

# Pak train of hope goes to India

**REUTERS, Wagah**

A Pakistani train crossed into India yesterday for the first time in two years, the most dramatic sign of rapprochement between India and Pakistan since ground-breaking talks between their leaders this month.

The Samjhota, or "Understanding," Express, freshly painted in green and yellow and festooned with bunting, crossed the border at Wagah near Lahore heading for the Indian station at Atari, one km away.

Resumption of the train service follows the recent meeting between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf at which the nuclear-armed rivals agreed to resume stalled peace talks next month.

Security was tight given fears of attack by militants opposed to

peace. Dozens of soldiers stood guard and sniffer dogs checked passengers and their luggage for explosives or narcotics.

The driver of the locomotive, wearing a garland of red roses, waved from his cab as the train crossed the border. Passengers will change trains in Atari for onward travel into India, while the Pakistani train will pick up travellers heading to Pakistan.

The train is capable of carrying 800 passengers, but only 76 tickets were sold for Thursday's journey, given continuing visa restrictions. The passengers were 56 Pakistanis and 20 Indians.

They hailed the resumption of the train service as a sign of peace between their countries, which went close to a fourth war in 2002 after India accused Pakistani-based militants of a bloody attack on its parliament in December 2001.

Transport links were severed after that attack and the two countries staged a massive build-up of forces along their border while violence worsened in the divided Himalayan territory of Kashmir, the main cause of their long-running rivalry.

India and Pakistan have already resumed flights and bus services since Vajpayee, now nearing 80, announced last April that he would make a final bid for peace with Pakistan in his lifetime. But the train service will be the most welcome return to normal relations for most ordinary people as it is the most economical means of travel between the countries.

Thousands of families were split up by the 1947 partition of the sub-continent that created Pakistan and India at the time of independence from Britain. Such families had relied on the train to visit relatives.

## Saifur brushes aside judicial probe into shrine blast

*Dr Kamal asks for a public investigation commission*

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet**

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday brushed aside main opposition Awami League's (AL) demand for judicial and parliamentary probes into the bomb blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) Monday night.

At a press briefing at Sylhet Circuit House in the afternoon after his visit to the shrine complex, Saifur ruled out the AL demand raised by its presidium member Abdus Samad Azad.

Asked whether religious bigots were behind the blast that killed three people and injured 37 others, the finance minister, also the lawmaker from Sylhet-1 constituency, made an evasive reply, saying no partner in the ruling coalition government was involved in the incident.

He was also critical of AL's hartal call in Sylhet on Wednesday.

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A private rubbish collector pedals away his van loaded with bags of discarded cardboard, twigs and dry leaves, paper and refuse near the Gulshan Circle-1 yesterday in the capital.

## PM tells of tradition to artists

*11th Asian Art Biennale begins*

**AGENCIES, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has urged the country's artists and all concerned involved with the art and culture to make efforts to create a distinct language of art in the light of own heritage, tradition and culture.

She stressed the need for nurturing the great tradition, heritage common values and rich inheritance of Asia and the East in the context of stiff competition of globalisation.

"We have an open-minded policy to be informed about contemporary art, advancement of art for providing new dimension to our own creations. But we'll never disregard our own creativity, heritage and

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Visitors appreciate artworks on display yesterday at the launch of the 11th Asian Art Biennial at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

## Blasts kill UP chairman in Khulna

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

A Union Parishad chairman was killed and two others were injured in bomb blasts at Digraj Bazar in Mongla thana Wednesday.

Partha Pratim Roy, 35, chairman of Digraj Union Parishad, also president of the union unit BNP, was taking tea in a roadside tea stall at around 9:00pm when two assailants threw three hand bombs.

The critically injured -- crab trader Ajoy, 30, and Thakur Das, 28 -- are undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

No-one was arrested and no case was filed till 5:00pm yesterday.

## Binod Dasgupta passes away

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Veteran journalist and columnist Binod Dasgupta expired at Millennium Hospital at Lalmatia in the city Wednesday.

He was suffering from several diseases including respiratory syndrome for a long time.

Binod Dasgupta, 68, served in different dailies including the Bangladesh Times for 20 years. He wrote columns in two dailies and weeklies for the last few years and is also author of several books.

An active leftist throughout his life, Binod left behind his wife and a daughter.

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina expressed condolence at his death.

## MODHUPUR ECO-PARK Notice served on govt to stop work

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A legal notice has been served on the government seeking an immediate halt to work on the Modhupur National Park Development Project popularly known as eco-park project.

A public hearing should be organised to settle in a transparent way the issues concerning rights of the indigenous people living in the area before implementing the project, it said.

Referring to the killing of a young Garo named Piren Slan in police firing recently, the notice

demand compensation to his family and steps to punish those responsible for the killing within 15 days.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) and Society for Environment and Human Development served the legal notice on request from the ethnic leaders for legal assistance to stop implementation of the project by the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

According to a Bela press release, legal action will be taken if

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## Non-govt edn instts in crisis

*Teachers, staff start indefinite strike*

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

About four lakh teachers and employees of 25,000 non-government primary and high schools and colleges across the country started an indefinite strike yesterday to press their eight-point demand.

The demands include 100 per cent government contribution to their salary instead of 90 percent, festival bonus and medical allowance.

The strike was observed peacefully and no classes were held in the non-government educational institutions yesterday, said a leader of the Non-government Teachers'

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**Announcement**

The next installment in our series The Strength Within come out Saturday. The story is about how down trodden potters turn their wheels of luck by banking on a sanitation program.

