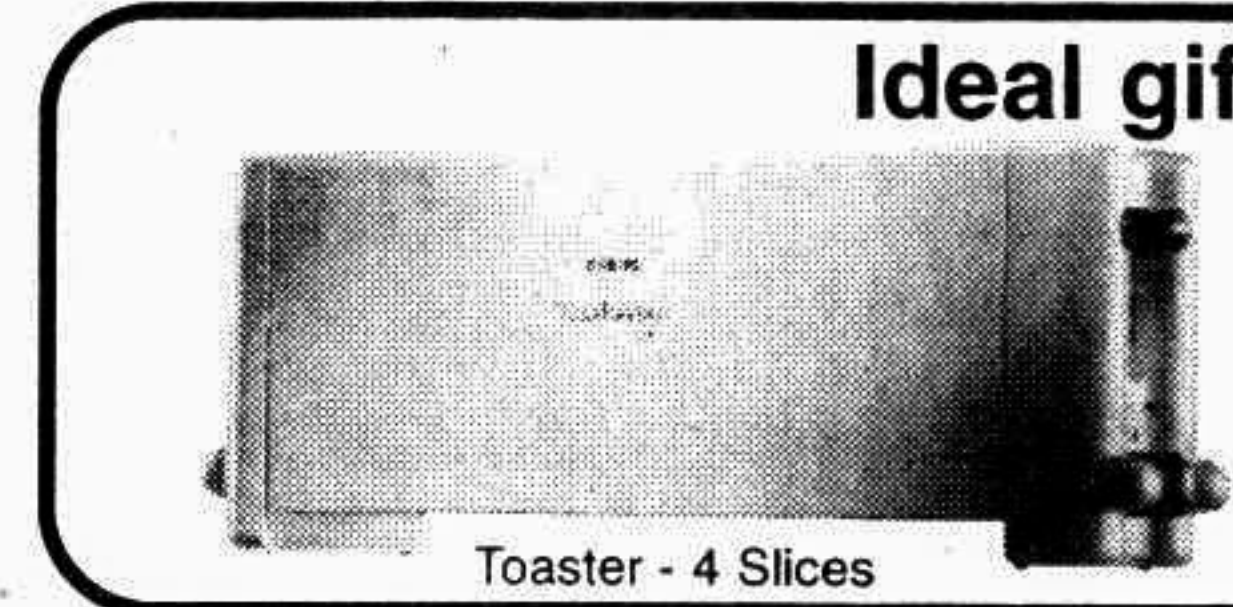


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PHILIPS

Proposal for including BR in Trans-Asian rly ready : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said necessary proposals have been formulated to include Bangladesh Railway in the Trans-Asian Railway, reports UNB.

"For its geographical position, Bangladesh will play an important role for the rail communication of this region," she said while inaugurating the Extended Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Kamalapur in the morning.

The ICD near the Kamalapur Railway Station has been expanded by 9.86 lakh square feet, raising the area to 14.73 lakh sq ft from 4.87 lakh sq ft.

Official sources said the expanded ICD will have an increased handling capacity of 90,000 containers per year from the previous 25,000 containers. The ICD has been expanded at a cost of Tk 58 crore.

Hasina said the government, considering the importance of rail communication, has taken some "effective and realistic steps for creating dynamism in the activities of this service oriented sector."

"We've also taken up some reform measures to improve the quality of service of the Railway," she said mentioning that commercial service of four passenger trains, and the on-board service of Dhaka-Chittagong

inter-city trains have been handed over to the private sector.

Because of these steps, Hasina said, the quality of service has improved and the number of passengers and cargo traffic have increased. The revenue earnings of the Railway has also increased as a result, she added.

The prime minister said that for the development of the railway sector, the government has already procured 22 new engines and 66 passenger carriages. Eight more engines and 26 passenger coaches will also be procured soon.

She said travel by train has become safer and faster because of the modernisation of railway, including development of rail tracks.

