

Dhaka proposes 2 bodies for pipeline, trade issues

Saifur talks with Aiyar on tri-nation gas scheme, says it's not right to link them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday proposed forming two committees -- one for the proposed tri-nation gas pipeline and the other for trade issues -- at the talks with visiting Indian Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar.

Dhaka also proposed to keep the option of taking gas if and when it requires from the pipeline to India from Myanmar through Bangladesh when it is set up.

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Indian Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj Mani Shankar Aiyar makes a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Aiyar meets Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Indian Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Mani Shankar Aiyar has said the relations between Bangladesh and India should further improve and must move forward for welfare of the two peoples.

Aiyar made the remarks when he had a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

The prime minister gave a positive response to the suggestions made by the Indian minister.

Aiyar offered training to Bangladeshi personnel in the petroleum sector in the Indian Institutes. Enhancing cooperation between the two neighbouring countries, matters of mutual interest and regional and international issues came up in the meeting.

The meeting also discussed cooperation to improve local government system in the two countries as well as arranging training and exchanging visits, and organising seminars and workshops in the two countries to this end.

The prime minister conveyed her best wishes to her Indian counterpart.

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Indonesian plane crash kills 143

13 survive

AFP, Jakarta

A Boeing 737-200 jetliner crashed yesterday into a densely populated suburb of the Indonesian city of Medan moments after take-off and burst into flames, killing at least 143 people.

The Mandala Airlines jet bound for Jakarta slammed into buildings just outside the perimeter of Medan's Polonia airport early in the morning, killing 104 of its 117 passengers and crew and 39 people on the ground.

The updated figures were given by acting North Sumatra governor Rudolf Pardede, after the province's governor Rizal Nurdin was killed in the crash.

"The dead victims total 143, composed of 104 passengers and crew and 39 residents," Pardede said in a statement in the country's third biggest city.

"The surviving passengers

currently under treatment number 13," he said, adding that four residents were still in hospital.

Local Red Cross official Heriansyah said bodies were believed still under the wreckage, which was scattered for hundreds of metres. Many of the dead on the ground were minibus passengers hit by debris.

Some 30 houses were damaged and gutted by fire. Wreckage of the plane and at least five burned vehicles littered the usually busy main avenue bordering the airport.

Corpses were gathered for identification at Adam Malik, the hospital nearest the airport. Most were charred beyond recognition and many were incomplete.

Crumpled vehicles, bicycles and destroyed houses littered the area, where soldiers and police earlier carried away charred and mutilated corpses and struggled to keep curious crowds at bay.

Passenger Rohadi Sitepu told Metro Television from hospital that he and five other people seated in the back of the plane in Row 20 had all survived.

"There was the sound of an explosion in the front and there was fire and then the aircraft fell," he said.

Rohadi said he escaped the blazing wreck by jumping through the torn fuselage and fleeing on foot as four large explosions erupted behind him.

Another survivor, Freddy Ismail, told ElShinta Radio from his hospital bed that the aircraft got into trouble after take-off.

"After take-off, the noise of the engine suddenly became very loud and the aircraft began shaking intensely before it suddenly fell," he said.

The company, which is part-owned by the Indonesian military,

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Red alert in Khulna on fresh attack fear

STAR REPORT

The country's southwestern region has been on red alert since early yesterday following intelligence report that a top leader of an outlawed party is active to mastermind a series of terrorist attacks.

A reliable source said intelligence men have gathered that founder of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan is working in Meherpur district to orchestrate attacks on a large scale in conjunction with the religious extremists. He has been giving necessary instruc-

tions to his cadres to work jointly with JMB.

Meanwhile, investigators in Chittagong yesterday obtained some important information including the numbers of over 150 mobile phones used to co-ordinate the August 17 blasts. The intelligence agencies are now trying to identify the subscribers of those phones.

Police detectives in Khulna yesterday arrested a homeopath in Khalishpur area of the city, suspecting him to be a top leader of an Islamist group having links to the countrywide explosions.

Our Staff correspondent from Khulna reports: The state minister

for home on Sunday named PBCP-Janajuddho to have assisted Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in carrying out the serial blasts.

In another development, Masud bin Ishaque, the detained homeopath, has identified himself as a leader of Jama'atul Moslemin, a militant outfit.

Police said they recovered from him also a note book containing land and cellphone numbers of Dr Asadullah al Galib, chief of Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab), and Abdur Rahman, chief of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

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Friday, Saturday weekly holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has introduced two-day weekly holiday -- Friday and Saturday -- effective from next Friday to reduce use of fuel in the backdrop of skyrocketing oil prices.

Office time will be from 9:00am to 5:00pm with a half an hour break at 1:00pm.

A cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday took the decision.

However, educational institutions will remain out of the new holiday purview.

Banks will also enjoy two-day weekly holiday and the Bangladesh Bank will fix office time of the financial institutions, the meeting decided.



Date expired and unregistered food items seized by a mobile court from Meenabazar department store in Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday.

Meenabazar fined for selling foods without expiry date

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the mobile court arrived, the authorities of the Meenabazar, a department store at Dhanmondi in the capital, sprayed air freshener and ignited incense sticks in their fish and meat section with the hope to prevent the stink emanating from the rotten items.

The court also found dextrose monohydrate (glucose) without expiry date on it and bread, biscuits and other bakery items without the seal of the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

The mobile court led by Magis-

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Bangladeshis in hurricane-hit US states safe

UNB, Dhaka

All the Bangladeshi families and students who live in New Orleans are safe, but most of their houses were destroyed by hurricane Katrina which left Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama of the United States in ruins.

A spokesman for the foreign ministry told the news agency yesterday that some Bangladeshi-American families and 15 Bang-

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Top outlaw leader dies in Rab action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The second-in-command of Janajuddha faction of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party was killed in a 'shootout' with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Katakhal crossing in Rupsha upazila on Sunday midnight.

The Rab-6 in a press release yesterday said they had reports Saifuzzaman alias Shoaib alias Ripon, 38, was going to Khulna from

Dhaka through Gopalganj-Mawa route to carry out destructive activities.

Rab members took position at different points on the route, waiting for a private car, which according to the reports was carrying Shoaib.

Challenged at about 3:40am, passengers of the car defied the Rab signal and drove towards the Rupsha Bridge, opening fire on the elite force, the release said.

The Rab countered the attack and fired about 47 shots during the 20-minute-long 'shootout'. The Rab men later recovered Shoaib's body and seized his white Toyota car, but could not arrest his associates.

The Rab also seized one SBL gun, one locally made revolver, five cartridges, three bullets, three used cartridges, one c e l l p h o n e

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GAS PIPELINE Aiyar seeks Hasina's support

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Indian Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar yesterday sought help from Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina for the tri-nation gas pipeline from Myanmar to India through Bangladesh.

"This is not a matter for the opposition leader, it depends on the government. But I sought her assis-

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COMMENT ON AL QAEDA

Tarique rebuts BBC report

Says his words were misreported; BBC says it corrected news late at night

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman yesterday rebutted some parts of the interview

that he gave to BBC Bangla Service on Sunday and said his words were not presented accurately by the news outfit.

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JS session begins Thursday

Discussion on Aug 17 carnage likely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The upcoming parliament session is likely to hold a discussion on August 17 countrywide serial bomb blasts, but there is little possibility to adjourn the other business of the House for the discussion that the opposition lawmakers are demanding.

The discussion, if held, will be a general one that will not need

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