

## It’s sad I didn’t get to meet Mamata

### Hasina tells journos

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night expressed disappointment at not being able to meet West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in New Delhi.

“My relations with Mamata Banerjee go beyond politics. I wanted to meet her in Delhi this time. But that is not happening. What can be done?” Hasina told a select group of media people at a dinner hosted in her honour by Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Md Imran at his residence in Chanakyapuri, the diplomatic zone, in South Delhi.

In July, the Bangladesh PM had written to Mamata, saying she was keen on meeting her during her visit to Delhi.

It is Mamata’s fierce opposition that has held up the Teesta deal for 11

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## SSC exams to begin at 11am: Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said the Secondary School Certificate and its equivalent exams will be pushed back an hour so that students can avoid the morning traffic.

This year, SSC and equivalent exams will start from 11:00am instead of 10:00am on the scheduled dates to help students reach centres on time, she said.

The minister made the announcement while talking to reporters after attending a meeting of the National Monitoring and Law and Order Committee at the secretariat.

The exams will begin on September 15, with theoretical exams ending on October 1 and practical exams on

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in talks with S Jaishankar, Indian minister of external affairs, at the meeting room of ITC Maurya in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

## Kyiv claims gains on southern front

### Ukrainian troops raise flag over a town in Kherson

AGENCIES

Ukraine made its boldest claim yet of success on the battlefield in its week-old counter-offensive against Russian forces in the south, while European markets reopened yesterday in free-fall after Russia kept its main gas pipeline to Germany shut.

After days of declining to give details about their new offensive, Ukrainian officials posted an image online of three soldiers raising a flag over a town in Kherson province, a southern region occupied by Russia since the war's early days.

The image of the flag being fixed to a pole on a rooftop, purportedly in Vysokopyllyia in the north of Kherson, was released as President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that Ukrainian forces had captured two towns in the south and one in the east.

In a rare acknowledgment from the Russian side that the Ukrainian counter-offensive was spoiling Moscow's plans for territory it has seized, TASS news agency quoted a Moscow-installed official in Kherson as saying plans for a referendum to annex the region to Russia had been put on hold due to the security situation.

Mark Hertling, a retired former commander of US ground forces in Europe, said Kyiv's aim appeared to be to trap thousands of Russian troops on the east bank of the vast Dnipro River, destroying bridges the Russians now use for supplies and would need to escape.

Russia had left "a force in Kherson, with a river at their back & limited supply lines", and Ukraine was hitting them with "precision weapons, confusing a RU force that already has very low morale and poor leadership," Hertling tweeted.

Ukraine's embattled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant's last working reactor

has been switched off from the grid after the facility was disconnected from its last remaining power line due to shelling, reports AFP.

"The world is once again on the brink of a nuclear disaster. The de-occupation of the ZNPP and the creation of a demilitarised zone around it is the only way to ensure nuclear safety," Ukraine's energy minister German Galuschenko said following the news yesterday.

In his evening address on Sunday, Zelensky tempered his announcements of success with a warning to European countries that they could face a cold winter.

Moscow blames Western sanctions it says have interfered with repairs of equipment for forcing it to halt the flow of gas through Nord Stream 1, its main pipeline to Germany. Russia was due to reopen the pipeline on Saturday but has said it will stay shut indefinitely.

## Execution proving tricky

FROM PAGE 1

run, a Bangladeshi vessel carrying one Indian transit container loaded with 25 tonnes of TMT bar is expected to arrive at Chattogram port today from Kolkata, said Habibur Rahman, manager of the ship's local agent Mango Line.

After being unloaded and released from the port, the container will be

"We are expecting to conduct three trial runs by September-October. After that a regular transshipment of goods will start," said a shipping ministry official wishing not to be named.

During the trial run, the National Board of Revenue and the port authorities will take fees as per the treaty.

And for use of the Bangladeshi

goods was Tk 192.25 per tonne.

The drop in distance means a significant fall in costs and time: it would cost \$35 per tonne and take around 10 days to reach the destination through Bangladesh compared to \$67 per tonne and 30 days for trucks to reach the same destination, said a member of the Bangladesh team who negotiated the transit issue with the Indian side.



sent to the Indian state of Assam by road through the Sheola land port in Sylhet and the Sutarkandi land port in Assam.

