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Train disaster death toll rises to 11

Telecom wire theft, negligence may have caused accident

Star Report

Disruption in telecommunication between Hajiganj and Meher stations since Sunday night and possible negligence may have caused Monday's train disaster at Kangaish, 15 kilometers from Chandpur town, railway sources said here yesterday.

The death toll in the disaster rose to 11 yesterday with the recovery of another body from the wreckage and death of one of the 20 critically injured persons at Chandpur Sadar Hospital. The number of injured persons was estimated at around 150 yesterday.

A section of the wire of the control telephone system that also guides the signaling between the two stations were stolen on Sunday night. The two stations, 5 miles apart, are in the Laksham-Chandpur line.

The sources told The Daily Star that communication between these two points was being maintained through an alternate system known as 'paper clearance'. Under this system, the driver separates the engine from the compartments at a particular point and drives on to the station master to get a 'chit clearance'. He then returns to pull the carriages.

The trains were running late because of this system, but if the set rules were maintained properly without any negligence, then the accident might have been avoided, disclosed the sources.

The head-on collision between the Chittagong-bound Sagarika Express and a Chandpur-bound 101 local train occurred at around 6 pm Monday at a place between Hajiganj and Meher stations.

Station master of Hajiganj station, Azizullah, was arrested yesterday while station master of Meher, Fazlur Rahman and the signal maintenance inspector were suspended from duty pending completion of the probe committee report.

The three-member probe committee, formed immediately after the accident, reached Chandpur from Chittagong yesterday.

Our correspondent adds: Only four of the dead have been identified so far. They are: Moniruzzaman, 25, driver of the Sagarika Express, Abdul Latif, 37, British Chandra Saha, 25 and Md Sarwardi, 20.

The other bodies have been kept at the Chandpur Hospital morgue.

Three of the wounded have been shifted to the Pongu Hospital in Dhaka. Sixteen others in critical condition are undergoing treatment at Hajiganj and Chandpur hospitals.

The rescue and salvage operation was carried out by the relief trains from Chittagong, Akhaura and Laksham. Besides the fire brigade, police and armed forces also joined the operation.

The Chandpur-Laksham line is likely to be re-opened today after the salvage operators remove the wreckage from the track.



Some bogies skidded off the track (Top) and one bogie slid over another (Bottom) in the head-on collision between two trains near Hajiganj in Chandpur Monday.

— Star photo by Shirin Akhter

Murder of hotel owner Thana gheraoed, hartal called at Gulshan today

By Staff Correspondent

Several hundred people gheraoed the Gulshan thana in the city and clashed with police yesterday demanding arrest of the killers of Shamsul Islam, a contractor and owner of a hotel in Baridhara.

They later held a rally near Gulshan Circle-II where a dawn-to-dusk hartal programme at Gulshan for today was announced protesting the killing and release of one of the accused in the incident, Faroque Thakur.

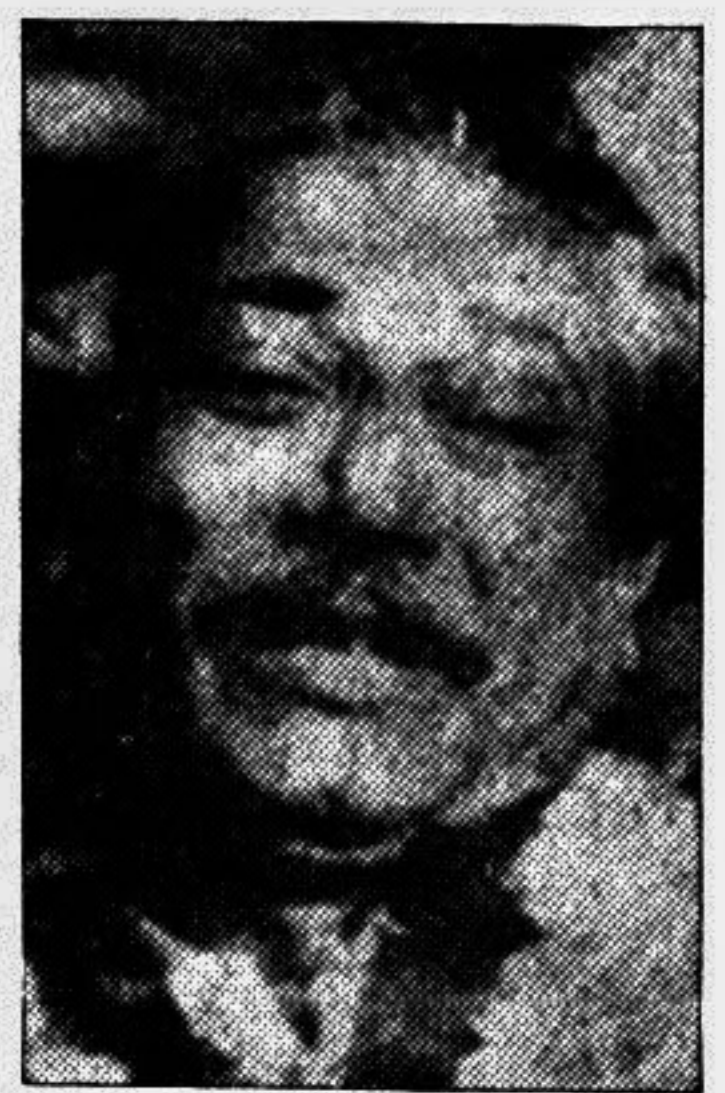
The rally was addressed by Haji Tofazzal and Marfat Ali.

