



Over 3,500 new books on offer

PM opens Ekushey Boi Mela today; Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to add int'l colour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People of all ages are ready to make beeline for Bangla Academy in the city on winter afternoons throughout February as Amar Ekushey Boi Mela-2011 begins today.

Apart from 65 new books from the academy and around 3,500 from other publishers, the month-long fair is also an attraction as a meeting place for readers, publishers, booksellers, media personnel, authors, cultural activists and celebrities.

The academy has been organising the annual event since 1984 to commemorate the martyrs of Language Movement, 1952.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the fair around 3:00pm while Nobel laureate Amartya Sen is expected to join as the guest of honour, said Bangla Academy officials yesterday.

After declaring the fair open, Hasina will visit several bookstalls and also inaugurate the Jatiya Lekhak and Sahitya Museum at the historic Burdwan House in the academy complex.

Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan said the theme of this year's fair is Rabindranath Tagore, marking the great poet's 150th birth anniversary.

The academy will publish several new books with compositions of Tagore while discussions and cultural events on the

premises will focus on his works, he added.

A number of foreign writers have been invited to the opening ceremony.

Meanwhile, preparations for the fair are almost completed. Divided into 556 units (spaces for stalls), the venue will accommodate 376 publishers.

Nine corners of the fair have been dedicated in the name of noted literati, language movement martyrs, poets and intellectuals while a corner has been dedicated for children, said Deputy Director of the academy Murshid Uddin Ahmed.

Laptop users will enjoy Wi-Fi network at the venue.

The fair will open at 11:00am and close at 9:00pm on holidays and continue 8:00am through 10:00pm on February 21, the International Mother Language Day.

Daily schedule for the rest of the month is 3:00pm-9:00pm.

Buyers will get a 30 percent discount on books published by Bangla Academy and 25 percent on those from other publishers.

Munier Chowdhury and Chittaranjan Saha memorial awards will be conferred to the publishing house bringing out the highest number of quality books and the publisher of the best book in the fair.

Closed circuit cameras and security arches will be set up while police, Rab and intelligence agencies will be in place to ensure security.

61 BGB men

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seven years of rigorous imprisonment each.

The court started delivering the judgement around 9:00am, which ended at about 10:30am.

The convicts were sent to Sylhet Central Jail immediately after the pronouncement of the verdict.

Yesterday's was the fourth judgement in mutiny cases in Sylhet region.

Syeduzzaman, the then officer-in-charge of Sylhet Kotwali Police Station, filed three cases with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in May 2009 against the

mutineers of Sylhet sector.

The jawans were charged with looting firearms and ammunition from armoury, setting fire to vehicles and putting up barricades on the Sylhet-Sunamganj highway.

They were immediately arrested and produced in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent them to the lock-up.

Trial of the case began in the special court on October 20 last year. On December 27 the court read out the allegations against the accused. Major AKM Aurangzeb of the sector headquarters served

as the prosecutor.

During the argument, prosecution witnesses including the sector officials narrated how the accused had revolted in Sylhet on 26 February 2009 in the aftermath of the previous day's massacre in Pilkhana, Dhaka.

At least 74 people including 57 top and mid-ranking army officers were killed in the two-day mayhem.

Twenty-eight accused pleaded guilty and 33 claimed innocence. None, however, produced any witness in support of their claim.

Protesters call

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Egyptian capital after a week of revolt in which at least 125 people have been killed.

Tens of thousands of protesters yesterday carpeted Cairo's Tahrir square, the epicentre for those calling for an end to the corruption, deprivation and police oppression indelibly associated with Mubarak's 30-year rule.

"We will stay in the square, until the coward leaves," the crowd chanted.

The army has positioned tanks around the area and was checking identity papers but letting protesters in. Civilian popular committee members were also checking papers to make sure no plainclothes police get in.

"We are looking for police trouble makers, they want to come in and break our unity," said a popular committee member who asked not to be named.

Nearby, soldiers scrubbed furiously at their tanks in a bid to wash off some of the anti-Mubarak graffiti they have been covered in over the last three days, as officers looked on.

Eid Mohammed, one of the protesters and organisers, told AFP: "It was decided overnight that there will be a million man march on Tuesday. We have also decided to begin an open-ended general strike."

The strike was first called by workers at a factory in the canal city of Suez late on Sunday.

But faced with untold numbers potentially trying to converge on the capital, authorities stopped all train traffic with immediate effect on Monday afternoon.

