

Biman spreads

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But the court will settle issues like pilot retirement age increase to 62 years from 57. A case in this regard is pending with the High Court, report BSS and UNB quoting Assistant Press Secretary to the prime minister Asif Kabir.

However, other issues will be settled through discussions, the agencies reported.

The feud between Biman authorities and pilots started to affect Biman flight schedule and passengers after pilots began agitation on October 22 demanding cancellation of an order of retirement age enhancement from 57 years to 62 years. Biman increased the retirement age of pilots but did not extend insurance and rehabilitation benefits to pilots who lost their wings for medical reasons during their extended period of service.

The row over this resulted in pilot agitation and eventually their calling in "sick" on October 26.

Initially, the demonstration was marked by delays in some flights as pilots refused to fly beyond their duty regulations and give any concession to the airline management.

But flight cancellations and delays started to increase after Biman authorities served show-cause notices upon more than a dozen BAPA members on different grounds. The reasons include holding a press conference on issues that are under trial at a court.

Biman later withdrew four pilots from flight duty, which

infuriated pilots and at least 56 pilots called in sick to protest. This led to large-scale flight disruptions including cancellation of flights. The hajj flights, however, went smoothly.

Biman had to cancel nearly 20 flights to various domestic and international destinations. Biman said the stalemate hurt the image of the airline, increased expenditure as well as caused sufferings to passengers.

"We are sorry that passengers had to suffer for us," said Biman MD Zakul. "We regret it."

"We are part of a family," he said, hoping that such stand-off would not happen in future. "We apologise for the stalemate in the last couple of days. Nobody would expect such a situation," said BAPA General Secretary Captain MA Basit Mahtab while sharing the outcome of the meeting with Sheikh Hasina in a press briefing in BAPA office yesterday afternoon.

BAPA acting President Captain Zakir Hussain said, "Our discussion with the prime minister has been fruitful. She has assured us of settling our demands."

Mahtab said the 56 pilots, who had called in sick earlier, began to fly. "One of our mates has already flown to London in the morning," Mahtab said.

Mahtab, also one of the four pilots who were withdrawn from flight duty, said the prime minister has asked pilots to join work without fear.

ADMISSION SCAM DU hi-tech fraud gang faces case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University authorities yesterday filed a case against eight persons arrested for sending answers to multiple-choice questions via SMS to some of those taking the university admission test on Friday.

DU Proctor KM Saiful Islam Khan said a university security officer, Kamrul Hasan, had filed the case with the New Market Police Station.

Meanwhile, DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique at a press briefing said answer-scripts of the favoured students of the fraud gang would be cancelled.

He also said academic action would be taken against the DU students who were among the gang members.

DU officials concerned said the gang kingpin, Aminul Islam, sat for the Friday's admission test posing as a freshman, as the university didn't have photos of candidates in its admission server.

Aminul completed BBA from DU accounting department this year. He was busted by Rab inside the admission test hall while sending out answers via text messages.

DU officials said they tracked down 18 candidates who had participated in the admission test with the gang's help. They collected cell phone numbers of another 22 linked to the scam.

VC Prof Arefin said action would be taken against the 40 after enquiry.

He said the university would not allow further any applicant carrying cell phones or any other electronic devices in admission exam halls.

Graft gobbles

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metric tonnes of rice already sold to 300 people. Asked for explanation, Wahed Ali and the food inspector, who identified himself as Sardar Akbar Ali, offered this correspondent tea and expressed their helplessness to comment on that. Meanwhile, according to the register, the duty inspector for that day was Amirul Islam.

A quarter kilometre from Barnali Mor, another dealer Mostak Ahmed was also found starting the day showing 1.5 metric tonnes of rice sold to 300 consumers. Food inspector MA Hannan at that time arrived on the spot on a rickshaw. Informed about the matter, the inspector expressed surprise saying, "I don't know how it is possible as I left the spot half an hour before yesterday's closing and today he is yet to start the sale."

Sankar Banik, a dealer in Alupotti, without hesitation admitted that selling rice on the black market is profitable. "I sold only five to six sacks of rice, not a dozen or more like others. We usually give them [monitoring officials] one or two sacks as commission," Banik said pointing at food inspector Towhid Islam standing there. The inspector, however, declined to comment on this saying that he has been under pressure "to be part of the practice".