Thakur, a film producer and eight others were arrested Monday for complicity in the killing Sunday but he was released on bail yesterday.

During the clashes, police lobbed at least six teargas shells and fired rubber bullets to disperse the agitated people who hurled bricks and damaged a number of vehicles in front of the thana, witnesses said.

Police said about 500 people gheraoed the thana at about 4 pm and started storming it. None was arrested during the clashes, police added.

Shamsul Islam, owner of Hotel Plaza in Baridhara was shot dead at Gulshan during a shootout between two groups of people over possession of the ground floor of a house on Road No 72 at Gulshan.



Bangabandhu's home-coming day today

By Staff Correspondent

Today is the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On this day in 1972, Bangabandhu returned home after nine months of captivity in Pakistan during the country's War of Liberation.

Awami League, its front organizations and other socio-cultural and political organizations have charted out various programmes to celebrate January 10 in a befitting manner.

Jubilant countrymen with fresh taste of freedom after a bloody war with Pakistani occupation forces converged in great numbers at the Dhaka airport to give a rousing reception to their national hero, who championed the cause of independence and Bengali nationalism.

See Page 12 col 8

Tk 1 cr PM's help for Bangabazar traders
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday donated Tk one crore to small traders whose shops in Bangabazar in the city were gutted in a devastating fire on November 27, reports UNB.

The amount was granted in response to the appeal of hawkers' union leaders who had met with the Prime Minister after the fire incident and sought financial help to reset their business.

Begum Zia handed over See Page 12 col 7

Opposition's 35-hr hartal ends

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition-called 35-hour country-wide hartal passed off by and large peacefully, paralysing normal life and disrupting rail-road communications for the second day yesterday.

The mainstream opposition had called a 48-hour hartal from Monday morning demanding resignation of the prime minister and holding of parliamentary election under a neutral caretaker government. But the hartal timing was reduced to 5:30 evening yesterday following re-scheduling of the polls by the Election Commission on Monday.

Chandpur district was exempted from the hartal yesterday to facilitate rescue work following a train accident in Hajiganj Monday night.

In the capital, a rickshaw-puller, Sukkur Ali, and a grocer, Dalim, were injured in separate bomb blasts in front of the Shilpa Bhaban at Motijheel and at Hazaribag, police said.

A large number of rickshaws started operating from morning but no motorised vehicle came out on roads till late afternoon. Rickshaws were allowed to ply in the city roads from 7 pm yesterday.

Most of the private office remained closed and transactions in banks were less. Educational institutions were closed.

Pro-hartal activists brought out processions and held roadside rallies at different points in capital to press their demands while police and paramilitary BDR personnel were patrolling the city roads.

Addressing a rally at Badda in Gulshan yesterday, AL general secretary Zillur Rahman See Page 12 Col 4

BNP units in Ctg split over nominations

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Jan 9: Factional rivalry in ruling BNP has resurfaced in some constituencies of Chittagong with the announcement of party nominations for the ensuing parliamentary polls, party sources said.

Some party candidates, failing to get nominations, have formed rival factions in Rangunia, Anwara and Banskhal and held rallies and demonstrations staged protesting nominations in those areas.

Supporters of Rangunia unit BNP president Nurul Alam staged demonstrations and enforced a dawn-to-dusk hartal at Rangunia on January 5 demanding nomination of Alam cancelling that of Adil Hossain in the Chittagong-7 constituency. They also put up barricades on Chittagong-Kaptai road for two days.

