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Road links remain snapped Rail link with Ctg, Sylhet, Noakhali restored

By Staff Correspondent

Direct rail link between the capital and Chittagong, Sylhet and Noakhali was restored yesterday after four days, a press release of Bangladesh Railway said.

The press release said, Upakul Express train left at 7:10 yesterday morning for Noakhali. The train plied through Tongi-Jinardi section. Rail links through Tongi-Jinardi section was snapped on Thursday due to flooding of about 30 km of rail track at several points snapping communications with Sylhet, Chittagong and Noakhali.

An alternative route through Tongi-Mymensingh was, however, established on the same day connecting the abovementioned destinations.

The capital's road links with districts of Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal divisions are still snapped, the Chief Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department said last night.

Road communication between the capital and the North Western and South Western districts are being maintained through the Dhaka-Mymensingh road, he told The Daily Star.

Bus operators at Gabtoli bus terminal said, they were using Alenga-Ghatail-Madhapur-Jamuna Bridge route to reach destinations in northern districts and the Pabna-Paksey-Bheramara route for going to southern districts.

Half-day hartal observed in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent
 COX'S BAZAR, Sept 14: A half-day hartal protesting an alleged attempt to murder a local BNP leader and editor of a local daily was peacefully observed in the town today.

Local BNP called the strike protesting Sunday's attack on Mahbubur Rahman, a local BNP leader and Editor of The Daily Saikat.

Life in the town was paralysed as the local BNP and journalists brought out separate processions and held rallies demanding arrest of the attackers.

3 chopped to death in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent
 CHUADANGA, Sept 14: Three persons of village Prugpur under Alamdanga thana of Chuadanga district were chopped to death yesterday afternoon at about 5:45 pm by a gang of unknown assailants.

According to Alamdanga thana police, the victims are Abdus Sattar, 45, Hafizul, 32, and Shamsul, 33.

Police said that a gang of about 25 armed miscreants, allegedly the members of outlawed Purbobanglar Communist Party, swooped on the houses of the victims and chopped them to death at their respective residences.

A case has been filed in this connection with the Alamdanga police station.



Destitute women at a flood shelter at Khilgaon in the city try to shield their children from the scorching sun while in queue for chira (flattened rice) yesterday. —Star photo by Sk Enamul haq

Bangabandhu Murder Case Prosecution produced false witnesses : Defence Counsel

None of the "witnesses" produced by the prosecution, was present at the Bangabandhu's residence on August 15 in 1975, said defence counsel Khan Sairur Rahman during his argument in the Bangabandhu Murder Case on the fourth day yesterday, reports UNB.

The "witnesses" who came to this court "did not see anything as they were not present there," they were manipulated witnesses of the prosecution.

Khan, counsel for Lt Col Syed Farooq Rahman, said contradictory statements given by the witnesses, who were said to have been present at the same time and at same place, proved these witnesses were false and manipulated.

Quoting different variations of the witnesses in their depositions and statements during cross-examinations, Khan said it further proved that "this case was an arranged one and the prosecution was trying to hide the real killers."

Citing an example, the counsel said PW-1 Mohitul Islam had said that PW-50 DSP Nurul Islam was standing behind Sheikh Kamal when the army came while Nurul Islam told the court that he took Mohitul Islam inside the office room.

"If those two witnesses were together they were supposed to describe the incident in to-to," he argued.

Khan said neither Mohitul Islam nor DSP Nurul Islam were injured on August 15 by bullet because of the fact that with bullet wounds on knees they could not have walked. But in their deposition they mentioned that they moved here and there with injuries on knees.

Bringing out contradictory statements of PW-4 and PW-5, Havilder Qudus and Havilder Gani, the counsel submitted that "in fact, none of them were in Bangabandhu's residence as house guards on August 15."

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NGOs plan moratorium

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flooding, according to Yunus. "Affected areas" are those which suffer from flood, fire or drought, he said. "We then try to save the affected people."

Other major national NGOs, such as Proshika and Association for Social Advancement (ASA), are also thinking in the same line.

"We might consider a three-month moratorium on loan repayment," said Mashrurul Islam, deputy director at micro-finance division of Proshika.

Proshika has provided Tk 230 crore to six lakh beneficiaries under its micro-credit programme through its 121 branches countrywide. "We have 88 branches affected by the flood," said Mashrurul Islam.

Some NGO officials warned the micro-credit system, developed by the non-governmental organisations to help the poor come out of the poverty trap, may collapse if fresh funds are not made available to the NGOs after the recession of flood water.

Some 36 lakh rural people have borrowed about Tk 2,300 crore from different NGOs, of which a big share could not be repaid by the takersholders in time due to the devastating current flood, NGO sources said. The funds revolve and augment the capital.

