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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 sft from 4.87 lakh sft.

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 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 Bangabandhu 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 Joydebpur 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 Hussain Khan also spoke on the occasion.

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

"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

Doha in the dock

From Page 1

there were many irregularities in the transactions. For example, Shapnepukur Holding's shares were sold by the firm based on false and unsigned orders given by Sathkhira 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."

Barrister 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 Shapnepukur 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 "mischief".

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 SEC which 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."

So 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."

Seeking to frame charges, Special Public Prosecutor Syed Rezaul Rahman said that there was manipulation and that there was a prima facie allegation against the accused.

Defence lawyer Serajul Huq differed with Zahir on the Supreme Court verdict. "It has not bound the hands of the Sessions Judge. Otherwise, they (Appellate judges) would have framed charge themselves."

Huq said there was no allegation in the probe committee report, which was the basis of the complainant 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 Shapnepukur shares ... This firm acted on unsigned orders given by Sathkhira Fisheries for sale of shares of Shapnepukur 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."

Manju leads

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Ersahad's effort to keep his party MPs in tow.

Manju displayed one of his many tricks, quietly and decisively taking the JP MPs under his sleeves, a source close to him said.

He also enjoys support of at least three other MPs from his own sphere of influence — the greater Barisal region. They are Taslima Hossain, Rustam Ali Farazi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

More MPs are likely to lend their support to him, the sources indicated.

The scenario would be clear when parliament meets for its winter session later this month.

Those who met the PM included Mustafizur Rahman, Nur Mohammand Mandal, Tajul Islam Choudhury, Golam Hossain, Wahiduddin Badshah, Sharifuddin Ahmed Jhantu, Jajinal Abedin Sarker, Ahsan Ahmed (all from greater Rangpur) and Golam Faruq Ovi (Barisal).

Earlier in the evening, Anwar Hossain Manju had visited Mizanur Rahman Choudhury at his residence. From there, he took him to the Ganobhaban, the sources said.

Mizanur Rahman Choudhury, a JP vice-chairman and a former prime minister under the general, was recently reinstated in his position. He was left in the cold by Ersahad following his release in January 1997.

Recently at the height of the Ersahad-Manju controversy on the former President's tilt towards the mainstream opposition camp, Mizanur Rahman Choudhury was sidelined from the party hierarchy. But he was reinstated shortly while the likes of Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Shabir Moazzem Hossain returned to Ersahad-led JP.

Meanwhile, some JP leaders are still trying to reconcile the two sides.

Some of them met Ersahad last evening and reportedly discussed the possible rapprochement between the two.

Ersahad also met some party MPs last night. But it was not possible to know the outcome of the parley or their names.

Sharif

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here — capital of central Punjab province.

Police blamed the ethnic Muttahida Qami 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 rallied 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."

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.

Code of conduct

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any law to try the teachers for offences. They were only involved in elections".

It is necessary to have a code of conduct. It is necessary to find out why the teachers are of such a low moral standard."

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

Meanwhile, at a rally on the DU campus, Bangladesh Chittagong 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.

BNP meeting

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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 Ersahad's Jatiya Party, Bhuiyan said: "Not only JP, we will welcome all those willing to join our current oust-government movement. We will not hesitate to build united movement with any party-left or right."

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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 Chowk 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 Bangabandhu 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 Chaitainawabganj were killed when it plunged into a road side ditch at Analiabari after colliding with a truck at about 1.30 am.

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 Hujurapur village, Alo Miah, 38, and Khairel Islam, 40, of Bohalabari village in Chaitainawabganj district.

Separate cases were filed with Kalihati police.

Albright refuses to hold meeting with Israeli FM

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

Netanyahu insists in particular that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat abandon plans to declare a Palestinian state unilaterally when the interim five-year period of self-rule expires in May unless there is progress in talks on a final settlement.

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 minister said.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month cancelled a second West Bank troop withdrawal Israel was required to carry out

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

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They said the ministers agreed to lobby the Arab League to put off a meeting on Iraq indefinitely for fear that it will further split Arab ranks. The diplomats spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

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 Yemeni Embassy in Cairo said only that Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdal-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.

The forecast for this month also said Dhaka is likely to have 8-10 mm rainfall, Chittagong 4-6 mm, Sylhet 4-5 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.

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

A case was