

'Projects taken to modernise railway'

Deal With Chinese Co to buy 50 Flat Wagons, 5 Brake Vans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday said the government has taken up a number of programmes for modernisation and development of the railway sector.

Several procurement projects involving about Tk 1700 crore are being implemented and that the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne)

has already approved Tk 1500 crore development projects for the railway sector, he said.

He also said the construction of the rail line linking Chittagong with Gurdum in Myanmar via Cox's Bazar will begin soon.

The minister said this at a ceremony for signing an agreement with a Chinese company for purchasing 50 flat wagons and five brake vans at the Railway Bhavan in the city.

TA Chowdhury, additional deputy director of Bangladesh Railway, and Manager of Chinese shipbuilding company Apshara International Yu Jian signed the deal on behalf of the respective countries.

The railway authority would receive the flat wagons and brake vans worth Tk 32.72 crore within a year. The earnings of the railway will increase by 2.1 percent after the wagons are put into operation.

BCL demands Ducusu polls

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday staged demonstration on Dhaka University (DU) campus demanding Ducusu election and resolving accommodation crisis.

In support of their demand, around 1000 BCL leaders and activists brought out a procession and held a rally at noon.

Addressing the rally, the BCL leaders also urged the government to allocate more funds for DU to resolve its transport problems and ensure quality food in canteens of the dormitories.

"We demand that the university authorities take steps to hold Ducusu election soon and the government allocates more funds to resolve our accommodation problems," said BCL DU unit General Secretary Sajjad Saqib Badsha while talking to The Daily Star.

BCL DU unit President Sohel Rana Tipu urged the university administration to take steps to recover occupied university lands and build more halls to resolve the accommodation crisis.

He also demanded access to Internet for all DU students and modernisation of DU Central Library.

The leaders said general people blamed the BCL men for seat politics at halls.

But the real scenario is that the hall authorities are unable to allot seats for the huge number of students, they said urging the student leaders to manage seats for general students.

Expressing solidarity with the demands, BCL central unit President Mahmud Hasan Ripon and General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Chowdhury Ratan also spoke at the rally.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over the cabinet meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PM may defer visit to US, Canada

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's scheduled visit to Canada and the United States may be deferred, officials in the foreign ministry said yesterday.

Hasina was scheduled to leave Dhaka for Canada via London on May 10, on her second trip abroad after becoming PM.

A senior official in the foreign ministry told UNB that sickness of the Prime Minister's husband, Dr Wajed Miah, is one of the reasons for deferring her visits.

Besides, some appointments with the prime minister in Canada and Washington were not finalised.



PHOTO: STAR

US Ambassador James F Moriarty exchanges views with senior journalists of the Prothom Alo during his visit to the newspaper's office at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday.

Bullet-hit body identified as officer of DC's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man who was gunned down in the city's Malibagh area on Sunday was an administrative officer of Dhaka Divisional Commissioner's office at Segunbagicha.

Identified as Aminul Haque Khadem, the victim was a resident of Uttar Bashabo at Sabujbagh in the city who hailed from Akhaura in Brahmanbaria.

His family members alleged that he was killed over rivalry concerning the committee of a shrine at Kharampur at Akhaura in the district.

Shaheen Ahmed Khan told The Daily Star that he had been holding the post of the shrine for the last ten years, which a group of people did not like.

He said the election of the shrine committee was supposed to be held within the next few weeks and rivals might have killed him fearing defeat in the election for the post of secretary.

He added a few years back three people were killed at a bomb explosion in the shrine during the yearly gathering of the devotees.

However, Sub-inspector Kabir Hossain Hawlader of Motijheel Police Station, who is also the investigation officer of the case, said they were investigating into the incident to find out whether the rivals in the shrine or enemies in Dhaka are behind the killing.

Bangladesh achieves progress in different sectors

Moriarty tells journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador James F Moriarty yesterday said Bangladesh has achieved progress in different sectors in the last one year.

He also hoped that the country would attain more achievements in the future.

The US ambassador said this at a view exchange meeting with senior journalists of the Prothom Alo during his visit to the newspaper's office at Karwan Bazar in the city.

He also spoke of various issues, including Bangladesh-US bilateral trade relation, impacts of global economic recession, situation in South Asia and militancy and terrorism. Later, he visited different sections of the Prothom Alo office.

At the meeting, Moriarty said when he arrived in Bangladesh a year ago, he saw the country undergoing a transition to democracy. There were confusion and doubts

over the country's future, but the caretaker government managed to hold a free, fair and neutral election after preparing a modern voter list, which helped restore democracy, he said and congratulated the caretaker government, media, political parties and democracy-loving people.

It is a hopeful sign that the economy of Bangladesh still remains in a stable position despite the global economic meltdown, the US envoy said.

