

# High-powered body formed for upgrading railway

Consulting firm recommends Dhaka-Ctg cord line

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government formed a six-member high-powered committee yesterday to recommend a package programme for upgrading the Bangladesh Railway.

The committee was formed at a meeting at the communication ministry, with Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin in the chair.

The committee headed by additional chief engineer (Mechanical) of Roads and Highways Department has been asked to submit its report within a month. The members of the committee are high officials from the railway, BRTC and the communications ministry.

They will find out ways to

improve the standard of passenger service and modernise the railway, and recommend the systems of implementing the plan. They will also find out the reasons behind the train accidents.

A consulting firm, engaged in carrying out feasibility study on installation of cord line by establishing double lines on Dhaka-Chittagong route, submitted its report before the meeting.

The consultants recommended setting up a new cord line to Chittagong from Dhaka via Fatulla-Laksam route, by setting up double line along the existing rails between Dhaka and Chittagong, at a cost of Tk 7,800 crore.

The distance of the Dhaka-Chittagong cord line will be 228 kilometres and it will take three

hours to travel between the capital and the port city.

The communication adviser said the government would consider the proposal for setting up the new line for upgrading the standard of passenger service of the railway.

"If the government takes the proposal as a positive one, a period of time would be needed to set up the new line," he told the meeting.

He urged the railway officers and employees to work with service attitude to restore the good image of railway through upgrading the passenger services for the sake of their own existence.

A number of communication experts, including eight former directors-general of Bangladesh Railway, also took part in the meeting.

## Kushtia journo held on charge of extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested a local journalist last night in an extortion case filed by a BNP cadre in 2005.

The arrested journalist is Shamsul Alam Swapan, Kushtia correspondent of the daily Amader Somoy.

According to sources, Sazzad Hossain, a second officer of Kushtia sadar police called Swapan to police station at about 7:30pm.

Police interrogated Swapan when he reached the police station about 8:00pm.

Police said Swapan is an accused in an extortion case filed by BNP cadre Ibrahim Ali, a close associate of former BNP lawmaker of Kushtia-2 Shahidul Islam with Bheramara Police Station. Three other journalists were also accused in this case.

Later, the two journalists except Swapan were granted bail from the High Court in July 23, 2005 in this case.

Police said they arrested Swapan as a warrant had been issued by a Magistrate Court in Kushtia.



PHOTO: STAR

Law enforcers examine necessary documents of motorcycle riders in different city points in a bid to curb mugging and other crimes. The picture was taken from Shahbagh intersection yesterday.

## India rejects greenhouse gas limits

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday said it would reject proposals to limit greenhouse gas emissions at a summit meeting of the world's leading economies next month because stricter limits would slow its booming economy.

"Legally mandated measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are likely to have significant adverse impacts on GDP growth of

developing countries, including India," environment ministry secretary Pradip Ghosh said.

"This in turn will have serious implications for our poverty alleviation programmes," he said. "Legal mandates on greenhouse gas mitigation in any form will impact our growth, and this is not the path we wish to pursue."

Summit host Germany has

called for a statement limiting worldwide temperature rise this century to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) and cuts to global greenhouse emissions to 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

But chances of a consensus seem remote with the United States rejecting the idea of mandatory emissions targets, as well as language calling for G8 nations to

raise energy efficiency.

Global debate on climate change has acquired a new urgency as the Kyoto Protocol, the only global agreement that sets specific targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, expires at the end of 2012.

Talks on renewing the deal are under way, with the next round scheduled to take place in Indonesia in December.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Laila Anjuman Banu speaks at a discussion titled 'Social awareness and state initiatives to ensure safe motherhood' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday to mark the International Safe Motherhood Day. On her left are Dr Firoz Mia, Ayesha Khanam, Samina Chowdhury and Dr Fauzia Moslem.

## Orientation of DU science, law faculties held

The orientation programme of science and law faculties of Dhaka University was held at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) yesterday, says a press release.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz attended the programme as the chief guest while Science Faculty Dean Prof Tajmeri SA Islam attended the programme as special guest.

In his speech, Prof Faiz asked the freshmen to develop themselves as honest, responsible and ideal citizens of the country.

"Students should also participate in debates, sports and cultural activities alongside concentrating on studies," said the DUVC.

"The nation and their parents have high hopes and expectations on the newly admitted students which they have to fulfill by following the right path," he added.

