



**P3** More women going abroad for work



**P7** Plus means positive



**WR3** Kashmir: a heaven on earth



**WR4** SATIRE Blackout was to cure FB junkies

## BHANGA-BENAPOLE HIGHWAY Smoother link not so soon

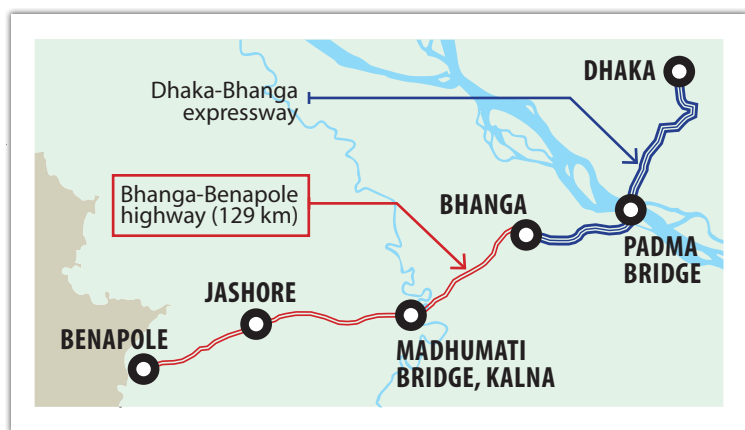
Madhumati Bridge opens Monday but little progress in 4-lane expansion plan

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Despite the opening of the Padma Bridge and the Madhumati Bridge, the country will not be able to reap the maximum benefit of the enhanced connectivity as the 129km road from Faridpur's Bhanga to Jashore's Benapole is still not ready for increased vehicular movement.

A plan for turning the two-lane Bhanga-Benapole road into a four-lane highway was chalked out long ago but it saw little progress, thanks mainly to uncertainty over funding, officials said.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has prepared two separate development project proposals (DPPs) -- one for acquiring land and relocating utility lines while another for physical works -- involving Tk 15,286 crore (BDT 89 per \$1) to expand the road.



The Third Shitalakkhya Bridge over the Shitalakkhya in Narayanganj and the Madhumati Bridge, locally known as Kalna bridge, inset, over the Madhumati in Narail are scheduled to be opened to traffic by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday. The Shitalakkhya Bridge will establish direct link between Narayanganj city and Bandar upazila, while the Madhumati Bridge will cut the distance between Dhaka and Jashore significantly.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, HABIBUR RAHMAN

But it is not possible to say when the projects will be approved and when the work will start as both the proposals have to go through a lengthy process to get the final nod.

Even if the projects are approved this year, the land acquisition will take till June 2025 while the main project till 2027, as per the related documents.

In this situation, smooth road communication for the people of the southwestern region and vibrant cross-border connectivity is still a distant dream.

"We are not in the habit of doing anything with a comprehensive plan. We don't have the capacity either. This has been exposed here again," transport expert Prof Moazzem Hossain said.

### WHY THIS ROAD IS IMPORTANT?

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June inaugurated the long-cherished Padma Bridge, creating a direct link between the capital and the southwestern region.

The longest bridge in the country has cut the travel time significantly between the capital and the southwest. It is also a key component of the Asian Highway-1, which is expected to boost the economic growth of Asia and improve the country's standing in the continent.

The AH-1, connecting Meghalaya with West Bengal of India via Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka-Narail-Jashore, had two missing links: one is the Padma Bridge and another Kalna bridge, formally named Modhumoti Bridge, in Narail.

The prime minister will inaugurate the Modhumoti Bridge on Monday, meaning there will be no missing link left.

The government has already taken two projects to turn the two-lane highways from Dhaka to Sylhet and Sylhet to Tamabil into four-lane ones.

The expansion of the Dhaka-Sylhet highway will start this year and Sylhet-Tamabil highway early next year. On the other hand, the government has already turned the road from Dhaka to Bhanga into an expressway.

But the road from Bhanga to Benapole via Jashore is a two-lane highway, with a ferry terminal at Kalna point of Madhumati river in Narail.

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## 'We want justice'

**Demands Dhamrai family; judicial probe into cops' torture of woman, child sought**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Several members of a family, who were allegedly tortured in DB custody in Savar, demanded justice yesterday.