At Poba upazila around 11:00am on October 17, dealer Ashraf Ali was found making a list of beneficiaries for the next day. His outlet was closed because, he claimed, within an hour he had sold his entire lot of OMS rice, which is one metric tonne for the upazila. "I could not but sell 75 kg rice to 15 persons from my next day's allocation as those people had been queuing for long," said Ashraf Ali.

The OMS outlets at Nawhata College Mor and Baya Bazar were found closed at 12:00 noon.

The OMS policy made it mandatory for the authorities to set up a control room at the DC office to register daily sale and storage of unsold rice. No such control room was found in Rajshahi. District controller of food told The Daily Star that he did not officially set up the control room but they are monitoring the programme properly.

The nexus between the dealers and food department inspectors of Rajshahi city is widely known. On condition

of anonymity, a dealer admitted that every day he has to pay the inspector up to Tk 3,000.

The poor, who return empty handed from the OMS centres, are too scared to protest against this as most of the dealers are allegedly selected from among the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance leaders and activists.

Rajshahi Regional Food Controller Serajul Islam said that his office is supervising the dealers as per the rules. "We see people in long queues for rice. If you find any anomalies why don't you write about this," he suggested when he was told about the black market sale and the involvement of his inspectors in this.

Islam said, "What can you do when someone buys OMS rice and sells it to the retailers? The dealers are responsible for checking whether anyone is purchasing rice more than once by taking the consumers' thumb impression in the register."

Rice traders and sources close to the dealers said the OMS programme in Rajshahi hardly witnessed any buyers in September. The food department records, however, show up to 95 percent daily sale since the OMS began during the month of Ramadan.

According to the food department's records, in 18 days till October 20, 1,760 metric tonnes of rice had been sold to 3,52,000 people, which is 70 percent of the city's population of 5 lakh. The record has astonished many including regular rice dealers. A trader of the main bazar said the coarse OMS rice was not very popular among the low-income people for its quality.

Sources in the district administration said the government has decided to extend the weekly OMS sale from five days to six days from October 20.

Meanwhile, hearing the allegations of dealers selling rice on the black market under the officials' supervision, Muhammad Delwar Bakht, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi, said he would instruct the mobile courts to keep an eye on the OMS programme.

Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi Abdul Mannan, also the head of dealer selection and monitoring of OMS project, said he would discuss with the relevant officials soon.

Border talks in Kolkata today

UNB, Dhaka

A five-day deputy director general (DDG) level BDR-BSF border meeting begins in Kolkata today.

DDG of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Brigadier General Md Obaidul Haque will lead the 12-member delegation at the meeting, while his counterpart inspector general of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) South Bengal Frontier will lead the 18-member Indian delegation.

Official sources said the 12-member Bangladesh delegation comprising sector commanders of Khulna, Kushtia, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Dinajpur BDR sectors, staff officers of BDR headquarters, representatives of Home and Foreign Ministries will leave Dhaka for Kolkata today.

Issue of narcotics smuggling inside Bangladesh from India will be emphasised in the DDG level discussion from Bangladesh side. Besides, Bangladesh will raise the issue of killing and injuring Bangladeshis allegedly by Indian BSF, and illegal trespassing inside Bangladesh territory by BSF or Indian nationals, side by side with other issues, including border security.

The meeting will also discuss the ways of increasing bilateral cooperation and confidence between BDR and BSF.

'Criminal' killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An alleged criminal was killed in a 'shootout' between Rapid Action Battalion and an armed gang at Piarpur in Sadar upazila of Faridpur early yesterday.

Law enforcers said deceased Gulzar Khan alias Kamal, 42, a resident of the district town, was accused in a number of cases including one for murder.

The shootout took place around 3:30am when plainclothes Rab personnel challenged a group of people beside the bypass road near Piarpur Primary School, said Maj Sabbir of Rab-8, adding that Gulzar and his accomplices were holding a meeting there.

The gang opened fire at the law enforcers compelling them to strike back. Gulzar came in the line of the fire and died on the spot, said Maj Sabbir.

Rab recovered a 9mm pistol and five bullets from the spot.

Abahani

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take the lead, and what seemed like the match, in the 80th minute.

But Sheikh Jamal escaped from the death and took the game to extra-time courtesy of a sublime long-range strike from Mamunul Islam.

But in extra-time Sheikh Jamal showed their relative inexperience and pushed the self-destruct button as defender Rezaul got himself sent off in foolish circumstances.

