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Tata investment talks to resume next month

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The Bangladesh government and Indian conglomerate Tata are going to resume talks on a Tata investment proposal sometime in the first week of next month.

S Manzer Hossain, Tata project director in Bangladesh, yesterday met Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman to discuss issues pertinent to the talks. He also met Kamal Uddin Ahmed, executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI), to set the schedule and agenda of the negotiations.

The commerce adviser following his meeting with the Tata representative told journalists, "We'll definitely make sure that the country's interests are protected while we welcome foreign investments."

FULL STORY STAR BUSINESS B1

UN forms task force to tackle food crisis

AFP, Bern

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon yesterday ordered a top level task force to take on the global crisis caused by rising food prices and urged key producer nations to end export bans.

The UN chief said the immediate priority must be to "feed the hungry" and called for urgent funding for the World Food Programme.

Ban said after a meeting of the heads of 27 key international agencies that the new task force would be led by the UN's top humanitarian official, deputy under-secretary John Holmes.

Ban urged countries such as Brazil and Egypt to drop export restrictions on certain foods and commodities, saying they have reduced supplies and contributed to price hikes.

Argentina, Brazil, Vietnam, India and Egypt have all imposed limitations on the export of certain produce in order to ensure food security for their populations.

"Domestic policy measures that correct distortions and do not jeopardise the supply response need to be put in place, together with budget support measures and balance of payments support for the most affected countries," Ban said.

His calls were echoed by World Trade Organisation director general, Pascal Lamy, and the World Bank head Robert Zoellick, who were both at the conference.

"We urge countries not to use export bans. These controls encourage hoarding, drive up prices and hurt the poorest people around the world," Zoellick said.

He welcomed Ukraine's moves in lifting a restriction on wheat exports, noting that it resulted in an immediate lowering of prices.

Lamy described such restrictions on exports as "not good economic solutions" in the short-term.

"It's obvious that such measures would result in a further increase of prices," he told AFP.

One paradox of the food crisis is that many food exporters such as Brazil, who have been at the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bangladeshi shot dead on Sharsha border

Killing sparks BDR-BSF gunfight

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel and troops of the Border Security Force (BSF) of India traded bullets at Sharsha border of Benapole after BSF gunned down a Bangladeshi farmer yesterday.

Sources said the BSF killed Hafizur Rahman, 21, of Tangrali near Sharsha border around 11:00am while he was harvesting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



Child ragpickers try to salvage date-expired food items at a garbage dump in Halishpur in Chittagong yesterday. Joint forces destroyed the goods there a day before.



This photo taken through the gap between two segments of Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge at Postagola shows a boat plying the Buriganga. The steel plates covering the gap were stolen.

US envoy hopes polls to be held in time

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador James F Moriarty yesterday hoped that the planned elections in Bangladesh would be held in time.

"I have heard nothing to the contrary, and the government understands the need to move ahead with the preparation for it," the envoy told reporters after he called on Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the foreign ministry yesterday.

They were learnt to have

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Birth registration time may be extended for slow progress

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The government is thinking about extending the time for the universal birth registration programme for the third time as only 2.80 crore people received their birth certificates since July 3, 2006.

The programme was supposed to complete registering every one in Bangladesh by the end of this year.

Over 11 crore people are yet to receive their birth certificates and it is not possible for the government to reach and gather data of so many people by December this year, said sources in the LGRD ministry which deals with the birth registration programme.

Using the national ID cards as birth certificates for people aged above 18 would save at least Tk 146 crore of the government and would be less time consuming, they said adding that it would also be helpful for this group, 52 percent of the population. Apathy of the LGRD ministry makes the process of birth registration time consuming and expensive, they added.

The project was earlier scheduled to ensure birth registration for all by July this year. The government had to move the project-end date to December this year.

"The birth registration activities

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

ASSAULT AT ZIA Court Martial formed to try air force men

UNB, Dhaka

The authorities constituted General Court Martial, the highest court in Air Force law, to try its personnel responsible for the assault on Bangladeshi British national Barrister Rezwan at Zia International Airport on April 14.

The military court headed by a group captain will award tough punishment to the guilty persons "on charge of irregularities and breaking discipline," said an ISPR press release yesterday.

Immediately after the incident, the Air Force arrested the persons responsible and handed them over to the custody of law-enforcers

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Saifur's younger son sued for ill-gotten wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against Shafiqur Rahman Babu, younger son of former finance minister M Saifur Rahman, for amassing wealth beyond his known sources

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Poor farmers can't reap high Boro price

They are forced to sell at cheap rates to moneylenders

STAR REPORT

With Boro harvest having started across the country, marginal farmers in northern districts who borrowed money to meet high production cost are now forced to sell rice to moneylenders and hoarders at prices cheaper than the government rate.

While borrowing money, these small farmers had to sell a portion of their Boro harvest to the moneylenders and hoarders in advance. In some cases, part of the harvest is even considered as interest against their loans.

The government has set Tk 720 as the price for procuring a maund of Boro paddy but many farmers were found selling their harvest at as low as Tk 250 per maund in Pabna, Tk 500 in Gaibandha and Tk 650 in Rajshahi.

