

Dhaka, Delhi to benefit from 3 newly opened dev projects

PM tells Indian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the newly opened three India-aided development projects will benefit the people of Bangladesh and India.

"Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I jointly inaugurated three development schemes on November 1. I hope these projects will benefit the people of both the countries ...," she said.

The premier made the remarks when Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban in the evening.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

The prime minister said general elections are approaching in two countries and the countries should be mindful of each other's sensitive issues.

The PM thanked the Indian government and Modi for supporting Saima Wazed's candidacy as the World Health Organisation's new regional director for South East Asia region for a five-year term beginning from 2024 in an election in India.

The election was held on November 1 and Saima, the daughter of Hasina, won.

During the meeting, Hasina and the Indian envoy expressed happiness about the state of bilateral relations and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The three projects are 12.24km Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link, Khulna-Mongla Port Rail Line, and Unit-II of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant.

6.4 magnitude quake hits Nepal

REUTERS

A 6.4 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal last night at 23:47 (local time), according to its National Seismological Centre.

The epicentre was around Ramidanda in Jajarkot district, which is about 500km west of the capital Kathmandu. There were no immediate details of any damage.

"This was a big earthquake. We have heard some damage to houses. We are collecting details. So far no reports of human injuries. Police and army have been mobilised," Suresh Sunar, a top official in Jajarkot, told Reuters.

The German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) pegged the earthquake at a magnitude of 6.2, at a depth of 10km.

The earthquake shook buildings in New Delhi, according to Reuters' witnesses.

Afghans dispatch Dutch to boost semis bid

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after openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (10) and Ibrahim Zadran (20) had departed cheaply.

Rahmat fell, caught and bowled by Saqib Zulfiqar with 129 on the board and his team well set for victory.

Hashmatullah's 56 came off 64 balls and followed his 80 against India and 58 in the match with Sri Lanka.

Earlier, Afghanistan restricted error-plagued Netherlands to 179 all out.

The Netherlands, who still harboured a slim hope of squeezing into the semifinals, won the toss and opted to bat but were undone by seeing four of their batsmen run-out.

They recovered from seeing 39-year-old opener Wesley Barresi dismissed by spinner Muijeb Ur Rahman in the first over.

Max O'Dowd and Colin Ackermann put on 70 for the second wicket when a series of calamities put them on the back foot.

O'Dowd was on 42 when he was beaten by a direct hit by Azmatullah Omarzai from fine leg.

With the score on 92-2, Ackermann (29) failed to make his ground when Ikram Alikhil whipped off the bails from a smart throw by Rashid Khan.

On the next delivery, skipper Scott Edwards swept, lost sight of the ball and as he wandered aimlessly out of his crease Alikhil ran him out without scoring.

Mohammad Nabi and teenage wrist spinner Noor Ahmad then sent back Bas de Leede and Saqib Zulfiqar with Logan van Beek dismissed thanks to a smart stumping by wicketkeeper Alikhil.

Sybrand Engelbrecht had made 58 with six fours when he became the fourth run-out of the innings, failing to beat Nabi's throw from midwicket.

That left the Dutch on 152-8 before they went on to be bowled out after 46.3 overs.

Nabi was the pick of the bowlers with the veteran off-spinner taking 3-28.



A warm cup of tea expresses a welcoming spirit in cultures across the world. If tea is not offered then a relationship is not offered – this is how my conversation began with a tea alchemist and creative storyteller, Katrina Wild. She is a traveller driven by the desire to search for old tea legends and stories, and like a modern-day monk, Katrina is travelling and offering tea along the way.

Katrina Wild's exotic TEA ADVENTURES

RBR

"One of the greatest things about being a vagabond is that when you do not have solid plans and are flexible like water, there is a lot of space for opportunities just knocking at your door. And now here I am in beautiful Bangladesh," she said.

Interestingly tea specialist, Katrina, and local tea hobbyist, Mishael Aziz Ahmad, will be officiating an informal tea ceremony at BBQ Express, Lalmatia on Sunday evening. It promises to be a unique experience for Dhaka tea lovers, as they take us on a fascinating sensory journey through a variety of teas sourced from all corners of the globe.

Mishael did a few tea ceremonies at Goethe Institute, and he is eagerly looking forward to this opportunity to talk all about his passion and share a platform with a specialist.

"I am from Latvia and during my high school years, when I was looking for harmony in my life, I started working in a Buddhist tea house. From there I learned the calm, cleansing, meditative, and ceremonial effect of tea. I was attracted to oriental culture and their variety of tea blends fascinated me.

Now, I just go to exotic places in search of tea stories and experiences!" she remarked with a smile.

Katrina added, "I earn my tea trips by working as a freelancer, sometimes writing, and at other times doing tea jobs in Japanese tea farms, learning to brew tea in a Buddhist monastery, or even as a tour guide".

So far, her travels took her to Japan, Croatia, the Canary Islands, South Korea, Taiwan, Egypt, Vietnam, Thailand, and now Bangladesh.