That was the cue for Abahani to take the game to their opponents, and the giants used all their big game experience to pressurise Sheikh Jamal into submission with two more late goals.

In the end it was a deserved victory and marked an eighth Federation Cup trophy for Abahani and the end of a ten-year dry spell for the trophy.

Jamuna

FROM PAGE 1
the SP "Search is going on for the captain."

Eight divers were carrying out search operation. They found a wheel and wing of the plane till filling of this report yesterday evening.

Police said the jet hit a tree at Duttakandi village, damaging its wing and fell into the river about 500 metres from there.

Chowhali police chief Aminul Islam said though they received the news of the accident almost instantly, they could not reach the remote area immediately.

Members of the army, police and fire brigade reached the spot.

A 17-member Bangladesh Navy team from Dhaka joined the rescue operation, said an Inter Services Public Relation (ISPR) release yesterday.

On September 23, a fighter jet of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) crashed into the river Karnaphuli while its pilot escaped unhurt near the Patenga Boat Club.

Another BAF training aircraft crashed on October 22 last year while landing at a local airport at Arulia in Bogra Sadar upazila. The pilot of the aircraft also survived unhurt.

\$2.3b net profit

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from transit services, says the study.

Freight charges within Bangladesh's transport network would go down and the country would receive revenue in port charges from international cargo at Chittagong and Mongla ports. Besides, transit fees to be earned by Bangladesh will be equivalent to 70 percent of India's transport cost saving, thanks to diversion of each route, it says.

The study covered 14 corridors -- eight road and five rail routes, and a waterway -- for transit traffic between Bhutan, India and Nepal through Bangladesh.

Dr Rahmatullah declined commenting on the study. He said the government would go through different studies including the one prepared by the CPD and decide its next course of action.

He said Bangladesh's investment would be required in the multi-modal transit including rail, road and river routes that are now under consideration. On the basis of this, Bangladesh could impose transit fees in a manner that would create a win-win situation for both Bangladesh and India.

The government wants to reach an agreement with India very soon on the issues of transit and transshipment, said a high official at the finance ministry.

The CPD report will be presented at a seminar on transit and transshipment to be organised by the National Board of Revenue in Dhaka on November 10.

Prime Minister's Economic Adviser Mashur Rahman said the government has been working on a resolution on transit and transshipment.

He declined giving any detail.

In the CPD report, the results of aggregate Cost Benefit Analysis show that trade in transport services is an economically viable option for Bangladesh. The Internal Rate of Return is 33.46 percent, the benefit-cost ratio 2.86 and the Net Present Value \$2.3 billion.

A debate is on whether there should be a transit and transshipment arrangement between Bangladesh and India, and what should be the charges for the facility.

Giving an example of the benefit of transit for the parties involved, CPD Executive Director Mustafizur Rahman said just assume that India has to spend \$100 for transporting goods from one state to another in the North East. If Bangladesh allows India to use its transport network the goods could be transported for only \$60. Now both the governments have to decide on the share of the amount saved.

Mustafiz said Bangladesh could impose charges in any form such as transit fees or toll.

World pledges

FROM PAGE 16
Currently only 13 percent of land and one percent of oceans are protected.

Nevertheless, Greenpeace expressed disappointment at the new targets, which delegates said were lowered on the insistence of China and some other developing countries.

Greenpeace had been pushing for 20 percent of oceans to be conserved, as a step towards an eventual target of 40-percent preservation.

There were other limitations to the Nagoya pact -- including that the United States was not a signatory as it is one of the few countries not to have ratified the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

But while some green groups said the 20-point plan was not as ambitious as hoped, most still welcomed it as a historic step towards united global action in tackling biodiversity problems and raising awareness about the issue.

"Governments have sent a strong message that protecting the health of the planet has a place in international politics and countries are ready to join forces to save life on Earth," WWF International director general Jim Leape said.

Conservation International president Russ Mittermeier was even more upbeat, saying: "This conference must be viewed as a success and a major global achievement."

The accord was clinched after a last-minute breakthrough on an 18-year stand-off over "fairly" sharing the benefits and knowledge of genetic resource riches that are found in

Zahid Hossain, senior economist of World Bank, said policymakers could make the right decisions considering the options and can do much better at the negotiation table if equipped with solid information on costs and benefits of the alternative options.