At the beginning of the meeting, Prothom Alo Editor Matur Rahman described the progress of the newspaper since its inception and its socio-economic activities.

Political and economic counsellor at the US Embassy Jon Danilowicz, information officer Harvey Sernovitz, head of press section Marina Yasmin, Joint Editor of Prothom Alo Abdul Quayum and Deputy Editors Sajjad Sharif and Anisul Haque were present at the meeting.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants of a workshop on "Using internet tools for e-learning and teaching" pose for photograph at the computer lab of Presidency University in the city yesterday.

Workshop on using internet tools for e-learning

METRO DESK

A day-long workshop on "Using internet tools for e-learning and teaching" was held at the computer lab of Presidency University in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Bangladesh Language Teachers' Association (BELTA) organised the workshop.

The participants were English language teachers from different schools, colleges and universities. The facilitator was George Chinnery, currently a US Embassy Senior English Language Fellow at the Commissionerate, College Education, Jaipur, India.

The interactive presentations on technology and language learning focused on a wide variety of productive tools and used today for teaching and learning English on the internet.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:29pm today and rises at 5:21am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.6 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 19.9 degrees Celsius at Sayedpur.

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	34.9	22.2	62	40
Chittagong	31.6	22.0	70	69
Rajshahi	34.5	21.0	75	52
Khulna	35.2	22.5	75	54
Barisal	34.5	20.8	74	70
Sylhet	33.3	23.8	64	58
Cox's Bazar	33.2	23.2	69	--

DHAKA TODAY

Workshop

Waste Concern and Department of Environment jointly organise a workshop on "RETA6361: Draft policy on hazardous waste management". Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

DCCI and Canada-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry jointly organise a seminar on "Trade and investment - Canada-Bangladesh initiatives". Venue: DCCI auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar on swine influenza

Bangladesh Society of Medical Microbiologists organises a seminar on Swine influenza virus. Venue: Dr Milon Hall, BSMU. Time: 12:00am.

Maintain chain of command

BDR chief asks jawans

UNB, Dhaka

Director General of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Maj General Mainul Islam yesterday directed its jawans to perform their duties maintaining the chain of command.

The instructions were given while the new chief of the battered border force was visiting different BDR battalion headquarters at Naikhangchhari in Bandarban and Sadar and Teknaf battalions in Cox's Bazar.

When contacted over cellphone yesterday evening, the DG told UNB that during his visit to battalions, jawans sought fair justice in the

Pilkhana carnage.

Replying to the sepoys, Gen Mainul said precondition to getting justice is to disclose the facts about the mutiny that had spread from the headquarters to different units across the country.

The DG quoted the BDR personnel as assuring him that they would remain strict in performing their duties and send back any illegal trespasser across the border.

Replying to a question about reorganisation of the border force he said, "Work is in progress to reform the BDR."

UNB Bandarban Correspondent adds: Maj Gen Mainul Islam urged BDR

jawans to carry out their duties with more sincerity.

"Punitive action will be taken if anyone breaks discipline," he said while visiting the Battalion headquarters at Naikhangchhari.

He assured them that no one would be harassed in connection with the Pilkhana tragedy.

Regional Commander of Bandarban Brig Gen Mahfuzur Rahman, BDR Chittagong Sector Commander Col Didarul Alam and BDR Naikhangchhari Battalion Commander Lt Col Abu Nayeem were present during the trip.

Jessore Udichi blasts

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and 14 Hujji men were involved in plotting and executing the Udichi blasts.

On March 7, 1999, the then sub-inspector Abdul Aziz filed two cases -- one under Section 302 of Bangladesh Penal Code for murder and another under the Explosive Substances Act -- with Jessore Kotwali Police Station without naming anyone.

After investigation, the then ASP of Jessore CID Dulal Uddin Akand pressed charges on December 14, 1999 against 24 people including BNP leader and former minister Tariqul Islam.

Tariqul was exempted from the charges by the Supreme Court on August 12, 2003 after hearing of his leave-to-appeal petition, while the rest 23 were acquitted in the verdict by the Jessore court.

The judge while delivering the verdict made his observation that stern action must be taken against the investigation officer for submitting a motivated and weak charge sheet devoid of evidence required for punishment of the accused.

Jessore District Udichi General Secretary Shaheeduzzaman said CID has already talked to them as part of their fresh initiative to reinvestigate the case.

Asked to comment about acquittal of all accused, he said,

"We want detection and punishment of those who were really involved."

HANNAN'S STATEMENT ON UDICHI BLAST

The Hujji leader said they chalked out the plan for the attack at their Mohammadpur office in 1999.

Among others, Abdur Rouf (Madaripur), Hafez Jahangir Badar (Dohar), Yahia (Sylhet), Abu Bakar (Sylhet), and Maolana Sabbir (Bogra) were present at the meeting.