Earlier in August, a vessel with two Indian transit containers arrived at Mongla port.

One container carrying 16 tonnes of iron pipes was transported to Nongpoh in Meghalaya using the Tamabil-Dawki route and another carrying 8.5 tonnes of prefoam was sent to Silchar in Assam through the Bibirbazar-Srimantapur stations.

road, a Tk 1.85 fee would be charged for each tonne and each kilometre of Indian cargo.

**RIVER ROUTES IN LIMBO**

The first consignment of 1,000 tonnes of iron rods onboard a Bangladesh ship started from Kolkata on June 3, 2016 for delivery to Tripura.

The goods were unloaded at Ashuganj river port and then loaded onto trucks to cross the 32-km Indo-Bangla border in Akhaura to a warehouse in Tripura. The transshipment fee for carrying the

This route has been unused by India since 2020 after the pandemic hit, according to the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

The route's general failure to launch among Indian businessmen was down to two reasons: the absence of a terminal at the Ashuganj river port and a four-lane from the port to Akhaura land port, according to Sk Mahfuz Hamid, managing director of Gulf Orient Seaways.

In 2018, the government took up a project to construct the terminal and container depot at the Ashuganj river port for completion by December 2020.

"It could have been done in two years but that has not happened," Hamid said.

The project is targeting a December 2024 finish.

India would be providing Tk 740 crore of the total project cost of Tk 1,751 crore.

In 2017, the government also took up the project to construct the 50-km four-lane from the river port to the Akhaura land port for completion by June 2020.

As of February, the project's progress is 33 percent and is now aiming for a June 2025 completion, according to the ministry of road transport and bridges.

India would be providing Tk 2,982 crore of the total project cost of Tk 5,791 crore.

Once completed, the route will be attractive for Indian business people, said a shipping ministry official on the condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

"There is no awareness among Indian businessmen of these routes – those who ship to the Seven Sister states do not know of this facility even those there is substantial cost-saving for them," Hamid added.

## Momen left out of India visit

FROM PAGE 1

the time flanked by Md Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

His wife Selina Momen was also in Hasina's entourage, according to the official list obtained by The Daily Star.

However, sources in the minister's family said Momen was sick and that's why he opted out of the trip.

The Daily Star failed to reach the minister for his comment. Foreign ministry officials also declined to make any comment on the record.

On this issue, Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said anyone can be dropped from the PM's entourage as Covid-19 precautions.

"Choice of words is a dangerous thing. You said [Momen has been] dropped. If you know the reason, only then you can say whether he was dropped or if he couldn't go for a certain reason," she said, replying to a question during a press conference yesterday.

She also said that before meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina or parliament sessions, they remain anxious over possible Covid infection – wondering if they were still coronavirus positive.

Usually, when the head of government embarks on a state visit, the foreign minister accompanies.

On August 18, speaking as the chief

guest at a Janmashtami programme in Chattogram, Momen said he had requested the Indian government to do whatever was necessary to help maintain stability in Bangladesh.

He also said he had urged the Indian government to back Sheikh Hasina so that she can stay in power.

A day after, he sought to clarify his remarks saying he was wrongly quoted in the media.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a press release, accused the media of distorting the speech of the minister.

Earlier, he also made some comments about Bangladesh-India relationship, which reportedly embarrassed the government.

## Bus crash kills 8, exposes irregularities

FROM PAGE 1

Five died on the spot.

Three more died at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said Shariful Hasan, the hospital's director.

Six of the victims were identified: Anwar Hossain, 35, of Harialkuthi village in Taraganj; Anisur Rahman, 48, of Taraganj; Jewel Rana, 22, a general secretary of Kamarpukur BCL unit of Nilphamari's Syedpur; Sadek Ali, 65, of Gaibandha; Dhananjay Roy, 27, of Taraganj; and Jibon Rahman.

On information, personnel from the upazila's fire service and the Taraganj Highway Police Station reached the spot and started rescue operations with the help from locals.

Almost half the length of both buses were crumpled, leaving injured passengers trapped. Rescuers were seen using huge cutters to cut through parts of the bus and get the passengers out.

