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Prothom Alo-BIIS discussion on transshipment

Think regional, says Saifur There's time to think: Tofail

By Staff Correspondent

Former Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday said that transshipment was all through an Indian agenda while Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed denied saying that the issue was proposed by Bangladesh to get duty free access for some of its products.

At a roundtable discussion, organised by the Bengali daily Prothom Alo and Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BIIS), in the city yesterday, Saifur Rahman said that India had always wanted transit facility whenever Bangladesh proposed any new ideas regarding contentious issues.

He said that the matter should be discussed in the regional context rather than bilateral. "The government would have faced lesser criticism and opposition if its proposal included Bhutan and Nepal."

He pointed out that Bangladesh's interest in transshipment was very marginal compared to that of India.

Regarding government's claim that the issue of transshipment was being raised for duty free access for local goods, Saifur said that it was not possible to assess the benefit of such duty free access because quality of goods was also a major factor.

He said that the roads and other physical infrastructure of the country were in bad shape and that even in five years time the situation would not improve enough to accommodate another 1000 trucks.

Regarding government's claim on BNP signing the 1980 agreement, Saifur said that many agreements were signed but could not be implemented due to inability to meet certain other conditions associated with the agreements. He said although BNP signed the 1980 agreement, which was renewed, but it could not be implemented due to such problems.

Speaking on the occasion,

Tofail Ahmed said that the issue was wrongly interpreted as the cabinet had only agreed to allow discussion by an expert committee on the possibility of allowing transshipment to India.

He said that it was just the beginning of a process and in due course the matter will come before parliament depending on the opinion of the expert committee.

He also said that in 1973 the then Awami League government signed a trade agreement where transit was mentioned. He said that the agreement became void as it was not renewed in the

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Buriganga swallows huge toxic waste a day

Oxygen now almost non-existent in the water

Save the Buriganga

By Morshed Ali Khan

Each day, the 17 km stretch of Buriganga river receives 16,000 cubic metres of highly toxic waste from Hazaribagh tanneries.

Another 3,500 cubic metres of toxic waste flow into the river from Tejgaon industrial area.

Along the river from Rayerbazar to Pagla and beyond, some 1,500 industrial units operate with their hazardous waste directly running into the river. These include factories producing aluminium and pharmaceutical products, battery, hardware, dyeing and washing plants and cold storage.

The list goes on. The river is also burdened with untreated sewage from a city of about eight million inhabitants.

Organic waste from kitchen markets along the river, oil and grease from the plying vessels, all contribute to making the Buriganga one of the most polluted rivers in the world.

To curtail the alarming rate of pollution of the river, the government so far failed to take any step other than launching a 'campaign' which is now restricted to occasional table talks.

The committees formed in September 1997 and in December 1998 in the light of a Save Buriganga campaign have defaulted on their terms of reference by months. Environment ministry officials who had initiated the campaign were so annoyed at the committee's sluggish progress that they even threatened to lodge an official complaint to the Cabinet Secretary.

The last meeting of the 1998 committee, held on June 22 this year, decided that some surveys have to be conducted before launching any action programme. But officials of other government departments said there was no need of any fresh

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The deluge of pollution
Dhola Khal remains one of the main sources polluting the river Buriganga. Thousands of cubic metres of sewage and toxic materials find their way into the canal everyday, which then move onto the river.

—Star photo

Opposition calls dawn-to-dusk hartal today

By Staff Correspondent
A dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal called by the BNP-led opposition alliance begins today to protest what it said the killing and attacks on opposition activists during Wednesday's DC office gherao programme.

At least one person was killed and 100 others were injured in terrorist attacks in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Khulna, Barisal and Laxmipur.

Protesting the incidents, the alliance partners — BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote — instantly called an eight-hour hartal today, but later extended the hartal hours till evening.

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6-hr hartal at Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Aug 21: BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia will arrive here on Monday to lead a mass procession protesting the government's decision to provide transshipment facility to India, party sources said.

The Chittagong Chapter of the opposition liaison committee at a meeting here yesterday decided to observe tomorrow's hartal in the city only for six hours from 6 am to 12 noon to take preparation for next day's mass procession.

BNP has already started a massive campaign here to muster support for Monday's mass procession through holding rallies and processions.

The mass procession will start from Lalbagh Maidan at 2pm and end at Port connecting road, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the local administration is set for maintaining tight security in the city on that day, sources concerned said.

Bus accident in Narsingdi: 15 injured

At least 15 passengers were injured as two buses met with an accident near Bashal Eye Hospital on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Narsingdi Friday night, reports UNB.

The police said none of the buses fell into water. The driver of a bus in his bid to avert collision with a truck pressed the brake and turned right. Another bus coming from behind hit the first bus, resulting in injuries to passengers of both the buses.

