



PHOTO: STAR
The president's motorcade, caught in heavy traffic, slows to a crawl on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Tejgaon Police Station in the city yesterday. President Zillur Rahman was on his way back to Bangabhaban from Bangabandhu International Conference Centre where he had addressed the inauguration of Digital Bangladesh Summit 2009.

Shifting of Kamalapur railway station to Tongi to worsen jam

Speakers suggest multimodal transport system in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said relocating Kamalapur railway station and container depot to Tongi will worsen the traffic situation in the city in future instead of improving it.

Every day some 50,000 commuters travel to Dhaka city through Kamalapur railway station, they added.

They stressed the need for developing a balanced multimodal transport system instead of increasing dependency solely on road transport.

If Kamalapur station as well as container depot is relocated, huge number of commuters will have to use alternative mode of transports to enter the city while goods distribution will also depend on road-based transport modes.

They further said that the

step would further increase the flow of road transport inside the city intensifying the traffic congestion.

The speakers said this at the roundtable on 'Expectations about the development of railway: Recent steps' organised by Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Paba) and WBB Trust at the National Press Club in the city.

They pointed out that Dhaka Railway Station was shifted once in the 1960s from Fulbaria to Kamalapur to reduce congestion without any visible effect. One should look into the example of other successful mega cities of the world.

Buet Vice Chancellor Dr AMM Saifullah said railway was ignored since independence for road-based transport development, which was a wrong choice, adding that

railway is the best mass transport because it can carry a large number of passengers.

Terming railway environment-friendly and cost-effective, he suggested introducing commuter trains connecting Dhaka with the surrounding districts as many passengers come to Dhaka from those areas daily.

He also suggested rescheduling train timing according to the needs of the passengers, especially during the office hours.

Fazle Hossain Badsha MP blamed the donor-prescribed policies for the current downfall of railway.

He stressed the need for improving rail services with the districts that produce more crops, vegetables, poultry and dairy products.

Citing the example of neighbouring India, he said

improved service would enable the farmers to sell their own products instead of depending on middlemen, which will bring down the prices as well.

Barkat Ullah Bulu MP opposed the move to hand over railway to the private sector, saying that many state-owned agencies were handed over to the private sector earlier without any significant growth.

He suggested establishing a separate ministry for railway.

Prof Anwar Hossain, VC of Ahsanullah Science and Technology University, Prof Sarwar Jahan, chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, Abu Naser Khan, chairman of Paba, Ashrafur Alam, member of Rail Master Plan Study Team, and Md Syed Mahbul Alam, programme manager of WBB, also spoke, among others.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE 'Raise children's issues in Copenhagen confce'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Representatives of Child Parliament yesterday called on the government to raise the issue of children's vulnerability to global climate change in the upcoming international conference on climate change in Copenhagen.

The children placed the demand at a 'Children Dialogue' session at the National Press Club auditorium in the city yesterday. Some members of the government's negotiating team who will join the Copenhagen conference attended the dialogue organised by the Child Parliament, an organisation for children.

The Child Parliament

representatives called on them to highlight the suffering the children face during natural disasters in the country.

Children are most vulnerable to climate change, they said. Speaking at the programme, Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of Forum for Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), said that like children, the negotiating team of the government is also deeply concerned about the climate change impacts on children.

A huge portion of the country's population is children and women and we would place the issues concerning children and women in the Copenhagen conference," said Quamrul, also a

member of the negotiating team.

Replying to a query from Tumpa, a Child Parliament representative, Quamrul said they would also demand steps to bring down greenhouse gas emission by 45 percent by 2020.

Rony, another child representative, said the natural disaster shelter homes in the country are not child-friendly and children are even abused sometimes in the shelters.

Other negotiating team members Dr Asaduzzaman of the Sustainable Development Networking Foundation (SDNF), Ziaul Hoque Mukta of Oxfam and environmental expert Golam Rabbani also spoke.

BANGABANDHU MURDER Chief state counsel rejects AI suggestion

UNB, Dhaka

Chief state counsel Anisul Huq yesterday asked the Amnesty International (AI) to refrain from making request for commuting the death sentence on the former army officers convicted of the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Following the November 19 conclusive verdict of the Supreme Court on the historic Bangabandhu murder case, the UK-based human rights watchdog in a statement urged Bangladesh government not to execute the condemned convicts.

The chief state counsel, Anisul Huq, questioned the merit of such request. "They should not make such request in an omnibus manner. The facts and circumstances of each individual case should be gone into and understood by them before making such request," Anis told media men while giving his reaction over the AI statement.

"Can they (AI) return the August 15, 1975 victims to the members of the bereaved family?" he posed a question.

"As they cannot do so, they should refrain from making such statement," he said.

Anis said the killers do not deserve remission of capital punishment, as their offence was dreadful.

ZIA ORPHANAGE CASE Hearing adjourned till Dec 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday adjourned the hearing on the petitions filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her elder son Tarique Rahman till December 7 for staying the proceedings of Zia Orphanage Trust embezzlement case against them.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Rais Uddin passed the adjournment order upon a time prayer moved by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam.

Struggle for Pakistan poisoned Hindu-Muslim relations

Says Indian scholar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The struggle for creating Pakistan poisoned Hindu-Muslim relations in the sub-continent, Indian scholar Tapan Raychaudhuri said yesterday.

"The partition riots led to the death and mutilation of millions and forced many more millions to leave their ancestral home," said the emeritus fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford.

He was delivering the Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Memorial Lecture 2009 on 'Muslims and Hindus in British India' organised by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh under the auspices of Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Memorial Foundation at the National Museum in the city.

