

Tarique, wife are fugitives

Declares HC, orders trial of graft case against them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Declaring BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his wife Zubaida Rahman as "fugitives", the High Court yesterday rejected their writ petitions challenging the filing and initiation of a Tk 4.82 crore graft case.

The HC also withdrew the stay order on the case filed during the caretaker government in 2007 and directed the lower court concerned to complete the trial proceedings as early as possible.

The chief metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka has been asked to send the case record to the Senior Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka within 10 days of receiving

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



A woman cooks while sitting on a pile of bricks and sand in front of her inundated home in Monipur area of Bijoy Nagar, Brahmanbaria yesterday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

RIISING COVID CASES

Health dept concerned

Says health minister; urges all to finish vaccine course

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the health department is concerned over the rise of Covid-19 infections, as 1,680 new cases were recorded in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

Two deaths were reported during the period.

Speaking at the cholera vaccine campaign yesterday at the icddr, he said Covid infection rate had decreased to below one percent with the death rate being nearly zero. However, the number of cases has been increasing and the positivity rate has recently crossed the 15 percent mark.

Yesterday, the positivity rate was 15.66 percent, from 15.07 percent from the day before.

With the new infections

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Russian missiles shake Kyiv

Kindergarten, apartment block hit; Biden slams the attack as 'barbarism'

AGENCIES

Russian missiles hit an apartment block and kindergarten in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv yesterday, in strikes US President Joe Biden condemned as "barbarism" as world leaders gathered in Europe to discuss further sanctions against Moscow.

Up to four explosions shook central Kyiv in the early hours, in the first such attack on the city in weeks. Two more blasts were heard on the southern outskirts of the city later in the day.

"The Russians hit Kyiv again. Missiles damaged an apartment building and a kindergarten," said Andriy Yermak, head of the president's administration.

A Reuters photographer saw a large blast crater by a playground in a kindergarten that had smashed windows.

Ukraine's police chief, Ihor Klymenko, said on national television that five people had been wounded, and police later said one person was killed.

Russia has stepped up air strikes on Ukraine this weekend, which has also seen the fall of a strategic eastern city to pro-Russian forces.

"It's more of their barbarism," said Biden, referring to the missile strikes on Kyiv, as leaders from the Group of Seven

(G7) rich democracies gathered for a summit in Germany.

"Putin's been counting on it from the beginning, that somehow Nato and the G7 would splinter, but we haven't and it's not going to," Biden told German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

"Putin's being counting on it from the beginning, that somehow Nato and the G7 would splinter, but we haven't and it's not going to."

US President Joe Biden

Seeking to further tighten the screws on Russia, G7 countries announced an import ban on new gold from Russia.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said G7 countries should respond to the latest missile strikes by imposing further sanctions on Russia and providing more heavy weapons to Ukraine.

As Europe's biggest land conflict since World War Two entered its fifth month, the Western alliance supporting Kyiv was starting to show signs of strain as leaders fret about the growing economic cost.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the West needed to maintain a united front against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The price of backing down, the price of allowing Putin to succeed, to hack off huge parts of Ukraine, to continue with his programme of conquest, that price will be far, far higher," he told reporters.

Two Russian missiles also struck the central city of Cherkasy, which until now had been largely untouched by bombardment, according to regional authorities, who said one person had been killed and five others wounded.

Russia's TASS news agency quoted a pro-Russian separatist official saying its forces were advancing on Lysychansk, across the river from Severodonetsk, and had entered the city's industrial zone.

In the Ukrainian-held Donbas town of Pokrovsk, Elena, an elderly woman from Lysychansk in a wheelchair, was among dozens of evacuees who arrived by bus from frontline areas.

"Lysychansk, it was a horror, the last week. Yesterday we could not take it anymore," she said. "I already told my husband if I die, please bury me behind the house."



Paturia ferry terminal devoid of vehicles.

Almost deserted

FROM PAGE 1

All the pontoons of Paturia ferry terminal were empty by 4:00pm. Only a few trucks were seen on the ferry, they added.

A total of 7,658 vehicles crossed the Padma using ferries on this route between 6:00am Saturday and 6:00am Sunday, said Shah Mohammad Khaled Newaz, deputy general manager of BIWTC's Aricha office.

Hasan Ali, of Rajbari, said he used to face long tailbacks on the Paturia-Daulatdia route, but he did not have to wait even for a minute for boarding a ferry yesterday.

Selim Khan, of Magura, said he used this route regularly and would do so in the future as it became easier due to less traffic.

