



Connectivity key to nat'l development Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government has been working to improve the connectivity throughout the country for economic progress and industrialisation.

"We've developed a communication network through construction of roads and bridges across the country. Besides, we've been dredging and reviving the rivers... We're reviving the rail services (on different routes) and constructing new rail lines," she said.

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Carrying large bamboo cages, meant to protect roadside trees, a man steers his pull-cart amid the scorching heat in Shyamoli area yesterday. When asked, he said he was taking those to Agargaon from Kalyanpur.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PADMA BRIDGE How did he remove the nuts and bolts?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hours after the arrest of a youth who was seen removing nuts and bolts of Padma Bridge's railing, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) still could not specifically say how he removed them.

However, CID officials suspect that he might have used tools to remove the bolts.

"It is not possible to remove the bolts with bare hands. We have discussed with the bridge authorities and they confirmed this," Special Superintendent of CID Rezaul Masud told a press briefing at CID headquarters in Malibagh yesterday.

The official, however, could not determine what kind of tools were used.

Meanwhile, construction workers were seen working on the bridge yesterday morning. They were tightening the nuts and bolts using wrenches and a special type of glue.

A worker said they could not tighten all the nuts and bolts of a part of the railing before inauguration.

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PRAYER
TIMING

JUNE 28

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:05	12:45	5:00	6:54	8:17
JAMAAT 4:40	1:15	5:15	6:57	8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Gone are the busy days?

Sadarghat sees decline in passenger rush
after Padma Bridge's inauguration



PHOTO: STAR

DIPAN NANDY

After Padma Bridge's opening for regular commute, launch owners saw a decline in passengers for the waterways.

This correspondent visited Sadarghat launch terminal in the capital yesterday and saw the numbers of launches and passengers have decreased.

The few passengers who were seen getting on launches did so for relaxation and avoiding the rush on the newly-inaugurated bridge.

Saidur Rahman, a passenger from Dhaka to Barguna's Kumrakhali, said, "The launch will take more time but we want to relax a bit. The buses will be crowded and it will be difficult travelling with the kids."

"I am happy that Padma Bridge has finally opened. But the rush is at the peak now, so I did not take the risk of going by road. But my family and I will be visiting our home through the bridge soon," said Md Atiqur, who was

going to Barguna's Kakchira.

Sources in Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority's (BIWTA) Traffic Control Room said around 75 to 80 vessels leave from Sadarghat every day. There were 59 vessels leaving from Sadarghat on Sunday.

The major route of Sadarghat is Dhaka to Barishal. Around 8 to 9 vessels leave for Barishal every day. However, only two vessels left on Sunday.

Nizam Uddin, owner of Adventure Launch, told this correspondent that his company runs two launches to Barishal every day. However, on Sunday, they ran none on the route.

"It is too early to talk about the effects Padma Bridge is expected to have on our business. But it's true that the number of passengers saw a decline on Sunday as people are excited about the bridge and want to avail of its utilities," he said.

Alamgir Kabir, joint director of BIWTA and

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'Ensure justice for teachers' Protesters at rally condemn Ashulia, Narail incidents

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of prominent citizens, including university teachers, demanded proper investigation and exemplary punishment for the perpetrators behind murder and humiliation of teachers in Ashulia and Narail yesterday.

They made the demands at a protest rally in the capital's Shahbagh organised under the banner of "Shabagh Against Oppression".

Minority Rights Forum, Students alliance Parishad, Teachers alliance Parishad and University-College Teachers Association, participated in the rally, presided over by activist Akramul Haque.

While addressing the rally, publisher Robin Ahsan said college teacher Swapan Kumar Biswas was humiliated for belonging to a religious minority community.

"He was humiliated in front of the police. We demand immediate resignation of responsible police superintendent and district commissioner," he added.

DU Prof Robayet Ferdous said, "Justice remained elusive in every such incident. Meanwhile, reactionary forces got even more powerful."

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Fully profitable, but with govt subsidies

Wasa MD tells Star

GOLAM MORTOZA

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) operates with the government's "alms", said its managing director Taqsem A Khan while talking about the price hike of water.

But at the same time, he claimed that Wasa is 100 percent profitable.

