



DHAKA TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 2022

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXII No. 226

BHADRA 22, 1429 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SAFAR 9, 1444 HJURI

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HASINA IN INDIA

Talks open with energy security



Hasina and Modi to meet at 11:00am today.

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar yesterday agreed that Bangladesh and India should work together to overcome the challenges posed by Russia-Ukraine war in ensuring energy security.

On the first day of her four-day India visit, Hasina discussed with Jaishankar a wide range of issues, including the Rohingya crisis and purchase of fuel from Delhi.

After the meeting, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud bin Momen told reporters that if India has surplus oil to export to Bangladesh, Dhaka could consider buying it if the terms and prices are favourable.

"From India, we can get its surplus fuel [if any] on favourable terms and conditions. We will of course consider that," he said.

Hasina told Jaishankar that many countries are facing problems due to the soaring prices of petrol, diesel and gas, the foreign secretary said adding that purchase of surplus fuel from India will be discussed today.

Masud said it's not correct that Bangladesh cannot buy oil from Russia, and that they are now scrutinising technical specifications to that end.

At yesterday's meeting, Hasina raised the Myanmar issue, referring to the unrest in Rakhine province.

In response, Jaishankar said India is keeping an eye on the recent unrest in Rakhine.

The Bangladesh PM said there is apprehension that the recent unrest in Rakhine would hamper the Rohingya repatriation.

"Everyone feels that apprehension," he said, quoting the premier.

The Bangladesh foreign secretary expressed optimism that the procedures for signing seven MoUs (memorandum of understanding) would be completed last night and placed during bilateral talks between Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi today.

"These are likely to be finalised tonight [Monday night]," he said.

The Bangladesh foreign secretary said the transfer of electricity from Bhutan and Nepal to Bangladesh through the Indian power grid would also come up for discussion today.

He said Hasina and Jaishankar also agreed to expedite the revival of all modes of connectivity, as the air, road and rail links, disrupted by Covid-19 pandemic, have been restored.

Jaishankar, who called on Hasina at ITC Maurya, said he was delighted to meet the Bangladesh PM.

"The warmth and frequency of our leadership level contacts is a testimony to our close neighbourly partnership," he tweeted.

Earlier in the day when Hasina arrived at Palam Airport, India rolled out a red carpet to welcome her.

The premier then visited Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah and offered prayers.

Indian State Minister for Railways and Textiles Darshana Vikram Jardosh received her at the airport. A six-member cultural team performed a welcome dance.

"Immensely honoured to welcome and receive hon'ble PM of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina ji in New Delhi. Her visit will mark a new

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Indian State Minister for Railways and Textiles Darshana Vikram Jardosh receives Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Palam airport in New Delhi yesterday. Hasina is in India on a four-day state visit at the invitation of her counterpart Narendra Modi.

PHOTO: PMO

Momen left out of India visit 'at the last moment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen is not accompanying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her four-day visit to India.

He was dropped from the PM's entourage at the last moment, but there was no official statement on this yet.

Diplomatic sources said he was left out of the tour, which began yesterday, as his recent comments on India-Bangladesh relations triggered widespread criticism at home and abroad.

Only on Sunday, the minister at a press briefing had said he would travel with the PM. He was at

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INDO-BANGLADESH TRANSSHIPMENT Execution proving tricky

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHAMMED AL-AMIN

The much-talked-about transshipment facility for Indian goods to its landlocked northeastern states using Bangladesh's two seaports and inland waterways, roads and rail network has failed to take off in a big way due to the absence of proper infrastructure and awareness.

Transshipment is the shipment of goods or containers to an intermediate destination, then to another destination. Until 1965, cargo originating from India's North Eastern Region (NER) -- which was connected to the rest of the country and the outside world largely through present-day Bangladesh before 1947 -- transited through rail and river routes to Chattogram and Kolkata ports.

After that, the arrangement was suspended. In 2009, soon after the Awami League government came to power, India sought to revive the route by way of transshipment facilities from Bangladesh for time and cost-saving reasons.

For instance, trucks from Kolkata travel about 1,600 kilometres to reach

Agartala in Tripura, one of the seven NER states. The distance through Bangladesh would be about 800 km.

India's demand sparked a heated debate in Bangladesh. But Bangladesh eventually relented.

In 2015, the two countries, which share the fifth longest border in the

The utilisation of transshipment facilities remains woefully low because of the absence of: a proper river port, wider roads and awareness among Indian business people.

world spanning 4,096 km, inked an initial transshipment deal involving the use of Bangladesh's four riverways, followed by a detailed agreement in 2018 involving the two sea ports.