In Anwara, supporters of advocate Kabir Chowdhury held rallies and processions protesting nomination of Sarwar Jamal Nizam, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry

and demanding the party ticket for Kabir in the Chittagong-12 constituency.

Demonstrations and rallies were also held at Banskhal (Chittagong-11) demanding nomination of advocate Abu Saleh cancelling the nomination of Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, senior vice-president of Chittagong chamber of commerce and industry.

When asked about the possibility of any change of

'Political unrest discourages investors'

Kihak Sung, chairman of Bangladesh-Korean Economic Cooperation Committee and chief executive of a Korean industrial complex, has praised the skills of Bangladeshi workers.

"Bangladeshi labour force is absolutely positive, sincere and hard working," Kihak See Page 12 col 8

nominations in Chittagong, Amir Khosru Mohammad Chowdhury, an influential party leader and a former MP said "I don't think so".

In the city, demonstrations and rallies were held by rival groups over nominations in the last by-election in Doublemooring (Chittagong-8) and the mayor election.

Demonstrations were held in the city demanding nomination of industrialist Zahir Uddin Khan replacing Amir Khosru Chowdhury in the by-election in Chittagong-8 constituency (Doublemooring) after the seat was vacated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Zahiruddin was not given nomination but made minister later, but he resigned over fertiliser crisis last year.

A city BNP leader, Ekramul Karim, was expelled from the party along with some followers after a series of demonstrations for nomination in the mayor election. Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin was nominated for the mayor election.

Probe into missing cargo ship

By Staff Correspondent

The Shipping Ministry yesterday asked the Director General, Shipping to look into the case of the cargo vessel missing in the China Sea with 24 Bangladeshi crew on board.

Shipping Secretary Anwarul Islam asked DG Shipping Abdul Malek over telephone to investigate the report published in The Daily Star.

The DG Shipping told The

Editorial on page 4

Daily Star last night that he has already assigned a senior official to collect necessary information regarding the missing ship.

When asked whether any enquiry committee was formed, he said "as the spot is far away from the country it is very difficult for Bangladesh government to investigate the matter with its limited resources."

He, however, said that government-level contact was See Page 12 Col 3

Donors for raise in leasing, toll rates of village markets

Donors negotiating with the government on funding a 172 million US dollar project to develop rural infrastructure, are seeking raise in the leasing and toll rates of village markets, reports UNB.

Official sources, however, said the government had disputed many of the donors' conditions, required to be met by April 30 as the credit is scheduled to be placed before the World Bank board for approval in June.

An inter-ministerial meeting, held late last month, refrained from taking any decision on raising the toll rates at least until April, apparently keeping in mind the forthcoming general election.

Official sources said the World Bank, which agreed to

bear the lion's share of the project cost, was insisting on strengthening the financial capability of the local councils (union parishads) and recommended a major hike in toll rates to attain that.

The World Bank, which is to provide 117 million dollars in soft-term loan for the project, further wants that the union parishads (UPs) get at least 50 per cent share of the revenues collected as land transfer fees. At present, district councils alone benefit from the land transfer revenue.

The bank recommended raising the limit of the leasing rates of markets under the management of UPs to Tk 100,000 from the exist-

ing Tk 50,000 and also that at least 40 per cent of the collection goes to the UPs.

World Bank also seeks raise in the rates of unit tolls by at least 30 per cent in case of the developed and commercially important markets.

Sources said the donors further sought better "transparency and competitiveness" in the leasing process of village hats and bazars.

Seeking a financially solvent local council, the donors want the government's share from the revenue coming from leasing of village markets to be reduced from 35 per cent to 25 per cent to raise the share of the UPs. Besides the World Bank,

Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) is the other donor to the project which will contribute 15 million US dollars. The government of Bangladesh will put the remaining 40 million dollars in the project, titled "Second Rural Roads and Markets Improvement and Maintenance Project."

Under the project, a total of 574 kilometres of rural roads will be developed and some 150 growth centres (village hats and bazars) improved in 14 districts. It is designed to help increase rural employment and income through reduced transport costs, better marketing facilities and higher farm productivity.

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Body recovered

TONGI, Jan 9: A body of an unidentified young girl was recovered from the railway track at Tongi Station last night, police said today. The source said, GRP after getting information from railway workers recovered the body of the girl, aged about 18, reports UNB.

Tin-shed house gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent
 A fire that broke out in a tin-shed house at Khilkhet in the city yesterday gutted five rooms and destroyed valuables worth over Tk one lakh. The blaze originated from a electric heater, fire brigade sources said. Fire fighters extinguished the blaze about 45 minutes after it started at around 1 pm.