Mentioning the introduction of commuter train service between Dhaka and Brahmanbaria, she said this type of services will help people accomplish their works in the capital. They will travel to the capital and then return to their homes after completing job.

The prime minister said special initiative of the present government has made the inclusion of rail line in the Bangladesh Bridge possible. "We were able to persuade the

donors about the indispensability of rail track on the bridge."

She said a 98-kilometre mixed gauge line will be extended up to Joydevpur from Sirajganj.

Hasina hoped that in the first half of 2001, regular train service between east and west would begin.

She thanked the railway officials and employees for their special service to the nation during the recent devastating flood and said it was for their efforts that export was not hampered even though the road communication remained suspended.

While giving recognition to good deeds, the government will not also hesitate to take stern action against any lapses in duty, she said and assured all possible measures for further modernisation of Railway.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju, State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Roads and Railways Division Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat and Director General of Railway Atiqul Hossain Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Earlier, the prime minister unveiled the plaque of the extended inland container depot.



Gausia gets going as ever

Shopping never ends here. Arguably the city's busiest shopping centre, it has one great advantage. New Market, New Super Market, Hawkers Market and Chandni Chawki in the vicinity, Gausia stretches itself conveniently up to - shall we call it? - footpath, creating on the nearby streets the worst congestion one can imagine. - Star photo

Road accidents kill seven in Tangail

TANGAIL, Jan 3: Seven people, including a college student, were killed and 25 others injured in two road accidents on Bangladesh Bridge link road in Kalihati thana on Saturday night and today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said six passengers of a Dhaka-bound coach of Hanif Enterprise from Chapainawabganj were killed when it plunged into a road side ditch at Analiabari after colliding with a truck at about 1.30 am.

The coach was carrying 32 passengers. Villagers rushed to the spot and rescued the victims at dead of night. Passengers attributed the accident to rash driving.

The dead were identified as bus driver Kamal Hossain, 32, of Mirpur in the capital, Bikash Chandra Das, 42, and Ranjan Kumar Das, 40, of Paharpur village, Syamal Kumar Ghose, 24, of Hujurpur village, Alo Miah, 38, and Khairul Islam, 40, of Bohalabari village in Chapainawabganj district.

Of the injured, 11 were admitted to General Hospital. Police seized the truck, but its driver fled away.

In the other accident, Abdur Rashid, 22, a degree examinee of Shamsul Haq College, was run over by a bus at Alengia while he was crossing the road riding a bicycle along with a friend at about 10 am.

Rashid died on the spot. His friend received injury.

The death of the college student sparked off protest by the local people disrupting road communication between the capital and northern districts for five hours. The protesters put up barricade on the road and damaged some 30 buses.

The barricade was withdrawn after the intervention of police and local administration at 3 pm. Separate cases were filed with Kalihati police.

Albright refuses to hold meeting with Israeli FM

JERUSALEM, Jan 3: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has rejected a request from Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon for a meeting during a planned visit to Washington later this week, army radio reported today, says AFP.

The snub is a mark of the "US administration's anger" with the Israeli government over its decision to freeze implementation of October's US-brokered Wye River peace accord with the Palestinians, the radio said.

Albright has also cancelled an expected visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories to monitor implementation of the land-for-security accord, it said.

Sharon still plans to leave for the United States on Thursday to meet Israeli diplomats there and will hold talks with US Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross, the foreign ministry said.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month cancelled a second West Bank troop withdrawal Israel was required to carry out at the league's headquarters in Cairo in December to discuss American and British airstrikes on Iraq. The December 16-19 attacks were intended to punish the regime of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein for failing to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors.

At the request of Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, the meeting was put off until January 24.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid today told reporters that there were no moves afoot to further delay a foreign ministers' meeting on Iraq.

Talaat Hamid, spokesman for the 22-member league, said today that there has been no formal request to cancel or put off the January 24 meeting.