## JCD men beat up journalist, ask him to leave Kushtia

**STAR REPORT**

The cadres of ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday beat up a senior journalist in Kushtia and asked him to leave the town within 24 hours or face 'dire consequences'.

The journalist, Ali Rahamat Risvy, news editor of local daily The Aker Alo, has filed a general diary (GD) with Sadar Police Station.

Alice Slater, head of the environmental advocacy group Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, warned the Bush initiative "will create a new arms race to the heavens."

US security officials have said military dominance in space was

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## Transport workers attack Sayedabad Police Camp, set van ablaze

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Hundreds of transport workers attacked Sayedabad Police Camp after a police sergeant kicked a truck driver in the groin following a dispute.

The unidentified police sergeant stopped a truck near Sayedabad Bus Terminal at about 9:00 last night and asked the driver to show his driving licence and the vehicle's papers.

The sergeant and the driver brawled over the issue and at one stage, the sergeant kicked the driver in his groin.

Later, hundreds of transport workers attacked the police camp with bricks. The agitators also set ablaze a police van.

The incident prompted a traffic snarl-up for about half an hour on Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

## Sergeant killed by mistake

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Police suspect gangland turf war was the reason behind the gun attack on Mohammad Hanif at Mohammadpur Wednesday night in which police sergeant Kazi Shahabuddin was mistakenly shot at and killed.

Hanif is son of Shahabuddin's landlord. Both of them were coming out of a phone-fax shop at Ring Road at around 7:00pm when the attackers opened fire on them.

Police said Hanif has links with a local criminal gang. He 'owns an under-construction building' at Barabo in Mohammadpur though he has no official means of income.

Hanif received six bullets in

different parts of his body and is now undergoing treatment at South Asia Hospital. Shahabuddin received one shot and died Wednesday night.

"We suspect rivals attacked Hanif when he went to make phone call at the phone-fax shop and sergeant Shahabuddin unfortunately fell victim," said Ruhul Amin, deputy commissioner (west) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He said it was too early to say whether the same gang had gunned down Shafiqul Alam Firoz, a businessman, at Zahuri Mohalla minutes before the attack at Ring Road.

Police are also investigating to

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## Planned road link promises closer ties

*PM tells Myanmar envoy*

**UNB, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said Bangladesh and Myanmar can benefit from the geographical proximity and economic situation of the two countries.

She also hoped that the planned road link between Bangladesh and Myanmar would bring Myanmar closer as also the other countries of the region.

The prime minister expressed the views from the newly appointed Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh U Thane Myint called on her at the Prime Minister's Office in the afternoon.

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## Intelligence unit formed to detect tax dodgers

**REJAUL KARIM BYRON**

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has formed a central intelligence unit (CIU) to detect Vat and tax evasions by large companies.

The 13-member team is formed to fulfil one of the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for getting the fourth tranche of its Poverty Reduction Growth Facilities (PRGF) loan in December this year, sources said.

The CIU is composed of six NBR deputy commissioners and six inspectors with Commissioner Aminul Karim at the helm as director general. The NBR chairman will

directly supervise its activities.

The CIU will assist the newly expanded Large Taxpayers' Unit (LTU) of the NBR. It will gather information on Vat (value-added tax) and income tax of companies through investigation and review, e.g. digging into the imports, production and sales of products, sources said.

If the unit detects any Vat or tax evasion, it will inform the appropriate NBR department for taking action.

The LTU, which so far has been dealing with only income tax payments of large companies, is now

preparing files on their Vat payments too. Sources said as per another IMF condition the LTU must prepare these Vat files by September 30 this year.

The LTU was formed in 1999. But its activities had been insignificant until the government expanded it recently in line with an IMF recommendation.

The LTU presently deals with 1,200 files on large taxpayers. Among them are 800 directors of banks, insurance companies, financial institutions and service

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## Cold wave to come back in a week

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A mild cold wave will hit the country in a week, says a weathercast.

The temperature has increased at most of the places across the country, but a mild cold wave is still sweeping the northern region in the country. The mild wave that started around a month ago hit the children and aged people the most and claimed more than 100 lives.

"The cold appears normal but severe cold will hit the country in a week. Once the fog disappears, which will happen soon, people will feel more cold," said Sujit Kumar Das, duty forecasting officer of the meteorological office.

The met office forecasted that the sky will remain partly cloudy in the next 24 hours until 6:00pm today. Fog may cover the country during in the morning and night temperature may slightly fall during the period, it added.

The lowest temperature of the capital was 14.2 degrees Celsius and of the country 8.8 degrees Celsius in Syedpur yesterday.

Prayer Timings		
January 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-10
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-41
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Activists of the Slum-dwellers' Union demand an end to eviction from slums and repression on slum-dwellers at a protest rally at Muktangan in Dhaka.

## Five top civil servants transferred

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government yesterday transferred five top civil servants as part of its current reshuffle to make the civil administration dynamic.

Secretary of the Ministry of Textile Syed Tanveer Hussain has been transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forest, according to an official notification yesterday.

He has been replaced with Secretary of the Energy Division Azizul Islam.

The position of secretary at the Ministry of Environment and Forest has fallen vacant following the expiry of the contract of Sabihuddin Ahmed. Sabihuddin has been appointed Ambassador to Sweden.

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