

# DOWN TO EARTH On Bus Terminals in City

**By ASM Nurunnabi**  
Dhaka city has four bus terminals at Saidabad, Mahakhali, Gabahti and Gullistan. The first three terminals are mainly for inter-district services, while from Gullistan buses operate on city routes and some routes to nearby places like Gharipur and Dharmat. The inter-district bus terminals have specific zones of operation: Saidabad terminal serves Chittagong Division, Mahakhali terminal north-eastern zones like Mymensingh and Tangail, and the Gabahti terminal serves the northern and southern districts.

All these terminals together handle approximately 1 lakh passengers a day. This huge number of passengers are, however, deprived of some elementary facilities at these terminals which go to compound their tribulations. In the context of the fast growing passenger traffic in the city, these deficiencies need to be attended to with all urgency.

As compared with air transport and railways, road transport enjoys a steadily growing importance, because of its accessibility to new areas and requirement of less capital investment. But the record so far shows that it has not been able to meet adequately the challenge and problems in this sector. Many shortcomings appear even to the casual eye. Among the more important of these are that, first, it does not possess a modern fleet of buses/ minibuses. Most of them are re-conditioned ones. Secondly, it has an unsatisfactory safety record. The high incidence of road accidents involving passenger buses causes a lurking fear in every bus traveller. The bus service also fails to provide many elemen-

greater vigilance of the authorities. From sources close to the owners of transports, it is understood that there is at present a proposal under consideration for setting up a Terminal Authority, consisting of representatives of the City Corporation, Road transport authority, owners and employees. The purpose of setting up the Authority is stated to be to ensure greater efficiency in terminal functioning by coordinated action for improvement and development.

When asked why the road transport sector is lagging behind in offering improved services to passengers, sources close to the owners state that the sector is at present functioning under some handicaps. First, new capital investment in this sector is slow because many banks hesitate to offer loans in spite of an easy procedure for granting loans as advised by the Bangladesh Bank. Moreover, the existing import policy banning import of spare parts for vehicles more than six years old acts as a damper on satisfactory operation of re-conditioned vehicles most of which are 1973 and 1974 vintage. As a result, the sector is said to be functioning in an unhappy situation, and very few buses are put on the road. It behoves the concerned authorities to look into these aspects of the problems.

The deficiencies in the basic facilities for passenger comfort are at present too apparent at the terminals. The fast growing passenger volume makes all the more urgent that the terminals function with a reasonable standard of efficiency and the existing deficiencies made good.



Mouchak Market has been illuminated for traditional face-lift to shopping centres in city before Eid ul-Fitr. — Star photo

## The Midnight File

### UN commander starts talks with Serbs

SARAJEVO, Mar 5: The UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina began talks with local Serbian forces today on access to the besieged Muslim enclave of Ceraska in eastern Bosnia, from which the UN wants to evacuate wounded people, an Unprofor spokesman announced, reports AP.

### S African parties begin crucial talks

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 5: Black and white political parties began crucial talks Friday aimed at resuming full-scale negotiations on ending apartheid after months of stalemate. Political leaders warned South Africa was running out of time and a peaceful solution was vital in the face of soaring violence, political intransigence and the crumbling economy, reports AP.

### FBI trying to negotiate with cultmen

WACO, Mar 5: Federal agents trying to negotiate an end to a bloody standoff Friday with a doomsday prophet and his armed disciples are getting help from Biblical scholars, reports AP.

## WB aide memoire

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provided already agreed reform measures continue under a sustain stability. "Aid commitments for FY '94 (1993-94) will need to be related to the government's demonstrated ability to strengthen its implementation performance," the aid memoire said with a call to speed up ADP implementation and improve aid disbursements.

Last year, for 1992-93, donors pledged 2.1 billion US dollars in aid — 1.4 to 1.5 billion dollars in project aid, 0.45 to 0.60 billion in commodity aid and 0.20 billion in food aid. The memorandum issued from Washington February 12 showered praises on the government for macroeconomic management, tax reforms and 'successful stabilisation' which it described as an important achievement and said that the Dhaka authorities should now focus more on implementation of structural reforms needed to raise investment.

The WB paper, which forms the basis for donors' evaluation and new yearly pledges, speaks of three priorities for the government that include 1) raising the level of public investment, 2) restoring export competitiveness and 3) forming a clear vision for the future. "All macroeconomic indicators show a marked improvement between FY '90 and FY '92. The fiscal deficit was lowered from 7.8 to 5.2 per cent of GDP; the annual inflation rate fell from 9.3 to 6.2 per cent; the current account deficit was reduced from 6.9 to 2.3 per cent of GDP; and foreign exchange reserves increased from 1.9 to 5.6 months of imports," the WB memorandum prepared by the South Asia department said. "Successful stabilisation in the midst of the political transition of FY '91 and FY '92 and the devastating April 1991 cyclone certainly enhances the credibility of the GOB's policy agenda," the WB said.

"This stability, the Bank view, allows the government to quicken the implementation of the 'much needed' structural reforms. According to the Bank paper, fiscal adjustment, 'successful' tax reforms in particular, has removed the shortage of taka resources as a constraint on ADP implementation, helped reduce duties on imports and finance public enterprise restructuring and labour retrenchment. Also, the Bank believes, reduction in inflation provides a conducive environment for financial sector reforms. On the first priority, the World Bank contends that the government must 'raise the level of public investment through a drastic overhaul of

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## Diarrhoea claims 15 more lives

A total of 15 people died of diarrhoea and another 1,005 were attacked in different parts of the country in last 24 hours, Diarrhoea Control room sources said yesterday (Friday), reports UNB.

With this, the death toll from the disease rose to 400 people since January 1. More than 60,698 people were attacked during the period.

Unofficial sources, however, said the death figure and the number of people attacked by the disease would be much higher.

According to Diarrhoea Control room, 7 people died in Jhalakathi, 3 in Netrokonia, 2 in Patuakhali, 1 in Khulna, 1 in Barguna and 1 in Barisal during the last 24 hours.

## BCS promotion

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Commission (PSC) suggesting relaxation of the rules for another two to three years. Some officials, who could not appear at the examination because they had reached nine years of services, said that promotion system under this rule would create imbalance between the positions of juniors and seniors as all the BCS cadres did not fall under the purview of the rule.

Eight BCS cadres including the law and justice, health, education, statistics and others are exempted from examinations for promotion. In these cadres, promotion takes place automatically on the basis of seniority. Many BCS officials who served over nine years expressed their helplessness for not being able to appear at the examination because they could not even qualify themselves for the test due to 'official bottlenecks' all these years.

Before appearing at the promotion test, one BCS official must take departmental trainings and examinations. One such situation prevailed in the BCS economic cadre which was created in 1984. The departmental trainings and examinations of this cadre could not be held till '89 as no syllabus was formulated till then.

In '89, when the first trainings and examinations of the economic cadre was held many officials could not attend those as they were on trainings outside Bangladesh. Some economic cadre officials alleged that the Planning Division could not arrange divisional training for them till '92. "For such delays, my juniors or equals who took their training in '89 were qualified for the promotion test and thus became my seniors," an official regretted.

27 shops gutted in Faridganj  
CHANDPUR, Mar 5: At least 27 shops were completely gutted in a devastating fire at Khejuria Bazar in Faridganj thana early hours Thursday, reports UNB.

The blaze was put out after five hours of battle by the local people in the absence of any fire station in the area.

## WB: Bank rates

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ical of the "inefficiencies" in the country's financial system which, according to the Bank, are hampering private sector development here. Weak staff of the commercial banks precludes them from playing their important role of mobilising savings and allocating them to efficient investment, the bank observed.

It said the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) have been sheltered for years from market forces which has impeded their efficiency. The World Bank appreciated the recent reform measures 'which the government initiated under its Financial Sector Reform Programme (FSRP), including interest rate liberalization, introduction of new monetary instruments, discontinuation of directed credit and subsidized refinancing facilities and establishment of financial loan courts. It, however, recommended further actions like formulation of policies to strengthen the supervision and regulatory capacity of Bangladesh Bank and restructure the commercial banks. As an immediate measure, the World Bank — which is providing the country with an adjustment credits for financial sector reforms — suggested that the government should immediately start privatizing one of the NCBs to demonstrate its sincerity about restructuring the banking sector.

## Deputies

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ister with a Soviet-era bureaucrat.

AFP adds: Khasbulatov, warned lawmakers today that "terrorist acts" were being planned, including assassinations of democrats aimed at discrediting conservatives.

In a thinly veiled allusion to Yeltsin, he told an incredulous parliament he had "reports" indicating that terrorist acts are being planned.