[Our Manikganj correspondent contributed to this report.]

Turkey arrests Greek on spying charges: police

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey arrested a Greek citizen yesterday on suspicion of espionage activities, a day after seizing him in an operation coordinated with its spy agency, local police said.

Mohamed Amar Ampara was caught in the southeastern city of Gaziantep near Turkey's border with Syria.

"The agent, named M.A.A., was detained by the judicial authorities after he was discovered to have connections with the Greek National Intelligence Organisation ... compiled information about our country's border security and transferred it to Greek intelligence," the police department in Gaziantep said in a statement.

Turkish media reported at the weekend that Ampara operated disguised as a businessman during his trips to Turkey.

'Home never felt so close'

FROM PAGE 1

start of vehicular movement on it yesterday were historic moments in Bangladesh's road communication.

A flurry of vehicles started streaming in and out of Dhaka soon after it opened, resulting in long queues of buses, trucks, cars and motorcycles before the toll plazas at Mawa point and on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway. However, the pressure of vehicles started to ease as the day progressed.

The Daily Star correspondents took a trip on a BRTC bus to see the changes that the Padma Bridge has started to make on the once-strenuous journey to the southwestern districts of the country.

Starting from Fulbaria Bus Terminal in the capital's Gulistan at 10:30am, the passengers faced the all too familiar congestion leading up to the expressway at the Suvadda canal in Keraniganj. As the bus hit the expressway around 11:10am, excitement gripped passengers.

"What a smooth road it is!" one of the passengers exclaimed as the bus was heading towards the dream bridge at speed.

The entire expressway up to the toll plaza at the Mawa end was decked with various flowering plants in the median strip. Many of the passengers were seen taking photos and videos as the bus moved along.

It took only around 30 minutes for the bus to reach the toll plaza. As soon as the bus driver started towards the bridge after paying the toll, which took less than a minute, there was a stirring among all passengers as they

made final preparations to experience their slice of history – the first crossing of the Padma Bridge.

Some burst into joy and others turned to the windows to catch a glimpse of the mighty structure. Most of the passengers started recording the journey, while some shared the experience with their relatives through video calls.

"I have been trying to reach you for quite some time. Look, here is the bridge and I am crossing it," an excited Safia Khatun told her daughter over the phone. Her husband, sitting beside her, piped up excitedly: "Look Ma, how beautiful the bridge is!"

Sixagenarian Mohammad Shafiqul, a resident of Shariatpur, could not believe his eyes as the bus moved along the bridge.

"It was a dream that came true ... I finally crossed the bridge," he said.

"My home is close to Dhaka. It is barely 10 kilometres from the river. There were times when I had to spend seven to eight hours on the banks of the Padma before Eid. That is over now," he said.

The bridge wore a festive look as it had been overflowing with crowds of people, many of whom came to see the bridge.

Flouting government instructions, they were seen stopping motorbikes and cars to get a feel of the bridge, taking selfies and group photographs. Bikers were seen posing with their two-wheelers propped against Padma Bridge's railings.

The Cabinet Division issued a notification

yesterday, saying stopping vehicles, walking around on Padma Bridge, and taking pictures are completely prohibited and punishable offences.

Authorities of the Padma Bridge project asked the engineering support and safety team to beef up vigilance on the upper deck of the bridge and on both sides after incidents of damaging the bridge were reported.

The first eight hours on the opening day saw 15,200 vehicles crossing the bridge since it was opened to traffic at 6:00am. Around Tk 82.19 lakh toll was collected from vehicles till 2:00pm, an official of Bangladesh Bridge Authority told The Daily Star.

RETURN TRIP Soon, the bus reached Bhangha intersection, around 20km away from the Padma Bridge connecting road. Most of the passengers, including these correspondents, got down as the bus started for a return trip. BRTC expanded its services on 21 routes in southwestern region including Dhaka-Bhangha yesterday.

"I cannot believe I reached so fast," said Saiful, a passenger.

The bus driver, Jashim Uddin, was no less amazed. "There were times when we got stranded for the entire night at the ferry terminal. Now we will be able to make trips to and from Dhaka quickly. This will increase our income."

The correspondents got on another BRTC bus to return to Dhaka. Many of the passengers boarded the

bus to see the Padma Bridge. The bus began its journey at 2:18pm.

Around 2:45pm, the bus reached the toll plaza at the Zanjira end. A huge crowd was found near there. Many had come to see the bridge.

