

## PM returns home after 3-day official visit to Belgium



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has returned home after wrapping up her three-day official visit to Belgium.

A commercial flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, carrying the premier and her entourage, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:51am yesterday.

On board her return flight, the prime minister exchanged pleasantries with the passengers, going from one seat to another. She asked about the well-being of the surprised passengers.

The aircraft departed from Brussels Zaventem Airport at 2:10am yesterday (Bangladesh time).

In Brussels, the PM attended the "Global Gateway Forum 2023" on October 25-26 at the invitation of European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen.

During her stay in Brussels, Hasina had several meetings with leaders of European countries, the European Commission (EC), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Parliament, as well as attending a community reception on the sidelines of the Forum.

## Three migrants killed in shooting near Serbia-Hungary border

AFP, Belgrade

Three people were killed and another wounded in a shooting between migrants near Serbia's border with Hungary yesterday, state-run television RTS reported.

The shooting happened at an abandoned farm complex near the border village of Horgos, a place where migrants trying to enter European Union member Hungary will often camp, RTS said.

Police forces were sent to the area, but did not immediately issue a statement over yesterday's incident.

The region has seen a series of clashes between smuggling gangs and migrants in recent months, sometimes deadly.

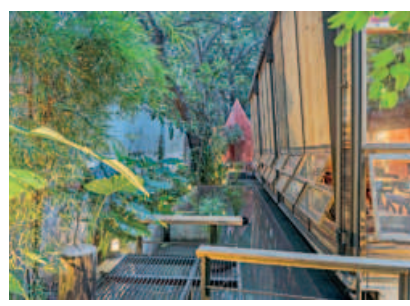


PHOTO: SHAFIET ALAM ABIR, GOAAT

## ECO-CHIC EXPERIENCE at Ajo Idea Space, Gulshan

RBR

I was feeling a little down the other day and wanted to sit down somewhere quiet and serene to just switch off from the chaos and rejuvenate my mind. What my mood craved was not something Dhaka's posh cafes would be able to offer.

I wanted earthiness. I wanted to sit on wooden leg stools and breathe in the freshness that an autumn garden has to offer. I longed to walk on muddy green rolling grass.

This ambience stuck in my head and finding it in reality was a tall order indeed, until I stumbled upon Ajo Idea Space's new branch at Gulshan. It is exactly a place that has been carefully chosen and thoughtfully organised in such a dream-like setting.

The spirit of the place feels like it has been brought to life from the pages of a romantic novel. "Ajo is a restaurant for fast-casual and relaxed dining with artistic expressions in food, ambience, architecture, elements, design, and thought," says Khalid Mahmud, owner of Ajo Idea Space.

The Gulshan space has a Japanese Zen garden feel with the Ikebana Experience Centre right next to it. A

small goldfish-and-turtle pond and big trees that exude a natural relaxing essence – it is as close to nature as you can get in this fast-paced city.

The interior of this branch is pure love. "Everything in Ajo is from recycled and refurbished items to press



home our concept to promote environmentally friendly products," says Mahmud.

GoAAT (Group of Architects and Thinkers) are the creative minds that gave Ajo this much-cherished look. Scrap metal and wooden boards from old ships were used in the walls. Other construction materials were sourced from fully refurbished materials.

"Our place is environmentally sustainable, organic, and simple; where

we offer people a place to unwind and enjoy the calmness of the interior," Mahmud explains.

Their focus is more on creating a memorable experience and food just plays a supporting role in the aesthetic drama.

The menu gives local produce a transnational twist. Spanish tapas platter, Indian naan with curry, pasta, fried calamari, coffee, and tea – the menu is diverse but sourced locally. Interestingly, their mocktails are quite the rage. Rangbaj is a kalojaam (berry drink), dui poisar alta, shancharini, shobuj shathi are drinks of green mango, mixed fruits, etc. The names are a compliment to the local appeal and deshi fruits.

When you have that forlorn longing and want to spend some quiet time, take a stroll through Ikebana Experience Centre, sip a drink at Ajo Idea Space and look through the Gallery and Made in Bangladesh's outlet, all housed in this single location.

The place is artistically inclined; it is a treat for all your senses – something that Dhaka needs. The curated old-charm look brings about a sense of yearning that makes you want to come back and sit for a while and enjoy the skylight or just the tranquillity of the moment.

For the restless and young, who loves showmanship this experience centre is the best Instagrammable spot in town now.

## AL, BNP ready to show off strength

FROM PAGE 1

and participants cannot carry sticks or rods claiming those to be parts of banners or placards.

