



Govt rolls out Tk 4,988cr road safety project

World Bank to provide Tk 3,759.82cr; RHD, BRTA, police, DGHS to jointly implement it by June 2028

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The largest-ever road safety project in Bangladesh was launched yesterday aiming to reduce fatalities and injuries from road crashes.

The World Bank and the government are funding the Tk 4,988.14 crore project, which was approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on April 18.

Of the sum, the WB -- for whom this will be the first dedicated road safety project in South Asia -- will provide Tk 3,759.82 crore. The government will provide the remaining sum.

The Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Bangladesh Police and Directorate General of Health Services will jointly implement the project from May 2023 to June 2028.

The project began at a time when road safety has taken a central stage with thousands of people getting killed and injured every year mainly due to lack of proper monitoring and enforcement of laws.

At least 4,68 people were killed and 769 others injured in 496 road crashes across the country in May, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passenger welfare platform.

Different bodies exist in Bangladesh to ensure road safety, but they are not empowered and lack effective coordination to get expected outcomes, the WB said in its appraisal report.

The organisations are also not held accountable. Besides, the fund allocated for road safety action plans is insufficient, not prioritised and

Different bodies exist in Bangladesh to ensure road safety, but they are not empowered and lack effective coordination to get expected outcomes: WB

has never been institutionalised, it said.

The project will pilot comprehensive road safety measures, including improved engineering designs, road signs and markings, pedestrian facilities, speed enforcement and emergency care from Gazipur to Elenga and Natore-Nawabganj highways.

The measures will help reduce road traffic deaths by more than 30 percent on the two highways, the WB said.

The project will also undertake road safety pilots in selected urban areas and district roads. It will improve post-crash care, which is critical in saving lives, and will also set up an ambulance service via a toll-free number and upgraded emergency care services in selected district hospitals, and upazila health complexes along the two national highway corridors.

"Road safety affects us all. Road crashes are the fourth leading cause of children's death in Bangladesh and youths are disproportionately affected," said Abdoulaye Seck, the WB's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, at the launch event held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

Road fatalities and injuries are personal and family tragedies and they undermine a country's growth and human development. For Bangladesh, improving road safety is a key development priority, he said.

"Through this project and other ongoing initiatives, the World Bank is helping Bangladesh make roads safer for its people," he added.

Although the incumbent government made a significant development in the transport sector, the road accidents put them in an uncomfortable situation, said Obaidul Quader, the road transport and bridges minister.

This project will help Bangladesh achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on road safety by 2030.

The WB's decision to cancel the loan for Padma Bridge was a misunderstanding, which is over now, he said, adding that the Washington-based multilateral lender's funding for the project and budget support is a testament to that.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the road transport and highways division, Sharifa Khan, secretary of the economic relations division, and chiefs of the implementing agencies of the project also spoke.

DHAKA-17 BY-POLLS

Rift in JP resurfaces

Quader, Raushan nominate separate candidates

RASHIDUL HASAN

Fresh rifts have surfaced between Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader and the party's Chief Patron Raushan Ershad as they nominated two separate leaders to contest in the Dhaka-17 by-election.

GM Quader yesterday nominated Maj (retd) Sikdar Anisur Rahman while Raushan, also leader of the opposition in parliament, nominated Kazi Mamun to contest in the by-polls.

Flanked by leaders of Raushan's faction, Kazi Mamun yesterday submitted his nomination papers before the Dhaka Senior Election Officer Md Munir Hossain at the Election Commission office in Agargaon.

Opposition Chief Whip Mashiur Rahman Ranga, Raushan's political secretary Golam Moshi, former state minister

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

79 migrants drown as boat sinks off Greece

104 rescued; hundreds more feared dead or missing

REUTERS, Athens

At least 79 migrants drowned early yesterday and hundreds more were feared dead or missing after their overloaded boat capsized and sank in open seas off Greece, in one of Europe's deadliest shipping disasters.

