



SOUTHWESTERN REGION

Padma rail link to open new horizon

PM to inaugurate 82km Dhaka-Bhanga section today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The long awaited rail line via the Padma Bridge is set to open today and is expected to help improve the southwest's rail connectivity with the rest of the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the 82km Dhaka-Bhanga section at a programme at the Mawa station at 11:00am.

She is expected to take a train from Mawa to Bhanga with accompanying dignitaries and join a rally, organised by Faridpur district Awami League, at Kazi Abu Yusuf stadium there, sources said.

Bangladesh Railway is implementing the Padma Bridge Rail Link project to build a 169km rail line from Dhaka to Jashore via Padma Bridge at a cost of Tk 39,246.8 crore.

Most of the project's funding has come in the form of Chinese loan.

The entire line, up to Jashore, is scheduled to be completed by next June.

It has already created scopes for bringing the Barishal division under the rail network, and once the entire line is completed, travel time to the south-western region via rail would be considerably shortened.



BR is planning to start commercial operation on Dhaka-Bhanga section from next month by changing the routes of three trains, BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan said.

The schedule for the trains will be introduced on November 1.

Quamrul said they are planning to operate the Khulna bound Sundarban Express and the Benapole-bound Benapole Express via the Padma Bridge. The two trains are now being operated via the Bangabandhu Bridge.

He further said they were also planning to extend the route of Modhumoti Express up to Dhaka via Padma Bridge. It currently operates from Rajshahi to Bhanga.

Meanwhile, a special BR committee has proposed fares on the Dhaka-Bhanga route, which is much higher than the bus fares.

The seven-member committee, led by BR's Chief Commercial Manager (east) Nazmul Islam, proposed Tk 350 as fare for non-AC seats and Tk 667 for AC seats.

The fare is Tk 250-300 in non-AC buses, while it is Tk 400-500 in AC buses.

Even though the distance from Dhaka to Bhanga is around 80km, the committee in its proposal said the route length was 353km after counting the 23km elevated section of the line. The "pontage", the toll levied for the building or repairing of bridge, for the Padma Bridge was also counted.

The committee counted the 6.15km Padma Bridge as 154km and 23km elevated section as 155km, making the total commercial length of the route 353km, sources said.

The fare proposal is now pending with the railways ministry for approval.



Thousands of BNP activists and supporters gathered near the BNP office in the capital's Nayapaltn yesterday during the party's rally, demanding the release of its chief Khaleda Zia to send her abroad for better treatment. Story on Page 3. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

INDO-PACIFIC REGION

China's influence may challenge sovereignty of nations

Says US ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Unchecked Chinese influence may challenge the sovereignty and strategic autonomy of the Indo-Pacific nations, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas said yesterday.



"This, in turn, could precipitate instability and impede the prosperity we collectively seek," he said at a session on the last day of the three-day conference titled Bay of Bengal Conversations.

The event was organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) at a city hotel.

Canadian High Commissioner Lilly Nichols, Australian High

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US-China ties impact 'destiny of mankind'

Xi tells top US senator Chuck Schumer

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday that China-US ties would impact the "destiny of mankind", as he met with a group of American senators in Beijing.

"How China and the United States get along with each other in the face of a world of change and turmoil will determine the future and destiny of mankind," Xi said as he met Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

Schumer is the latest high-level American official to go to China as Washington seeks to ease tensions with Beijing, leading a six-person delegation.

"I have said many times, including to several presidents, that we have 1,000 reasons to improve China-US relations, but not one reason to ruin them," Xi said, adding China-US ties are "the most important bilateral relationship in the world".

Schumer, in turn, told Xi that "our countries, together, will shape this century".

"That is why we must manage our relationship responsibly and respectfully," he said.

Earlier China's top diplomat Wang

Yi said he hoped Washington and Beijing could manage their differences "more rationally".

Meeting with Schumer at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, Foreign Minister Wang told the senate delegation he hoped their visit would help the two sides "manage existing differences more rationally, helping the relationship between the two countries return to the track of healthy development".

Wang also said he hoped they would "more accurately understand China" after the trip, which he said comes as the world is in a "turbulent period of change".