There is no water nearby and the question of falling the bus into roadside ditch does not arise, said police pointing to the report published in a section of the press yesterday.

Soon after the accident Friday night, UNB correspondent at Narsingdi was wrongly informed that both the buses collided and fell into 8 to 10 feet water with about 120 passengers on board.

Police said some 15 people were injured, including Samidul Haq of Habiganj who was admitted to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital.

The injured given first aid in nearby clinics and hospital, police added.

Squatters gather before Dr Kamal's house

By Special Correspondent

A group of evicted slum dwellers, demanding food and shelter, late Friday night gathered in front of the residence of Dr Kamal Hossain, who leads a team of lawyers for petitioners filing a writ with the High Court challenging the government's eviction drive.

When caretakers declined to open the gate as Dr Kamal and his wife were away in London, the squatters moved away and camped on the pavement of Bailey Road in front of his house.

"Sahib (Dr Kamal) is a good man, he is fighting for us. We have come to get help from him to survive our ordeal", said one of the squatters, Rashid Moral.

Moral and at least 50 others also erected makeshift shelters with bamboos and plastic sheets. He denied that anyone had sent them to squat there. Rather, he said, they felt that 'Sahib' could give them all help. "We shall not move from here till we are provided with alternative accommodation".

Rokeya, who was a neighbour of Moral at the now demolished slum beside the rail track at Maghbar, lamented that

they could not find the 'Sahib' who would help them.

She alleged that two caretakers at the residence of the 'Sahib' drove them away when they called for help at about 2 am after police drove them out of their makeshift shelters at the demolished slum.

The caretakers — Nur Alam and Danaruddin Rana — said that Dr Kamal and Mrs Kamal are likely to return from London tomorrow morning.

A police sergeant busy managing traffic in the area at 6-30 pm yesterday said that he had informed his superiors about this. "Ramma thana is to deal with this matter. Besides, we did not get any complaint from Dr Kamal's home".

Lutfar Rahman, President of Bangladesh Bastuhara Samity, told reporters that his organisation did not have any links with those squatters. "My group camping at the Eidgah on the Supreme Court premises would continue squatting there", he added.

Shahiduddin, general secretary of the Samity, urged all to come in aid of the squatters.



Metropolitan police recovered 147 sacks full of phensidyl bottles from an underground bunker they dug out in the city's TT Para slum yesterday.

—Star photo

Biggest haul of phensidyl

17000 bottles seized from demolished slum

By Staff Correspondent

In the biggest ever haul, 17,000 bottles of phensidyl, a banned addictive cough syrup, were recovered yesterday from two underground tunnels at the recently demolished slum on the premises of the Railway Nirapatti Bahini barrack at Gopigab in the city.

The bottles were recovered in a 12-hour police operation starting from the early hours of yesterday.

A section of RNB personnel must have co-operated with the drug traders in bringing and stockpiling the phensidyl bottles. Otherwise it would not have been possible to stockpile such a huge quantity of drugs in such a planned way at a place close to the barrack, a senior official of DMP's Eastern Zone told The Daily Star last night on condition of anonymity.

Police and other sources said the tunnels might have been used as a 'wholesale centre' by an organised gang. The price of the bottles could be around Tk 22.44 lakh at Tk 132 per bottle.

Earlier on Friday, 732 bottles of phensidyl were recovered

from a tunnel in a room at the Sweeper Colony near Gopigab.

In the last six months, police dog squads and narcotics control officials had raided the same area several times but failed to unearth anything.

Considering the location of the tunnels, it is also believed that phensidyl bottles were being smuggled by train regularly.

When asked whether a section of railway personnel were involved in it, the police official replied, "I think most of the phensidyl bottles were smuggled through Akhaura-Cosha area and brought here by train."

Acting on a tip-off, police personnel from Motijheel thana cordoned-off the area.

The dog squad of police also took part in the operation that ended at about noon yesterday.

The seventeen thousand bottles were kept in 170 jute sacks in the underground tunnels.

One of the concrete tunnels is about 15 feet long, five feet wide and 9 feet deep. The second one is a 'bit smaller'. The tunnels were covered with concrete

slabs. The slabs were under about one foot of earth. The entry points of the tunnels looked like slabs covering any normal septic tank, police officials said.

A portable metallic ladder was used for entering the tunnels. "At one stage during today's (Saturday) operation, we were considering taking legal steps against the RNB and the railway for allowing criminals to establish shanties on railway land", a police official said.

However, none was arrested till filing of the report at about 10 last night.

Police suspected that those tunnels were used by drug trader Khokon and his men. Khokon was murdered by his rival group a few months ago following a feud over drug trading. "China", an accomplice of Khokon was controlling the drug trade after his death.

In another incident CID recovered 2000 bottles of phensidyl from an abandoned pick-up van at Mayakanon in the early hours of yesterday, police said.

