

Dhaka-Kolkata train service from Apr 14

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh have decided to launch a train service between Kolkata and Dhaka on April 14, marking first rail link between the two neighbours.

The agreement to launch the service on Bangla New Year's Day was taken at a three-day meeting of India-Bangladesh Intergovernmental Committee of Railways, which concluded here yesterday, official sources said.

As per the agreement, each country will run the train for six months, they said.

The two countries now have two bus services between Kolkata and Dhaka and between Agartala and Dhaka.

Launch of the train service is a significant development as this remained undecided for several years.

The caretaker government recently took a number of other steps that have drawn positive reaction from India.

These steps include clearance of a power project to be set up by BHEL. Significantly, an investment of about \$200 million will be made by Bangladesh in this project.

The caretaker government is also positively considering India's proposals for transit and gas pipeline to Myanmar.

Correction

The news report titled "Tarique remanded in extortion case" that was published in The Daily Star yesterday, stated, "Tarique has been charged with extortion of Tk 1 crore from a construction firm, Al-Amin Construction, a concern of Amin Mohammad Lands Development Ltd." Amin Mohammad Lands Development Ltd in a rejoinder yesterday informed The Daily Star there is no relation between them or any of their sister concerns with Al-Amin Construction. We regret the mistake.

Muggers kill pvt firm staff, loot Tk 2 lakh in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Muggers shot dead an executive of a private company and took away around Tk 2 lakh in Hathazari upazila of the district on Thursday night.

The victim, Mir Nasimuddin, 38, son of late Bazal Ahmad of Goman Mardan Hat of the upazila, was a sales executive of Moon Star Company located in the city's Bahaddarhat area.

Sources said a gang of five intercepted Nasim on Goman Mardan DC Road on the western side of Boalia Khal at around 10:00pm while he was returning to the city in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw after collecting money from the customers in different areas of Hathazari upazila.

As the gang asked Nasim to give his bag containing the money, he refused to comply, sources said.

At this, the muggers shot Nasim point blank and took away the money, a cell phone and other valuables from him, they added.

Critically injured Nasim was first admitted to Hathazari Health complex and then shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where he died at around 11:30pm.

Police launched a drive to arrest the muggers, but they could not arrest any of the gang members as of yesterday evening.

Forex worth Tk 2 cr seized at ZIA, one held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Custom officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized foreign currencies worth about Tk 1.87 crore from a passenger of a Singapore-bound flight on Thursday night.

Acting on a tip-off, they searched the suitcase of Md Russel and found the currencies kept inside the packets containing vegetables and chana-chur while he was going to embark his scheduled flight at 10:30pm after completing all formalities.

The seized foreign currencies include 904,900 Saudi riyal, 40,000 UAE dirham, 4,700 euro, 4,200 Qatari riyal, 425 Kuwaiti dinar, 585 Bahraini dinar, 700 Omani riyal, 190 pound and \$700.

Officials said Superintendent Ashok Barua led the operation.

Later, Russel, son of Abul Kalam Khan of Jhankarkandi village under Jajira Police Station of Shariatpur district, was handed over to Airport Police Station.

Tarique being grilled at JIC as forces raid Hawa Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the intelligence officials of Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) started grilling former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, the joint forces yesterday raided BNP chairperson's office in Hawa Bhaban and picked up the office's computer operator SM Parvez.

Meanwhile, Hawa Bhaban was visited yesterday afternoon by a police team led by investigation officer (IO) of the case filed against arrested Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP Tarique Rahman in connection with extortion of Tk 1 crore.

Sources said intelligence officials grilling Tarique, who reportedly earned a large amount of money through unbridled corruption, wanted to know from him



about foreign bank accounts that he holds himself or through proxy. Tarique gave some information on such accounts, the sources added.

The interrogators also questioned him about lands he owns himself or through proxy. Besides,

the intelligence officials wanted to know from Tarique whether he has any investment in Malaysia.

The sources said investigators already started looking into the information divulged by Tarique, who had been sent to a four-day remand by a Dhaka court on Thursday in connection with the extortion case.

Owner of a construction firm, Amin Ahmed, who had been nominated as a BNP candidate from a Noakhali constituency for the cancelled January 22 election, filed the case against Tarique with Gulshan police station on Thursday.