"I still cannot sleep. I have nightmares about the torture. I am sick both mentally and physically," said Shyamoli Halder Rupa, who was allegedly detained and tortured for three days.

Her relative Kirton Halder said, "The DB [Detective Branch of police] officers strung me by my hands from the ceiling and beat me during three days of confinement. At one stage, the officers said they would stop hitting me if I made a so-called confessional statement."

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## HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES Only 1.5pc see conviction

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Seven years ago, Mohammad Sabuj and his neighbour Mohiuddin Sarkar from Cumilla's Daudkandi paid around Tk 13 lakh to six people who lured them with well-paying jobs in Germany.

In February 2015, the six traffickers sent the two to India, assuring them that getting the German visa would be easier there. But Sabuj and Sarkar got nothing and after 17 days in India, were brought back to Bangladesh, and taken to Cox's Bazar.

"This time, they told us that they would send us to Thailand first and then to Germany. They asked to stay at a house until a boat comes from Thailand. But within a few days, they fled abandoning us," Sabuj told The Daily Star.

After managing to make their way back to Daudkandi, Sabuj filed a case against six members of the trafficking gang with Paltan Police Station in the capital on July 10 that year.

Police Bureau of Investigation investigated the case and submitted a charge sheet to a Dhaka court against three accused on April 20, 2016.

The court framed charges against them on January 22, 2017. But none of the 13 witnesses, named in the charge sheet, testified in the case during the trial that continued for around five years.

On July 27 this year, the Anti-Human Trafficking Offence Tribunal of Dhaka acquitted the accused.

In the verdict, the judge said, "There are no legal or rational provisions for a criminal case to be pending for years due to a failure of the state in producing witnesses."

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## UKRAINE, RUSSIA, BELARUS Rights defenders of 3 countries get Nobel Peace Prize

REUTERS, Oslo

Jailed Belarusian activist Ales Bialyatski, Russian rights group Memorial and Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties have won the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize, amid a war in their region that is the worst conflict in Europe since World War Two.

The award, the first since Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine, has echoes of the Cold War era, when prominent Soviet dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn won Nobel for peace or literature.

The prize will be seen by many as a condemnation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who celebrated his 70th birthday yesterday, and Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, making it one of the most politically contentious in decades.

"We believe that it is a war that is a result of an authoritarian regime, aggressively committing an act of aggression," Norwegian Nobel Committee chair Berit Reiss-Andersen told Reuters after the announcement yesterday.

She said the committee wanted to honour "three outstanding champions of human rights, democracy

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## No room for talks with AL

**Says BNP; it'll sit with other opposition parties**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has said it will not hold talks with the ruling Awami League, but will sit with the opposition parties.

"We are holding talks with the parties and organisations who believe that the incumbent government destroyed democracy in the country. There is no room for holding talks with the Awami League. They must leave [office]," Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of BNP, said.

He made the remarks at a press conference at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday in response to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's comment on Thursday.

Addressing a press conference at the Gono Bhaban, the PM said the government wanted all political parties to join the next parliamentary election, but it was up to them whether they would take part or not.

Fakhrul said there is no scope for the BNP to hold a dialogue with the AL government until it stepped down accepting their demand. "They must

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Carrying sticks, Chhatra League men swoop on leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad at the TSC intersection of Dhaka University yesterday to disperse a rally organised to mark the third death anniversary of Buet student Abrar Fahad.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## ABRAR'S DEATH ANNIV BCL men attack 'safe campus' rally at DU

**13 hurt; police detain 20**

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 13 people were injured in an attack by Bangladesh Chhatra League on a rally, organised marking the death anniversary of Buet student Abrar Fahad, on the Dhaka university campus yesterday afternoon.

The rally by Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad came under the attack 10 days after BCL men roughed up Chhatra Dal leaders and activists on the campus while they were on their way to meet VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman.

Police detained 20 parishad men from Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday for interrogation. Among the detainees were several persons who went to the hospital to take care of the injured.

Abrar, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), died on October 7, 2019, at a dormitory after being brutally beaten by some Chhatra League activists.

Witnesses said the BCL men swooped

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