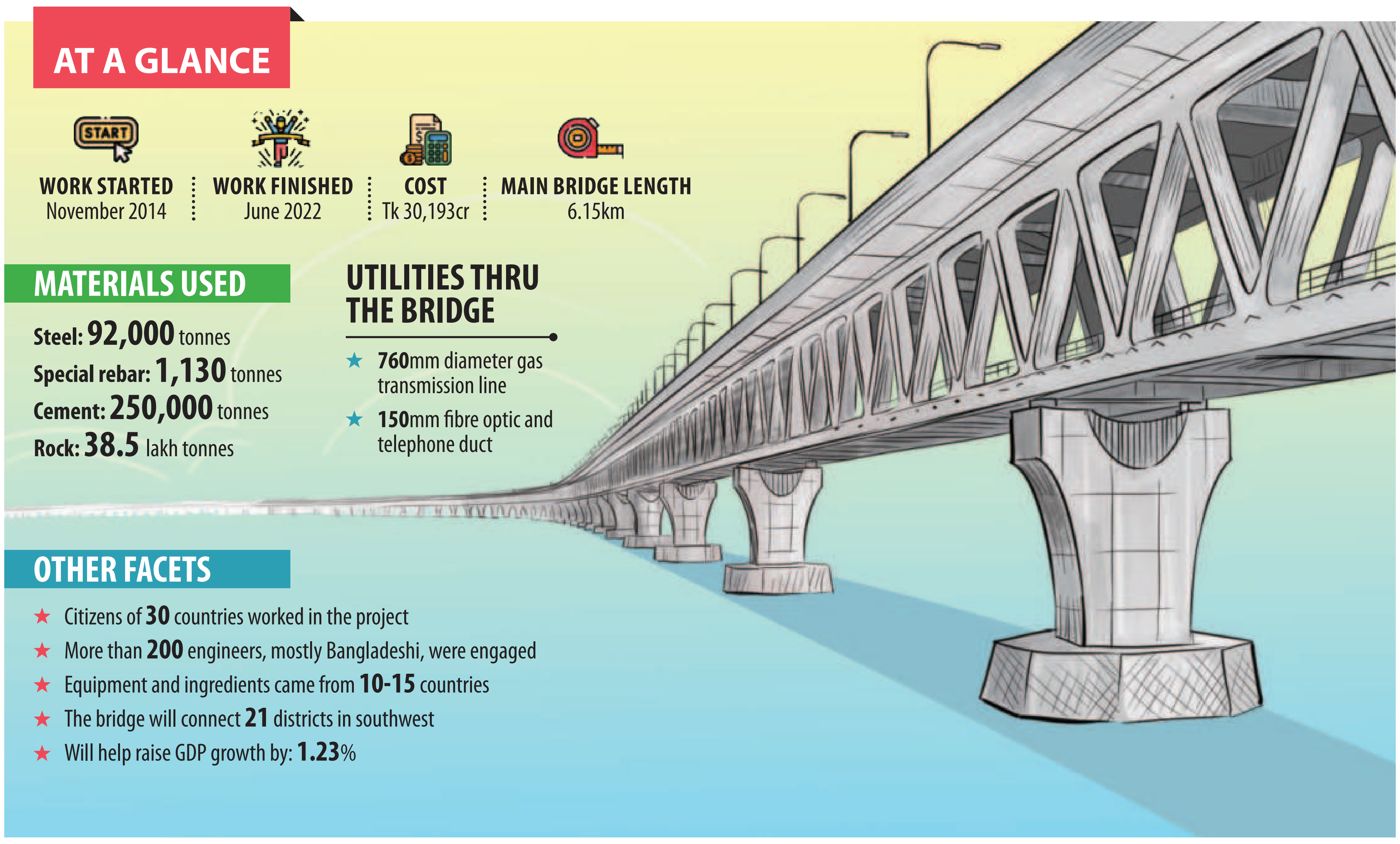

Padma Bridge: A display of local industries' prowess

Bangladeshi companies supplied major raw materials

MAHMUDUL HASAN

While the construction of the Padma Bridge with the country's own fund has buoyed the nation's confidence, the longest bridge in Bangladesh has also given an opportunity to local industries to demonstrate their prowess to both local and global audiences that they can make quality materials.

A number of key ingredients used in building the bridge are made in Bangladesh and local industries supplied the construction materials.

For example, about 92,000 tonnes of steel were used in the construction of the main structure of the project. Local millers supplied most of the steel, with BSRM alone accounting for 88,000 tonnes or 96 per cent of the total.

Dewan Abdul Quader, executive engineer of the bridge project, says the local companies have contributed a lot to the bridge's construction and they have also received a major boost.

"Around 30 per cent of the contribution to this project came from local sources."

The contribution of the local companies was more in supplying rods, cement, sands and stones in the river training, building approach roads on both sides of the bridge, and other infrastructures related to the mega project.

Beginning construction in November 2014, the 6.15-kilometre bridge will connect 21 districts in the southwestern region to the rest of Bangladesh after its inauguration tomorrow. Built at the cost of nearly Tk 30,200 crore, the bridge is expected to spur Bangladesh's economic growth through increased connectivity and economic activities.

