

METRO RAIL NOT VIABLE OPTION

Expand railway network to every corner of country

Speakers say at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said the underground rail system would not be an effective option to reduce transport crisis for people, rather it would shoulder the government the burden of giving subsidy in this sector every year.

Citing examples of underground rail system introduced by developed countries like those in Europe and even in neighbouring India, they said each government has to give subsidy per passenger in the system.

"I wonder whether metro rail would be either a viable alternative or affordable for people as in India per passenger subsidy in the underground rail system stands at 3,900 rupees every year," said Prof Dr M Anwar Hossain, vice chancellor of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology.

"I fear mass people would not be able to have an underground rail ride while the trains will remain fallen unused if it is

introduced," he added. Titled 'Significance and task of rail in developing economy and communication,' the roundtable was jointly organised by Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Save the Environment Movement) and WBB Trust at the National Press Club in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper, WBB Trust Programme Manager Sayed Mahbubul Alam said though government gave Tk 209 crore subsidy in addition to paying foreign loan in 2006 in railway, it is planning to install two underground rail system spending Tk 23,000 crore and Tk 6240 crore only to benefit some people in the capital 20 years' after.

Speakers underscored the need for bringing every corner of the country under railway networking, developing existing railway facilities and making the facilities available to mass people at first as railway is a poor-friendly transport.

They mentioned political economy and geo-economy as

the factors behind non-development and destruction of railway sector in Bangladesh since independence with numerous highways being constructed and car business booming apace.

Rail is the most viable mode of transport than others with regard to energy consumption, pollution, climate change, goods transportation, accidents and loss of lives by transports, use of land and reducing pressure of inhabitants from the metropolis, they added.

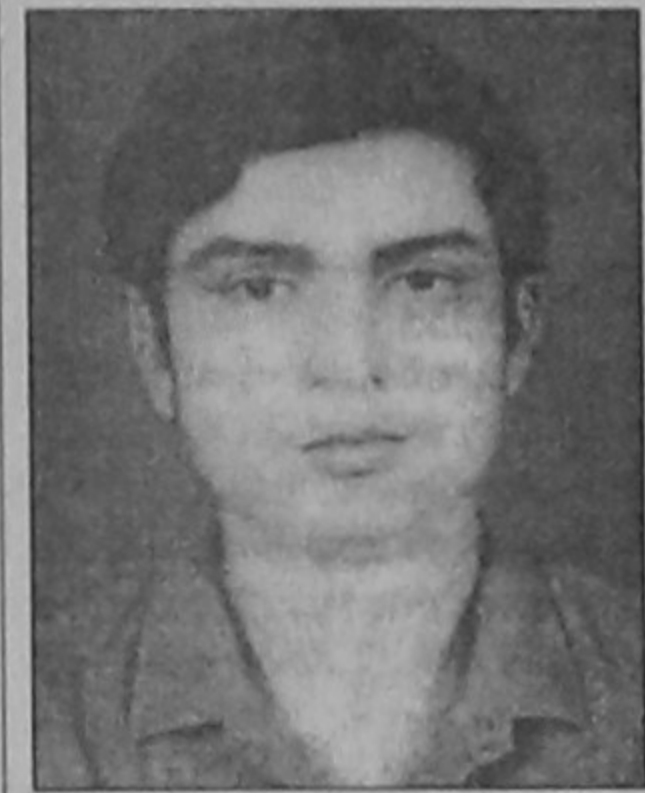
Prof MM Akash said, "Bangladesh has the chance to uplift its economy through railway communication as it is more cost-effective than any other modes of transport for mass people."

Noted economist Prof Anu Mohammad said, "If we take the factor of economic cost benefit into consideration regarding railway, road cannot be an alternative to railway. We must establish a rail communication throughout the country."

Moderated by Prof Khan

Sarwar Murshid, the roundtable was also addressed by Prof Rukhsana Hafiz, BLAST Director (admin) Ahmed Nasir Uddin Mahmud, Paribesh Bachao Andolon Chairman Abu Naser Khan and Bangladesh Railway Sramik League President Humayun Kabir.

Speakers repeatedly underlined the importance of establishing a separate ministry for railway.



Dr Milton Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the Shaheed Dr Milton Day.

On this day in 1990, Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milton, the then joint secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, was shot dead on his way to a meeting against autocratic ruler HM Ershad.

Different organisations have chalked out different programmes to observe the day. The programmes include holding discussions, do a mahfil, placing wreaths and offering feteha at Dr Milton's grave on the premises of Dhaka Medical College and at Dr Milton Memorial in front of the TSC on Dhaka University campus, where he was shot dead.

Awami League (AL) will place wreaths and offer feteha at the grave and at the memorial at 8:00am, says a press release of the party.