Director of Office of Student Counseling and Guidance Prof Hamida Akhter Begum chaired the programme while Student Adviser of Physics department Prof Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, Student Adviser of Chemistry department Prof Omar Ahmed, Student Adviser of Department of Applied Chemistry and Chemical Technology Prof Al Mostafa and Associate Professor Dalia Parveen of Law department also spoke.

Sayed Rezaur Rahman, deputy director of the Office of Student Counseling and Guidance, delivered the welcome address.

## 29 girls among 44 held from 2 city hotels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-four people, including 29 girls, were arrested from two hotels at Maghbazar in the city yesterday for their alleged involvement in anti-social activities.

Police said they raided Hotel Diamond and Hotel Rupali in the Maghbazar area at around 2:00pm and picked up 29 women and 15 men from the hotels. Later, police took them to the Ramna Police Station.

Police said the arrestees will be produced before the court today.

Sources said police have sealed

off 10 hotels in the city since May 20 on charges of sex trade.

Police continued raids on different city points to prevent such anti-social activities.

## Domestic help commits suicide in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A minor domestic help committed suicide at Khilgaon in the city on Sunday night.

The victim was identified as Shuma Akhter, 11, daughter of Mohammad Babul. She was working as a domestic help at the house of Kohinoor Begum at West Rampura.

Police said they recovered the body from the bathroom of the house at around 11:30pm and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Police quoting family members of Kohinoor said she (Kohinoor) scolded Shuma on the day as she was playing instead of doing her work.

Shuma went to the bathroom at night and hanged herself from the shower with a scarf, police added.

Later, the family members broke open the door of the bathroom and found the body.

An unnatural death case was filed with the Khilgaon Police Station yesterday.

## Obaidul's firm misses

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that there has been "no impropriety in the award of the Project to BON", and therefore the consortium would now move forward.

Against this backdrop, the consortium says that as per the IA the financial closing date is set on May 28 -- giving it seven and a half months time since the signing of the deal last year.

In order to shift this deadline, the IA's clause 18.1 needs to be amended and the BON would be given 15 months time, instead of seven and a half months.

Industry insiders are however highly skeptic about the BON's ability to carry out the project even if such a time extension is allowed. "Neither Orion, nor Belhasa have ever installed a power project. The lead bidder Steag is nowhere to be found. There is no confidence among any EPC contractors in the BON. There is too much uncertainty over the Consortium itself," said an industry insider.

The Belhasa previously proposed that the government take over Orion's share (only 16 per cent) and drive the project on. Belhasa guarantees implementation, said one of its executives to the power ministry in February.

Sources said that a lead sponsor contractor (in this case Steag) can take over shares with permission of the PDB. The contract does not give Belhasa the room to take over Orion's shares.

Obaidul Karim, who created the BON Consortium to bag power deals using his connections with the Hawa Bhaban, is wanted by the police in different

graft and criminal cases for swindling Tk 594 crore from the Oriental Bank.

The BON never actually gave the bid that was selected for this power project and it actually submitted its name as one of the two partners of a Japanese bidder Nisso Eiwi, which has the experience to qualify for building such a power plant. However Nisso disappeared from the scene in 2004 and Orion brought in another German company Steag showing it as the lead bidder. The name of the consortium remained BON -- representing Belhasa, Orion and Nisso -- though it should have been BOS.

The government initially rejected such a gross anomaly, but then under pressure from the Hawa Bhaban the government accepted and approved the bid in August 2005. Orion signed a series of contracts with the PDB and other authorities for the power project and signed the LLA, the final deal, on October 11 last year.

## Huge current nets, jatka worth Tk 71 crore seized

Bangladesh Navy Ship Shaheed Farid seized huge current nets and 'jatka' worth Tk 71 crore in different raids in the Hilsa breeding areas of the country recently, says an ISPR press release.

The current nets were 1,36,86,800 metres long. Navy personnel conducted raids near Himchar, Kodalpur, Jalalpur, Ibrahimpur, Alupur, Majherchor, Charbhairabi, and adjacent areas of coastal belt of Patuakhali, Borguna and Chandpur districts on May 20-26 as part of its 'Operation Jatka' campaign.

Later, the apprehended nets were burnt in presence of Commanding Officer of BNS Shaheed Farid Lt Cdr Humayun Kabir, local district fisheries officer and magistrate.



PHOTO: ISPR

BNS Shaheed Farid seized huge current nets and 'jatka' worth Tk 71 crore in different raids on the Hilsa breeding areas of the country recently.