The cries of the injured and sirens of ambulances pierced the midnight silence.

Hospital staffers were also facing difficulty in dealing with the number of injured passengers.

Khatibur Rahman, in-charge of Taraganj Fire Service and Civil

Defence, said the rain disrupted their rescue operation and the five bodies they recovered were almost unrecognisable.

**TOP TRANSPORT LEADER VIOLATES LAW**

After the crash, The Daily Star sought information from the BRTA and the police about the two buses and unearthed some astonishing information.

According to BRTA sources, the bus of Joyana Paribahan got registered with the BRTA in May 2010 under the name of Rozina Enterprise.

The bus had no route permit and its fitness clearance expired in May 2011, a BRTA official said citing official documents.

Contacted, Abu Raihan – general secretary of BBTOA and owner of both Rozina Enterprise and Joyana Paribahan – admitted that the bus was registered under the name of Rozina Enterprise and that the BRTA's approval was needed to change its name.

"I am the owner of both bus companies, so I did not take permission. We have just changed the banner [bus name]," he told The Daily Star last night.

However, as per Section 74 of the Road Transport Act-2018, unapproved

changes of vehicle ownership is a punishable offence and the offender may face up to one month in jail or a fine of Tk 5,000, or both.

Asked about the bus having neither a fitness clearance nor a route permit, he said, "I don't know the about it. My manager may know."

When this correspondent asked how he, a top transport leader, operates a bus without a route permit and a fitness certificate, he said, "I am looking into the matter."

He, however, said the accident occurred because the Islam Paribahan bus hit his bus after illegally changing lanes.

The Islam Paribahan bus, on the other hand, registered with the BRTA in July this year and does not have a route permit.

Mahbub Morshed, officer-in-charge of Taraganj Highway Police Station, said helpers of both buses were among the dead, but the drivers managed to flee.

He said rain could have been a reason behind the accident, or that one of the drivers may have lost control over the wheel.

He said they have seized both buses and filed a case.

## China approves inhalable Covid jab

AFP, Beijing

Chinese drug regulators have approved the world's first inhalable Covid-19 vaccine, made by Tianjin-based manufacturer CanSino

Biologics, boosting the company's share price by seven percent yesterday.

The National Medical Products Administration gave the go-ahead for the vaccine for emergency use as a booster, the company said in a

statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on Sunday.

Following the announcement, company shares surged 14 percent yesterday morning before closing 7.1 percent higher than their opening value.

### Jahangir gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted eight weeks' anticipatory bail to former Gazipur City Corporation (GCC) mayor Mohammad Jahangir Alam in a case filed in Faridpur on charge of making derogatory remarks on Bangabandhu and the Liberation War.

The court also asked Jahangir to surrender before the lower court concerned within eight weeks.

The bench of Justice Md Rezaul Hasan and Justice Md Atabullah granted the bail after hearing the petition filed by Jahangir, who appeared before the court yesterday.

His lawyer MK Rahman told The Daily Star that similar cases were filed against him in Naogaon, Rajbari and other districts in which he was granted bail.

In September last year, footage of Jahangir's comments on Bangabandhu and some martyred freedom fighters at a programme went viral on social media.

The ruling Awami League expelled him on November 19.

### Four 'fraudsters' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rab has arrested four members of a gang in Naogaon's Dhamoirhat upazila for allegedly defrauding people via e-platforms.

The four are: Zakaria Hasan Raju, 28, Ashik Ahmed, 20, Towhid Hossain, 30, and Alam Hossain, 20, hailing from different villages of the upazila.

Maj Mostafa Zaman, commanding officer of Joypurhat Rab camp, said the gang had been operating a network to deceive people via different e-platforms, including online dating and gambling.

The arrestees were handed over to Dhamoirhat police after a case was filed against them under the Digital Security Act, the Rab official added.

### Auto-rickshaw driver stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Criminals stabbed a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver to death on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila on Sunday night.

The victim, Ekram Hossain, 20, was from the same upazila, said police.

Abul Kalam Azad, OC of Sitakunda Police Station, said criminals stabbed him in Sitakunda municipality around 10:00pm.

He died on the way to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.