

Magurjhara
Rly operates
trial train
thru' repaired
tracks

From Iqbal Sidique
SYLHET. Nov 6: Bangladesh
Railway today safely operated a
trial train and a goods train
through the repaired rail tracks
passing through the Magurjhara
gas field area.

A railway official now staying at Srimangal informed that a high level team from Dhaka including the Divisional Manager, Divisional Engineer and others reached Srimangal this morning. They operated a trial train at 10:45 am from Srimangal to the gas field area and talked to the Occidental officials there. Later, a goods train also came from Srimangal.

In the afternoon, another goods train from Kulaura was operated upto Akhaura. After operating the trains, the Railway officials discussed with the Occidental officials and decided to continue trial run of goods trains during the day time from

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Next round of
Indo-Pak talks
in Dec

NEW DELHI. Nov 6: India and Pakistan will hold their next round of talks aimed at improving their tense relationship in December, according to India's foreign minister, reports AP.

United News of India said Kamala Sinha did not set a date when she announced yesterday that the talks would be next month. The talks will be held in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital.

Three previous meetings at the foreign secretary level have yielded little, with the long-standing dispute over Kashmir hindering progress. Pakistan wants to discuss Kashmir's status while the Indians would prefer to limit any discussion of Kashmir to security questions.

Pakistan and India have fought two wars over the Himalayas.

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Programmes of
3-nation summit
discussed

The third meeting of the national committee for preparation of India-Pakistan-Bangladesh business summit was held in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Presided over by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, the meeting discussed the programmes of the proposed summit.

The business summit will be held in Dhaka on November 23. Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will attend the summit.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Chairman of the Privatisation Board Kazi Zafarullah, Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman, former foreign secretary Farook Sobhan, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah Haroon and officials concerned were present in the meeting.

The Daily Star
on the Internet
<http://www.dailystarmnews.com>

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Kibria, Saifur for consensus on economic issues

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Politics turned pleasant on the first day of the international investment conference yesterday when the finance minister and his predecessor set aside the bitter bellicosity between the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP to put the nation's "economic interests" at the top.

Speaking at separate sessions, both, especially M Saifur Rahman who apparently thwarted a party move to force him to stay away from the conference, tried to offset fears of political instability polluting business environment.

Shah A M S Kibria, while listing the policy steps to facilitate foreign investment in his opening statement, sought to assure the participants that politics would not be a deterrent as he was only carrying

forward the reforms that the BNP administration launched.

According to highly-placed BNP and business sources, he counterlobbied successfully to foil a move by some party leaders to "boycott" the conference. Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, a BNP MP and president of Chittagong Stock Exchange, also joined him to speak on capital market development. Chowdhury was learnt to have been instructed by some party leaders not to attend, the sources said.

Several business leaders and conference managers, Financial Times Conferences, also put in efforts to keep the event above political differences.

The official programme for the closing session today has a place for a chief guest without

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Peter Montagnon, the Asia Editor of Financial Times, chaired the opening session yesterday that saw Finance Minister SAMS Kibria define the government policies, World Bank vice president Mieko Nishimizu and Privatisation Board Chairman Kazi Zafarullah speak on investment climate in Bangladesh.

—Star photo

Interview with Pakistan Prime Minister It will take time, but we want to settle Kashmir issue

By Kuldip Nayar

"I know it will take time to find a solution to Kashmir," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said. "I am not expecting results tomorrow or the day after. Let it take years. But we must settle it. We should never become dependent nor stop talking."

These words spoken to me at Islamabad last week reflect the mood of growing number of Pakistanis. They are keen to discuss Kashmir but do not expect quick results. In fact, they do not even dwell on Kashmir during discussions as they did until a few months ago. Even the argument that Kashmir

first and the rest later is heard less and less. Indeed, they appear anxious to have trade and contacts with the people in India and favour free movement between the two countries. They seem less deterred by the threats of fundamentalists and politicians. However, the atmosphere of fear has not disappeared completely.

Let all working groups meet simultaneously to discuss the seven "topics identified", said Nawaz Sharif. (The topics identified are: Kashmir, security, peace and confidence, political, economic, social and cultural development.)

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Meghnaghat, Haripur power plants

Donors concerned at delay in signing of agreements

By Sharier Khan

The signing of agreements for setting up of Meghnaghat and Haripur power plants in the private sector are being delayed although the government had announced the names of the lowest bidders two months ago.

According to official sources, the donor community including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, has expressed concern at the delay and indicated that continuation of such delay would affect credit programmes for the power sector.

AES, a leading US power

company, was selected as the lowest bidder in for both the Meghnaghat and Haripur projects as it had offered power tariff of 2.79 cents and 2.73 cents per unit respectively. The rates are not only much below power generation cost of the Power Development Board (PDB) but also one of the lowest in the world.

