

Dhaka, Yangon ink deal for direct road link

Bangladesh to bear cost of the road which may also connect Kunming in China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Myanmar yesterday inked a deal to construct a 25-kilometre road connecting the neighbours in efforts to boost trade and enhance people-to-people interaction.

The agreement that followed hectic negotiations over the years opens up a real possibility of a greater road network between Bangladesh and the South-East Asian countries including China, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Currently designed to start from 2 kms inside the border and then run over 23 kms through the Myanmar territory up to Bawlibazar, the road might stretch to Kunming province of China as part of a broader tripartite scheme.

Visiting Myanmar Minister for Construction Maj Gen Saw Tun and his Bangladesh counterpart Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin signed the documents at the conference room

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STAR GRAPHIC

Suicide blast near Pak Red Mosque kills 13

Hundreds of Islamists retake site

AFP, Islamabad

A suicide bomber blew himself up among a group of policemen during clashes at the Red Mosque in Pakistan's capital yesterday, killing at least 13 people, most of them police, officials said.

The blast came after hundreds of radical students occupied the mosque in the heart of Islamabad after its official government reopening, which followed an army operation earlier this month in which more than 100 people died.

Policemen's caps and shoes lay alongside body parts at the scene of the blast in one of the leafy city's busiest bazaars, where police were resting after firing tear gas at stone-throwing protesters, an AFP correspondent said.

"A man detonated explosives strapped to his body among two rows of Punjab police constabulary members who were there on duty because of the unrest at the Red Mosque," the security official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"At least 13 people have been

killed and many wounded. Most of the dead were policemen," he added.

Interior Secretary Kamal Shah, who gave a provisional death toll of 11, seven of whom he said were police, said: "The incident was linked to the Red Mosque situation."

"I saw bodies flying through the air, some were without legs and some were without arms. I put as many as I could into ambulances," policeman Mukhtar Ahmad told AFP.

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SYLHET GRENADE ATTACK

Charges against 4 to be framed tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Sylhet

The District and Sessions Judge's Court will frame charges tomorrow against the four accused of grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury on the premises of Hajrat Shahjalah's shrine on May 21, 2004.

The accused are outlawed Harkatul Jihad chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, his brother Mofizur Rahman alias Muhib and Huji operatives Delwar Hossain Ripon and Sharif Shahedul Alam alias Bipul. All the four are now in custody.

On July 12, the court shifted the date for charge framing to July 29 as the accused Mofizur Rahman

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Biman now has only 4 aircraft operating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the expiry of the lease of a DC10-30 aircraft, the number of running aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines has come down to four.

Leased in January 2000 for \$1.47 lakh per month, the DC10 is going to be sent back to its proprietor Pegasus Aviation as the leasing agreement expired on June 18, Biman sources said.

During the seven and a half years, Biman had to pay to Pegasus Aviation Tk 91.16 crore, which is much higher than the cost of a new DC10, they added.

According to the agreement, Biman will have to re-deliver the aircraft in the same condition when Biman obtained it and about \$4 million will be needed to bring it back to the previous condition, a Biman official wishing anonymity told The Daily Star yesterday.

A new DC10 costs about \$5 million, he said.

Saifur meets son at Dhaka jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former finance minister M Saifur Rahman along with four other family members met his detained son Naser Rahman at the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Jail officials said Saifur Rahman, Naser's uncle Rafiqul Islam, brother Kaiser Rahman, daughter Ambia Rahman and son Nabil Rahman came to the jail gate at 10:45am.

They had a 30-minute conversation with Naser at the office of Jail Superintendent Golam Haider. They left the jail premises at 11:15am.

Naser and his relatives became emotional during the meeting and Naser inquired about the other family members, the jail officials said, adding that they also discussed the cases filed against the

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POWER OF ATTORNEY

Dilly-dally in okaying Hasina's petition alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday again expressed her apprehension that she will be denied justice while the party's Acting President Zillur Rahman accused the caretaker government of delaying to approve the power of attorney for Hasina's lawyers to fight the case against her.

"I did not commit any crime. If I get justice I will be proven innocent as the case against me is politically motivated, false and baseless," Hasina's lawyer Anisul Haque, who met the AL chief in a special jail, quoted her as saying.

Zillur told journalists in his Gulshan residence in the capital

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Huge response for changing party constitution

Says Mannan Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said they are getting huge positive response from party councillors as well as from outside the party to their proposals to bring changes in party constitution.

Reiterating his earlier stance, he said they would complete all preparations for holding the party council to implement the reform proposals and announce its date with the consent of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"We are now mobilising support from the councillors and also from outside the party for our reform proposals, and we are getting huge positive response," Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters yesterday at his Gulshan residence in the capital.

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of a family residing at Adabar in the capital use a raft for transport yesterday as hundreds of people remain marooned there following heavy downpours for days.

Flood closes in on Dhaka

Major rivers near danger levels as situation in north-east districts worsens further

STAR REPORT

The capital is on the threshold of being flooded as the major rivers surrounding the city are rising fast with the possibility of approaching danger levels in two to three days.

The flood will only add insult to the injuries of the city residents, who have already been suffering due to waterlogging in low lying areas. The western zone of the city is bearing the brunt with severe situations at Dholaikhal and Pagla.

The flood situation in the north-eastern part of the country also deteriorated yesterday with water levels rising in major rivers including

the Jamuna and Padma, inundating many new areas.

Meanwhile, the army set up monitoring cells at its central and divisional headquarters to better coordinate the operations of rescue and rehabilitation of flood victims, which have been going on since July 23.

Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said the Turag River is likely to rise by 8cm at Mirpur in the capital, while the Buriganga is likely to rise by 14cm. The Balu at Demra is likely to rise by 12cm while Tongi Canal at Tongi is likely to rise by 9cm.

The Sitalakkhya River is likely to

rise by 12cm at Narayanganj. FFWC said yesterday apprehending that the rivers are likely to approach danger levels in the next two to three days.

The Brahmaputra-Jamuna also continued to rise at all points yesterday flowing 6cm, 60cm and 17cm above danger levels at Bahadurabad, Sirajganj and Aricha respectively posing a threat of inundation to the low lying areas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra and Jamalpur.

The Ganges-Padma also continued to rise at down stream points flowing 46cm and 23cm above

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