

'Transit point at Tetulia will boost trade'

Rafiq Hasan and Govinda Shil back from Panchagarh

Local people including political leaders in Panchagarh say opening of a check post and transit point at Tetulia would boost trade.

Such a facility there would make cross-border trade with Nepal and Bhutan easier because of its strategic location, they say.

The border with Nepal is only 18 kms away and that of Bhutan 40 kms from Bangla Bandh. Darjeeling, the famous tourist spot of India is only 52 kms from Bangla Bandh.

The correspondents, during their recent visit to Panchagarh and Tetulia talked to local political leaders, local body leaders and cross section of people including businessmen. A check post and a transit point is a long-felt demand of the people of the area, they told the correspondents.

The first proposal of a check point at Bangla Bandh was raised at the government level in 1972.

Everybody in the area will

be benefited directly or indirectly if a check post and transit point is opened," said Bangla Bandh Union Parishad chairman Naezul Islam.

Many tourists come here to cross the border because Bangla Bandh was mentioned as a check post in earlier maps, he said.

Cross-border trade with Nepal and Bhutan will be easier involving less cost and time if such a facility is opened," said Abdul Zabar, Tetulia thana Awami League leader. "It is all the more necessary because we are surrounded here by India on three sides," he added.

Bangla Bandh, is 60 kms from Panchagarh and 128 kms from Dmajpur and is connected with metalled roads with areas on both sides of the border, he said.

A new horizon of development will open up in the northern most area of the country of a check post is established, said Zakir Hossain, a businessman at Kael

Para at Panchagarh town.

Mirza Golam Haif, law justice and parliamentary affairs minister and local MP told the correspondents at Panchagarh Circuit House on February 2 that diplomatic efforts were on to set up a transit point at Bangla Bandh. "A tripartite agreement among the countries is needed," he had said. "Although, Nepal and Bhutan were eager, India showed little interest in this regard," he added.

A number of ancient temples, mosques, tombs and other historical sites are in the area which are very attractive to the foreign and local tourists. Tourists from Europe and America who visit Nepal, Bhutan and Darjeeling would also come here if facilities can be developed, Mirza Haif said.

Among the tourist spots in the area the two thousand years old Bodeshari temple, five hundred year old Mirza Pur Shit's mosque, temple of Kantasee and Baro Awliar Mazar are famous.



A procession in support of the opposition's non-cooperation programme in the city's Motiheel area yesterday.

— Star photo

Non-cooperation: 100 hurt

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demanding dismissal of the "illegal government" cancellation of the "farical" polls and holding of fresh elections within 90 days.

Under the programme, the Opposition called for country-wide suspension of rail-road, air and waterways communication, closure of courts, educational institutions, banks, insurance companies, the Secretariat and offices of other government, semi-government and autonomous organisations and Chittagong and Mongla ports.

Awami League activists held a rally on Topkhana Road, when heavy contingents of police and BDR were on guard around the Secretariat. Pickets blasted a number of cocktails at around 1:15 and a clash and a chase and counter chase with police took place.

Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the activists. The activists soon regrouped and made attempts at stripping some people who escaped and entered the Secretariat. Police picked up Matia Chowdhury along with two other women leaders of AL from the Topkhana road area. At this stage, police baton-charged on a group of journalists who were performing their professional duties. Six journalists were injured in the incident. In an instant reaction, the journalists brought out a procession and paraded the Topkhana Road.

One police official and a roadside vendor were injured in a cocktail blast there.

Two bank officials were injured when a cocktail was blasted near the head offices of Janata Bank at Motiheel around 10:30 am.

At Jatra, clashes between the Opposition and ruling party activists left at least five persons injured, one with bullet and another with bomb splinters at around 8:30 am. Of the injured four were claimed to be Jamaat activists while the other was identified as a rickshaw puller.

The Opposition and ruling party activists also clashed at Mahakhal when a group of youth riding motor bikes fired on a procession of Jatiya party at about 11:00 am. The processionists, led by JP leaders Moudud Ahmed and Kazi Zafar Ahmed ran for safety as police looked on.

Opposition activists also exploded bombs and clashed with police at Bangabandhu Avenue, Sadarghat, Farmgate and Gulistan. Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the activists.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club to extend its support to the Opposition programme.

Our DMCH Correspondent reports: Thirteen people were reported to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital following injuries they received during the agitation programme. Of the injured six were journalists who were discharged after first aid.

In separate statements last night AL president Sheikh

Hasina and JP Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Secretary General Anwar Hussain Manju held

responsible for attacks on opposition leaders and workers.

Attendance in government offices was thin while private offices, shops and market places remained mostly closed.

Road and rail communication throughout the country was severely disrupted as the Opposition activists raised barricades at places. A train driver was manhandled while pickets uprooted fish plates of rail tracks.

Mymensingh-bound Balaka Express was detained at Tongi outer post due to barricade erected by the Opposition activists. The driver of the train was also manhandled.

Barricades were put up at Islampur Bazar near Jamalpur, Tarakandi bazar near Jamuna fertilizer factory, Akhaura, Hasanpur, Laksam, Naoti, Abdullapur, Parbatipur, Bonapara, Kaunia, Lalmonirhat, Khulna, Daulatpur and several other places.

Derailed of an engine of a Mymensingh-bound passenger train at Bhagra also disrupted communication between Netrokona and Mymensingh. Railtracks were also uprooted near Gouripur station in Mymensingh district.

Domestic and international flights were however normal.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reported that activities at Chittagong port remained suspended and transportation of goods to and from the port city was disrupted as trucks and lorries stayed off the roads.

Our Khulna Correspondent reports that activities at Mongla port was suspended yesterday morning.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reported that a police constable was seriously injured when a bomb was hurled by Opposition activists on a police van patrolling Sonamaria market under Siddiganj police station. Two bombs hurled at Narayanganj Court compound created panic among the people.

Our correspondent from Khulna reported that over two hundred JCD activists stormed the district AL office while opposition activists hurled bombs at various establishments including banks, insurance companies and government offices.

Opposition activists also

locked the offices of the District Collector and the Divisional Commissioner of Khulna.

In Rajshahi one on-duty police man was injured when two powerful hand bombs were hurled inside the radio station.

At least 10 people were injured as opposition activists pelted stones at a launch at Kawkhal in Pirojpur riverport yesterday.

UNB adds from Comilla: Opposition activists halted three intercity trains at Laksam and forced railway employees out of Shahidul station here today.

Railway sources said pickets entered Sahasidul station and compelled its employees to leave the office at about 8 am. They later joined their work with police escort.

Chittagong-bound intercity "Mahanager" train was halted at Laksam at 1 pm as pickets put up barricades on rail tracks at Hasanpur and Naoti. The train returned to Dhaka at 3:30 pm.

Upakul, the Noakhali-bound express train from Dhaka was stopped at Laksam station at 2 pm and it came back to Dhaka two hours later.

Besides, Chittagong-bound Paharika train went back to Sylhet at 4 pm after remaining stranded at Laksam for more than an hour.

Meanwhile, a crude bomb was exploded at the main post office in the town and some telephone lines at PCO office were cut off by opposition activists.

Sons-in-law

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the announcement said. There were several attacks on the sons-in-law, killing one man and injuring three people, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Kabir Hossain, a contractor. He was travelling by the true appeal to the authorities to extend the book mela (book fair) till the end of March, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti stopped short of directly accusing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of involvement Friday's shootings.

But Kabariti said Jordan was upset with the killings because the defectors "were given the impression that they would be safe and that they were pardoned."

AFP adds: Saddam ordered the execution of the defectors, opposition members said today denying an official Iraqi account that their own relatives killed them.

Hussein Kamel was liquidated after having been interrogated continuously since his arrival in Baghdad on Tuesday, said General Wafiq Samarra, a former Iraqi intelligence chief who defected to Syria in 1994.

I totally rule out that General Kamel, his father and two brothers were killed by their family, said Meshan Juburi, a Sunni opposition member who fled Iraq around six years ago.

Samarra added that there "is no Majid clan to speak of. It's a small family made up of Saddam Hussein's cousins who all have positions of responsibility."

Turkish leaders fail to form coalition govt

ANKARA, Feb 24: Turkish leaders Mesut Yilmaz and Necmettin Erbakan failed to agree on setting up a right-Muslim coalition government after two hours of talks here today, Yilmaz said, reports AFP.

Yilmaz, leader of the conservative Motherland Party, said the talks with Erbakan's pro-Islamic Welfare Party had failed due to serious differences.

ECE's negotiating group, said 28 ECE countries had agreed that work on the protocols should begin after a week of talks.

Persistent organic pollutants include pesticides such as DDT, toxaphene, chlordane and industrial chemicals products like PCBs. They cannot be eradicated but are blown across national borders by wind and end up in the food chain and water supplies.

A recent study by the US Academy of Sciences shows that the pollutants are responsible for more than 20,000 cancers in the United States alone.

Polar regions have been particularly badly hit. POPs accumulate in the large after deposits of seals, whales and other Arctic animals hunted by the native Inuit peoples. As a consequence, the Inuits have dangerously high levels of the pollutants in their bodies.

Inuits have been advised by their organisations they cannot safely eat seal meat larger than the size of a lump of sugar per week," said ECE environment

'Dirty dozen' may be phased out in face of campaign

GENEVA, Feb 24: The campaign is on to eliminate a 'dirty dozen' deadly pollutants blamed for reduced male fertility, reports AP.

Twelve of the most highly toxic man-made chemicals, known as persistent organic pollutants or POPs, are thought to be responsible for a 42 per cent drop in male sperm counts over the last 50 years. They are also known to cause cancer and contribute to many other diseases.

The UN's Economic Commission for Europe, which covers Europe, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States, is preparing three new protocols as part of its Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. It hopes the protocols can be brought into force early next century.

The protocols will curb the pollutants, reduce emissions of nitrogen compounds and related substances from cars and trucks and phase out the heavy metals lead, mercury and cadmium.

Lars Bjorkbom, chairman of

tal chief Lars Nordberg. But changing their diet would change their whole pattern of life and culture.

Traffic pollution is also a killer.

Experts have calculated that air pollution mainly by car and truck fumes makes living in cities between 10 and 100 times more dangerous than working in the radioactive environments of nuclear power plants.

A recent study found that city smog is killing 350 people a year in the Paris region alone.

Bjorkbom said the biggest threat to the campaign could come from interest groups like transport and agricultural sectors looking to protect profits.

Transport is totally married to explosive engines. They could be a formidable foe against us, he said.

Technical changes such as universal usage of catalyzers won't help, he stresses.

We need to have structural changes in our whole mode of transporting ourselves and that is the real difficulty," he said.

The Midnight File

Bomb attack on Faridpur DC's official residence

FARIDPUR, Feb 24: The official residence of the Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur, ASM Abdul Haq Chowdhury, came under bomb attack tonight, official sources said. They said some miscreants hurled two to three bombs on the building at around 11:30 pm and the attackers could not be identified, reports BSS.

Benazir denies obtaining N-technology from China

KARACHI, Feb 24: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto today denied obtaining nuclear weapons technology from China, saying the real threat to non-proliferation stemmed from India, reports AFP.

Speaking at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs here, Benazir dismissed reported US intelligence claims that China supplied her

country with 5,000 magnet rings used in enriching uranium.

Her statement followed remarks by CIA Director John Deutch to the Senate select intelligence committee in Washington on Thursday that China was providing "inappropriate" nuclear technology to Pakistan.

"At a time when India is talking in terms of nuclear capable missiles and threatening proliferation in the South Asian region, intelligence reports are being leaked to damage Pakistan," Benazir said.

"This story about nuclear magnets from China is baseless and tendentious," she said adding that the "actual threat" to non-proliferation "emanates from India and not Pakistan."

Benazir, reiterating Pakistan's desire to resolve the Kashmir dispute with India through talks, expressed the hope that India would be ready for a meaningful dialogue after the coming elections there.

2 killed, 50 hurt as rivals clash in Habiganj

HABIGANJ, Feb 24: Two brothers were killed and some 50 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Passchimbab village of Ajmiriganj thana in the district yesterday, reports UNB.

According to witnesses, both the groups used lethal weapons and traded gunshots during the two-hour clash in which the two brothers Ali Hossain, 55, and Hanif, 50, hit by bullets, died on the spot.

Police said the clash erupted centering a dispute between the supporters of former UP chairman Ali Amad Talukdar and Nur Alam of the village, on appointing an imam for Eid-ul-Fitr congregation.

The dispute erupted on Eid day, but the villagers prevented both the groups from any confrontation by appointing a third imam.

The bloody clash began after the Eid day on Friday as a backlash of the dispute, when Nomi Talukdar, Nephew of Ali Amad Talukdar was allegedly beaten up by their rivals.

The injured were admitted to different hospitals of the district. Tense situation was prevailing in the village following the clash.

One dies as train smashes truck in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 24: Angry mob ransacked Sirajganj bazar station and attacked the office and the residence of a Railway official today after a train smashed a truck at the Chamarpaty level crossing, killing one man and injuring three people, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Kabir Hossain, a contractor. He was travelling by the true appeal to the authorities to extend the book mela (book fair) till the end of March, reports BSS.

Officials said the accident occurred at about 2:25 am as the truck was passing through the open gate of the level crossing between the Sirajganj bazar and ghat stations.

Railway authorities suspended gate keeper Abul Hossain, who was not present at the gate at the time of accident. Police proceedings will also be drawn against Abul Hossain, who has been absconding.

Later, in the morning, the mob ransacked the Sirajganj bazar station and attacked the office and the residence of a sub-assistant engineer of the station.

Appeal to extend Bangla Academy Boi Mela

Publishers and owners of different stalls at the Bangla Academy book fair have appealed to the authorities to extend the book mela (book fair) till the end of March, reports BSS.

About six hundred publishers and stall owners in a joint statement said that because of the political situation, Ramadan and other reasons, most of them had to face financial hardship as there were hardly any transactions. The plight of the stall owners and the publishers would certainly affect the publishing industry as a whole, they said.

Therefore, the publishers and stall owners said to save the situation, if the mela (which is to end within this month) is extended till March 26, the independence day, it would be a good coordination of two occasions. This would help save the publishing industry and at the same time play an important role in creating readers.

Hasina

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Khalilur Rahman and Akhtar Hossain

The Awami League chief alleged that police and BNP terrorists attacked peaceful rallies and processions of her party in different parts of the country including Dhaka and injured many of her workers.

She said BNP terrorists fired on Awami League procession at Jatra, leaving three workers injured seriously. Police and BNP activists also attacked Awami League procession in Chittagong and injured many, she added.

Fire at ballast manufacturing factory in city

By Staff Correspondent

A fire broke out at a factory manufacturing tube-light ballasts in Shambhag last night, causing damage to machinery.

The fire began at around 8 pm at the Diamond Electrical Company and was brought under control within 40 minutes by the fire brigade.

The factory, situated in a tin-shed at the house of its owner, M Shamsul Haq, was closed at the time of the incident.

The cause of the fire is yet to be determined and an inquiry is underway, according to Fire Service sources. The extent of the damage could not be known immediately.

Airline deal Koirala cleared of charges

KATHMANDU, Feb 24: A Nepali government panel cleared former prime minister Gijra Prasad Koirala of charges of financial irregularities in an airline deal, an official spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

According to political analysts in the Himalayan Kingdom, Koirala's clearance would pave the way for his bid to head the ruling Nepali Congress Party.

Koirala, 71, became Prime Minister in 1991 following Nepal's first free elections when multi-party democracy was restored six years ago.

The Commission for the Prevention of Abuse of Authority (CPAA) on Friday dismissed charges against Koirala of corruption in appointing a general sales agent in Europe for the state-owned Royal Nepal Airlines.

"The allegations of irregularities and corruption against the former prime minister Gijra Prasad Koirala concerning the appointment of the Fare Ltd as the general sales agent of the Royal Nepal Airlines in Europe are baseless," the CPAA said.

Chamber leaders

From Page 1

the country," he said. "It should have been kept out of the political ambit."

A number of exporters said yesterday that they had to cancel their planned shipment because of the Opposition's non-cooperation programme. They also said that they had to double their air-freighting of goods to meet deadlines.

In normal situation, between ten and 20 per cent of orders is air-freighted to meet sudden crisis. But over the last months, exporters say, about 40 per cent of their goods was sent by air.

"We could make profit of ten to 15 per cent in normal situation. But when exporters are forced to send bulk of the goods by air, they have to incur loss of about 15 per cent," said Elahi.

"I could not start any new industry in the last couple of months because of uncertainty," said a member of the Executive Committee of the DCCI. Meanwhile, interests on our bank loans are increasing if the situation continues, more sick units are inevitable.

Each day of hartal is costing the garment sector seven million US dollars," said Redwan Ahmed, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). Already we lost 80 days due to hartals.

"Garments exporters are now requesting the importers for extension of shipment period," said Redwan. "We need a long term solution to the situation. Otherwise, the markets will be lost for ever."

Aid Club to review unfinished reforms

Bangladesh Aid Group meeting scheduled to be held in Paris from July 10 will review the unfinished reform programmes affected by the domestic political turmoil. Economic Relations Division Secretary Lutfulah Majid said here yesterday.

Talking to BSS at his office, Lutfulah Majid said that the three-day Paris Aid Group meeting would review the overall achievements of the economic reforms taken so far in the country.

The ERD secretary said the meeting is also expected to deal with the issues relating to further strengthening the private sector and public administration reforms.

He pointed out that poverty alleviation drive with special emphasis on women in development would receive top attention at the meeting.

Blast kills one in city

By Staff Correspondent

One person was killed yesterday in a bomb explosion at Tejgunipara under Tejgaon thana in the city, according to police.

The victim, Ali Ashraf, 55, was critically injured when a bomb went off at a garbage dump near a boarding house at Tejgunipara at around noon.

Ashraf was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries in the afternoon, hospital sources said.

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Rival transport workers clash in Natore: 1 killed