Spokesmen for the Egyptian and Syrian foreign ministers declined comment on the report of the Hurgada meeting. An official at the Yemen Embassy in Cairo would say only that Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul-Kader Bajammal was in Egypt.

The Gulf states, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, have not forgiven Saddam for his 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which sparked the 1991 Gulf War.

The diplomats said that Egypt and Saudi Arabia would prefer to see bilateral discussions or small meetings on Iraq. This, they said, would deprive Saddam's regime of possibly using the league as a platform for anti-Western rhetoric.

Arab League foreign ministers had been scheduled to meet

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Asma's kidney transplantation date shifted

By Staff Correspondent

The date for kidney transplantation of Asma, scheduled for today, has been shifted to Monday next.

Asma, whose only functioning kidney was removed "mistakenly" by doctors at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on August 11, is now at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

Her mother Zohura Begum, who earlier agreed to donate one of her kidneys, was insisting on fixing the operation date after Eid holidays.

When contacted last night, Prof Harun-ur-Rashid, head of Nephrology of the hospital told The Daily Star, "Fixing the operation date after Eid would be risky. We have, however, honoured Zohura Begum's request by shifting the operation date but cannot delay any further."

Condition of Asma, who is surviving on haemodialysis thrice a week can turn worse any time.

She is now fit to undergo the surgery, Prof Rashid added.

Projonmo '71 Newly formed body refutes claim of rival faction

By DU Correspondent

Leaders of the newly formed Central Committee of Projonmo '71 refuted the claim of a rival faction in the organisation that their committee was unconstitutional and illegal.

Saidur Rahman, former president of the organisation, announced the new Executive Committee at a press conference in the city on Saturday but its former general secretary Tawhid Reza who leads the rival group in a statement claimed that it was illegal and unconstitutional.

Anwarul Kabir and Hedayet Hossain president and general secretary of the new committee in a joint statement yesterday claimed that the committee was formed by inviting the members and representative of Projonmo '71 from districts.

"The representatives supported the new committee and so it can in no way be termed illegal," they said.

They said the new committee will find out who were actually responsible for the stalemate in the organisation in the last four years.

"There are a handful of members who are active so that we can not be united. Action will be taken against them once they are identified," they said.

"We do not believe that Projonmo '71 is split. We are under one umbrella as brothers and sisters and will continue to remain so. We will take action against those who are purposefully destroying the image and ideology of the organisation," they said.

Date for stickers in vehicles deferred

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) yesterday deferred by one month introduction of tax, fitness and route permit stickers to be displayed on windshields of motor vehicles.

The system was to be introduced today. A BRTA announcement said it will begin from February 4.

Vehicle owners will have to collect the stickers during renewal of tax token, fitness certificate and route permit.

New flight in Dhaka-Sylhet route from today

Biman Bangladesh Airlines starts a new domestic flight in Dhaka-Sylhet-Dhaka route from today, reports UNB.

The flight, BG604/604, will leave Dhaka at 12:15 pm for Sylhet and depart Sylhet for Dhaka at 1:25 pm on Monday. It will reach Sylhet at 12:50 pm and Dhaka at 2 pm.

Planned trip to Calcutta PM flouting her policy of austerity : Khaleda

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came under criticism from the opposition leader for her planned trip to Calcutta flouting the pledge of austerity during Ramadan, reports UNB.

"She has called for austerity and now plans to go to Calcutta at the cost of public money," Begum Zia, the BNP chairperson said at an Iftar party yesterday evening.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Calcutta January 27-28 where she will be decorated with Dill by Biswa Bharati University. She will also open a book fair there.

Questioning the wisdom of spending public money, Begum Zia said the Prime Minister is flouting her policy of austerity by undertaking a costly trip abroad.

Referring to Prime Minister's refusal to attend the Iftar party hosted by her, Begum Zia said, "It needs the blessings of Almighty Allah to arrange Iftar or break fasting together with other devoted Muslims. It seems Allah has not granted them (ruling party leaders) such an opportunity."