BNP sources said most of the party leaders and activists travelled to the city for the rally and that they would like to stage a huge show of popularity and send the ruling party a message.

"The main goal of our peaceful grand rally is to compel the government to hold a free and fair election under a non-partisan interim government," said Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party.

The AL wants its rally to be bigger than that of the BNP to send a message to the nation and the international community about its popularity, AL insiders said.

They said they took steps to get rid of the assumption of some that the BNP's rallies have been bigger than those of the ruling party recently.

District and thana AL units close to the capital have been asked to send as many people as possible to the rally, according to AL sources.

The party also wants to make sure that a significant number of its rank and file are at the entrances to the capital, its unit offices, and other important places to thwart "any possible attack by opposition activists", they said.

AL activists will be on the streets from early morning as the party does not want the BNP activists to have a free reign, the sources said, adding that the AL activists will not attack but they will defend themselves.

"We will die if required but will not leave the ground. It is another Liberation War for Bangladesh and we will be victorious if we are united," AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said at AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Yesterday morning, the AL started erecting a stage at the south gate

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of Baitul Mukarram even before getting the police permission. The work stopped around noon after the police intervened.

A lone police vehicle was seen there.

But at Nayapaltan, more than 100 police personnel were deployed since noon. Riot control vehicles and

water cannon trucks were parked at the BNP's rally venue.

The law enforcers set up 60 CCTV cameras there.

Apart from police, Rab deployed 1,500 members across the city. APBN is on standby.

The DMP yesterday held an emergency meeting of officers in charge of 50 city police stations and other top police officials at its headquarters.

DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman and other high officials directed the field-level officials not to go on the offensive even after instigation.

"There could be instigation and abusive words hurled at the police but the police will show maximum restraint," a high official of the DMP told this paper.

"Stay vigilance, do not allow any Jamaat men to enter the capital, and take lawful actions whenever needed. Probe the unidentified people or suspicious gatherings," the official quoted the instructions given to the field-level officers.

Asked about the meeting, Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner of the DMP, said there were many political programmes on October 28. "So, we held a special meeting on the traffic plan, security, and diversions."

Asked if law enforcers checking mobile phones was a violation of privacy rights, Mahid said, "The police are taking lawful measures when suspicion arises."

Meanwhile, BNP leaders and activists started gathering at Nayapaltan around 1:00pm yesterday. They chanted anti-government slogans and were seen in procession on rickshaws on the street.

Aminul Huq, member secretary of BNP Dhaka north unit, claimed that tens of thousands of party leaders and activists would join today's rally defying all obstacles.

## Bangabandhu Tunnel

FROM PAGE 1

Alam, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

The tunnel is expected to save time and money in the transport of raw materials and manufactured goods used and produced in various industries in the country's largest economic zone. This zone houses Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar in Mirsharai, Korean EPZ in Karnaphuli upazila, China Industrial Zone in Anwara upazila and Cox's Bazar Coal Power Plant.

The FBCCI president said that since the construction of the tunnel began in 2015, many new factories have been set up in the region. Even a decade ago, there were no such industrial units on either side of the Karnaphuli.

The Tk 10,689.42-crore project has been jointly funded by China and Bangladesh, with Beijing providing Tk 5,913.19 crore in loan at 2 percent interest.

Built by China Communication Construction Company at a depth of 18 to 31 metres under the Karnaphuli, the main tunnel is 3.32km long.

The length of its two tubes, with two lanes in each tube, is 2.45km. The tunnel also has a 5.35km connecting road at the western and eastern ends and a 727-metre flyover at the Anwara end.

According to the upazila land office data, at least 50 large industrial groups and 350 businesspeople have already bought land to establish factories in various sectors – power, petroleum, apparel, shipbuilding, fish processing, steel, cement and oil refinery – on the south bank of the Karnaphuli.

There is potential for large-scale investments.

Md Khalilur Rahman, president of Chattogram Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the under-construction Bay Terminal, located next to the tunnel, is expected to open in 2025. This terminal will handle as much goods as the

Chattogram Port.

Matarbari Deep Sea Port, also under construction, and a sea port jetty at Mirsharai economic zone area are set to be connected through the tunnel by 2025 and 2026, respectively.

"As a result, thousands of factories on the north side of the tunnel have already drawn more investments," Khalilur said.

In addition to expanding economic activities, the Karnaphuli tunnel will develop the tourism industry in the region, said Harunur Rashid Chowdhury, project director of the Multilane Road Tunnel under the River Karnaphuli.