Such analysis could help clarify many misconceptions about the transit issue, he said. Prior to the partition of India in 1947, trade between the northeastern sub-region of South Asia and the rest of India was done through the territories of what is now Bangladesh.

Rail and river transit across the erstwhile East Pakistan continued until 1965. Only inland water transport transit was restored in 1972 after Bangladesh's independence.

Due to fragmented transport, Europe-bound consignments of Assam Tea now travel 1,400 kilometres through India's 'chicken neck' to reach Kolkata Port. Traffic from Tripura would have to travel only 400 km instead of 1,650 km to reach Kolkata port, if transit through Bangladesh was possible.

Bangladesh and India signed a joint communiqué in January 2010 creating a scope for introducing multi-modal transit and transshipment between the two nations.

Faridpur

FROM PAGE 1
killer of Chanpa Rani Bhowmik," he said.

Nahid's assurance came during his visit to Chanpa's Madhukhali house in Faridpur around 11:00am yesterday to console her family members.

Chanpa Rani, 45, an employee of Faridpur Sugar Mill and wife of Swapan Biswas, was killed after Rony drove his bike over her on October 26 for protesting the harassment of her twin daughters Hira and Mukta.

Five people have been arrested so far in this connection with main culprit Rony absconding. Nahid expressed shock at this. Police earlier told The Daily Star that Rony is hiding in the capital and members of Faridpur police are in Dhaka to capture him.

The minister also said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is thinking of providing financial assistance to Chanpa's daughters so they can continue their studies.

"To resist stalking of women," he said, "the society as a whole should stand up against it."

He also said chapters on awareness against stalking will be included in the textbooks, if needed.

Meanwhile, Faridpur Sugar Mill Workers' Union yesterday staged a demonstration on the mill premises demanding arrest and punishment of the "killer".

They also threatened to go on a strike from November 6 if Rony is not arrested by this time.

Faridpur-1 lawmaker Abdur Rahman and Chanpa's widow Swapan were also present at the demonstration.

Target genocide

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apology from Bangladesh for the genocide in 1971.

This would be helpful in strengthening the bilateral ties and in carrying out the current trial of the local collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces in Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, sources said.

Since independence, two major areas of disagreement remained between Bangladesh and Pakistan. The first issue concerned the finances of united Pakistan.

After getting independence in 1971, Bangladesh claimed that it deserved a share of the US\$ 4 billion worth of pre-independence exchange, bank credit, and movable assets, which were protected in West Pakistan during the war.

In a 1975 agreement, Bangladesh accepted half of Pakistan's pre-1971 external debts, but the asset-sharing issue remained unresolved.

The second issue tangling between the two countries concerned the immigration of large number of people, mostly Biharis (non-Bengali Muslims), to Pakistan.

The International Red Cross registered nearly 540,000 people who wanted to immigrate to Pakistan after independence. By 1982, about 127,000 had been repatriated, leaving another 250,000 people still demanding repatriation.

Bangladesh also wants

settlement of US\$ 200 million, which Pakistan received from the international community as donation for the 1970 cyclone victims of the then East Pakistan.

Bangladesh is optimistic that Pakistan, which earlier gave Bangladeshi jute and tea duty-free access to its market, is likely to give such access to more Bangladeshi items in future.

The Islamabad meeting is expected to culminate with the signing of two Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) on exchange of cultural programmes and activists, and visa free entry of the officials of both countries.

Besides, Bangladesh will ask Pakistan to prune the negative list of goods under South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safta), to establish the Karachi-Chittagong direct sea link and to increase the frequency of flights between the two.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary is expected to meet Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Ahead of the Islamabad meeting, an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by the foreign secretary was held at the foreign ministry where it was emphasized to pursue duty-free access of Bangladeshi products in Pakistan.

Muhith spurs

FROM PAGE 16
The finance minister's view came at a time when the government is moving to fully computerise land management system at all the upazila (Land) offices in the country to digitally track down and update all land related data and records through easy access.

Underlining the need for speedy implementation of the initiative, the finance minister said, "If necessary, we are ready to work more closely with the land ministry in this regard to bring more pace and effectiveness in the scheme."

Fake ownership of lands spawns a large number of criminal activities in Bangladesh, with studies indicating that more than 80 percent of criminal activities in the country stem from land disputes.