AL President Sheikh Hasina in a message said criminals killed Dr Milton during the anti-autocracy movement, his murder geared the movement into a mass movement and thus democracy was freed.

She said the dream Dr Milton dreamt is yet to be implemented, real democracy, rule of law and voting rights of people is yet to be established.

The AL chief urged the people to form tough unity to restore democracy in the country.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) will place wreaths at the grave and at the memorial at 8:00am.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Muzahidul Islam Selim in a statement said Dr Milton's dream of democracy has not yet established in the country. Rather, we are seeing ties with autocrat and war criminals to ascend to power.

JSD-Chhatra League will also place wreaths at the grave and the memorial in the morning and hold a discussion marking the day at the TSC road island.

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A father has sought financial assistance for the treatment of his 15-year-old son, who is suffering from thalassemia, a severe blood disorder, says a press release.

The boy, Animesh Kundu, who hails from Goadanga in Ashashuni, Satkhira, has been suffering from this disease since his birth. According to doctors, he needs to undergo bone marrow transplant immediately, which involves about Tk 15 lakh.

His father Jagadish Chandra Kundu has already spent all his savings on the treatment of his son. Now it is no longer possible for him to manage such a huge amount.

He has appealed to generous people and philanthropic organisations to extend a helping hand to save the life of his only son.

Contributions can be sent to Savings A/C No. 11944, Janata Bank, Ashashuni branch, Satkhira. Interested persons can also call at 01739004615 to contact his family for further information.



Dhaka College students stage a demonstration on the Mirpur Road in the city yesterday demanding steps to turn the college into a full-fledged university.

Credible elections indicator of democracy

Stefan Frowein tells AmCham meet

UNB, Dhaka

EC Ambassador Stefan Frowein yesterday said Bangladesh will get business opportunities from the European Union, the United States and other markets and emerge as a middle-income country only if there be a switchover to genuine coalition of sustainable democracy, good governance, the rule of law and commercial dynamism.

"The successful holding of credible elections is only one indicator of health of democracy in a given country," he said while giving a talk on 'Election, Democracy and Development' at AmCham monthly luncheon meeting at Hotel Sheraton.

Frowein said he stresses "successful" and "credible" as the world is only too used to witnessing deeply flawed and rigged elections that are mere vehicles for rubberstamping the rule of despots.

He noted the situation in Bangladesh is somewhat different - and complex one. On the one hand, the authorities have developed an electoral system that includes voter list with photographs and constituencies, which better reflect the distribution of votes.

On the other hand, the ambassador said, political system has for many years endured a culture of confrontation where responsible cooperation in a parliament has appeared elusive.

This impacts the social and business climate of the country, he said.

"We can draw one conclusion immediately: It is not only undemocratic states that struggle to maximise their development potential. Dysfunctional and unstable democracies lose out too by frightening off potential investors and undermining the cultivation of trade links that are essential for survival in a globalised world," he noted.

The European envoy, however, observed that the story of Bangladesh in recent years have not been all doom and gloom. The country has sustained a credible GDP growth rate, millions of new jobs have been created in

RMG sector and new job opportunity is being created in emerging shipping sector.

Endeavours of the interim government in the past two years to foster a more congenial business environment through initiatives such as Better Business Forum, the Truth Commission, the Regulatory Reform Commission and reform of Chittagong Port must be recognised, he told his business audience.

Frowein said all the efforts of the caretaker authorities have been underpinned by one simple commitment that the country will return to democracy through parliament elections in December.

He said deployment of the EU election observers to monitor the polls is a reflection of the EU's commitment to a strong, stable and democratic Bangladesh.

The ambassador said the European Commission would continue to furnish substantial funds for development of Bangladesh with at least 50 million euros annually.

He said Bangladesh would remain the foremost recipient of EC trade-related technical assistance in Asia with an average of 10 million euros per year to tackle the issues like diversification of export products and fulfillment of quality and labour standards.

Frowein said the institutional and good-governance reforms achieved by the interim administration is a task that now falls to an incoming elected government.

AmCham President Syed Ershad Ahmed presided over the luncheon meeting attended by diplomats and business leaders.

2 killed in crossfire with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A listed criminal and one of his accomplices were killed in crossfire during a gunfight between the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his cohorts at Shanir Akhara in the city early yesterday.

The dead were identified as Rosen, the leader of Rosen group, and Atiqur Rahman Bidyut, 32.

Rosen, son of Imdadul Huq of Paterbagh in Dakkhin Dania, was an accused in several cases, including murder and extortion. Bidyut was also an accused in various cases.

Rab-10 officials said a Rab team conducted a raid on Shanir Akhara at about 4:30am after receiving a tip-off that Rosen and his accomplices gathered under a bridge to plan criminal activities.