"My Buddhist temple stays and tea making has been definitely the highlight of my time in South Korea. I learned that Buddhism discovered the methods of producing great teas and presented us with the legacy of brewing green teas and oolongs without sugar," remarked Katrina.

Tea bags are a by-product of fine tea dust. It does not have the complex character of loose, large tea leaves. Only low-grade tea goes into the tea bags; to enjoy the authentic tea complexities, one has to appreciate the blends. One must also keep in mind that anything brewed is not tea as herbs are not from tea plants.

On Sunday evening, at the tea ceremony in BBQ Express, the two tea enthusiasts will infuse your cup with stories of origin, the people behind the tea, and the rich cultural traditions that accompany each brew. You will gain a profound appreciation for the art of tea. The two passionate tea aficionados will also explore the rituals and the spirituality associated with drinking the beverage.

"Tea acts as bridges to bring together different cultures and people in a harmonious way. My knowledge from visiting Amazigh Libya border people I learnt that brewing a tea in a metal pot over the Sahara Desert fire, is sheer tea wizardry. With lots of sugar and a hint of mint or lemon grass Ceylon tea brewed over open fire, is heavenly. Tea cooked in this manner is called Zarda in Western Sahara Desert, Egypt-Libya border," she tells.

As an avid tea drinker myself, I am eager to see our vibrant culture of dudh-cha (milk tea) find a place on the tea map. Needless to say, Katrina's visit to Bangladesh is exciting for the niche tea specialists who are steadily growing in the capital!

3 Bangladeshis killed in Malaysia landslide

STAR REPORT

Three Bangladeshi migrant workers were killed in a landslide in Malaysia's Machang area on Thursday.

The deceased are Jahidul Khan, 20, and Sajjad Hossain, 20, of Shariatpur, and Monirul Islam, 31, of Pabna, Nazmus Sadat Salim, minister (labour) at the Bangladesh mission, said yesterday.

The official said the bodies were kept at a local hospital after autopsy.

The mission is trying to send the bodies home as soon as possible and also working to realise compensation from their employers, he said.

The migrant workers might have entered Malaysia recently on e-visa, the official told this newspaper over phone.

The three workers were buried alive in a landslide while working at a highway construction site near Kampung Maka, Pulau Chondong around 2:30pm (Malaysia time), according to another report of the Star.

2 killed in road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people died in a collision between a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a lorry on the Bayezid ring road in Chattogram last morning.

The deceased Monir Hossain, 50, from Cumilla's Brahmanpara, and Ziaur Rahman, 40, from Bogura's Shahjahanpur, were passengers of the auto-rickshaw.

Nurul Alam, sub-inspector of Chattogram Medical College and Hospital police outpost, said, "The two critically injured road accident victims were brought to the hospital early in the morning. Later, the on-duty doctors declared them dead."

Masud Rana, sub-inspector of Faujdarhat police outpost, said the lorry was seized, but the driver fled the scene.

Bangladeshi arrested in Italy on suspicion of Al-Qaeda links

AFP, Rome

Italian police yesterday said they had arrested a Bangladeshi citizen suspected of belonging to a Pakistani Al-Qaeda-linked group who was studying military tactics and publishing incendiary videos online.

Police in Genoa said the man, who described himself on Facebook as an "Al-Qaeda lover", had posted videos and messages online "inciting terrorist actions or acts of intolerance toward other communities".

The suspect and his contacts "are part of an intercontinental network subservient to the logic of Al-Qaeda, having as its objective the propaganda of violent redemption in the name of an intolerant jihadist Salafism," wrote police in a statement.

Police claim the suspect, who has been under investigation since 2021, is part of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and was awaiting his residency in Italy before planning to fight in Pakistan.

The militant group with a headline Islamist ideology – which the United States considers a foreign terror group – emerged in 2007 and carried out a horrific wave of violence in Pakistan that ended with a military crackdown from 2014.

The group, which has links to al-Qaeda, has recently been emboldened by the return to power of the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Resist arsonists in every area

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Hasina, also the AL president, asked her party activists to protect the lives and properties of the people by finding out those behind arson violence and handing them over to law enforcers.

She said it is the responsibility of her party to ensure protection of the people's lives and properties.

The AL chief asked her party activists to get organised so that not a single culprit behind arson violence goes unpunished.

"If anyone is caught red-handed while setting fire, you [party activists] will have to throw that person in the same fire. The hands which are used in setting fire will have to be burnt.... If this is done, they would learn lessons," she said.

Hasina said the BNP was "plotting to foil" the next general election, but the party would fail to do so. She said the parliamentary polls can't be foiled only by a handful of criminals.

The premier asked the AL leaders and activists to remain united to make sure that people's voting rights can be upheld and they can vote peacefully.

Hasina said the BNP is doubtful about taking part in the next general election because the party is worried about not winning enough seats.

"Even if the BNP joins the polls, it would do so to do nomination business."

Hasina questioned who would be the BNP's leader if it runs in the election. "Who will be the prime minister? Who will be in the cabinet?"

She said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has been convicted in several cases, including the 10-truck arms haul case and a money laundering case.