Without indicating his sources, Khasbulatov said "several rumors have been circulating for a while on the existence (of presidential) decrees ordering the dissolution of congress by force."

Possible victims of attacks were Gleb Yakunin and Lev Ponomarev, two leaders of the pro-reform democratic bloc in the Congress, he said.

Meanwhile dozens of aging Stalists laid flowers at the dictator's grave along the Kremlin wall Friday to mark the 40th anniversary of his death. They later accused Boris Yeltsin of plotting a new dictatorship.

"People remember how well we lived under Stalin. Everything was for the people.

## Injured Ctg JCD leader succumbs

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 5: The body of the JCD leader here who succumbed last night to his bullet wounds at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, was buried after a Namaz-Janjaja at Agrabad Jamburi field today. Saiful Alam Babul received severe bullet injuries during Wednesday evening police firing at Abidarpur Police outpost under Doublemooring thana. Another JCD activist also received bullet wounds. Both of them were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. But Saiful died there.

## Clinton, Yeltsin to hold summit in Vancouver

MOSCOW, Mar 5: The April 4 summit meeting between President Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin will be held in Vancouver, news agencies reported Friday, reports AP.

The summit will be Clinton's first foreign trip as president.

## Khaleda at Iftar

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hosted for politicians last week. According to the Awami League sources Hasina wanted Begum Zia to reciprocate her dinner attendance.

BSS adds BNP Secretary Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, when asked to comment about the getting together of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, said it would enhance mutual understanding among the ruling party and the opposition. He also went on adding that it would have been better if the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina would have attended the iftar party hosted by the Prime Minister on February 25, the second day of the Ramadan.

The ministers who attended the iftar were Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Information Minister Nazmul Huda and State Minister for Establishment M Nurul Huda.

Among the political leaders at the iftar party were Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Moudud Ahmed, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Nurul Islam Nahid, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Pankaj Bhattacharya and Moynuddin Khan Badal.

## ALWC to meet Fridays

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large number of leaders addressing the three day meeting expressed their concern over severe inter-district conflict which surfaced in different district level units of the party.

A total of nine district level units including those of Pabna, Gaibandha, Narshingdi and Chittagong city had been identified by the ALWC as ones suffering most from the internal conflicts.

Some of ALWC members also expressed their worry about the party's failure to ensure significant fresh recruitments in the recent years.

In a bid to settle disputes in the district level units of the party, separate committees comprising Zillur Rahman, Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, Dr Selim and Prof Abu Sayeed had been formed on the second day of the three day meeting.

According to the ALWC decision, sources said, the committees had been granted a period of sixty days to settle the disputes surfaced in all the nine district committees.

In case, the committee members fail to remove internal conflicts from the units within the deadline fixed by the meeting, the Working Committee would directly take up the issue, sources said.

Revitalisation of the party activities across the country was the only answer to the problems in fresh recruitment of workers into the party, the ALWC observed.

A senior AL leader, in a bid to revitalise the party activities, has proposed formation of a high level committee at the meeting.

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## Ransom

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ing the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), police and local sources said.

The sanctuaries of the terrorists are located in the hilly jungles of Hathazari, Fatikhahri and Razoan, administration sources said. A group of terrorists recently set up a hide-out in the hilly area at Pahartoli under Razoan thana, local and police sources informed.

At least 50 persons were kidnapped by the terrorists in the past six months and released after realising ransom at different villages of Razoan and Fatikhahri thanas, unofficial sources said.

Besides, several persons including a UP chairman and an Awami League leader were killed during the period by those terrorists, sources added.

The armed terrorists last Wednesday night shot dead a local timber businessman at Nazirhat under Fatikhahri, police said.

Another local businessman Mohammad Ali was kidnapped at gunpoint allegedly by the terrorists Sunday night from village Dabua under Razoan thana, sources said.

But even after five days, the victim is yet to be rescued. Police said efforts were being made to rescue the businessman from the sanctuary of the terrorists.

Sources say, the alleged terrorists are demanding Taka 15 lacs as ransom. They may kill the man, if the ransom is not paid, sources also say.

Apart from these the alleged terrorists frequently demand illegal toll from the villagers who return from Middle East countries, local brickfield owners, shopkeepers, businessman and contractors, sources also informed. Consequently, many villagers fearing attacks from the alleged terrorists fled their ancestral homes and began living in the town here, sources further informed.