As the team reached the area, the criminals opened fire, prompting the Rab members to fire back,

resulting in a 20-minute gunfight, said a Rab official. Rosen and Bidyut were killed in the crossfire but others managed to escape, he added.

Later, Rab members recovered two foreign-made revolvers and two rounds of bullet from the spot.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. Jatrabari and Sutrapur police said Rosen had been engaged in extortion and targeted businessmen and traders in the areas.

On October 28, Rosen group members shot dead an employee of Ilish Paribahan and injured two others at the transport company office in the city as the company authorities did not pay them Tk 10 lakh in extortion.

Bidyut's brother Tutul claimed that Rab men picked up Bidyut from their Tejgunipara house on Tuesday night and later they found him dead.

'Recover playgrounds, children parks'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Khilgaon Samajik Sangstha yesterday demanded steps to recover all the playgrounds and children parks in the city, including playground and open space of Khilgaon Pallima Sangsad from encroachment.

The leaders of the organisations also demanded necessary steps to bring the beautiful look of Khilgaon as a residential area as per the 1960 master plan of the city.

They said this at a rally at Khilgaon Pallima Sangsad in the city with Khilgaon Samajik Sangstha President Monir Hossain Khan in the chair.

Zakaria Pintu of Swadhin Bangla Football Dal spoke at the programme as the chief guest.

The speakers said Khilgaon has lost its proper look due to encroachment of open spaces, playgrounds and children parks, adding that the city is now in near uninhabitable stage due to the unplanned urbanisation.

The rivers and water bodies in and around the city are being polluted day by day and the scopes of play and entertainment for the children have been reducing continuously, they added.

Bapa Joint Secretary Sharif

Zamil, General Secretary of the Sangstha Md Hafizur Rahman Moina, former whip Abu Sayed Khan, ex-lawmaker Shamim Mishir, ex-director of AnsarVDP

Memorial complex being built to pay tribute to Nazrul

Says DU VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

The initiative to build a memorial complex on the premises of the grave of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam has been taken to pay tribute to the poet, not to undermine him, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz told reporters yesterday.

The construction work has begun following a decision taken by a high-level committee, which also approved the design of the 'Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam Smriti Complex', he added.

But a certain quarter is trying to create confusion over the construction of the complex.

Being influenced by the confusion, leaders and activists of Nazrul Academy yesterday formed a human chain in front of the grave and demanded a halt to the construction work.

conspiracy to undermine the poet and that the grave would be destroyed in the name of the renovation.

Refuting the allegations, Prof SMA Faiz said the grave would not be destroyed during the construction work.

The complex is being built on the space between DU central mosque and the faculty of fine arts. It would contain the graves of poet Nazrul Islam, martyr of language movement Barkat, eminent artists Zainul Abedin and Kamrul Hasan and former VCs Prof Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury and Prof Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

Project Manager Nurul Islam Akash of Viti Shapathi Ltd told reporters that there are a total of six graves at the site and they will remain intact during the renovation.

He also said that the company is constructing the complex for the purpose of beautification.

27TH BCS EXAMS

Removal of PSC chairman demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

Agitating candidates of the 27th BCS examinations yesterday demanded their immediate appointment and removal of Public Service Commission (PSC) Chairman Dr Saadat Hussain, accusing that he is involved in the conspiracy to exclude them from the civil service.

They also burnt an effigy of the PSC chairman during a protest at the Central Shaheed Minar.

These candidates passed the exams at first but were dropped from the list of successful candidates as per the 2nd phase results. They had been demonstrating on the Dhaka University (DU) campus since September demanding their immediate appointment.

Several hundred candidates yesterday joined the protest and also took out a procession in the afternoon.

Later at a rally, they alleged that Dr Saadat is still trying to exclude them from the process of appointment, ignoring their demands.

They vowed that they would launch a tough movement if their appointment is not finalised soon and Dr Saadat is not removed from the post of PSC chairman.

The candidates had started a fast-unto-death programme on November 1 but called off the programme on November 20 following assurance that the government is considering three options to appoint them.

Obituary

Gazi Abdul Matin, former BCIC secretary and adviser of Scancem Bangladesh, passed away on November 24 at the age of 75, says a press release.

Relatives and colleagues are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Hemayet Ali Chowdhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hemayet Ali Chowdhury, owner of Car Land and son of business man late Halim Chowdhury, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his residence at Paltan in the city yesterday at the age of 51, says a press release.

He was rushed to Islami Bank Central Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the Naya Paltan Jame Mosque after Johr prayers yesterday.

He left behind his wife, mother, one son and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He will be laid to rest at his village home Gangashipur in Laxmipur today.

His Quikhwani will be held at his Nayapaltan residence in the city after Asr prayers on Saturday.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 37th death anniversary of martyred freedom fighters Golan Rashid Bakul and Mohammed Abu Sayem, says a press release.