Raychaudhuri, a scholar on Indian history and civilization, said, "In the pre-British days, there were no riots in the

sub-continent for political reasons, but for socio-economic misunderstandings."

"In pre-British times, there was no subcontinent-wide consciousness of a cohesive community, either among

Hindus or among Muslims and that the two communities were political rivals was a consciousness very clearly traceable to the latter half of the 19th century," he said.

Jobs, education and distribution of seats in the legisla-

tures -- in all such matters, the separate provisions for the two communities created an unhealthy basis for competition and conflict, he added.

"The bitterness that the conflict produced still continues to vitiate our lives. In the 80s of the last century, the doctrine of Hindutwa emerged as a powerful force in Indian politics, partly drawing upon that inheritance of bitterness," he said.

At the programme, senior advocate of the Supreme Court Mahmudul Islam was awarded Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Gold Medal for his contribution to legal literature.

Justice Rifaat Ahmed read out a citation for the award. Asiatic Society President Prof Sirajul Islam and Ishtiaq Ahmed Memorial Foundation Convener Prof Zeenat Intiaz Ali also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR
Indian scholar Tapan Raychaudhuri delivers the Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Memorial Lecture 2009 at the National Museum in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof Sirajul Islam.

AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK Hizbul leader Yusuf Butt on fresh remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abu Yusuf Butt, a leader of Kashmir-based militant organisation Hizbul Mujahideen, was taken on a fresh remand for three days yesterday in connection with the August 21 grenade attack case.

Earlier, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) interrogators remanded him for nine days in two phases.

Seeking the fresh remand, CID officials told the chief metropolitan magistrate's court yesterday that Yusuf should be interrogated more to know more about the grenades used in the attacks, persons involved in the carnage and their patrons.

They also said Yusuf came to Bangladesh years ago in cooperation with Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Maulana Tajuddin, brother of detained former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, and he had been staying in the country with his fake name Abdul Majid and also was carrying out militancy in the country.

PRIMARY TERMINAL EXAMS

Over 3 lakh absent on second day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 303,242 students were absent yesterday from taking the examinations of Mathematics and Religion on the second day of the Primary Education Terminal Examination.

Around 92.34 percent class V students appeared at the examinations, according to the control room of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education at 9:30 last night.

A number of students and their guardians said the examinees were overcoming the fear they had initially of taking part in the public exams.

A total of 38 'fake' students were identified across the country. Of them, 18 were from Dhaka division, 16 from Rajshahi and four from Khulna division, according to both the control rooms of the directorate of primary education and the primary and mass education minis-

try. They claimed that the 'reported' students were over-aged and would not be able to take their next exams, saying that they were mainly from a number of NGO-running schools that wanted to earn reputation.

The sources said the ministry officials said they had increased the number of exam centres yesterday. The number of total exam centres was 5,343 on the first day.

The students will sit for English and Paribesh Parichiti Samaj (social science) tomorrow.

The officials said the students who were absent on the first were allowed to take their exam on the second day. The absentees were basically from the rural areas and fear might have worked behind it.

"If the students, who did not sit for the first exams, can do well in four subjects will be promoted," said an official last night.

NIGHTINGALE MEDICAL COLLEGE Students want migration to other medical colleges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Nightingale Medical College and Hospital (NMCH) yesterday demanded to take immediate measures to migrate 165 students of NMCH to another medical colleges for the sake of their future.

At a press conference at National Press Club in the city, they said they have already lost a session and have been remaining out of class for the last five months.

In a written statement, Farha Nusrat, a first year student, said the NMCH authorities closed down the institution sine die on July 15 and asked the students to leave the college after they went to the managing director with their demands.

Farha said the government sent a high-powered committee to the college to investigate whether the college was running its activities as per the regulations of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council.

Nurses demand jobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Diploma Unemployed Nurses Association yesterday started observing a fast unto death at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city demanding the government recruits about 9,500 nurses by December.

"We have been demanding batch, merit and seniority-wise recruitment of the

nurses for the last one year. Although Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque had assured us of the recruitment, that did not happen," said Taslima Begum, president of the association.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also announced that 5000 nurses would be recruited, but the decision is yet to be implemented, she added.

62 hajj pilgrims finally leave for Saudi Arabia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cheated by a travel agency, some 62 hajj pilgrims finally left for Saudi Arabia last night with contribution from their group leader and own pockets to perform the hajj in Makkah.

Each of the hajj pilgrims paid Tk 2.20 lakh to travel agency Al-Mobarakat but without buying their tickets, the agency's staff went into hiding, hajj officer Bazlul Haque Biswas told The Daily Star yesterday. The pilgrims suffered for a couple of days for such a cheating.

The group leader of the hajj pilgrims made some contributions to buy their tickets of a Saudi Arabian Airlines while

other pilgrims the rest, he said.

There is no problem now, Biswas said, adding that Rab and police have been looking for the agency men as stern actions will be taken against them in this regard.

The licence of the travel agency will be cancelled with confiscating its security money. Besides, criminal charges will be brought against the agency, the hajj officer said.

Official sources said this year around 59,000 pilgrims are performing hajj, the biggest Muslim congregation in the world. Most of the hajj pilgrims have already reached the holy land since October 21.

JAMUNA TV Govt action challenged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court (HC) yesterday challenging the government action stopping the test transmission of Jamuna TV, a private satellite television channel.

The Jamuna TV authorities filed the petition seeking the HC directions upon the government to allow the test transmission of the channel.

Deputy Attorney General Nahid Mahtab told The Daily Star that the hearing of the petition will be held at the High Court bench of Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mamnoon Rahman this afternoon.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) halted the test transmission on November 19 night.

Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq will appear for the petitioner.

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