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Ashuganj transit deal signed

Power plant equipment to be carried to Tripura; effective till June 2012

REZAUL KARIM and REZAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh yesterday signed the first ever multi-modal transit deal with India only for carrying equipment to a power plant in Tripura. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by officials of the two countries at the shipping ministry in Dhaka.

With this, Bangladesh implemented one of the clauses of the 50-point Joint Communiqué issued on January 12 during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India.

India will not pay any fees or service charges for this transit even though it will use Bangladesh's rivers and roads. However, it has agreed to provide Bangladesh Tk 25.50 crore for the development of Ashuganj river port terminal and 49 kilometres of roads.

India has been paying annual charge under

river protocol since 1972 and it will continue to do so. The charge has been raised to nearly Tk 5 crore a year since 2009 for five points of call across Bangladesh.

Foreign ministry sources, however, said the MoU was signed without the foreign ministry's nod. An official of the ministry said under the Rules of Business, 1996, no other ministry can do anything unilaterally if the matter is related to foreign relations.

No foreign ministry official was present during the signing.

According to the MoU, Indian cargo will start from West Bengal's Raimongal and enter Bangladesh at Angtiara under Shyamnagar of Sathkira and go up to Ashuganj river port by inland waterways. The cargo will then be moved to Akhaura on very large lorries.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Dancers perform at Celebrating Life 2010 at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday. The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank jointly organised the event to discover creative talents in the country. More photos on page 2. PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

CELEBRATING LIFE President calls for nurturing creativity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday pulsed to the rhythms, melodies, voices, and arts, celebrating the unwavering and indomitable spirit of the nation.

It was the stage for the third award giving ceremony of 'Celebrating Life', a The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank competition to reward creative minds from across the country for their creative photographs, lyrics and films.

"Music, photography and movies are three vibrant mediums of our art and culture," said President Zillur Rahman, the chief guest of the programme.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

KHALEDA'S PETITION Contempt hearing now today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The hearing of the contempt of court petition filed by Khaleda Zia against the government over the Dhaka Cantonment house was not held yesterday, as the Supreme Court did not sit due to the countrywide hartal called by BNP.

The SC will hear the petition today, said Attorney General Mahbubey Alam.

"The judges of the apex

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Stray clashes mark hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

150 hurt, 200 held

With overwhelming presence of law enforcers and ruling Awami League activists on the streets, opposition BNP's dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday passed without any major untoward incidents.

Top-ranking BNP leaders including most members of the party's standing committee were not seen on the streets during the hartal. Even leaders like Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Moudud Ahmed, who were very vocal about enforcing the hartal, stayed indoors.

The capital, however, saw less cars and passenger vehicles on the streets with rickshaws dominating the thoroughfares due to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1
MORE ON PAGE 5, 13, 16

BNP claims success, AL trashes it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) said yesterday people hatefully rejected BNP's hartal on the day but the main opposition party said people spontaneously made the hartal a success despite government obstructions.

Both the parties came up with their claims at separate post-hartal press briefings.

The AL said BNP enforced the hartal to protect party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Koko indicted in absentia

Trial of money laundering case begins Jan 4; Saimon also accused

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against former prime minister Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and a former BNP minister's son in absentia in a money laundering case.

The other accused is Ismail Hossain Saimon, son of former shipping minister late Akbar Hossain.

The same court on October 31 issued arrest warrant against Koko and Saimon in connection with the case. As per the law the accused were supposed to be present in the court at the time of hearing on the charge framing and during the trial proceedings.

Judge Mozammel Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-3 fixed January 4, 2011 to start trial of this case through deposition



of 23 witnesses.

The court also framed charges against the duo in their absence, as Koko and Saimon did not appear before the court or were not produced by the police.

Koko, who was arrested on September 2, 2007 on graft charges and paroled for treatment abroad in July the next year, is now in Bangkok though his parole is not in effect.

Saimon has been on the run since the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the money laundering case against him and Koko on March 17 last year.

In the case statement, the anti-graft body said the accused had laundered money they received from China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd and Siemens for helping them win

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



BNP activists run for cover inside their Paltan office after police charge truncheons on them during yesterday's hartal. More photos on page 5. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

HSBC, Star hand climate awards today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ceremony of "HSBC - The Daily Star climate awards 2010" takes place today after a several months of rigorous selection process to identify efforts made by individuals and institutions to combat climate change.

The ceremony will be held at 7:30pm at the Celebrity Hall of the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The award, the first of its kind in the country, was offered in four categories - climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation, climate change research and knowledge management,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

AFTAB MURDER CASE RESTORED Charge against prime accused Osman dropped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A trial court yesterday rescinded its earlier dismissal of businessman Aftabuddin killing case, and reinstated murder charges against 18 of the accused including top-listed gangsters Shahadat Hossain and Khorshed Alam.

Judge Mahbubur Rahman of the Environment Appeal Court revived the murder charges. He however upheld dropping of the charge against number one accused Osman Goni Sarkar, as the charge against him had been deemed politically motivated by the National Review Committee for Withdrawal of Politically Motivated Cases.

The same judge on October 3 had thrown away the entire case following a petition to do so from the public prosecutor (PP) on recommendation from the home ministry.

The law ministry on Monday moved to reinstate the murder case as its withdrawal drew a flurry of criticism, and asked Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu to file another petition for rescinding the dismissal order.

In his yesterday's order, the judge said the previous order was erroneous. "So the court accepted the petition of the metropolitan public prosecutor to withdraw the earlier order."

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

AUG 21 PROBE CID gets 3 months more

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted three months more to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to complete the probe into one of the two cases filed in connection with the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004.

The case was filed under

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Notice

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains a two-page supplement on the proceedings of a roundtable on "Strategic Information and HIV Prevention among Adolescents" organised jointly by the UNFPA and The Daily Star on November 2, 2010. See pages 22 and 23.

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