Wasa is providing a total incentive of Tk 19 crore to its officers and employees as "performance awards".

Taqsem has been the managing director since 2009 and gets Tk 6,25,000 as monthly salary. According to sources, his salary has increased by 421 percent in the last 13 years. He will get a bonus of Tk 10,01,000 this time, three and a half times his basic salary of Tk 2,86,000.

The Daily Star had a talk with Taqsem recently regarding all these issues.

The Daily Star (DS): You termed the government's subsidies alms. But at the same time, you and your employees are receiving huge incentives. How do you explain that?

Taqsem: Wasa runs on government subsidies, but that money is used for Capex, not Opex.

Capex means capital expenditure, and Opex is operational maintenance... The government provides capital expenditure.

The government fixes the price of water and asks us to follow it. And for that, they provide subsidies. But they do not give anything for operational maintenance.

In addition, we repay some part of the capital expenditure... It is something that you have to pay

Our pipeline is around 95 percent clean, which was found after testing, ordered by the High Court. They did not find any harmful germs like coliform... We have changed the situation a lot.

in monthly or yearly installments.

DS: As we know, Wasa has huge amounts of debts, right?

Taqsem: Yes, we do. But, who pays the debt? We have to repay the loans. The government is only the guarantor of these loans. However, we can't repay 100 percent of it, because we are not a break-even organisation.

The price of water does not cover the costs. If we want to cover them, the price will be much higher. So, of course, Wasa is a profitable company, but with the government's subsidies.

DS: So are you saying a company which runs on subsidies, could be profitable too at the same time?

Taqsem: The Asian Development Bank termed us one of the best companies in South Asia. Because we're 100 percent profitable.

DS: But as you said, you have to keep begging the government to run the organisation. So how does the MD of such a company take Tk 6 to 6.5 lakh as salary?

Taqsem: No, that's an unusual question. Don't forget that we have the same management system like those across the world. That's why we're making profit. And that's how we can get such amounts of salaries and bonuses.

DS: You failed to supply pure and safe drinkable water, but you are giving an incentive bonus of Tk 19 crore. Is that okay?

Taqsem: How do you define pure water? And who told you that we don't supply pure water?

DS: The water that can be drunk directly from the tap is pure water. Can we do that?

Taqsem: Why would you drink water directly from the tap? Have you read the Wasa Act?

DS: Yes.

Taqsem: Then, can you say, where do we supply water?

DS: You supply water to residents' water-tanks through pipelines.

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Bureaucrats have local reps on a tight leash Planning minister tells event

STAR REPORT

Bureaucrats are keeping local representatives -- who seek allocation for rural development -- on a tight leash, Planning Minister MA Mannan has said.

He also said a local representative has to struggle to meet even a petty officer at the Secretariat.

The minister said this at a views exchange meeting on "Implementation and Allocation for the Local Government in the National Budget", organised by Governance Advocacy Forum at Dhaka's Cirdap on Sunday.

"A chairman of a union parishad has to wait days to meet a senior assistant secretary. Bureaucrats now have local representatives on a tight leash. The consequences would be felt in the coming days," he said.

Saying that to get allocation, local representatives have to first demonstrate their affluence, Mannan said, "To get allocation of Tk 100, local representatives have to show Tk 20 (in their pocket) first. As a result, representatives opt for a tortuous path instead of a direct route."

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A sea of rickshaws in Dhanmondi's Science Lab intersection yesterday. Heavy traffic has become a usual affair in the area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Please bring back my son

Mother of missing student pleads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"My tears have dried... There's no trace of my son for over two months."

Jannatul Ferdous yesterday made an emotional appeal to get back her son Ifaz Ahmed Chowdhury.

Ifaz, a third-year student of computer science and engineering at a private university, went missing after he left his Mirpur home for going to a nearby mosque on April 11, 2022.

The family filed a general diary with Mirpur Police Station the same night.

"We visited offices of detectives, Rab and Criminal Investigation Department but none admitted to picking him up."

"The officials said they are trying to find him and thus two-and-a-half-months have passed," Jannatul said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity. The mother said they collected CCTV footage of nearby areas and saw a black microbus parked by the road as Ifaz was returning home from a veterinary clinic in Mirpur-1.

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