Tapan Sengupta, deputy managing director at BSRM Group of Companies, said more than 95 per cent of the rod was supplied by BSRM from the beginning to the end.

He credited the quality of products of international standards produced by the biggest steel manufacturer in Bangladesh for it being selected to meet the demand for the key construction material.

"We were chosen because of our ability in ensuring the quality of products and services and the capability of delivering products," he said.

"Padma Bridge is the pride of the country and we are proud to have supplied locally manufactured rods for such a prestigious project."

According to Sengupta, there was no complaint about BSRM products from the construction firm.

What is more, it kept its factory open during lockdowns in order to guarantee an uninterrupted supply for the mega project.

About 2.5 lakh tonnes of cement were used in the main structure of Padma Bridge and all of them came from domestic sources.

Of the volume, Scan Cement provided around 2.25 lakh tonnes alone.

Bashundhara Cement, Crown Cement, Abul Khair Group's Shah Cement and Seven Circle Group's Seven Rings Cement have also supplied the item to complete the construction of various components of the bridge.

"Our materials, manufactured in Bangladesh, were used in the columns of the main structure," said Sayef Nasir, director for sales at HeidelbergCement Bangladesh, which markets Scan Cement.

"Our quality was the key parameter for being selected as a supplier of cement."

Premier Cement Mills Ltd supplied cement to the bridge project along with the undergoing Padma Rail Link Project.

"Padma Bridge is a milestone project. We are proud to be part of it," said Mohammed Amirul Haque, managing director of the manufacturer.

Not only steel and cement, locally made cables were also used in the bridge for its lighting, various establishments on both sides of the Padma Bridge and sub-stations.

BRB Cable Industries Ltd, the country's largest cable manufacturer, supplied various types of cables used in the project.

"We have been supplying cables for the last three

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Time for Padma Bridge Plus

Selim Raihan, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, co-authored a study on the economic impact of the Padma Bridge in 2010 when the government had been at the final stage of beginning its construction works.

As the nation is set to celebrate the opening of the long-cherished bridge, Raihan, also executive director of research organisation Sanem, shares his views with The Daily Star's ***Sohel Parvez.***

TDS: It is a great moment for the nation that Bangladesh is going to open the long-cherished Padma Bridge. As an economist, what is your reaction?

Raihan: The Padma Bridge connects southern districts to the economic lifeline of Bangladesh, the Dhaka-Chattogram economic corridor. For a long time, these southern districts had been cut off from this economic corridor. Until today, communication and transportation over the river Padma had been solely reliant on ferries. This mode of transportation is not only inconvenient but is also filled with uncertainty, and it is far from seamless.

The Padma Bridge will open up opportunities for plenty of benefits to the southern region. The economic activities, that were previously impossible to carry out in the southern districts due to poor connectivity, will now be possible. The southern districts in Bangladesh have not experienced any industrialisation. As a result, the lack of overall economic development and poverty are major issues in that region.

Climate change is also having a significant

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STOCKS

DSEX ▲	CASPI ▲
0.15%	0.08%
6,327.65	18,618.84

COMMODITIES

Gold ▲	Oil ▲
$1,840.91	$105.43
(per ounce)	(per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS

MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
▲ 0.86%	▲ 0.08%	▼ 0.02%	▲ 1.62%
52,265.72	26,171.25	3,092.80	3,320.15

SM Shamsul Arefin

Uttara Finance MD removed

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday removed SM Shamsul Arefin from the post of managing director of Uttara Finance and Investments Ltd (UFIL) for his alleged involvement in financial irregularities.

The central bank sent a letter to the board of the non-bank financial institution to this effect, saying Arefin was involved in financial anomalies, adversely impacting the interest of depositors.

Rahman Rahman Huq, a chartered accountant firm, recently carried out a special audit into the irregularities committed

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Talks ongoing to buy wheat from Russia

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh yesterday edged closer to finalising a deal over buying 200,000 tonnes of wheat from Russia under a government-to-government contract in order to build up public food stocks to carry out various social safety net programmes.

"Russia already has offered to export two lakh tonnes of wheat to Bangladesh. Besides, a letter has been sent to the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi to import wheat from India at government and private levels," Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder told parliament yesterday.

In reply to a lawmakers' query, he said the foreign ministry has approached different wheat exporting countries as the prices of wheat and flour has gone up along with various food grains due to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The move comes as public food distribution has been increasing amidst soaring prices of essential commodities, including the staple rice and the ongoing flood in the northeast division of Sylhet and a number of northern districts.

Bangladesh's public and private sectors have been importing wheat from India. But the supplies came to halt after India banned shipments to contain domestic prices.

Wheat flour hit Tk 40.89 per kilogramme in May, the highest since March 2008 when the price was Tk 42.25 each kilogramme.

"We want to buy and they also want to supply wheat to us. We have discussed a number of issues and we will sit again on July 4," said a senior official of the food ministry after a virtual meeting with his counterpart.

The meeting is expected to finalise prices and shipment of the grain, said officials.

Russia, the world's biggest wheat exporter, has been supplying the grain to Bangladesh under state arrangements since fiscal year 2013-14.

In the current fiscal year, the government bought 300,000 tonnes of wheat from Russia, three times that in the previous year.

The food ministry official said

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