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## A dream fulfilled

### PM says as she opens rail link with southern region thru' Padma Bridge

AGENCIES

The railway link between Dhaka and Bhanga is a dream come true, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

The 82km line via the Padma Bridge is expected to significantly boost rail connectivity with the southwest.

"This country is ours; [we] attained independence in exchange for blood. Bangladesh will march forward and stand with heads high in the world arena cherishing the ideology of the Father of the Nation," said Hasina while addressing a rally in Mawa after inaugurating the rail line.

The premier unveiled the inaugural plaque of the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project before joining the rally. She went to Mawa by car.

Echoing the words of her father, she said, "No one can hold back the Bangalees."

"We will build a smart nation, smart economy, smart government, and smart society. It is our goal."

She reaffirmed her vow to make the upcoming national election free, fair, neutral, and truly reflective of the people's will, reports UNB and BSS.

She slammed those who talk about toppling her government. The BNP-Jamaat-led 20 party alliance got only 29 seats out of 300 in the 2008 election and since then, they have been staying away from polls, she said, adding, "They don't want neutral elections."

She alleged that they were playing with elections, killing people, and resorting to murders and arson. Hasina urged all not to allow anyone to play ducks and drakes with the fate of the nation.

After the rally, the premier and her sister Sheikh Rehana bought tickets for themselves and other members of her family from two ticket counters at the Mawa station.

They waved the green flag and blew the whistle on the platform at 12:59pm and boarded a 14-carriage special train.

Her family members, dignitaries, and 50 other people from different professions travelled with her.

Hasina was seen looking outside the window when the train was crossing the Padma Bridge. She also talked to her fellow passengers.

At 1:55pm, the train arrived at the Bhanga Railway Station where AL central

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A smiling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, and Rehana's grandchildren pose for a photo inside a special train heading for Bhanga from Mawa via the Padma Bridge yesterday. Hasina inaugurated the Padma Bridge rail link and addressed rallies in Mawa and Bhanga before going to Tungipara for the day.

PHOTO: BSS

## Let the heavy defeat not deflate Tigers

AL-AMIN

When England tick all the boxes, it is nigh impossible for any team in the world to stop them from winning a game.

The defending world champions did exactly that against Bangladesh in Dharamshala yesterday. And, the outcome was a massive 137-run win — a victory that put England back on track after a stunning nine-wicket defeat against New Zealand in their World Cup opener last week.

The match as a contest was all but over at the halfway mark after England had clobbered 364-9.

Bangladesh were expecting an England assault after skipper Shakib Al Hassan won the toss and elected to field. The six-wicket win in the opening game against Afghanistan on this ground, where the spinners found good purchase from the wicket, and the overnight rain might have prompted Shakib to chase again.

Shakib was also expecting early breakthroughs from the pacers. But it did not happen as the two England openers — Jonny Bairstow and David Malan — put on 115 runs in 17.4 overs, an ideal platform

from where the holders prospered.

Besides, Malan's imperious 140 off 107 balls also came as a surprise to the Tigers, who were expecting the assault from somewhere else considering the left-hander's holding role in the team.

Joe Root, the other player entrusted with the job of anchoring the innings and allowing the others to go all guns blazing, also hit a fine 82 off 68 balls.

When Malan was dismissed at 293-3 in the 40th over, England, with a batting line-up as deep as number 10, were eyeing a total close to 400.

However, the Tigers pegged them back, conceding just 66 runs in the last 10 overs, with left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam and off-spinner Mahedi Hasan, who came into the side as the sixth bowler, sharing seven of the eight wickets that fell at that time.

That bowling effort in the final Powerplay overs gave the Tigers some sort of momentum going into a very difficult chase.

But an all-too familiar top-order collapse dashed any hopes for Bangladesh of making a match out of it. The Tigers

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## Pakistan sink SL with record run-chase

AFP, Hyderabad

Mohammad Rizwan and Abdullah Shafique clubbed centuries as Pakistan chased down the highest



target in World Cup history to beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

The diminutive Rizwan overcame leg cramps to score a 121-ball 131 not out while Shafique hit a 103-ball 113 as Pakistan overhauled their 345-run target in 48.2 overs.

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## Is EC capable of holding fair polls?

### Visiting US team asks EC, enquires about its control over election officials

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The visiting US pre-election assessment mission has enquired of the Election Commission how they would ensure "control" over election officials, including the field level administration officials, and law enforcers during the next general election.

Top EC secretariat officials, who attended a meeting between the US mission and the commission at its office yesterday, said that the delegation also wanted to know about the commission's competence to hold the election in a free and fair manner.

At the meeting, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal told the US team that the commission wants free, fair and participatory elections, and that it held dialogues with political parties sans those who "turned down" the invitation to join talks.

The BNP and several other opposition parties skipped the EC's dialogue with political parties last year. The commission in March this year had invited BNP to an informal discussion, but the party didn't turn up.

"The discussion focused on a free, fair, participatory and peaceful election," Habibur told reporters after the meeting yesterday.

The US mission of the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) is now on a six-day visit to Bangladesh to know about the election preparations and conduct an independent and impartial assessment.

After ending its activities, the visiting team will issue a statement on its key findings, analysis of the pre-election environment and other issues, the IRI and NDI said earlier in a joint press statement.

The 12th parliamentary polls are likely to be held early January next year.

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## 'You've turned country into hell'

### HC judge tells DAG, grants Odhikar's Adilur, Elan bail; CJ asks judge to be careful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday rebuked the deputy attorney general, saying, "You have turned the country into hell."

The court said this while hearing the bail petition of Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan.

Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad rebuked Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Rezaul Karim after he attempted to place his argument against the petitioners before Odhikar lawyer AJ Mohammad Ali placed his.

As soon as Ali placed the bail petition, DAG Rezaul said the prosecution had arguments against the petition.

The justice then said, "Let the petitioners' counsel place his arguments first. Then you will place yours. Why did you get started even before the petitioners' counsel made his arguments? You have turned the country into hell."

Later in the day, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told reporters that Justice Emdadul's comment was unconstitutional.

"Not even a private citizen can say that the country has been turned into hell, let alone a judge," he added.

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Bangladesh opener Liton Das cut a forlorn figure as he walked back to the pavilion despite having scored a fluent 66-ball 76, which hardly had any impact on the outcome as the Tigers suffered a 137-run defeat against England in their second ICC World Cup fixture in Dharamshala yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israel retakes control of Gaza border areas

### Claims 1,500 Hamas fighters killed; UN says more than 180,000 Gaza dwellers made homeless

Death toll surpasses 1,000 in Israel; 765 killed in Gaza

Hamas attacks Israeli city of Ashkelon with rocket fire after warning residents to leave

Gaza-Egypt crossing hit by Israel for third time in 24 hours



AGENCIES

Israel said it recaptured Gaza border areas from Hamas fighters as the war's death toll passed 3,000 yesterday, the fourth day of fierce fighting since the Islamist group launched a surprise attack.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned Israel's military campaign following Saturday's onslaught was only the

start of a sustained war to destroy Hamas and "change the Middle East".

Fears of a regional conflagration have surged amid expectations of a looming Israeli ground incursion into Gaza, the crowded enclave from where Hamas launched its land, air and sea attack on the Jewish Sabbath.

The death toll in Israel has surged

above 1,000 from the worst attack in the country's 75-year history, while Gaza officials have reported 765 people killed so far.

Israel's military said its forces had largely reclaimed the embattled south and the border around Gaza and dislodged holdout Hamas fighters from more than a dozen towns and kibbutzim.

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