"The entire-micro credit programme run by the NGOs may collapse if fresh loans are not provided to them immediately," said Khandker Zakir Hossain, executive director of Credit and Development Forum (CDF), an organisation that tries to promote transparency in micro-credit operation.

With some 870 members in its fold, CDF receives regular information on credit programmes from 380 of them.

Hossain said he would discuss with his fellow members the possibility of giving the poor borrowers some relief. "It is certain that the adversely affected people would not be able to repay now."

Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), the single largest lender to small and medium NGOs, is likely to hold a board meeting today to consider a two or three month moratorium and create fresh funds for these micro-finance institutions (MFIs).

PKSF is expected to provide some Tk 100 crore to its 151 borrowers (NGOs) to help their beneficiaries generate income. This will enable the NGOs to allow a moratorium to their clients and eventually recover the money which amounts to Tk 250 crore in outstanding loans.

"We might consider a two-month moratorium," said Mosharrar Hossain, PKSF general manager for micro credit.

Already, different NGOs have requested PKSF for a moratorium and a special fund. "NGOs need to give time to its beneficiaries to restart their income-generating work," said Shamsul Huda of ADAB, which forwarded the NGOs' appeal to PKSF.

"Our outstanding loan to some nine lakh beneficiaries now stand at Tk 250 crore of which 50 per cent is under serious risk," said Shaiful Haque Chowdhury, managing director of ASA.

He spoke in similar vein as regards small borrowers' ability to start repayment without fresh loans. "I need some 25 crore taka as a special fund for this purpose," he said and added he was also considering a moratorium.

Proshika has also applied to PKSF for a three-month moratorium. "We need Tk 45 crore for the affected people soon so that they engage themselves in the economic activities to repay their monthly instalments," Mashrurul Islam said.

Meanwhile, CDF is launching a study to assess the flood damages to the NGOs.

US Air Force personnel join relief operation

US Aircraft C-130 yesterday carried about 11 tons of medicine to Chittagong for the flood affected people in the division, reports UNB.

The US Air Force personnel who are here for joint exercise with Bangladesh Air Force took part in the relief operation by carrying relief goods.

Out of 40 US personnel, 17 joined the relief operation.

The medicines include Piriton and Fimoxyl syrups, Fimoxyl capsule, ORS and IV fluid.

The US personnel along with hosts took part in the loading and unloading of the relief goods.

3000 units

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crucial issue here will be which units will really need funding so that money is not wasted on wilful defaulters.

The Bank will also chalk out a programme to bring small entrepreneurs, who have not taken any bank loan but are now unable to cope with the flood losses, into the banking system.

"We will look into the investments of these small entrepreneurs and those who are genuine and are willing to take help of the bank will be given loans," said a finance ministry source.

The finance minister has already announced that small industrial units and those having investments or loans up to Tk 50 lakh will get priority in receiving loans.

However, it is learnt that the BB has not yet issued any circular in this regard to the banks.

In view of the current need for rehabilitation of the flood-hit industries, the BB now has to move in a cautious manner so that credit expansion does not go out of proportion, resulting in inflationary pressure.

According to sources, the finance ministry is now thinking of a cautious step as regards providing fresh term loans.

"The crying need is to put the badly hit industries on their feet again," said a finance ministry source. Term loan is a secondary consideration."

Cabinet talks crisis

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emergency basis, the sources said.

The item was not on the official agenda but outshined other issues for obvious reasons.

They also discussed repair and reconstruction of roads and bridges, school buildings, distribution of agricultural loans and seeds among the poor peasants and expansion of the food-for-work programme. The Cabinet decided to distribute 7.5 lakh tonnes of food under the programme.

Legal aid bill

In another decision, the Cabinet approved in principle a draft legislation to ensure legal support to the "weaker section of people who are unable to meet litigation expenses across the country."

The bill -- The Legal Aid Bill, 1998 -- would be placed in parliament in its next session, Law Minister Abdul Matin Khoshru said.

However, for the last one year, the government has been running a legal aid programme in 61 districts out of the 64. The district bodies are operating under a national committee headed by the law minister. But more than one crore taka which was initially allocated for the purpose is still lying unused.

"It did not work effectively for certain reasons," the minister admitted, speaking to The Daily Star last night. Less than five per cent of the money was spent since the beginning of the operation last year, he said.

Asked who would be eligible for legal aid, the minister said that a committee would be formed under the proposed law which would formulate a definition of the poor in this regard.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet also approved a proposal to rename the Ministry of Labour and Manpower as the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Bureaucrats at work

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agency imports to the capital.