Bholob Shaheed Smriti High School will organise a memorial meeting and a prayer session at the school auditorium at 11:00am to observe the day.

Bakul embraced martyrdom during the frontal war with the Pakistani army on this day in 1971 at his village Rupshi at Ruppangj of Narayanganj while Sayem of village Bholob embraced martyrdom the same day in another frontal war with the occupation forces in the river Shitalakkha.

Amirun Nesa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 25th death anniversary of Amirun Nesa, the first woman president of Muslim League, Dhaka district unit and wife of the former MLA late Khan Shaheb M Osman Ali of the then undivided Bengal, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at her Baitul Aman residence at Chashara, Naryanganj after Johr prayers.

THAI VIOLENCE Advice to Bangladeshis

UNB, Dhaka

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday cautioned that Bangladeshis traveling to Thailand should exercise "extreme caution" because of the ongoing disturbances in that country.

"In case of any emergency, the Bangladeshi nationals should contact the Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok at House No. 727 Sukhumvit Soi 55 (Thong Lo), Bangkok 10110 phone 02-185-1340 and 02-185-1341," said a release from the foreign ministry.

The Thai army chief intervened and called fresh elections as anti-government protesters took control of the capital of the country yesterday.

Depression turns into cyclone Nisha

UNB, Dhaka

The deep depression over southwest Bay off Tamil Nadu coast of India intensified into a cyclone codenamed "Nisha", barely ten days after its predecessor "Khai Muk" had died down while crossing the coast.

"It was centered about 1865-km west-southwest of Chittagong port, 1815-km west-southwest of Cox's Bazar port and 1705-km southwest of Mongla Port at noon yesterday," said a special bulletin of the Met Office.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 54-km of the storm centre is about 62 kph, rising to 80 kph in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain rough.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant warning signal number two.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay have been advised to remain close to the coast and proceed with caution until further notice. They are also advised not to venture into the deep sea.

Ensure best use of available manpower IT expert urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IT expert in the US Dr Mashiur Rahman said Bangladesh should ensure the best use of its available manpower for the country's socio-economic development.

The Bangladeshi scientist, who was awarded with the Lead Inventor Award 2007 and '08 for his contribution to the US IT sector, said this while giving an interview with the ANA, a US-based Bangla news agency.

The current worldwide economic recession will not affect the country if it can utilise its manpower, he added.

Mashiur called for a unity among political parties who will contest the upcoming general elections to reach a consensus on the national interests. He called on the parties to refrain from calling any strikes and hartals.

He suggested making the

youth of the country capable enough to get jobs in the developed countries to reduce unemployment problem.

Mashiur is now working for AT&T Laboratory as the principal research scientist.

The next elected government will face three challenges -- food security, reduction of unemployment and social safety, he added. Hailing from Sharsha upazila in Jessore, Dr Mashiur passed his HSC examination from Jhenidah Cadet College in 1974 and went to the US in 1982. After finishing his higher studies, he served the laboratory since 1987.

LEGAL NOTICE ON GOVT 'Procure rescue equipment for earthquake'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) yesterday sent a legal notice asking the government to procure enough rescue equipment, which will be required in the event of any earthquakes.

The legal notice was served on the home, finance and disaster management secretaries and the director general and the director of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Advocate Manzil Murshid sent the legal notice on behalf of HRPB.

In the notice, the organisation requested the respondents to take immediate steps to collect the equipment and confirm the same within three days of the receipt of the notice.

HRPB also warned that legal action would be taken if the authorities fail to collect rescue equipment.

In the legal notice, the HRPB said that several newspapers recently carried reports that a major part of Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, lies in the earthquake-prone zone, but enough rescue equipment are not available in our country.

If any earthquake of high intensity hits the country, many people could die and become disabled in the absence of proper rescue equipment, it added.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 30.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 12.4 degrees Celsius at Srimangol.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:10pm today and rises at 6:23am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.6	16.3	60	70
Chittagong	30.0	17.3	85	74
Rajshahi	27.8	15.6	85	76
Khulna	27.5	16.8	81	—
Barisal	28.9	15.7	90	86
Sylhet	28.8	16.5	62	70
Cox's Bazar	29.8	17.3	71	81

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar on financial crisis

North South University and the World Bank jointly organise a seminar on global financial crisis and its impact on Bangladesh. Venue: NSU campus, Banani. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Northern University Bangladesh organises a discussion on 'One year of independence of judiciary: Expectations and achievements'. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Workshop

Bangladesh Bank organises a workshop for economic reporters of media outlets on banking issues. Venue: Bangladesh Bank Training Academy. Time: 9:00am.

Seminar

Citibank NA Bangladesh organises a seminar on Bangladesh economy, prospect and challenges. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 10:00am.

Dialogue

Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity organises a dialogue on implementation of rights of women with disabilities. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.