

# 'Home never felt so close'

Joyful reactions on first day of Padma Bridge

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Six minutes was all it took a BRTC bus to cross the 6.15km bridge over the Padma river yesterday.

If the 3.15 kilometres of the approach viaducts of the newly inaugurated bridge is included, the river crossing that once was a source of suffering took just nine minutes and 45 seconds.

"Unbelievable, surreal," exclaimed Sattar Moral, a bus passenger who was apparently trying to process the smoothness of the journey.

Before the country's longest bridge opened for vehicular movement at 6:00am yesterday, the 50-year-old resident of Faridpur's Bhanga upazila had to wait for hours in queue to get on a ferry.

In cases of inclement weather or the outward rush of people from the capital around Eid time, his miseries would only compound, making the journey excruciating.

But yesterday, it was a brand new experience on a brand new bridge as he made it home in just two hours.

"I can't express in words how I am feeling. Home never felt so close. It's just because of the Padma Bridge. What a beautiful bridge it is!" he said breathlessly.

The bridge's grand inauguration on Saturday and the

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Hundreds of motorcycles and several vehicles queuing up in Mawa, Munshiganj, to get on the Padma Bridge yesterday evening. Over 15,000 vehicles travelled across the bridge in only eight hours after it was opened to traffic at 6:00am yesterday. The authorities last night issued an order banning motorcycles on the bridge from today.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

## Padma Bridge off limits to motorcycles

Large number of motorcycles overwhelm toll plaza; bike crash on bridge kills 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bridges Division last evening banned motorcycles on the Padma Bridge from 6:00am today as thousands of bikers queuing up to cross the bridge overwhelmed the toll plaza employees and two bikers died in a crash on the bridge.

The Press Information Department issued a circular in this regard hours after the long-cherished bridge was opened to traffic at 6:00am yesterday.

"We have made the decision for the safety of travellers and the bridge," Monjur Hossain, secretary of the Bridges Division, told The Daily Star last night.

Two men died after their motorcycle crashed on the

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## Floods displaced 5 lakh people in the northeast

Study finds

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Nearly five lakh people have faced temporary displacement during recent floods in Sylhet, Sunamganj, and seven other northeastern districts, said a report by a platform for government and non-government humanitarian agencies.

The devastating flash floods affected about 72 lakh people, damaged crops on over 83,000 hectares, and washed away 4,056 farm animals, said the Needs Assessment Working Group (NAWG).

The report titled, North Eastern Flash Flood, May-June 2022: Key Immediate Needs and Situation Analysis, said the internally displaced population were in need of immediate food, water and cash support.

Animal fodder and emergency

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## FLOOD DAMAGES

# Farmers face hunger after loss of crops

ZYMA ISLAM and DWOHA CHOWDHURY

When the floods came this year, it was not just the rice in the paddy fields that were washed away, but also those stored at homesteads -- leaving many in a state of food insecurity.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, two crore tonnes of Boro rice were harvested from the fields -- an amount higher than last year -- despite the floods in April and May.

After injecting the rice into the market, farmers had stocked their homes for the season.

Their storages now lie empty.

In spite of having brought home 20 maunds of rice, Faruk Ahmed's family has

been living on dry biscuits while his stove lies cold.

Faruk is from Laki village, in Sylhet's Tawakkul union.

The village lies at the frontier of the wetlands bordering the impassive mountains of Meghalaya.

**In Sylhet district alone, 28,945 hectares of crops were damaged till June 26, according to the district administration.**

It receives the first faceful of the rainwater run-offs coming from the mountains.

Faruk's 20 maunds had survived the floods of May as they were brought home

safe before the floods hit.

This time, however, he could not help but silently watch his precious grains get swept away in the chest-deep waters

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## PATURIA-DAULATDIA

# Almost deserted

SAJJAD HOSSAIN, Munshiganj

The number of vehicles at the Paturia-Daulatdia and Shimulia-Majhikandi ferry routes significantly dropped as the Padma Bridge opened to traffic yesterday.

Ferry operations remained shut on the Shimulia-Majhikandi route due to a shortage of vehicles, said officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

Two private vehicles arrived at Shimulia ferry terminal yesterday morning but the authorities asked them to leave as no other vehicle was there, said Ahmed Shamim Al Razi, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

"We will start operating ferries if [enough] vehicles arrive at the terminal," he said.

The number of launch and speedboat passengers also dropped on the route, said Shahadat Hossain, assistant director of Shimulia River Port Naval Safety and Traffic Management of BIWTC.

Meanwhile, on the Paturia-Daulatdia route, the usual long tailbacks could not be seen yesterday, said officials.

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