But in two days, only three return trips took place. One return trip could be made on Sunday, and only two yesterday. The first flight yesterday could take off at 1:50 pm after hours of wait at the tarmac, which made the Iranian and the Chinese crew complain publicly about the system in Bangladesh.

"This is a torture, which has exceeded all limits," said an angry Mostafa Golam Haider, managing director of Noami Dresses Ltd. "It shouldn't take more than an hour, but we're taking about three and a half hours to load goods," he said, grumbling against the Biman staff at the airport.

"They are not providing us the logistic support properly," he said. "They simply fail to understand the nature of emergency."

And when the export consignments were finally loaded at 9:30 pm, operators of the aircraft were told that they would not be allowed to fly because the control tower at Chittagong airport was closing. "I referred to the Prime Minister's directive to make them agree to re-open the tower," Mostafa Haider said.

BGMEA stands to lose a lot of money if it fails to fly the plane at least 90 hours, for which it is committed to pay the local operator.

Sources said that the BGMEA is obligated to pay as much as Tk 2.25 crore to the operator, flying or not flying. When the plane arrived on Sunday, two senior cabinet ministers were at the airport to welcome the event and assured all support considering the national emergency.

At CAAB, the problem reportedly stemmed from a small mistake in the code names of the destinations. "When everybody knew about the purpose of these flights, some officers unnecessarily delayed the process," said another exporter.

Meanwhile, the American C-130 cargo aircraft that had flown in relief goods for flood victims left Dhaka Sunday with a large consignment of apparels destined for Europe. Sources said that the plane carried cargo of a top BGMEA leader.

3 SPP appointed to conduct Ctg Mass Killing Case

CHITTAGONG, Sept 14: The government has appointed three Special Public Prosecutors (SPP) to conduct the Chittagong Mass Killing Case, reports UNB.

Law Ministry yesterday issued notification appointing Swabhu Prasad Biswas, Sahanmoy Bhattacharya and Salehuddin Haider as SPP.

Public Prosecutor Kamaluddin sought one month's time to move the case when the court took it up for hearing today.

Earlier, on January 22, 1997 Police Commissioner Raqibul Huda, the accused in the case, was arrested. Huda was released as the High Court granted him bail in March last year.

Investigation Officer later added 40 people to the list of accused.

Woman arrested from MP hostel

By Staff Correspondent

A young woman was arrested yesterday morning while she was attempting to escape with stolen clothes from a room of the MP hostel allotted to a female MP of the ruling party, police said.

The arrested woman was identified as Sathi, 22, daughter of one Nuru. She was a resident of Shyamoli in the city. She was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after being produced before the CMM's court, police said.

The woman MP's husband, Mihir Kumar Sarkar, in his FIR lodged with Tejgaon thana alleged that the woman had sneaked into his room and hid herself under the bed, police said.

After being arrested by police, Sathi tried to defend herself saying that she was a sex worker, police said.

Mihir could not be contacted for comment till last night.

UNB adds: Mihir said he came to Dhaka to take relief materials for flood affected people on behalf his wife and was alone in the room.

"I witnessed Pakistan-India cricket match in TV till 3:30 am Sunday night. The main doors might have been left open by mistake and she sneaked into the room."



A Y B I Siddiquee new IGP

By Staff Correspondent

A Y B I Siddiquee, Additional Inspector General of Police has been promoted to the rank of Inspector General (IG) of Police, said an announcement yesterday.

He takes over from the incumbent IG of Police, Ismail Hussain who goes on LPR by the end of this month, sources said.

Siddiquee joined the then Police Service of Pakistan (PSP) in 1970. He is from the last batch of PSP officers in the police force, sources said.

Siddiquee superseded nine other senior officers, who have already been made OSD or are serving in different autonomous organisations.

All those superseded by Siddiquee served in the rank of Additional Inspector General of Police and mainly came from military background. When they were absorbed in the police force they were given seniority on the basis of their length of service in the armed forces.

The DMP Commissioner Mahmud Al Farid is also senior to B I Siddiquee in terms of service length, source said. Three other officers, who have been made OSD, are Ahmed Fazlul Kabir, Shahudul Huq, and M Salam.

Among the rest Shahidul Islam Chowdhury is now serving as the chairman of BIWTC, M Wahidul Huq is now DG, Passport and Immigration, M A Khaleque is chairman of Rashidhi Development Authority, A N Hussain is chairman BRTA and Rafikul Islam is now on a foreign mission and scheduled to return shortly.

Power plant

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30.

It was originally scheduled to commercially operate from August 16. But the companies failed to complete the project in time. Last week, PDB which had initiated the project informed the press that it would be operational from September 12.