Describing the arrest of JCD leader and a BNP activist from Iftar party, she accused the ruling party of creating obstacles to religious activities.

The opposition leader urged the people, including the Hindu community, to launch united movement to oust the oppressive government.

Describing woes of the common man Begum Zia said rice is selling at Tk 16 to 20 per kg, pulses at Tk 42 per kg, edible oil at Tk 50 per kg and even fried rice (muri) at Tk 36 per kg.

People from rural areas are converting to cities for work and food as government has failed to start post-flood rehabilitation work.

She added, the government failing to resolve the problems is resorting to repression on the opposition in a bid to stop democratic movement.

The Iftar party, organised jointly by Cantonment, Gulshan and Uttara units of BNP and its front organisations, was held at Khilkhet Kurmitola High School ground.

Unemployed youths are coming with great enthusiasm for loans" he said but refused to give the amount of loans so far disbursed and the project proposals in the pipeline.

The Karma Sangsthan Bank (employment bank) was launched in July last year with a paid up capital of 100 crore taka.

It gives collateral-free loans for income-generating projects in 32 sectors including poultry, fish cultivation, handicraft, farming and setting up of agricultural manufacturing plant, horticulture, sericulture, pottery, wood and steel furniture making, boutique printing and transports except two-stroke vehicles.

The number of unemployed youths in the country is about 14 million and around one million are being added to it annually, according to an estimate by the Bureau of Statistics.

One arrested for collecting toll

By Staff Correspondent

The Special Branch of police yesterday arrested a young man for allegedly collecting toll by posing as the son of the Prime Minister.

The arrested person was identified as Khandaker Tanveer Islam alias Joy, son of Khandaker Nazrul Islam.

Khandaker Rahman ASP of SB raided a house at Mohammadia Housing at Mohammadpur in the city and nabbed Joy. Police said he collected toll from industrial units at the Export Processing Zone and Parjaton Restaurant at Saver.

He was sent to Mohammadpur thana. He will be produced in court today, police said.

Truckers call off strike

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Truck Drivers and Workers Federation (BTDWF) has called off its indefinite truck strike in greater Dhaka considering the suffering of the people during the month of holy Ramadan.

However, the federation will continue road barricade programme on Dhaka-Aricha highway for an indefinite period until its demands are met.

The BTDWF enforced an indefinite truck strike in greater Dhaka district yesterday demanding effective measures to stop toll collection at Aricha ghat, and arrest of miscreants disturbing smooth functioning of Utholi Truck Stand.

All types of trucks and tank lorries came under the purview of the strike.

The BTDWF leaders thanked bus owners and drivers for expressing solidarity with the strike call.

Rampage

From Page 1

unscheduled barricade programme was also observed on Dhaka-Aricha highway.

The transport workers would continue the road barricade programme till the extortion was not stopped, the committee sources said.

At the directive of the Home Minister, the local administration held a joint meeting with transport owners and workers Wednesday where decision was taken to crack down upon the extortionists, but toll collection continued unabated, the sources alleged.

Meanwhile, in another incident, BNP-backed Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal activists today damaged five vehicles at the local bus stand demanding release of its leaders and workers.

They also staged demonstration and put up barricade on the highway for two hours at noon.

A case was filed with the police.

Cold spell

From Page 1

Mymensingh 12.4 C, Tangail 11.4 C, Faridpur 13 C, Comilla 12.2 C, Majdi 14.4 C, Feni 13 C, Cox's Bazar 15.8 C, Jessore 12 C, Ishwardi 11.6 C, Bogra 12.4 C, Rangpur 12 C and in Dinajpur 11 C.

The forecast for this month also said Dhaka is likely to have 8-10 mm rainfall, Chittagong 4-6 mm, Sylhet 12-15 mm, Rajshahi 8-10 mm, Khulna 5-7 mm and Barisal 5-7 mm.

There was no rainfall last month as there was no western low over the country.