Besides, Gulshan police also filed a general diary (GD) against Tarique the same day accusing that

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Hasina to spend time writing

UNB, Dhaka

As all political activities have been banned by the caretaker government, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina plans to spend her time writing.

"Now politics is banned...I will pass my time writing and complete my unfinished writings," she said while visiting the party's ailing President Member Zillur Rahman at Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute yesterday.

Zillur Rahman was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday with high blood sugar and kidney complications.

Hasina talked to the attending doctors and inquired about the condition of the ailing party leader.

She wished early recovery of Zillur Rahman and offered him a bouquet on his 79th birthday yesterday.

Awami League leaders Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Seim, Motia Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Dr Dipu Moni accompanied Hasina.

Obaidul Quader arrested, ex-Jamaat MP surrenders

Sramik Dal leader Kashem Chy, Tarique's aide Milton held

STAR REPORT

The joint forces arrested Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader, raiding another AL leader's house in the city's Khilgaon area early yesterday.

In Satkhira, former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam, who like Quader is among the 50 graft suspects listed recently by the government, surrendered to the joint forces yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, ex-state minister for education ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon has been sued for extortion, looting and assault. Three cases have been filed against him with the Cognisance Court in Chandpur in three days since March 6, court sources said.

In another development, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a Mercedes-Benz automobile of detained AL leader and former minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain from Suvastu

Tower at Panthapath yesterday, sources said.

Later, the luxury car was taken to Rab-2 office at Maghbazar.

Besides, the army-led crack forces arrested senior vice-president of Sramik Dal Abul Kashem Chowdhury and Bogra's Gabtoli municipal Chairman

Morshed Milton in separate raids at Gulshan in the capital yesterday.

Sources said Kashem is an influential trade union leader while Morshed was a close aide to Tarique Rahman, the detained senior joint secretary general of BNP.

Apart from those, 1,460 people

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Obaidul Quader



Gazi Nazrul Islam



The ongoing drastic demolition drive has compelled many of the owners to either change faulty design or demolish illegal portion of their buildings. Here one such structure in Tejgaon undergoes 'repair work' at the instructions of Rajuk.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON HASINA, KHALEDA

AL, BNP deny getting any official order restricting movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the BNP and Awami League (AL) yesterday denied reports that the government has restricted the movements of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

The same day some newspapers reported that the BNP chairperson and the AL president have been asked not to come out of their residences on security grounds.

According to home ministry sources, officials concerned have contacted the former prime ministers over phone to say they should confine themselves to their houses for security reasons.

However, no official order has been issued to that effect, they added. The 'directives' that came hard

on the heels of the government's March 8 ban on political activities indoors prompted Khaleda to cancel her meeting with women leaders at Hawa Bhaban Thursday evening, sources close to the immediate past premier said.

However, BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan told The Daily Star last night, "We did not receive any such directions. I didn't even hear anything like that though I met the chairperson on Thursday night."

Meanwhile, Sheikh Hasina went to BIRDEM Hospital last evening to visit her veteran party colleague Zillur Rahman.

When asked about the reported restriction on her movements, she said, "I haven't been informed of any

such restriction. If it was there, then how come I'm here at the hospital?"

"We did not get any government directives of that sort," a personal staff of the AL president told The Daily Star last night.

On January 26, the caretaker government issued Emergency Powers Rules 2007 banning political activities and provocative news in the media.

The BNP and AL chiefs still attended a few programmes and spoke in public on a number of occasions since then. As the government did not slap specific restrictions on in-house politics, different committees of the parties held meetings.

Against this backdrop, the government on Thursday came up with the blanket ban.

CNG FILLING STATIONS

Costly govt lands allocated at throwaway prices

STAR REPORT

Massive corruption, nepotism and malpractice marked the allocation of costly land to set up CNG filling stations during the rule of immediate past BNP-led alliance government.

The then minister for communications Nazmul Huda and state minister Salahuddin Ahmed who are now behind bars, distributed the government lands in the capital and suburbs at throwaway prices among the 'favourites' including a former state minister, a few former

lawmakers, and the relatives and henchmen of BNP leaders.