The meeting decided to stop the "naked musical performances" of Udichi even if it were to take a huge effort and conveyed the decision to the organisation's Amir Mufti Shafiqur Rahman.

They said they had learned from the media that Udichi was going to arrange about a month-long programme in Jessore.

Informed of the decision at Mugda office, Shafiqur directed Maolana Abu Bakar, Abu Musa and Sabbir to visit the area and report to him.

After the team returned from the field inspection, he assigned Sabbir and Musa to make some bombs and use those at the venue of Udichi programme.

Following a call from Rouf, Hannan went to Jessore on March 5 and stayed at Khurshida Madrasa. Later, Musa along with Rouf and Sabbir went there and informed

Hannan that the bombs were kept at madrasa teacher Samsul Haq's house.

For planting the bombs, they brought Abdullah, aged about 17, from Chittagong and Waliur, 20, from Jessore. The two did their parts on orders of Rouf.

The bombs went off between 12:30pm and 1:00pm, killing 10 people and injuring over 100.

Hannan said he returned to Magura after handing the bombs over to Rouf, Waliur and Abdullah.

Attack on dentist condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Dental Health Research Foundation (BDHRF) condemned the attack on Dr Mujibur Rahman Hawlader, an associate professor of dental unit of the BSMMU and president of the BDHRF, says a press release.

Some miscreants attacked him and vandalised his chamber while he was working at his chamber on April 29. They also beat the employees of his chamber.

The foundation protested the attack and demanded arrest and trial of the criminals.

ACC act

FROM PAGE 1

sent to the parliamentary standing committee for examination.

The ACC has proposed to appoint more workforces to deal with the corruption cases against government officials, the minister said. The government has not agreed with this proposal, as dealing with such cases is the duty of ACC, he added.

The four proposed amendments include the commission's authority to seek assistance or expertise from any government or government-controlled organisation if it desires.

The cabinet yesterday approved in principle amendment to the ACC law with a lenient provision granting logical time for self-defence to an accused in corruption case or a corruption-suspect before incarcerating them.

Another proposed amendment is making it mandatory for making ACC a party in the cases filed by it and challenged in the higher courts.

The cabinet made the decisions at its regular meeting held at Bangladesh Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Reaffirming to her government's commitment to make ACC much stronger and effective in dealing with corruption, Hasina asked the authorities concerned to be careful so that none is "harassed in the name of curbing corruption".

The cabinet however disagreed to cancel the section 408 from the ACC schedule that empowers the commission to investigate corruption of private companies.

The amendment proposal has been pending from January 26 as the cabinet sent back the proposals to ACC for review and scrutiny.