Doha in the dock

From Page 1

there were many irregularities in the transactions. For example, Shineeupur Holdings' shares were sold by the firm based on false and unsigned orders given by Sathkira Fisheries (both organisations are sister concerns of Beximco Group).

"... In this way, the share market was manipulated to influence the general people to buy the shares."

Barister M Zahir quoted the findings of the probe committee to argue that the accused was one of the major traders on DSE concentrating mainly in the shares of Shineeupur Holdings.

"They were both buyer and seller. Most of their trading volume was with Beximco associates, sponsors," Zahir said. Presenting documents before the judge, he said that the firm violated securities law by acting on orders which were not signed.

He also argued that the activities of the firm were fraudulent and fell under the purview of Section 17 of the Securities and Exchange Ordinance which deals with "mischiefs".

Zahir also quoted the verdict of the Appellate Division, which referred to the SEC probe committee report to comment: "We are also satisfied that there is prima facie allegation of contravention of Section 17 of the ordinance. When the SEC was making a complaint of fraudulent acts against certain companies and their directors on the basis of an enquiry undertaken by an expert committee, a court would be well-advised not to try to be more expert at the complaint stage because otherwise it will be an example of nipping the prosecution in the bud."

No charges can be framed against the accused, Zahir argued.

"They traded among themselves and raised the share price. The transactions were false and did not involve any cash. All trades were on paper only and the dealings were recorded in the DSE quotations which lured thousands of investors to invest in the market," Zahir said. "And they invested and lost their savings."

He concluded by saying that "the accused have committed the crimes and there is prima facie allegations of contravention."

Besides academic qualifications, other qualities should be taken into consideration while appointing teachers, he said.

Meanwhile, at a rally on the DU campus, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF) yesterday urged the DU authorities to accept the six-point demand of the SPSH. BCF leaders said that the movement against sexual harassment should be spread all over the country. Earlier, the BCF brought out a procession on the campus.

Huq said there was no allegation in the probe committee report, which was the basis of the complaint petition filed by the SEC.

He also quoted the report of the probe committee that stated: "The general impression is that they (Doha Securities) played a role in market operations relating to Shineeupur shares... This firm acted on unsigned orders given by Sathkira Fisheries for sale of shares of Shineeupur Holdings Ltd."

He argued that such "general impression and having played a role in market operation" could not be considered as an offence. "And having sold shares based on unsigned orders was also not a violation of law as there were no such requirement of law."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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BNP meeting

From Page 1

He told another questioner that the standing committee meeting discussed forging broad-based unity of opposition political parties for launching a tough anti-government agitation.

Asked whether BNP is going to reach an understanding with Ershad's Jatiya Party, Bhuiyan said: "Not only JP, we will welcome all those willing to join our current out-of-government movement. We will not hesitate to build united movement with any party-left or right."

Sharif

From Page 1

hore - capital of central Punjab province.

Police blamed the ethnic Mutthihs (Gami Movement (MQM) a former ally of Sharif, for the explosion. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a police official said three MQM workers had been arrested in the southern port city of Karachi on suspicion of planning the explosion. He did not disclose the identity of the suspects.

In Lahore, the home town of Sharif, police raided the MQM office, but made no arrests.

But an MQM leader, Sheikh Liaquat, Hussain said there was no question of his party's involvement in the incident.

"I am hearing this news from you," he told the Associated Press from Rawalpindi on telephone. "The MQM believes in a peaceful struggle, but the police are implicating us in false cases because we are no longer an ally of the government."

"We condemn the incident," he said.

The government said the blast was an "act of terrorism."

"The government has taken stringent measures to root out terrorism and this incident has further strengthened our determination to fight against this menace," Mushahid Hussain, the information minister, told reporters in Islamabad.

Sharif blames the MQM, a former ally, for most of the violence in Karachi, a city of 14 million people which has been politically controlled by the MQM since the mid-1980s. More than 1,000 people died in political and religious violence there last year.