



B1 Sugar prices go up amid speculation



P4 Protest foils attempt to lease out waterbodies for fishing



P7 7 killed in occupied Ukraine, says Moscow



P11 Hockey league rolls today

DHAKA-ASHULIA ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY Huge interchange to keep traffic flowing

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The authority of Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway Project is going to build an interchange for smoother traffic movement at Baipail where three major roads meet.

An interchange, also known as a grade-separated junction, is a set of roads usually designed on several levels. It allows vehicles to move from one highway to another without having to stop.

The decision to build the 2km-long interchange was made as the 24km elevated expressway project recently picked up pace.

The elevated expressway is being built between Dhaka EPZ area and the airport under a Tk 17,553 crore project. Physical work of the China-funded project started in November 2022,

Motorists will have to pay tolls to use it.

It will allow people from 30 districts to enter and exit the capital quickly and easily. There will be 14 ramps with a combined length of 10km. As per project documents, the expressway is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 0.21 percent.

Another expressway called Dhaka Elevated Expressway is being constructed to connect the airport to Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Kutubkhali. A section of it opened to traffic last year.

Once the two elevated expressways are fully operational, people from the country's northern, western and south-western regions will be able to avoid the capital's traffic as they will go from one side of the city to another without having to use the city streets.



The design of Baipail Trumpet Interchange SOURCE: PROJECT AUTHORITY

and as of last month, it made just 20 percent progress.

Officials say the project is still facing some challenges as the authority could not hand over the land required for the construction to the contractor and move some of the utility lines away from the project area.

The design change needed for the interchange is likely to increase the project cost by Tk 500 crore, sources said. Meeting the June 2026 deadline will also be a challenge for the authority, according to them.

The expressway will connect Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with Abdullahpur, Ashulia, Baipail and Dhaka Export Processing Zone on the Nabinagar-Chandra highway.

The project, which was originally supposed to be complete within June 2022 at a cost of Tk 16,901 crore, is being implemented under a government-to-government initiative between Bangladesh and China. It was delayed as Chinese authorities took longer to approve it. The delay resulted in a Tk 652 crore increase in costs.

China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC), the main contractor, is having the work done through three Chinese sub-contractors. The project is being implemented by the Bangladesh Bridge Authority.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Low water levels in the Turag lay bare the extent of damage done by incoming ships and boats on the embankment in the capital's Gabtoli. In the absence of barriers, vessels often crash against the banks when the river is full, causing erosion and raising the possibility of the adjacent walkway to cave in. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

PM asks Rab to keep watch on dishonest businesses

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the Rapid Action Battalion to be more vigilant against the unscrupulous businesses and help stabilise the prices of essentials during Ramadan.

"Holy Ramadan is coming. It is very unfortunate that some dishonest businesspeople become greedier instead of restraining their greed in this month," she said while addressing the 20th founding anniversary of Rab at its headquarters in the capital's Kurmitola.

She mentioned that these people hoard essential items for Ramadan, hike their prices, and play various types of tricks. "Proper steps must be taken against them."

The PM also directed the Rab personnel to intensify their drive against bank note counterfeiters ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. "I'm asking you to continue the drive."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



THE THIRD VIEW

The speech and those transformative days of March '71

MAHFUZ ANAM

The days of March 1971 are among the most crucial in the history of Bangladesh's struggle for independence. Events in this month are a combination of the finest (the March 7 speech) and the most tragic (the beginning of the genocide against us). It began with a spontaneous protest at Dhaka Stadium when the crowd, while watching a game, burst out in rage at the news that Pakistani President Gen Yahya Khan had postponed the convening of the National Assembly, and ended with the massacre in Dhaka and elsewhere, marking the beginning of the genocide on the night of the 25th, the Declaration of Independence, arrest of Bangabandhu by the Pakistanis, and the start of our Liberation War.

For those of us who had the good fortune of being a part of those supremely inspiring days, we know that each day was full of dreams, self-awareness, determination, and expression of love for our country, culture, and mother tongue. For those of us who were students of Dhaka University -- the nerve centre of nationwide student activities -- each day unfolded as if opening a new chapter in our nationalistic struggle. Each day was a rebirth of our determination, strengthening of our resolution, and signified our ever rising confidence -- all mixed with an overwhelming feeling of euphoria.

SEE PAGE 9

INDOMITABLE MARCH



Thus spoke Mujib

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJAN

It was the afternoon of March 7, 1971 -- the day Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made the historic speech that would resonate throughout the annals of history, changing its course forever.

Bangabandhu unequivocally declared, "The struggle this time is for emancipation. The struggle this time is for independence."

He called for a peaceful, non-cooperation movement to continue the struggle for independence.

Mujib had also issued several directives for a civil disobedience movement -- people should not pay

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

FIRES IN CITY Rajuk must be made accountable

Architect Tanwir Nawaz tells Star

HELEMUL ALAM



If the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha is not held accountable for how it functions, fires will continue to happen, like the one that claimed 46 lives in Dhaka on February 29, eminent architect Tanwir Nawaz said in an interview with The Daily Star.

"Rajuk now does not answer to anybody. No one knows anything about what they are doing, whether they have skilled manpower

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Cables for internet service and satellite TV tangled up in front of a building in the capital's Motijheel area, a common sight across the city. Such haphazardly placed cables are not only an eyesore, they become obstacles for emergency workers in the event of a fire at a nearby building. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

720 educational institutions in Dhaka fire-prone Says fire service in its 2023 inspection report

DIPAN NANDY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

National Ideal College, a popular educational institution in the capital's Khilgaon, has over 1,600 students attending classes in two separate residential buildings.

Each building -- one eight-storey and another six -- has a staircase only five-feet wide, making it risky to use in the event of a fire incident.

The Fire Service and Civil Defence marked the institution, established in 2001, "risky" in its latest inspection report released last year.

The principal of the college, Maksud Uddin, claimed they were not informed by the authorities that their institution is at risk of fire.

"We have fire extinguishers on every floor. There is a reserve water tank on the roof," he told this newspaper.

This is just one of 720 schools, colleges, and universities in the capital that have been marked "risky" for potential fire hazards.

The fire service inspected 801 educational institutions in Dhaka for five years, from 2017 to 2022, and found 64 to be "highly risky".

The remaining 16 institutions had satisfactory fire safety measures in place, said the report.

Across the country, the fire service inspected 1,527 schools, colleges, and universities, including Dhaka's, in that period and found 336 to be "highly risky" and 1,072 "risky".

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1