"Overall, the tunnel will increase the gross domestic product of the country by 0.166 percent," he said.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar is being set up on 33,805 acres of land in Mirsharai, about 10km from Dhaka-Chattogram highway and 65km from the port city. It will be connected to the tunnel through the marine drive along the coast. The marine drive will later be connected to Matarbari Deep Sea Port.

Investors say this will save time and money, and expedite the industrialisation in the area.

Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) data show that as of October 11, at least 152 companies have leased 5,271 acres of land. Of them, 26 companies have already invested \$1.67 billion besides setting up their factories on 410 acres, creating jobs for 52,238 people.

The 152 companies plan to invest \$18.5 billion in total and generate employment for 7,75,228 people, the BEPZA data show.

As many as 539 plots will be allocated to investors in this zone and they may go into production by 2030. Once in full operations, these units are expected to create more than 15 lakh jobs.

In addition, the 38 factories in the Korean EPZ, located on the south side of Karnaphuli on 2,500 acres, will benefit from the tunnel. Now the

## US monitoring reports on Khaleda's health

Says state dept spokesperson

UNB, Dhaka

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller on Thursday said the US is monitoring reports about former prime minister Khaleda Zia's "deteriorating" health.

"We have encouraged the Bangladeshi government to ensure a fair and transparent legal process for her. And I don't have anything to add to an internal legal process," Miller said on Thursday.

He told this in reply to a question during a regular media briefing in Washington.

He also reiterated that the US does not take sides in Bangladesh politics.

"I will just say that, no, we do not take a side on internal political matters," he said.

## 3 Shibir men arrested in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Narsingdi police yesterday arrested three activists of Islami Chattri Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, for their alleged involvement in subversive activities.

Billal Hosaim, 22, son of Bacchu Miah from Raipura upazila, Shafiqul Islam, 19, son of Sana Ullah from Monohardi upazila, and Arafat, 19, son of Ataur Rahman from the same upazila, are all students at Jamea Quasemia Kamil Madrasah.

They were arrested from the house of Maqbul Hossain, Jamaat's district treasury and a teacher at Jamea Quasemia Kamil Madrasah around 1:30am.

Later in the day, police sent them to jail via a court order, said Narsingdi Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abul Kashem Bhuiyan.

Police also sought a three-day remand to interrogate the arrested, he added.

## 5th batch of nuclear fuel arrives at Rooppur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The fifth consignment of uranium, the nuclear fuel for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, arrived in Pabna's Rooppur yesterday under special security arrangements.

A convoy carrying uranium entered the project area around 9:30am.

The last consignment of nuclear fuel reached Rooppur on October 20.

Confirming the development, Biplob Kumar Goswami, Pabna additional superintendent of police (Ishwardi Circle), said the convoy carrying uranium left the capital in the morning, crossed the Bangabandhu Bridge, and reached Rooppur project area via Banpara in Natore and Dasuria in Ishwardi of Pabna.

On September 28, the first consignment of fuel for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Project arrived in Bangladesh. The next day, on September 29, fuel was taken to the project area under special security measures.

The Ministry of Science and Technology recently said that the first unit of the plant may come into operation in July 2024 and the second unit in July 2025.

Korean EPZ exports \$1.5 to \$2 billion worth of goods every year, with 70 percent of its land still remaining unused.

Next to the Korean EPZ is the China Industrial Zone. It was inaugurated in 2016 on 783 acres in Anwara, although the land development work has not been completed yet. Once completed, it will be able to house 371 factories, draw investments worth \$18 billion and create 50,000 jobs, according to the BEPZA data.

"The long stretch from Mirsharai to Cox's Bazar will become the largest industrial corridor of the country," said economist Moinul Islam.

But he stressed the speedy implementation of the 230km marine drive project to maximise the utilisation of the tunnel.

"There is no alternative to the marine drive to make full use of the tunnel. Through the marine drive we can maximise the use of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar and Matarbari Deep Sea Port. At the same time, the entire region from Mirsharai to Anwara-Banskhali-Chakaria-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf will develop as an economic corridor," he said.

The former economics professor of Chattogram University said the loan repayment for the tunnel will start in 2025. It will not be possible to pay the installments with its income alone, as the tunnel will not be fully utilised in the next few years.

"The full benefits of the tunnel can be reaped when these industrial zones, including Matarbari Deep Sea Port and Bay Terminal are fully operational. In the long term, the tunnel is a very good initiative for the country," he noted.

According to a survey conducted in 2013 before the construction began, an average of 28,305 vehicles will use the tunnel every day by 2025, at least 37,946 vehicles by 2030 and 162,000 vehicles by 2067.