"The crisis in Ukraine has not yet subsided, and warfare has reemerged in the Middle East," he said.

"All these various challenges need to be addressed by the international community, and China and the United States should play their due roles," Wang said.

Schumer, in turn, thanked the Chinese delegation for their hospitality, noting there were several issues of "great concern" he was seeking to raise during his visit.

He said "a level playing field for American business and workers" was his delegation's "number one goal".



ROHINGYA CAMP

2 Arsa men killed in 'gunfights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two Rohingya, members of the Myanmar-based armed group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (Arsa), were killed in separate "gunfights" at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday, police said.

The deceased are Sakibul Hasan alias Sanaullah, 33, of Camp 2 West, and Ahmed Hossain, 36, of Irani Pahar in Camp 5, said Additional Deputy Inspector General Mohammad Iqbal, commander of 14 Armed Police Battalion (APBn).

Both were active members of Arsa and identified as "Jimmadar", he said.

In the gunfights between rival groups, Sanaullah was shot dead at Balurmath while Ahmed was killed in the Irani Pahar area, the police official said.

The bodies have been sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for autopsies and drives are underway to arrest the culprits, said the additional DIG.

US economist wins Nobel for work on gender gap

AFP, Stockholm

The Nobel prize in economics was awarded to American economist Claudia Goldin yesterday for research that has helped bring understanding to the role of women in the labour market.

The 77-year-old Harvard professor, who is the third woman to be awarded the prestigious economics prize, was given the nod "for having advanced our understanding of women's labour market outcomes," the jury said.

The Nobel is a "very important prize, not just for me, but for the many people who work in this field and who are trying to understand why there is so much change, but there are still large differences" in pay, Goldin told AFP in a telephone interview after the announcement.

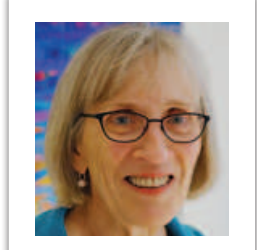
By studying the history of women in the United States workforce, Goldin demonstrated factors that have historically influenced, and in some cases still influence, the supply and demand for women in the labour force, the jury explained.

"She has demonstrated that the sources of the gender gap change over time," Nobel committee member Randi Hjalmarsson told a press conference.

Hjalmarsson added that while Goldin had not studied policy, her work had provided an "underlying foundation" that had different policy implications around the world.

Globally, about 50 percent of women participate in the labour market compared to 80 percent of men, but women earn less and are less likely to reach the top of the career ladder, the prize committee noted.

The Nobel prize in economics has the fewest number of women laureates, with just two others since it was first awarded in 1969. They were Elinor Ostrom in 2009 and Esther Duflo in 2019 - and Goldin is the first woman to receive the prize as the sole laureate.



Claudia Goldin

METRO RAIL Agargaon-Motijheel part to open October 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The opening of the Agargaon-Motijheel section of the country's first metro rail service has been rescheduled from October 20 to October 29.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the road transport and highways division, confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday.

"The date has been changed due to the prime minister's busy schedule... We just got the new date, but the venue [of the ceremony] and other related issues [regarding the programme] have not been settled yet," he said.

On August 20, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told reporters that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would inaugurate the Agargaon-Motijheel section of the metro rail on October 20.



Firefighters battling a fire that broke out at the SA Paribahan head office's parcel delivery depot in the capital's Kakrail yesterday around 10:10am. The blaze came under control within 45 minutes and was fully doused around 2:30pm. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Biggest ever solar storm identified using ancient tree rings

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Researchers have identified the biggest ever solar storm - when the sun emits huge bursts of energy - using ancient tree rings.



The event happened 14,300 years ago, according to the analysis of ancient tree rings found in the French Alps.

This radiocarbon spike was caused by a massive solar storm, the experts said, adding that a similar storm today could potentially wipe out satellite systems and cause massive electricity grid blackouts, costing billions of pounds.

The academics argue it is important to understand solar storms to protect future communications and energy systems and help build resilience against their effects.

For the study, an international team of researchers, including from the University of Leeds, measured radiocarbon levels in ancient trees on the eroded banks of the Drouzet River, near Gap, in the Southern French Alps.