As the bus got on the bridge, the passengers could barely contain their excitement and, seeing the crowd of people already on the bridge, they requested the driver to stop for a moment.

The driver succumbed to the requests and stopped for a minute. All the passengers got down from the bus and started taking photos and videos of the bridge.

"I came near the bridge site yesterday [Saturday], but could not see it up so close. Today I have been able to touch the bridge finally. It's a dream come true for me," said one of the passengers.

The bus started rolling again and drove almost uninterrupted until it reached Babu Bazar bridge over the Buriganga river at 3:47pm. It took 40 minutes for the bus to reach Fullbaria from the north end of Babu Bazar bridge, a distance of little over two kilometres.

Now that the bridge has opened and transport from the southern parts are coming to Dhaka more smoothly and quickly, traffic congestion became a spot of bother.

"We reached Babu Bazar in an hour, but now we are stuck in a jam for more than half an hour. We need to fix this problem. Else, we won't get the full benefit of the Padma Bridge," said a passenger.

PADMA BRIDGE

Man detained for removing nuts, bolts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was detained for removing nuts and bolts from the railing of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge yesterday.

Criminal Investigation Department detained Bayezid Talha, of Patuakhali, from the capital's Shantinagar area, said CID's Special Superintendent Rezaul Masud.

The CID yesterday said it would disclose further details at a press conference today.

Earlier, a 34-second-long TikTok video went viral where Bayezid was seen standing on the bridge and removing nuts and bolts from its railing.

People thronged the bridge yesterday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated it on Saturday.

Cattle trader found dead in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police recovered the body of a cattle trader at a banana orchard in Faridpur's Sadar upazila yesterday.

Sharif Sheikh, 35, of the upazila's Rahimpur village, remained missing for a day before his body was found, said Golam Mostafa, chairman of Krisnanagar union parishad.

"He was carrying Tk 5 lakh when he went missing. He did not return home overnight. Later, locals found his body."

Sumon Ranganj Sarkar, additional superintendent of police (Sadar circle), said the body had sharp force injuries.

The body was sent to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Faridpur for autopsy.

Three men get life term over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court yesterday sentenced three men to life imprisonment for raping a college girl 15 years ago.

The convicts are Asadul Islam, Ranju Mia, and Babu Mia, of Rangpur city.

Mostafa Kamal, judge of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, delivered the verdict.

The court also fined each of the accused Tk 1 lakh.

On May 26, 2007, the men picked up the victim and raped her. She filed a case against the tree on the same day, according to the case statement.

One dead, three wounded in Montreal stabbings

AFP, Montreal

One man was left dead and three people were sent to hospital early yesterday in Montreal after stabbings by a 26-year-old who suffered a breakdown, Canadian police said.

Padma Bridge

FROM PAGE 1

bridge between the pillar no 26 and 27 around 8:00pm, said SM Mizanur Rahman, additional superintendent of police in Shariatpur, adding that the man riding the bike was filming with one hand.

Alamgir Hossain, 25, and Fazlu, 24, were pronounced dead after they were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 10:30pm, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of hospital's police outpost.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday inaugurated the bridge and the authorities opened it to traffic at 6:00am yesterday. Officials said many of the motorcyclists stopped in the middle of the bridge to take pictures, disrupting traffic flow.

Secretary Monjur said mobile courts would be conducted on the bridge from today and army personnel would be on vigil.

"The court will take punitive action if anyone stops a vehicle and gets down on the bridge, violating government directives. The court will

also seize such vehicles," the secretary said.

Meanwhile, the Padma Bridge project authorities asked the engineering support and safety team to beef up vigilance on the upper deck of the bridge and on both sides.

Project Director Shafiqul Islam yesterday told this newspaper that he sent a letter to the chief coordinator of the team in this regard.

Bangladesh Army is providing the engineering support and safety service for the project.

In his letter, Shafiqul said some individuals were stealing and damaging important equipment from the bridge deck, even as getting down from vehicles on the bridge was prohibited.

Some of them even damaged equipment at Mawa and Zanjira ends of the bridge, he wrote.

Earlier in the day, the Criminal Investigation Department arrested a young man seen removing nuts and bolts from the guard rails of Padma Bridge in a viral video.

Macron tasks French PM with new talks to form 'government of action'

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday "confirmed" his confidence in Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne in an interview with AFP, after the premier came under fire for a wooden performance in an election that saw her boss fail to retain an overall majority in parliament.

Macron said he had instructed Borne to conduct new consultations with parliamentary groups to form a "government of action" for early July.