"They were directly involved in the August 21 grenade attack. There is no doubt about it," she said citing several remarks made by Khaleda Zia at that time.

Metro now connects Uttara with Motijheel

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6 would let people reach Motijheel from Uttara – a 20.10km route – in half an hour, a commute that now takes two to three hours due to traffic congestion.

Today, the PM also inaugurates the construction of MRT Line-5 (northern route), which will be a 20km line from Hemayetpur to Bhatara via Gabtoli, Mirpur-10 and Gulshan. The deadline for the Tk 41,239 crore project is 2028.

To facilitate the inauguration programme, regular metro services will remain suspended today, said the authorities.

MRT Line-5 (northern route) is the third of six planned metro lines the government is going to construct to establish a 140km network in Dhaka and its adjacent areas to reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

Physical work of MRT Line-1, the first underground metro rail in the country, started in February this year.

The new section of MRT Line-6 will connect Farmgate, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka University, Secretariat, and

Motijheel.

However, the metro rail authorities will open three of the seven stations of this section, namely – Farmgate, Secretariat (Press Club) and Motijheel – at the beginning. Three more months will be required to open the remaining four stations.

While visiting the Motijheel Station on Wednesday, this correspondent saw people decorating the station and preparing the stage for the inaugural programme.

Talking to reporters on Wednesday, MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, said the prime minister will travel on the metro from Agargaon to Motijheel.

After the inaugural event, Hasina will address a rally organised by the Dhaka city Awami League at Arambagh intersection.

From tomorrow, Siddique said trains will start plying between Agargaon and Motijheel every 10 minutes from 7:30am to 11:30am, while the Uttara-Agargaon route will remain open from

7:30am to 8:30pm.

Currently, trains operate on the Uttara-Agargaon section from 8:00am to 8:30pm.

Siddique said it takes 17 minutes to travel from Uttara to Agargaon on the metro and it will initially require 14 minutes to reach Motijheel from Agargaon, meaning that the travelling from Uttara to Motijheel will take around 31 minutes.

Once all 16 stations between Uttara and Motijheel route become operational, the journey will take around 38 minutes, he added.

Siddique said around 90,000 people use the metro rail daily, adding that, the number of users is expected to reach 5,00,000 when the route from Uttara to Motijheel is fully functional.

The government is implementing the fast-track project to construct the 21.26km elevated metro line from Uttara to Kamalapur at a cost of Tk 33,472 crore. The Motijheel to Kamalapur portion is expected to open by June 2025.

BNP looks for options

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Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a number of party leaders said people do not like it when a blockade continues for days, and that is what happened during the BNP's movement ahead of the January 5 election in 2014.

Contacted last night, Abdur Moyeen Khan, a standing committee member of the party, said, "We will continue our democratic movement until the government bows down to the will of the people."

On November 1 night, the BNP standing committee held a meeting and discussed the latest political situation and chalked out a strategy for its movement.

The committee members said the government foiled the BNP's October 28 rally with a plan to hold the national election excluding the BNP and its like-minded political parties.

They also discussed how police began arresting opposition leaders and activists after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina termed the BNP a terrorist party and said its leaders must learn a lesson.

They also expressed fears that law enforcers will continue to arrest BNP activists until the election and no one will be released before the polls.

The Election Commission is likely to announce the polls schedule this month, and the election may be held in the first week of January.

"This is why we do not have any choice but to continue our movement," said another senior BNP leader.

The BNP claims at least 4,847 leaders and activists, including its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, two standing committee members, three joint secretaries general, have been arrested over the last 11 days.

Many party leaders have been staying away from their homes to avoid arrest.

Since most of the leaders are either in jail or on the run, there is a risk that activists would get confused, said insiders, adding that that is why the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman regularly talks to district-

level leaders and coordinates the movement.

Moyeen Khan said the policymakers of the party also coordinate the overall opposition movement for "restoration of democracy" in the country.

"BNP is a Party with a democratic base whose strength lies in its grassroots workers and mid and local level leaders in addition to the top leadership. Moreover, while the top leaders are being illegally arrested right and left, it would be a fallacy to say that they are on the run," he said.

Regional war

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tens of thousands of displaced people in the front and back yards. Israeli strikes yesterday also hit the French Institute and AFP's office in Gaza causing significant damage.

In Geneva, the United Nations launched an emergency aid appeal seeking \$1.2 billion to help some 2.7 million people facing a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Ahead of Blinken's arrival, Israel's military said it had "completed the encirclement" of Gaza's largest city – signalling a new phase in the nearly month-long conflict.

The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, insisted Israeli soldiers would go home "in black bags".

"Gaza will be the curse of history for Israel," spokesman Abu Obeida said. Meanwhile, Israel yesterday began to send back thousands of Palestinian workers to Gaza. Workers crossing into the Palestinian enclave said they have been detained and ill-treated by Israeli authorities after the Oct 7 attack.

The United Nations Human Rights Office said it was "deeply concerned" about the expulsions.

Before the war started, some 18,500 Gazans held Israeli work permits, according to Israeli defence officials, but it was not clear how many were in the country on October 7.