Bangladesh and Indian officials subsequently developed a standard operating procedure (SoP) for its

execution.

According to the SOP, goods reaching Chattogram and Mongla seaports would be carried by four road, rail and water routes: to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhaura; to Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil; to Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola; and to Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar.

But the utilisation of the transshipment facilities remains woefully low because of the absence of: a proper river port, wider roads and awareness among Indian business people.

For instance, the transshipment route from Kolkata to Agartala via Ashuganj (waterways) and Akhaura (by road) has been operational since 2016. To date, only 17 cargo vessels carrying 23,377 tonnes of goods have been transported through the route, yielding Bangladesh Tk 35 lakh in transit fees, according to shipping ministry data.

The trial runs for the use of the Chattogram and Mongla ports, whose deal was signed in 2018, began only in July last year.

As part of the four planned trial

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Bus crash kills 8, exposes irregularities

Vehicles involved had no route permits, one unfit for 11 years

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and KONGKON KARMAKER

The two buses that collided head-on in Rangpur early yesterday, leaving at least eight dead and over 50 injured, should not have been on the roads at all as neither had route permits.

Buses of Joyana Paribahan and Islam Paribahan were involved in the deadly crash on the Rangpur-Dinajpur highway around 12:30am.

In a flagrant violation of law, the Joyana Paribahan bus had also been operating without a fitness clearance for more than 11 years.

But the irregularities do not end there.

The Joyana Paribahan bus is actually registered with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) as belonging to Rozina Enterprise.

But the bus changed its name without BRTA's approval and has been running under the Joyana Paribahan name, violating the Road Transport Act-2018, sources at the BRTA said.

Abu Raihan, general secretary of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association, own the vehicle.



This picture unfolds amid growing number of road crashes and resultant deaths, with experts blaming poor monitoring of authorities and lax enforcement of laws for the situation.

The number of road crashes and deaths saw a 30 percent rise last year compared to 2020, according to police reports.

At least 519 people were killed and 961 injured in 458 road crashes across the country last month, Road Safety Foundation said on Sunday.

Yesterday, along with the eight dead, over 50 people were injured when the two buses collided in Rangpur's Taraganj upazila.

Identities of the deceased could not be known immediately.

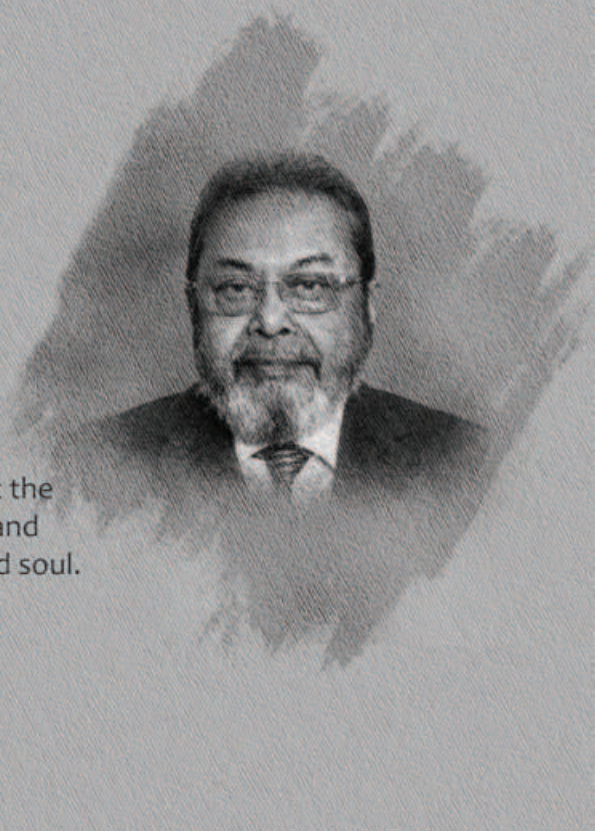
Police and locals said the Joyana Paribahan bus, heading to Thakurgaon from Mymensingh, collided with the Islam Paribahan bus, heading for Dhaka from Dinajpur, near Kharuvaj Bridge of Rangpur's Taraganj upazila.

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WE MOURN

We deeply mourn the sad demise of eminent banking personality **Mr. Ashfaq Uddin Chowdhury, The Founding Managing Director of Dhaka Bank Limited.** His sudden demise will be an irreparable loss for the banking arena of the country.

Dhaka Bank family is profoundly shocked at the demise of Mr. Ashfaq Uddin Chowdhury and pray for the eternal salvation of his departed soul. May Almighty Allah give strength and sabr to the family to bear the loss. Ameen



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