Although there was a selection committee comprising representatives from the communications ministry, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Dhaka Wasa, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and the office of the deputy commissioner of Dhaka for scrutinising the applications for plots, the committee hardly sat for a meeting, said a committee member.

The then communications minister and his deputy played the decisive role and made the plot

allocation keeping the committee members in the dark, the committee sources said.

The then estate officer of DCC Fazluzzoha was on the committee but he never attended any meeting of that committee, he told The Daily Star.

When asked why he did not attend any meeting, Zoha, who is now private secretary to DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, said, "I cannot remember, probably because no meeting of that committee was held."

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Bangla Bhai aide Khamaru arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai's close aide Mahtab Khamaru at a mosque near his house at Talgharia in Bagmara upazila after Juma prayers yesterday.

Rab men arrested Khamaru on November 27, 2005, but they had to release him following a ministerial diktat. Since then he was absconding. Khamaru, son of Hamirkutsa Union Parishad Chairman Muhammad Ali Khamaru, was wanted in several murder cases including those of Osman, Mukul and Dipankar, police said.

The killings took place during Bangla Bhai's Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) operations in 2004.

Khamaru was one of those who led the JMJB procession at Rajshahi on May 23, 2004. He addressed a rally in front of the law enforcers and threatened journalists for writing against Bangla Bhai.

Rejoinder and our reply

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a rejoinder sent to The Daily Star on a news item titled 'BNP chief, top leaders differ on mistakes' published on March 3 claimed that there had not been any difference of opinion between the party chief and the leaders on any organisational matter.

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Mohiuddin sent to Bandarban jail

Mahfuzur CCC administrator

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD and DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury was sent to Bandarban Jail from Chittagong central jail yesterday morning, sources said.

The mayor was arrested on Wednesday night on charges of indulging in corruption, irregularities and grabbing of both private and public land and properties.

His bail prayer was rejected and he was sent to jail when produced before a court here on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the government has appointed Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Mahfuzur Rahman the administrator of Chittagong City Corporation.

The LGRD ministry on Thursday directed Mahfuzur Rahman to continue his additional duty as CCC administrator until further order. He is likely to take over the charge tomorrow, according to UNB.

Members of the joint forces have started looking into allegations against the mayor and Awami League (AL) leader, and some CCC officials.

They have already seized records and files related to different CCC projects in which a wide range of corruption and irregularities was reported.

The seizure was made during a six-hour raid at the CCC building on Thursday. The joint forces searched different office rooms including that of Mohiuddin and picked up three CCC officials. They were later released after interrogation.

The raid followed intelligence agencies' investigations into corruption allegations against the mayor and some officials of the CCC.

A report on corrupt practices at

the CCC had already been sent to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Massive corruption and irregularities at the CCC started coming to light when the intelligence agencies interrogated two officials and two drivers of the CCC, and a fuel station owner.

The two officials-- Superintendent Engineer (Mechanical) Abul Hasnat and Transport Pool Officer 1 Joysen Barua -- were arrested by the joint forces on charges of pilferage of a huge quantity of fuel.

Mohiuddin topped the corrupt suspects' list the intelligence agencies made after their probe on the basis of sensational information given by the arrestee CCC officials.

The list included Mohiuddin's wife Hasina Mohiuddin, his son-in-law and CCC Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Salim, former chief executive officer Abdul Wahab, Chief Engineer Mokher Alam, Chief Conservancy Officer Saifuddin Ahmed Katebi, mayor's APS Shamsur, two nephews Mamun and Rubayet, some CCC ward commissioners and contractors.

The investigation revealed that Mohiuddin owned huge properties

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Mahila Dal in Bogra sued for staging protest rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Bogra police yesterday filed a case against several leaders of Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal, woman wing of BNP, under the State of Emergency Rules 2007, as they brought out a procession and held a rally in protest against the arrest of Tarique Rahman on Thursday.

A few leaders and activists of Mahila Dal, under the banner of Sacheton Bograbasi, took part in

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Five DU halls raided, 12 outsiders held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the law enforcement agencies raided five dormitories of Dhaka University (DU) at midnight last night and picked up 12 outsiders.

Helal Uddin, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said the law enforcers raided the halls to arrest outsiders and JCD leaders and activists who brought out a procession on the DU campus on

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