Lauding the government's achievement in building a Digital Bangladesh, Muhith said, "there is no possibility of a digital divide in the country under the current government initiative of rapidly digitising the whole Bangladesh."

In support of his remark, the minister said, "Within a short period of time, the government is going to open Information Centers in more than 4,500 unions around the country while most of the 64 district portals and government websites also get updated regularly."

Later, he also inaugurated the country's largest IT and computer gala BCS ICT World 2010, where the biggest names in local and global IT scenario showcasing the latest developments in the hi tech industry.

Staged at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) of the city, the four day long fair would be participated by 66 companies from home and abroad in 26 stalls and 69 pavilions.

The national association of the ICT companies - Bangladesh Computer Samity is organizing the event in collaboration with ICT Business Promotion Council.

Speaking on the occasion, the State Minister for Science and ICT Yeafesh Osman underlined the contribution of telecommunication sector in the economic growth of the country.

"Mobile technology certainly have a contribution in the nearly six percent GDP growth the country has achieved over the last few years," he said.

"To augment this growth, online payment system and money transferring through mobile has already been initiated while emphasis has been put on providing local content through cell phones", the state minister added.

President of Bangladesh Computer Society Mustafa Jabbar in his speech called for creating a government fund for purchasing of laptop and desktop computers for the school students.

"At the same time, the bank should provide low interest loan for the purchasing of computers and IT materials", he added.

War criminals

FROM PAGE 16
At the programme, noted citizens and SCF leaders expressed their concern over conspiracies by anti-liberation forces to foil government's initiatives to bring the war criminals to trial.

Presiding over the function, SCF Chairman and the Planning Minister AK Khandaker said the process of trying war criminals should be accelerated so that the victims' family members can witness the criminals receiving exemplary punishment for the crimes they had committed.

Eminent educationist Prof Anisuzzaman said conspiracies are being plotted both inside and outside the country to thwart the smooth execution of the trial.

The speakers urged the government to speed up the trial process in order to help the nation get rid of a stigma and establish role of law in the country.

Educationalist Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said people of the country would be offenders as long as they do not bring the criminals to trial.

The speakers asked the people to unite against the conspiracies by the anti-liberation forces to create anarchy in the country.

The rally was the central part of SCF's day-long street rallies held at 12 spots in the capital to create mass-support towards the trial of war criminals.

General Secretary of SCF Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-or-Rashid, SCF leader Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta, Abu Osman Chowdhury, Barrister M Amirul Islam and cultural activists Hasan Arif, Golam Kuddus, among others, spoke at the programme.

School girls Amusement park

FROM PAGE 16
them, eight were named and the rest unnamed. When Kashem protested their teasing girl students at the school gate around noon yesterday, they beat him up and snatched his sunglasses.

Salahuddin Karim, investigation officer of the case, said the youths are aged between 22 and 27 years.

Officer-in-charge Enamul Haque said they have identified their whereabouts and would soon pick them up.

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Man dies

FROM PAGE 1
Shakhawat escaped with minor injuries.

Passengers caught bus driver Al Amin and conductor Harun and handed them over to police, said Shiblee Noman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

A murder case has been filed in connection with Badruzzaman's death.

The company has proposed to spend over Tk 200 crore for developing the zoo and Tk 450 crore to set up the amusement park, he said.

"In case the government declines to allow it in the zoo, we'll seek a 20-acre area where the Central Poultry Farm [government poultry farm] is located nearby the zoo as an alternative," Haq, an Awami League lawmaker, said.

According to the proposal, the park will include a thrill park, hotel, food courts, water park with rides and hanging bridge, resort with cottage, convention centre, restaurants and gift shops.

There will be cable cars and trains over and around the zoo, and buses will travel inside to facilitate site seeing.

The company has also proposed renaming the Dhaka Zoo to Dhaka Zoo Amusement Park and run the park for 25 years.

"It's a move to commercialise a public institution to make profit," said Md Abdur Razaque Mia, former director general (DG) of livestock service department.

Thousands of migratory birds that travel to the wetlands of the zoo every year will stop coming if an amusement park is set up, said Mia, also an executive member of environmentalist group Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa).

ABM Shahid Ullah, curator in-charge of the zoo, said zoos are non-profit ventures all over the world. People will lose easy access to the zoo, as the entrance fee has been proposed at Tk 50, five times more than now.

According to a document obtained by The Daily Star, all