5 shot dead, 6 abducted in Assam

By Staff Correspondent

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Militants struck in a big way in Assam since last night, killing five people and kidnapping six more, including five tea executives, reports PTI.

Five firewood collectors of village Tulsibed in Gossaigaon Sub-Division were shot dead by militants of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland at Guma reserve forest at the border between Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts today.

Official sources said that four of them died on the spot while another seriously wounded died at the Dhubri Civil Hospital.

The killed are yet to be identified but they belong to the minority community, the sources said.

A group of unidentified extremists today kidnapped two tea executives and a contractor at gunpoint from Pakhmaria Tea estate under Udabond police station in Cachar District. The kidnappers came in a vehicle.

The kidnapped have been identified as Assistant Manager of the tea estate Ranjit Banerjee.

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Dighinala tense: Eleven more hurt in clashes

KHAGRACHHARI, Aug 21: Eleven people including three intelligence agency members were injured at Dighinala thana headquarters as trouble continued there for the second day today, reports UNB.

The trouble began on Friday following eviction of 12 repatriated tribal refugee families from the Dighinala Model Primary School, a temporary transit camp.

At least 18 people, including five policemen, were injured and a farmhouse of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Minister Kalparanjan Chakma was set afire Friday as the backlash of the eviction.

Police said some tribal youths called out three intelligence agency members—Humayun Kabir, Zakir Hossain and Shamsul Alam—at a tea stall and at one stage beat them up severely today.

As the news spread among the non-tribals, they went on the rampage at Kathatoli Bazar and attacked the tribal people, injuring eight.

Army troops and police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

CHT Regional Council mem-

bers Sudhasindhu Khisa, Raktatpol Tripura, Jafar Ahmed, refugee leaders Upendra Lal Chakma and PCJSS leader Tatindra Lal Chakma visited the spot and urged the people to maintain calm.

Khagrachhari Zila Parishad Chairman Jotindra Lal Tripura, DC AKM Zafrul Hossain and SP Sheikh Hemayet Hossain also visited Dighinala in the afternoon.

Army troops and police were guarding the troubled area.

Protesting the incident, Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), led by its local leader Tatindra Lal Chakma, brought out a procession at the thana headquarters in the afternoon.

Pahari Chhatra Parishad and Hill Women's Federation in separate statements today condemned the eviction and urged the Prime Minister to take action against the persons responsible.

Police said, they removed the refugees as the academic activities of the school have been hampering since they occupied it on February 21 last year.

Salam Talukdar laid to rest

BNP leader Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Molbari village in Sarishabari thana in Jamalpur yesterday, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, the liaison committee of the four-party opposition alliance called off today's hartal for the district to show respect to the BNP leader.

His body was flown by a helicopter to the Jamalpur stadium at about 12:30 noon from the capital after *namaj-e-janaza* in front of the party central office at 10:40 am and at DOHS mosque at 9:40 am.

Janazas for him were also held at Kachari Mosque and at Alhaji Jute Mills in Sarishabari before his burial at his birthplace.

Rezaul Karim Hira, MP, Mirza Azam MP, Dr Moïn Khan MP, Amanullah Aman MP, Barkatullah Bhulu MP, former minister MA Matin Chowdhury, Shahjahan Straj, DC and SP and local leaders of Awami League, BNP and other parties attended the *janaza*.

Hundreds of people paid homage to their leader standing on both sides of the road on way to Kachari mosque from the stadium.

In the morning, hundreds of party workers, leaders and admirers attended the *janaza* led by Olema Dal leader Moulana Mohammad Nesarul Huq in front of the party office in Dhaka.

Party central leaders prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Faridul Islam, Mirza Abbas, Sadek Hossain Khoka and Amanullah Aman were among others present.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Moulana Matiuur Rahman Nizami also attended the *janaza*.

Boiler burst kills 2 in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent
SATKHIRA, Aug 21: A woman and her two-year-old daughter were killed and two others injured in a boiler explosion at a rice mill at village Agardari in Sadar thana this morning.

The dead were identified as Firoza Khatun, 35, and Khadija, 2, of village Satani in Sadar thana.

Police and witnesses said, Firoza and her daughter Khadija died on the spot while the two other women — identified as Sakhina, 30, and Majida, 32, received serious injuries.



Prof Abdul Bayes

should distance ourselves from students' politics. There are allegations that few of us were directly involved even in formation of the executive committee of a particular student organisation," he said replying to a question how normalcy could be restored on the campus.

"The code of conduct should

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Prayer Timings

| August 22 | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4:10 | 4:15 |
| Johr | 12:50 | 1:25 |
| Asr | 4:45 | 5:00 |
| Maghrib | 6:40 | 6:45 |
| Esha | 8:00 | 8:30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation