



## FAILED PROCUREMENT Locomotives to cost more than double now

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

By failing to buy 70 locomotives over the last 11 years, Bangladesh Railway (BR) has shown how the non-implementation of a single project can hurt the organisation's overall services and cause huge financial losses.

When BR took on the project to purchase 70 meter gauge (MG) locomotives in August 2011, the cost was estimated at Tk 1,946 crore, with a deadline of June 2017.

The long-delayed project will be cancelled now as the authorities have failed to find a suitable financier.

In this given situation, BR has prepared a new project to buy 30 locomotives (MG) at a cost of Tk 2,247 crore, which is Tk 301 crore more than the original cost of the 70 locomotive project.

A BR official said the cost hike was caused by the rise in the dollar rate and the cost of materials over time. The locomotives in both projects have almost the same features.

However, cancelling the project will worsen BR's locomotive crisis, which is already bad because about 70 percent of the locomotives have passed their economic life.

According to the latest documents from BR, the state-run transport agency has 171 MG locomotives, of which 82 percent are old or "overaged". And of its 92 broad-gauge (BG) locomotives, 55 percent are overaged.

Apart from the 70 locomotive project, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) last month suggested suspending another project



Sylhet's rail link with Dhaka and Chattogram was suspended for 15 hours after parts of a train derailed at Lawachhara National Park in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila early yesterday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

## TRAIN DERAILMENT Rail link to Sylhet cut for 15hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Moulvibazar

Sylhet's rail connectivity with Dhaka and Chattogram was suspended for 15 hours after two carriages and the locomotive of Sylhet-bound Udayan Express from the port city derailed at the Lawachhara National Park in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal early yesterday.

Train operations resumed around 7:40pm after the carriages and the engine had been removed and the line mended, said Shakhawat Hossain, station master of Sreemangal Railway Station.

The compartments veered off the tracks at the Sreemangal-Bhanugachh section around 4:40am as a tree fell on the line after a storm, witnesses said.

Sohel Rana, assistant guard of Udayan Express, said there were no casualties as the train was moving slowly.

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## ROHINGYA REPATRIATION MOVE

# Dhaka calls for int'l support

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has urged the United Nations, Asean, and regional countries to support the pilot Rohingya repatriation project and help the returnees reintegrate in Myanmar.

"The presence of humanitarian and development actors in Rakhine will act as an important confidence-building measure," Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York Ambassador Muhammad Abdul Muhith said on Friday.

On May 5, Bangladesh officials, in coordination with Myanmar authorities, took a team of 20 Rohingyas to Maungdaw of Rakhine State to visit the resettlement camps there.

Upon their return, some of them told the media that they had doubts about Myanmar authorities' intentions.

They said they were unclear on how they would be granted citizenship. They also had doubts about getting back their properties, which they left in Rakhine after facing a military crackdown in

2017.

Bangladesh has already conveyed these concerns to Myanmar, which was planning to send a delegation to Bangladesh. It was postponed due to Cyclone Mocha.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, Rohingya repatriation must be voluntary, and the western countries, which are closely monitoring the pilot project, believe the environment in Rakhine is not conducive.

Muhith told the UN Security Council that the two sides have decided to undertake a pilot repatriation project under which a group of verified Myanmar nationals will return home in the first batch.

The repatriation will continue and additional Rohingyas will be repatriated in successive batches, Muhith said, adding that Bangladesh is taking all measures to ensure the voluntary return of the Rohingyas in family units.

He called upon the international community to remain vigilant so that the returnees under the pilot project are not exposed to further persecution.

The council members discussed the current humanitarian challenges in Myanmar, including the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha. They also backed Asean's efforts to address Myanmar's multifaceted challenges.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday urged the countries, which are heavily investing in Myanmar, to come forward with a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis for their own interests and to protect their investment.

"If the situation deteriorates, they [Rohingyas] could easily succumb to radicalism. The investments will be hurt if there are terrorist activities," he said at a seminar in a hotel in Dhaka.

Momen said if Rohingyas, who are frustrated become terrorists, major investments made in the region would be at risk.

