

## Train travel now risky

70pc tracks in bad shape; illegal level crossings, poor signalling system add to situation

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Dilapidated condition of over 2,000 km of the country's 2,835-km railway network and 675 unauthorised level crossings have made train journey quite risky.

Poor signalling system and shortage of efficient manpower also contribute to accidents that left 43 people killed and about 200 injured only in 29 days since April 16 this year.

"Not more than 25-30 percent of the total rail track is now in good condition, the rest is quite risky," a former director general (DG) of Bangladesh Railway (BR) told The Daily Star on Thursday.

BR Statistics shows 4,051 accidents causing deaths to 172 and injury to 1,208 took place from July 2001 to June 2007 with an average of 675 accidents every year. Thirty-two of the dead and 557 of the injured were railway employees. Nine people were killed in 111 accidents in the first three months of this year.

BR officials said only a few



A man runs across a guard- and gateless level crossing at West Munshibari of Jurain in the capital yesterday while a train approaches.

PHOTO: STAR

People's fate not leased out to any person or party: Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fate of the people is not leased out to any person or any political party, and the country is not anyone's family inheritance, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said yesterday.

He made the comment during a discussion meeting titled 'National dialogues, upcoming general election, and the will of the people' held in the Liberation War Museum in the capital, organised by Shommlito Shamajik Andolon (SSA), a citizens' platform.

"The fate of the people is not leased out to any person or any political party. The idea that nothing can be done without some specific persons' permission, is intolerable. The country does not belong to any party," Dr Kamal Hossain quipped.

He also said, "If somebody threatens to foil the election we the eight crore voters will make the election happen by casting our votes."

About public expectations regarding the ongoing dialogues between the military backed

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## Advisers have little time to visit rural areas, oversee dev activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the caretaker government has been busy negotiating with political parties since early April, most of its advisers seem to have little time to visit places outside the capital, although a decision was taken earlier to boost development activities countrywide.

Another late last year decision for accelerating administrative activities in rural areas also seems to be far from being implemented anytime soon, as the ongoing politico-electoral negotiation is expected to prolong till the end of next month.

The government took the decisions in a bid to identify region based problems, and to generate employment opportunities following the back-to-back floods and cyclone Sidr of last year.

Members of the 10-person council of advisers to the military backed caretaker government were then asked to visit different districts to identify the existing problems, and to come up with prag-

matic recommendations for solutions.

The weekly meeting of the council was also shifted to Sunday from Saturday to provide the advisers with an opportunity to find time for travelling, capitalising on the two-day weekends.

"Nowadays most advisers have little time to go outside Dhaka," said a top LGRD ministry official.

He said Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, who is in charge of three ministries -- LGRD and cooperatives, jute, and labour -- has been giving more time to the dialogues since early April, when a panel of advisers including himself started 'informal' talks with the political parties to prepare ground for the ongoing 'official' talks.

"He used to visit places outside the capital whenever he got time," the official told The Daily Star, adding that Anwarul Iqbal visited Sirajganj on May 16.

The four other advisers in the government delegation to the dialogues -- Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur

Rahman, Communications and Housing Adviser Ghulam Quader, Law, Land and Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hassan Ariff, and Foreign and Expatriates' Welfare Adviser Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury -- also have very little time to go outside the capital.

Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin went to Rajshahi on May 17 to attend a divisional conference on law and order, while Finance and Planning Adviser Dr ABM Azizul Islam, and Food and Disaster Management Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali have not been seen visiting places outside the capital very regularly.

Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury, whose portfolio includes the ministries of primary and mass education, women and children, and cultural affairs, returned from the US recently after a 13-day personal tour.

"She will soon make plans for visiting places outside Dhaka," said an official of the women and children affairs ministry.

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## BARAPUKURIA DEAL

## Altaf, Mosharraf interrogated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) officials yesterday questioned two more detained former ministers at Dhaka Central Jail gate in connection with the Barapukuria coalmine deal to Chinese company CMC.

Former commerce minister air vice-marshal (retd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was brought to Dhaka from Narayanganj jail around 11:00am and questioned for over an hour in presence of his lawyer. He was sent back in the evening.

After the questioning of Altaf, an ACC team led by Deputy Director (DD) Munirul Haq, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case,

interrogated former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain for an hour from 12:15pm. He was brought to Dhaka from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur and sent back in the afternoon.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique said, "During the interrogation, the lawyer of Altaf was present and Altaf was allowed to consult with his attorney before the interrogation."

"Mosharraf's lawyer, however, was not present during the interrogation," the DIG-Prisons said.

On May 27, the ACC interrogated four former ministers Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Jarhaat-e-Islami

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## People won't accept phony dialogue, rigged election

Says Khandaker Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding release of all detained political leaders including two former prime ministers, pro-Khaleda BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said the people will not accept any 'pre-scripted dialogue and rigged election' in the country.

Urging his party leaders and activists to be united, he said BNP will announce agitation programmes if necessary, and the activists should be ready to implement those to realise their demands.

"There is no alternative to an election, and the people will not

accept if anyone devises an alternative," he said at a discussion meeting held in the Engineers' Institution auditorium in the capital organised by BNP, marking the 27th death anniversary of its founder also a president of the country, Ziaur Rahman.

He also said, "A conspiracy is being hatched to hold an election keeping BNP at bay, but we will not participate in any rigged election."

Putting out a call to an undefined quarter close to the caretaker government, he said, "The practice of being in politics and in government services at the same time is

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## No Tendulkar, Dravid or Ganguly

AFP, Mumbai

India yesterday named uncapped pair Yusuf Pathan and Pragnan Ojha in a 15-man squad for a one-day tri-series in Bangladesh and the Asia Cup in Pakistan next month.

Pathan, 25, the elder brother of left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan, is a hard-hitting batsman and off-spinner who was part of India's World Cup winning Twenty-20 squad in South Africa in September.

Ojha, a 21-year-old from Hyderabad, is widely regarded as the country's best young left-arm spinner and forced his way into the national squad after a successful domestic season.

Pathan replaces star batsman

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## Malaysia tightens visa rule for Bangladeshis

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia is introducing new visa rules for Bangladeshi and Indian tourists in an effort to curb illegal immigration, The New Straits Times reported yesterday.

Visitors from the two countries will have to obtain a two-week pass and a return ticket before they can enter Malaysia, the report said, quoting Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar.

"The social visit pass replaces the visas-on-arrival (VOA), which was discontinued in April," Syed Hamid said, adding the social visit pass must be

obtained in advance from the tourists' home country.

Malaysia first introduced the visa-friendly programme, allowing visitors from 24 countries to stay for one month when they arrived, in 2006 to boost its tourism industry.

But immigration officials last year called for the programme to be scrapped after many visitors were found to have overstayed.

Media reports have said that most of the overstayers are Indians who remained in Malaysia to work in restaurants and on plantations.

## Pro-Saifur men declare Ilyas 'unwanted'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The pro-Saifur faction of Sylhet unit BNP yesterday declared the party's new district convener M Ilyas Ali persona non grata (unwanted), inviting sharp retorts from the other group.

Rejecting the Ilyas-led convening committee, they said the move is an attempt to destroy the party.

Pro-Ilyas faction, meantime, said the role of the other group led to the damage to the party after 1/11.

The two factions trotted out the denunciations of each other in separate meetings held to commemorate the 27th death anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, the party's founder.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain Thursday reconstituted the Sylhet

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