As a painstaking search for survivors continued, a European rescue support charity said it believed around 750 people were on board the 20-30 metre-long (65-100 foot) vessel. Greek authorities said it was too soon to speculate on the number.

Alarm Phone, which operates a trans-European network supporting rescue operations, said it received alerts from people on board a ship in distress off Greece late on Tuesday, subsequently losing contact.

"According to the people, there were 750 people on board... We now hear reports of a shipwreck and fear they are true," it said on Twitter.

The UN's International Organization for Migration said in a tweet that initial reports suggested up to 400 people were on the boat.

Greek authorities said it was unclear how many the vessel was carrying when it went under, and that 104 people had been rescued by midday.

"It is not safe to give a number. We do not know how many people were in the hold," coast guard spokesperson Nikos Alexiou told Greece's MEGA TV. "...There were too many people on the outer deck. It was full."

The boat's occupants had refused an offer of help late on Tuesday, the coast guard added.

Rare dwarf star crystallising into 'diamond' found

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Astronomers have found a rare white dwarf star about 104 light-years away whose core appears to be transforming into an ultra-dense "cosmic diamond."



When some stars, such as the Sun, near the end of their life, they become what is known as a white dwarf.

A white dwarf is very hot when it forms, but since it has no source of energy, it cools down, radiating energy, and some such stars may gradually harden and crystallise.

Astronomers, including those from the University of Southern Queensland in Australia, have now found one such white dwarf which has cooled down, and its core may be transforming into a "cosmic diamond."

In a yet-to-be peer-reviewed study, posted in the arXiv preprint server, scientists describe a white dwarf star about 104 light years away, which is primarily made of carbon and metallic oxygen.

"In this work, we present the discovery of a new Sirius-like quadruple system at 32 parsecs distance, composed of a crystallizing white dwarf companion to the previously known triple HD 190412," scientists wrote in the study, accepted for publication in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Mother, daughter stabbed to death at Noakhali home

Cops say spat over money led to double murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A woman and her daughter were stabbed to death at their residence in Noakhali town yesterday.

Police suspect a monetary dispute to be the motive behind the double murder.

The victims were Nur Nahar Begum, 40, wife of Fazle Azim, and her daughter Fatema Azim Priyonti, 17, who sat for this year's SSC exams.

The incident took place around 10:30am at Guptanko Barlington area.

Police arrested Altaf Hossain, 28, after locals handed him over to them. He was an expatriate working in Oman who returned home a week ago.

During primary interrogation, Altaf admitted to committing the double murder and a case was filed against him.

Altaf told police that he and Nur Nahar got acquainted over the phone, which later turned into an affair.

He also said that Nur Nahar told him to return to Bangladesh and that she would give him Tk 2.5 lakh for running a business here, said Md Shahidul Islam, superintendent of Noakhali police, at a press briefing yesterday evening.

Altaf returned a week ago and since then he has been demanding money

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A market of Dhaka North City Corporation in front of the Gabtoli cattle market is being demolished to build an approach road to the under-construction bridge over the Turag river at Gabtoli. The Roads and Highways Department, which knocked the market down, is constructing the bridge.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Abductors release 2nd video of Sufiul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A second video clip of a Bangladeshi UN official, reportedly abducted by Al-Qaeda in Yemen, has allegedly been released by the terrorist outfit as "proof of life".



Sufiul Anam

The clip was picked up by SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors the online activities of organisations like Al-Qaeda.

AKM Sufiul Anam has been held hostage since February 2022.

The first video clip of Sufiul was released on September 7 last year, where he stated that he was abducted by Al-Qaeda.

In the video picked up by the media yesterday, Sufiul reiterated that he was abducted on February 11, 2022, along with four of his Yemeni staffers.

"Today is the third June, 2023," said Sufiul in the clip. Throughout the video, he was reading out a written script.

"I appeal to the UN secretary-general and our colleagues at work for quick response to the demands made by AQAP [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] before I face serious and terrible consequences," he read.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3