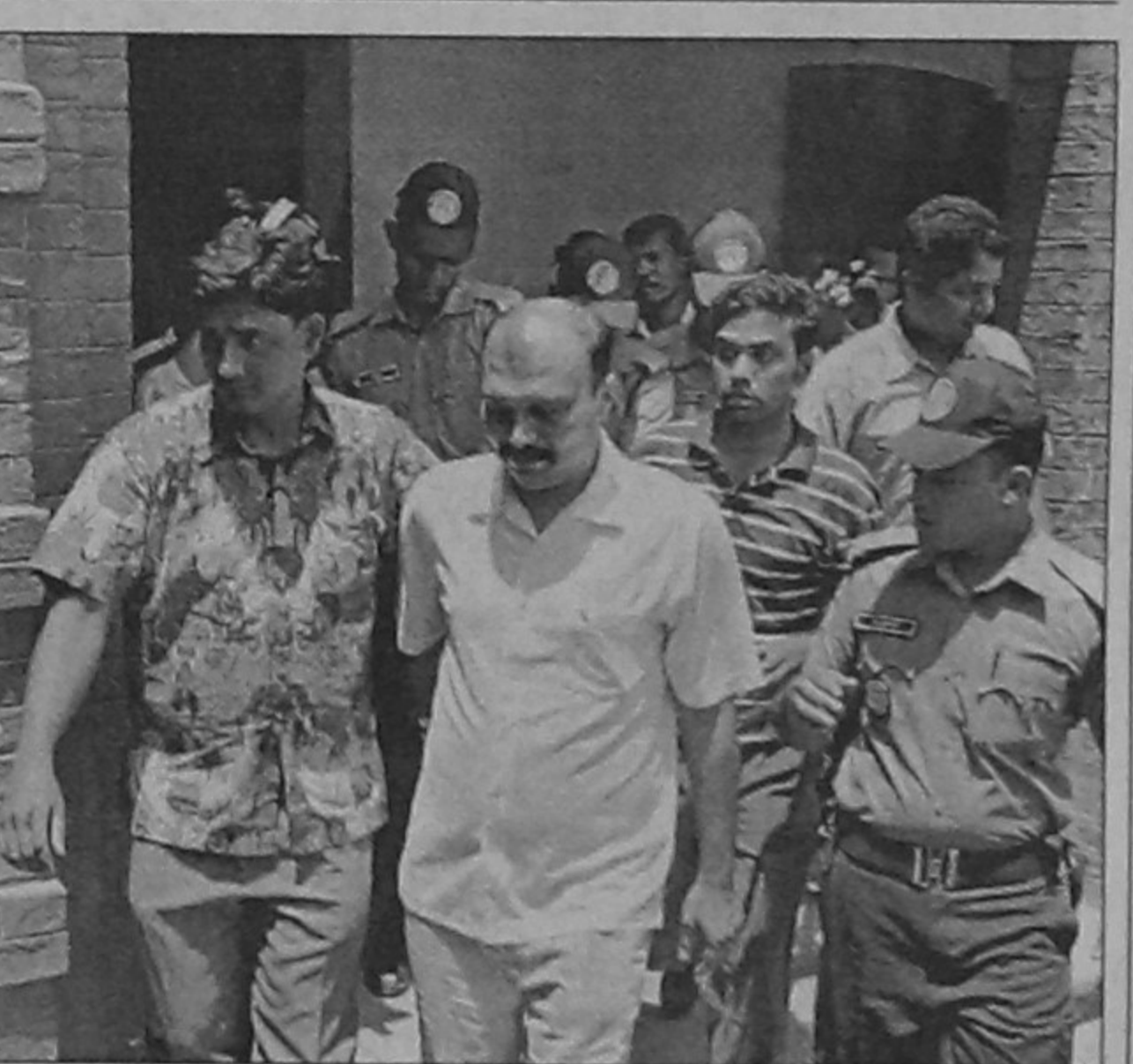


PHOTO: STAR

Former director (security) of National Security Intelligence Sahab Uddin is being produced before a Chittagong court yesterday in sensational Chittagong arms haul case. (Story on Page 1)

Per capita income

FROM PAGE 1

Last month, the WB released a report titled "Bangladesh: semi-annual economic update" which said economic slowdown is likely to increase poverty rate next year and the year that follows due to the global financial meltdown. As growth was slow in the current FY, poverty rate would increase by 0.3 percentage point in FY2010. In FY 2011, it is likely to increase by 0.5-0.7 percentage point depending on how growth would be affected.

Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Mustafa K Mujeri mentioned that according to the 2005 household expenditure survey (the latest such survey by the BBS) income inequality increased further. The fall in poverty rate did not match income increase.

Mustafa said although per

capita income increased this FY, the BBS estimate does not show whether per head income of the poorest. But generally it could be said that since per capita income rose, every one got a share of it to some extent.

He however said if there is more growth in agriculture sector and SMEs (small and medium enterprises), income of the poor would go up.

The BIDS director general pointed out that remittance played an important role in the increase of per capita income, and stressed sending skilled labour abroad so that remittance inflow does not fall despite the global recession.

If readymade garments sector is affected by the meltdown, employment generation would suffer lowering income of the poor, he added.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Moymona Khatun passed away yesterday at the age of 80, says a press release.

She left behind her four sons and two daughters to mourn her death.

She was laid to rest at her family graveyard at Khoykhat village under Tentulia in Panchagar district.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 27th death anniversary of Ustad Phuljhari Khan, an eminent tabla and esraj player of the subcontinent and nephew of Ustad Alauddin Khan, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at 93 East Rampura in the city after Asr prayers.

Foods will also be distributed among the destitute. Ustad Phuljhari Khan was also a teacher of esraj at Shantiniketan and a close associate of poet Rabindranath Tagore.

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Nikunja Lal Saha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 29th death anniversary of Nikunja Lal Saha, father of Birendra Chandra Saha, vice-president of Mohanagar Sarbojanin Pujja Committee and former official of Jibon Bima Corporation, says a press release.

On the occasion, special prayers will be offered at his residence for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Nur Banu, wife of eminent social worker Sadek Hossain, will be held at Bara Moghbazar Chourasta Jame Masjid after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at the Masjid.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Foreign aircraft

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have been issued letters several times, they did not respond. The Bangladesh firms that hired the aircraft are also avoiding their responsibility.

Despite several attempts to make contact with the two Bangladesh firms, no one was found. The local firms wined up their office from Cox's Bazar two years back.

The airport manager said repairing the planes to make them fit to fly would not be financially viable. Such types of Russian-made aircraft are not operating now in any country.

Sources concerned said there is a raft of complexities in auctioning the abandoned planes, advertisement has to be placed in international media, which is very costly. Besides, before going for such process, several notices have to be published.