"Peace is required in the region so that investments can be sustained." For this there is a need for commitment and will, which are lacking on the part of our global leadership" said the foreign minister.

He, however, said he always remains hopeful and mentioned that the US and China have been working together to find a solution to the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar.



## Jurassic sea giant was twice the size of killer whale

### Study says

CNN ONLINE

The chance discovery of large fossil specimens in a museum drawer have led researchers to conclude there was a gigantic marine reptile called a pliosaur swimming the seas 152 million years ago, according to a recent study.

The findings from the Late Jurassic period, though fragmentary, suggest the pliosaur was about twice the size of a killer whale.

David Martill, the lead study author is a professor in the University of Portsmouth's School of the Environment, Geography and Geosciences in the United Kingdom.

Martill recently found one Liopleurodon vertebrae in a drawer of fossils at Abingdon County Hall Museum in England, and subsequently learned the curator had three more in storage.

Due to the size of the vertebrae and comparisons to other fossils of other species from the Mid Jurassic and Early Cretaceous periods, the researchers concluded they were closely related to pliosaurus or a similar but undescribed species, according to the study.



**FAILED PROJECT**  
70 MG locomotives  
Taken in 2011  
Cost Tk 1,946 crore  
Deadline 2017  
Revised Cost Tk 2,659  
Revised Deadline 2024



**NEW PROJECT**  
30 MG locomotives  
Taken in 2023  
Cost Tk 2,247 crore  
Deadline June 2026

to overhaul 21 MG locomotives

Meaning, the two long-delayed projects will now be cancelled and no allocation was given to these projects in Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal year, officials said.

These two projects were initially taken to mitigate the growing crisis of rail engines.

On May 6, BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star that the cancellation of the two projects would cause serious problems because it would take four to five years to buy new locomotives under a new project.

### MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN

The deadline for the 70 locomotive project was extended twice before the project went through a major revision in 2018, when the cost jumped to Tk 2,659.33 crore with the deadline reset for June 2024.

In October 2018, BR signed a deal with the South Korean Hyundai Rotem Company for the procurement of the locomotives. As per the agreement, the company was supposed to arrange the required funds.

But in 2021, Hyundai sought to pull out of the project after the government asked it to manage soft loans instead

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## GCC POLLS Motorcade of Zaida attacked again

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gazipur

The motorcade of Zaida Khatun, an independent in the Gazipur City Corporation mayoral race and mother of suspended Gazipur mayor Zahangir Alam, was allegedly attacked again yesterday.

Zahangir, also an expelled Awami League leader, said the attackers were relatives of the ruling party mayor nominee, Azmat Ullah Khan.

At least seven of Zaida's supporters were injured in the attack, he claimed.

"My mother and I and our supporters were going towards ward-57 from ward-45 around 4:00pm. When we were near Tongi Railgate, a group of people stopped us and hurled chunks of brick at us," Zahangir told reporters.

He claimed four to five policemen present at the



Aspiring pilgrims stand in a queue to collect their necessary travel documents at the Hajj Camp in the capital's Ashkona yesterday. The first hajj flight is scheduled to depart for Saudi Arabia at 2:45am today.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## INFECTIOUS DISEASE DETECTION WHO launches global network

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday launched a global network to help swiftly detect the threat from infectious diseases, like Covid-19, and share the information to prevent their spread.

The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) will provide a platform for connecting countries and regions, improving systems for collecting and analysing samples, the agency said.

The network aims to help ensure infectious disease threats are swiftly identified and tracked and the information shared and acted on to prevent catastrophes like the Covid pandemic.

The network will rely on pathogen genomics to analyse the genetic code of viruses, bacteria and other disease-causing organisms to understand how infectious and deadly they are and how they spread.

The data gathered will feed into a broader disease surveillance system used to identify and track diseases, in a bid to contain outbreaks and to develop treatments and vaccines.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus hailed the "ambitious" goals of the new network, saying it could "play a vital role in health security".

"As was so clearly demonstrated to us during the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is stronger when it stands together to fight shared health threats," he said.

The IPSN, announced a day before the annual meeting of WHO member states begins in Geneva, will have a secretariat within the WHO's Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence.

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