As per the contract signed between PDB and Wartsla on October 16, 1997, the builders will now have to pay a daily demurrage of 10,000 US dollars for failing to meet the August 16 deadline. The demurrage is applicable till September 30, the latest schedule for commercial operation given by Wartsla.

The barge-mounted plant is the country's first private power scheme to come into partial operation.

A number of problems persist in the incomplete power unit. These include leakage in the cooling tank of the plant and lack of synchronisation of the power generated in the plant and that of the national grid. Besides, out of the 19 power generators installed in the plant, only half a dozen are currently operational.

"But the plant is not at its final stage of completion. We think the private builders will be able to complete the unfinished task by September 30. They (the builders) will be defaulter again only if they are inefficient," said a PDB official.

Built at a cost of 120 million dollars, the imported oil-fired power plant will sell electricity to PDB at Tk 2.24 (US 5.1 cents) a unit.

Rubel murder

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was any possibility of seeking a fresh remand of AC Akram Hussain, principal accused in the case.

The sources however said, as per the evidence and recorded statements, the CID is now convinced that Akram was involved in the murder of Rubel in DB custody.

Akram was interrogated for six hours only, after he was placed on three days' CID remand on August 9. On the second day of his remand, he was sent to the prison cell of PG Hospital without prior permission of the court. He was taken to Dhaka Central Jail on September 10.

Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University was tortured to death in DB custody on July 23. Rubel's father, A Rab filed a case on the next day.

WFP seeks more foodgrains

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Union and others.

A ship with 15,000 tonnes of foodgrains is arriving at Chittagong port on September 16 and two other ships are coming soon with 55,000 tonnes, he said.

"Together with the government stocks of about 700,000 tonnes, additional import of one million tonnes of foodgrains and commercial import by private sector, I see no reason for a shortage. If necessary we would seek more grains," he said.

"We have also sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to meet Bangladesh's balance of payment problems due to the massive imports of rice," Kiene said.

"They are working on it," he told a questioner on the possibilities of IMF assistance.

He said rice is scarce in the world market and as such is more expensive than wheat. But the government needs rice to keep the market stable through open market sales, for which it needs the IMF support, he added.

"We have advised the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) to raise the number of VGF card holders and increase the ration to help upto 1000 people in most affected unions, 700 and 500 at moderately affected unions," Kiene said.

"Half of Bangladesh's people are below 2100 kilo calorie per head food consumption level. One fourth of the people are below 1800 kilo calorie level -- whose number is some 30 million. The floods have affected 50 millions. We can handle food demands in next months but we have to handle it well," Werner said.

"It is a political word," he said replying to a question whether famine was stalking the country. "If we are not working here people below poverty line would suffer. So we are encouraging donors to bring in food and the GOB to import," he added.

Answering another question he brushed aside a report attributed to the UN that 20 million people would die of starvation. No UN official has said it, he said.

Flood

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level at Narayanganj, although it fell by 11 cm yesterday.

The Turag was flowing 180 cm above danger level at Mirpur and 134 in Tongi, although it dropped by 12 cm and 8 cm at the two points respectively.

The situation became normal in greater Sylhet, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Bandarban, Feni, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Joy-purhat and Magura.

In the light of the latest river position the FFWC forecast the flood situation will continue to improve in central part of the country, including in and around capital Dhaka.

Berisha ordered to leave Albania

TRIANA, Sept 14: The Albanian government tonight ordered former President Sali Berisha to leave the country by morning or risk arrest, but Berisha immediately said he would defy the order and not leave, reports AFP.

Interior Ministry spokesman Artan Bizhga said Berisha would be arrested unless he was out of the country by 5:00 am (0300 GMT) Tuesday.

Berisha told AFP: "In no event will I leave Albania."

BANGLADESH GARMENT MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (BGMEA)

EMERGENCY AIR CARGO LIFTING FOR RMG SECTOR

Considering the serious stocklot situation due to severe flood, BGMEA has organised an emergency airlifting of the raw materials and finished goods of the garment factories between Dhaka-Chittagong-Dhaka.

There is approximately five flights a day with approximately a payload of 100 CBM or 22 tons in each flight. The rates would be Taka 1,000/- CBM or Taka 7.50/Kg.

The flight operation has started at 11:30 am from Zia International Airport on Sunday, September 13, 1998 and thereafter 5 flights will operate a day each in every 4 hours starting from 7:30 a.m.

Kindly contact and confirm your booking with Dhaka and Chittagong BGMEA office from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. The service will be on first-come-first served basis. For emergency lifting of any relief materials, preference may be given to NGO's UN organisation and donors subject to availability of space in the aircraft. Considering export load the second cargo air craft will join.

On special arrangement Dhaka-Jessore-Dhaka flight can also be made possible.

Acting Secretary,

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