



A new DAWN for Bangladesh

Nation rejoices as PM opens Padma Bridge today

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

There are some epic moments that make a nation proud.

For Bangladesh, one such occasion is about to unfold as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opens the Padma Multipurpose Bridge today.

The 6.15km bridge, which has already been hailed as a huge technological accomplishment over one of the most challenging rivers in the world, is far more than just a structure for the people of this country.

It is a pride of the nation, a testament to its own ability, and, more pressingly, an exemplary demonstration of the steely resolve of a foresighted statesman in Sheikh Hasina, who mobilised all the resources to fulfil the dream that many thought not possible after the international funders led by World Bank backed out from financing the billion-dollar mega project over a decade ago, citing corruption conspiracy.

Built at a cost of over Tk 30,000 crore, the double-decker rail-road bridge is the strongest possible statement of the country's bold journey to economic success from being dubbed a "basket case".

Considered an economic corridor, the dream bridge over the mighty Padma is expected to add around 1.2 percent to the country's GDP as it will connect 21 districts of the south-western region with the rest of the country.

Once fully operational, the bridge will hopefully revolutionise Bangladesh's communication and transport sector, cutting short both travel time and cost, giving a major boost to trade and other economic activities and thereby unlocking opportunities for over 30 million people living in the region.

"Our long-cherished dream is finally coming true. We have been waiting with bated breath for this moment for years ... The bridge is not just a mega structure built with brick and steel; it is linked to our emotions," said Jaber Hasan, a private jobholder

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1





COMMENTARY

Sheikh Hasina's 'FINEST HOUR'

MAHFUZ ANAM

Borrowing from the title of the second volume of Winston Churchill's six-part history of the Second World War, I would like to term the completion of the Padma Bridge as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "finest hour".

Her ability to see the symbolic importance of defying the World Bank, grasp the real significance of the Padma Bridge to our economy, muster the self-confidence to pull the project through and steadfastly hold on to that confidence through the ups and downs of national and global economy -- especially the pandemic and the Ukraine war -- revealed her extraordinary leadership qualities as never before.

She had exhibited her courageous streak on earlier occasions but the convergence of that courage with astuteness, timing, self-belief, ability to mobilise resources and carry public support through it all provides evidence of an exceptional leader. Her intuitive ability to see that the completion of the Padma Bridge would serve as an immense source of national pride triggering a national "can-do" feeling was the masterstroke of a visionary and futuristic leader. This indeed, we repeat, is her "finest hour".

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

The man who steered project thru' tough times

Padma Bridge PD talks with Star



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

One afternoon in October 2011, Md Shafiqul Islam, then an additional chief engineer at the Roads and Highways Department, was tensely pacing the corridors of the erstwhile communications ministry,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

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৬.১৫ কিলোমিটাৰৰ পৰাৱৰ্তী বিশাল দৈৰ্ঘ্যৰ ইতিবাচক সবলকৃত্যৱহীতী দিলা **KSRM** দিলা
এৰ নিৰ্মিতৱৰ্তীৰ উপৰিৱৰ্তী। মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা-এৰ অমৰা বিদ্যুৎ পাত্ৰৰ কৰ্ত্ত
ৱৰ্ত্তৰ পাত্ৰৰ শেষ অৱধি অংশীদাৰ দিলাৰ থাকতে পোৱা আশীৰ্বাদ পৰিল।