Experts say such sales could be prevented if farmers had adequate access to credits to buy agricultural inputs and the government had declared the cash or other subsidies beforehand.

The government expects the Boro harvest would cross the target of 1.75 crore tonne as more than targeted 45 lakh hectares of land was cultivated and the yield was good.

The marginal farmers in most places in Pabna borrowed money from moneylenders and were forced to sell their paddy even before harvesting, reports our correspondent Ahmed Humayun Tapu in Pabna.

Nabir Uddin Miah of Saikola village in Chatmohor upazila borrowed Tk 15,000 from a local moneylender and sold 50 maunds

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

CNG-run bus owners demand rise in fare

Issue 3-day ultimatum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) run bus owners yesterday issued a three-day ultimatum to the government to increase CNG-bus fares by 45 percent and threatened to go for tougher action if their demands are not met.

Despite the ultimatum however, some CNG-run bus owners are already charging passengers higher fares on different routes.

Leaders of the Association of Bus Companies (ABC), an organisation of CNG-run bus owners, and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials held a meeting in this regard at the BRTA

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing

April 30

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

বিআরটিএ'র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সিএনজি চালিত শীতাতপ নিয়ন্ত্রিত ট্যাক্সিক্যাবের (হলুদ) ভাড়া বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সিএনজি জ্বালানির মূল্য বৃদ্ধির প্রেক্ষিতে সরকার কর্তৃক সিএনজি চালিত রেয়াতি হারে আমদানিকৃত শীতাতপ নিয়ন্ত্রিত ট্যাক্সিক্যাবের (হলুদ) ভাড়া নিম্নোক্তভাবে পুনঃনির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে:-

ক্রমিক নং	বিষয়	পূর্বের হার	বর্তমান হার
১।	প্রথম দুই কিঃ মিঃ ভাড়া	২০.০০ টাকা	৪০.০০ টাকা
২।	পরবর্তী প্রতি কিঃ মিঃ ভাড়ার হার	৮.০০ টাকা, এক-চতুর্থাংশ কিঃ মিঃ বা অংশের জন্য ২ টাকা	১০.০০ টাকা, এক-চতুর্থাংশ কিঃ মিঃ বা অংশের জন্য ২.৫০ টাকা
৩।	বিরতিকালের জন্য ভাড়ার হার	প্রতি ২ (দুই) মিনিট ২.০০ টাকা	প্রতি ২ (দুই) মিনিট ২.৫০ টাকা
৪।	সর্বনিম্ন ভাড়া	২০.০০ টাকা	৪০.০০ টাকা

রেয়াতি হারে আমদানিকৃত সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল সিএনজি চালিত শীতাতপ নিয়ন্ত্রিত ট্যাক্সিক্যাবের (হলুদ) মালিক, অপারেটর ও চালককে আগামী ১৫ দিনের মধ্যে উল্লেখিত বর্তমান হার মিটারে পুনঃসংযোজন (ক্যালিব্রেশন) করে নিতে অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে। বর্তমান হার মিটারে পুনঃসংযোজন না হওয়া পর্যন্ত ট্যাক্সিক্যাবের ভিতরে যাত্রীদের সহজে দৃশ্যমান স্থানে উপরি-উক্ত হার প্রদর্শন করতে হবে।

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল মিটার সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে নতুন ভাড়ার হার আগামী ১৫ দিনের মধ্যে মিটারে সংযোজন করতে অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

পরিচালক (ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং)
বিআরটিএ

GD-2052

Dhaka-Kolkata train trip to take 2 hrs less in a few days

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train is going to take at least two hours less than what it takes now -- 13 hours -- within a few days.

Communications ministry officials in Dhaka hope to receive in a couple of days Delhi's consent to a proposal in this regard they sent to their Indian counterparts on Monday.

The proposal seeks to cut the time for customs and immigration formalities at Darsana and Gede stations by two hours from five hours now.

Officials of both the countries have informally agreed on the proposal and it will be implemented immediately after receipt of India's consent to it, sources said.

Bangladesh has also proposed a change in the present schedule of the train service that resumed on April 14 about 43 years after it was discontinued following India-Pakistan war in 1965.

A train -- Maitree Express -- now leaves Dhaka for Kolkata every Saturday and returns on Sunday, and another train leaves Kolkata every Saturday to go back on Sunday. As proposed now, the train leaving Dhaka on Saturday will return on Tuesday.

"Since many passengers have businesses to do in Kolkata that take at least a couple of days, they now have to wait a week to catch the train for Dhaka. They won't have to do so when the new proposal is implemented," a communications ministry official said.

The ministry has meantime asked immigration officials to report within seven days details about having a set-up at Cantonment station for both customs and immigration checking.

Under the present arrangement, Cantonment station is for boarding and customs checking of Kolkata-bound passengers who undergo immigration checking at Darsana.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

বিআরটিএ'র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সিএনজি চালিত ইকনোমি ট্যাক্সিক্যাবের (কালো/নীল) ভাড়া বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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পরিচালক (ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং)
বিআরটিএ

GD-2051