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PM discusses 'issues of public interest' with President

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday evening and exchanged views with him on matters of public interest.

She stayed with the President for some time and apprised him of the outcome of the 2nd Conference of the Association of Asian Parliaments (AAPP) held in Cambodia recently.

A brief announcement from the president house said she also exchanged views with the President "on various issues of public interest."

President Shahabuddin appreciated the Prime Minister's role in the AAPP meeting and wished further success of the organisation.

Opposition calls another hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance has called another countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today to protest the killing of six people by police and BDR at Brahmanbaria on Tuesday.

Earlier, some Islamic groups had already declared a countrywide daylong hartal today.

"We cannot sit idle as the government continues to harass Islamic

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INSIDE TODAY

ARTICLE 4

The Education Policy: Does it make a Difference?
by Manzoor Ahmed

FOCUS 5

Old economy trap: Time to try the new

ANNOUNCEMENT

Today's 20-page issue of The Daily Star contains a four-page special supplement on 'Bangladesh Business Awards' on Pages 17-20

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 8		5:49 pm
Feb 9	6:35 am	

Prayer Timings

February 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5:30	6:10
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:20	4:35
Maghrib	5:54	6:00
Esha	7:25	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Train skids off track near Feni: 2 killed, 100 hurt

Alleged saboteur discloses names of 12

STAR REPORT

At least two people were killed and about 100 injured when seven compartments and the engine of Chittagong bound inter-city train Udayan from Sylhet skidded off the track on a bridge near Feni early yesterday morning.

As the express train was in high speed, the engine and five compartments fell on the marshy land at least 25 feet below while two compartments hung from the bridge.

The engine turned upside down and a compartment rolled over it in the

crash, alleged to be an act of sabotage, done by removing fish-plates from the tract.

Identity of the dead could not be known till last night. Body of one of the victims remained trapped under a compartment. The other body was taken away.

Of the injured, nine were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital where 20 others were also treated.

Critically injured Tofael Ahmed, one of the drivers of the train, was flown

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Intercity train 'Udayan Express' derailed 12 km off Feni yesterday, killing at least two people and injuring 100 others. One person was held allegedly for removing fishplates.

Pickets attack thana: 50 injured during countrywide hartal

Minister's car chased, trains halted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 people were injured, three of them by bullets, during Opposition-called countrywide hartal yesterday.

Besides, hartal activists attacked a minister's car in Dhaka and a police station in Cox's Bazar. They also halted trains at different points.

The four party alliance enforced the hartal demanding release of Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) chairman Maulana Azizul Haq and secretary general Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini. The hartal callers also demanded a judicial inquiry into the Saturday's

killing of a police constable in the city.

In the capital, a minister's car came under attack near Dhaka Club yesterday afternoon. Zinnatunnesa Talukdar, Minister of State for Women and Children Affairs, however, escaped unhurt when Chhatra Dal activists partly damaged her car pelting brickbats at 3:30 pm.

Six Dhaka University students, identified as Masum Billah, Nazmul Ahsan, Ashraful Islam Hiron, Anwarul Haw Royal, Mushfiqur Rahman, and Imrul Kayes, were arrested from near Matshya Bhavan on charge of attacking the minister's car, said Ramna police last night.

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'Red alert' for guarding rlys, bridges

UNB, Dhaka

Government declared "red alert" for guarding all railways and bridges after some 'saboteurs' derailed an inter-city train near Feni yesterday.

"We've ordered extra security in consultation with the Prime Minister as the extremist groups are targeting railway lines, bridges and property," Communications Minister Anwar Hossain said last night.

He also referred to the uprooting of rail tracks in Habiganj allegedly by the Islamic zealots, disrupting train communications along the Dhaka-Sylhet route.

Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh

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BNP in grasp of extremists, AL assessing impact

ZAYADUL AHSAN AND REAZ AHMAD

Following the recent escalation of violence let loose by Islamic zealots, BNP has virtually fallen in the grasp of fundamentalists' politics.

On the other hand, ruling Awami League is carefully analysing the probable impact of BNP's latest stance in the next parliamentary elections. AL's main concern is whether the changed scenario would benefit it or not.

Under certain compulsions, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had to give hartal call for release of the so-called religious leaders who even do not believe in leadership of woman at state level.

It appears that the supreme leader of the four-party Opposition alliance has shouldered the responsibility of fanatics' foul play.

The chronology of events in the fundamentalists-led violence frustrated the liberal faction in BNP, which was pursuing a policy to build

up an anti-government movement phase by phase.

The announcement for laying a siege around the Secretariat on February 18 was part of that movement programme.

But the hartal call, under compulsion from its so-called pro-Islamic partners, has now frustrated the liberals' plan for a more organized and systematic movement against the AL government.

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Goods worth Tk 30 cr gutted at Benapole customs warehouse

UNB, Benapole

Imported commodities worth about Tk 30 crore were gutted in a fire at a warehouse at Benapole land port yesterday.

Officials and C&F agents said the imports of 65 consignments kept at the warehouse included craft paper, medium paper, CR coil, duplex board, raw cotton, motor parts, truck chassis, foil sheet and textile parts.

Three people also received burn injury. Officials suspected that the fire originated from a cigarette butt at about 10 in the morning and soon engulfed the customs Warehouse No 26.

Fire fighting units from Jessore Sadar, Jhikargacha, Nawpara, Satkhira, Magura, Kushtia and Jhenidah rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze with the help of local people after hours of frantic efforts.

But witnesses said the personnel from the fire station set up at the port at the country's border with India spending Tk 20 lakh were conspicuous by their absence from the operation.

On March 12, 1996 imported goods worth about Tk 100 crore were gutted in three warehouses at the land port. That was an incident of arson.

This time the officials initially ruled out any possibility of sabotage. A five-member committee has been formed to probe the incident.

However, Sharsha police arrested two security guards of the port for their alleged involvement in the fire. They were identified as Aliar Hossain and

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PM announces special funds from ADP for IT sector

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced sanction of special funds from ADP for rapid development of information technology in the country.

The decisions were taken in the first meeting of a high-powered Task Force on Information Technology for quick expansion of computer education to grassroots level and creating job opportunities for the professionals at home and abroad.

Presiding over the meeting, Sheikh Hasina said, "We will do whatever necessary for developing the IT sector".

She asked the officials concerned and members of the Task Force to take immediate steps for popularising use of computers in the country. "The use of computers should not

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