Yet, the sources said, PDB which is handling the 350 MW to 450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant Project is delaying the project on different pretexts, questioning the evaluation of

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Resolution of land disputes now core issue in CHT

By Reaz Ahmad, back from CHT

Resolution of disputes over land ownership is the core issue now before the administration in the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), particularly at a time when a peace accord to put an end to insurgency in the area is in the offing.

Talking to this correspondent, officials in Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban districts had one thing common to point out that necessity of land registration had long been neglected in the CHT for more than one reasons.

The culture of zoom farming

made the tribal people nomadic and reluctant to land registration till the influx of non-tribal people from the plainland in late 70s. An agriculturist explained to this correspondent that traditional zoom farming does not allow tribesmen to be settled in one particular hill for years together.

On the other hand, when Bengalee people from the plainland started settling in the CHT in a great number changing the demographic composition of the region, they were offered lands upto five acres per family. But, at a later stage when vio-

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Cyclonic storm
moving towards
Myanmar coast

By Special Correspondent

The cyclonic storm near the Bay changed its course yesterday evening and is likely to cross the Akyab coast of Myanmar this morning.

Sajedur Rahman, Director of the Meteorological Department, told The Daily Star last night that the storm moving north-westward veered to the right and eyed the mountainous coasts of Arakan.

It's sudden change of course was detected at 6 pm yesterday, some 800 km southeast of Chittagong on the Andaman sea where it turned into a cyclonic storm.

It was formed out of the remains of Typhoon Linda that battered the Vietnam and Cambodian coasts on Tuesday.

The Bay has become rough as the storm steered its north-easterly course, packing 70 kph winds rising to 85 kph in gusts or squalls.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted Distant Warning Signal Number 2.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the eighth Biennial Asian Art Exhibition at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

17 rescued from fake treatment centre in Demra

By Staff Correspondent

Detective police rescued 17 people including three women from a fake treatment centre for mentally retarded persons at Govindapur under Demra thana in the city Wednesday, police said yesterday.

Police also arrested two persons, including a woman from there. The arrested man, identified as Abdul Quddus, aged about 60 and his wife, Jahanara Begum, had been running the fake centre for about 21 years.

They turned their big house into a 'treatment centre' and cheated people over the years in the name of treatment. Quddus used to charge 'admission fee' and took Tk 3,000 from every 'patient' each month. They confined the 'patients' in small 'cells' and tied their hands with legs using chains.

Police said Quddus and Jahanara have no academic qualification but so long, they said they were MBBS doctors having foreign degrees.

Police said some of the 'patients' had symptoms of serious skin diseases due to confinement in extremely unhygienic conditions. Police said Abdul Quddus, now a blind man had married four times in the past.

Police filed a case with Demra thana in this connection.

275 houses of Chakma refugees gutted in Tripura

AGARTALA, Nov 6: At least 275 houses of Bangladeshi Chakma refugees were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in a government camp at Karbook in south Tripura district on Tuesday reports PTI.

The fire originated from a kitchen of house, engulfed the entire area and gutted 275 houses, police said.

Meanwhile, a fire tender, rushing from Jatanbari of the district, overturned and fell into a ditch injuring 12 firemen. The injured were admitted to Jatanbari hospital. The five seriously wounded were later shifted to Udaipur district hospital, police said.

However, the fire was extinguished with the help of local police, police said.

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Begum Zia said it was unfor-

Opposition creating trouble without any issue: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday questioned the motive of the opposition agitation, saying they are hell-bent on creating trouble without any issue, reports UNB.

"Let the opposition leader say precisely what she wants. She should come to parliament and discuss grievances, if any," she said.

Addressing a press conference of the Overseas Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (OCAB) at Hotel Sonargaon in the afternoon, Hasina said how a solution could be found if the Leader of the Opposition did not specify her demands.

Asked about the concern expressed by the donors over the political instability here, the Prime Minister said for obvious reasons, she did not feel com-

fortable with the comments which she said are not graceful for the nation.

"But the question is what is the issue behind calling the hartal on that day that prompted the donors to make such a statement," she said.

Hasina said the Bangladesh Aid Group meeting was held for the first time in Dhaka, at our invitation. She deplored that an unwanted situation was created by calling hartal on that day.

The Prime Minister said her government was concentrating on economic development in a stable political atmosphere. "Democracy and development go hand in hand."

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Khaleda for CPA role in holding fair polls

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday sought a more effective role of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in improving democratic as well as human rights situations in the member countries including Bangladesh.

The Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party was delivering the concluding address at a post-election seminar jointly sponsored by the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat and the CPA. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the three-day seminar on November 4.

The fire originated from a kitchen of house, engulfed the entire area and gutted 275 houses, police said.

Meanwhile, a fire tender, rushing from Jatanbari of the district, overturned and fell into a ditch injuring 12 firemen. The injured were admitted to Jatanbari hospital with multiple injuries, official sources said.

Two boys were reportedly missing. Two shops were gutted as a sequel to the incident.

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