State-owned national carrier EgyptAir said it was cancelling all domestic and international flights from 3:00 pm (1300 GMT) to 8:00 am (0600 GMT) until further notice, coinciding with a curfew in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez.

Some flight times will be changed to take into account the curfew, the airline said in a statement.

Faced with the biggest protests of his presidency, an increasingly embattled Mubarak appointed his first ever vice president and a new prime minister in a desperate attempt to hold on to power.

The new cabinet unveiled on Monday did little to placate the protesters but the departure of Adly, who controls Egypt's notorious security forces who are accused of systematic human rights violations, was welcomed.

"We will accept no change other than Mubarak's departure," said one protester who asked not to be named.

Protester Rifat Ressay said: "We want a complete change of government, with a civilian authority."

He welcomed the departure of Adly.

"The interior minister is responsible for all the violence, because it's the police that opened fire on demonstrators," said Ressay.

Adly's ouster was one of the demands of protesters who have for a week demanded the departure of Mubarak and his entire

regime. They have also called for an end to corruption and oppression.

Business tycoons close to the regime playing an important role in politics is seen in Egypt as a sign of corruption, while Mubarak's son and previous heir apparent Gamal is also closely linked to the political-business milieu.

Egypt ordered riot police back onto the streets nationwide two days after they virtually disappeared as the army was deployed to deal with the revolt, but few were visible.

Police were seen smiling at motorists and sticking close to each other, a stone's throw away from burned-out shells of their police vans.

Their two-day vanishing act remains unexplained officially, but it left the city prey to looters and jail-breakers, as residents formed self-defence groups to protect their patches.

Many Cairo men are exhausted, taking part in neighbourhood vigilante groups protecting their homes from looters by night and protesting during the day.

Top dissident Mohamed ElBaradei late Sunday told a sea of angry protesters in the square that they were beginning a new era.

The Nobel laureate, who was mandated by Egyptian opposition groups including the banned Muslim Brotherhood to negotiate with Mubarak's regime, hailed "a new Egypt in which every Egyptian lives in freedom and dignity."

"We are on the right path, our strength is in our numbers," ElBaradei said in his first address on Tahrir square. "I ask you to be patient, change is coming."

"We will sacrifice our soul and our blood for the nation," the angry crowd shouted. "The people want to topple the president."

The protests against Mubarak's three-decade rule have shaken Egypt and left at least 125 people dead as the veteran leader clings to power.

Several foreign governments said they would evacuate their nationals, while the United States authorised the departure of embassy families.

Washington, a key ally of Egypt, called on Mubarak to do more to defuse the crisis, with President Barack Obama voicing support for "an orderly transition to a government that is responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people."

Troops set up checkpoints on roads to riot-hit prisons, stopping and searching cars for prisoners on the run.

Many petrol stations are running out of fuel, motorists said, and many bank cash machines have either been looted or no longer work. Banks were shut for a third straight day on Monday.

JS session

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boycott of it, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque told The Daily Star yesterday.

A number of BNP lawmakers hinted that their parliamentary party might sit this week to take the decision to this effect.

The opposition legislators have been keeping off parliament proceeding since early June last year on various issues.

The House is set to kick off today a 40-hour discussion on a thanks-giving motion on the president's address to the new-year session while the opposition continues its boycott.

Treasury bench Chief Whip Abdus Shahid will move a motion to thank President Zillur Rahman for

his address, officials at the parliament secretariat said citing today's business of the House.

After the president's January 25 address, the House session was adjourned till 4.30 pm today.

Meanwhile, two MPs-elect from Brahmanbaria-3 and Habiganj-1 constituencies are likely to take oath today.

Ruling Awami League-backed Ubaidul Muktar Chowdhury won the January 27 by-election in Brahmanbaria-3 and BNP-supported Sheikh Sujat Mia won in Habiganj-1.

Interestingly, the parliament secretariat has to organise separate oath-taking ceremony for the two lawmakers-elect as the treasury bench chief whip asked it to do so.

Court to rule on US gunman

Says Pak president

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari said yesterday the courts should decide the fate of a US government employee, under investigation for double murder, after US lawmakers pressed for his release.

Six representatives of the US Congress asked Zardari to free Raymond Davis, who was arrested after killing two Pakistani motorcyclists in broad daylight on the streets of Lahore, in what the American said was self-defence.

Star reaches out

FROM PAGE 20
Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the website at The Daily Star office in the capital by taking a mock test.

The website, www.champs21.com, will help students assess their knowledge on specific topics and sharpen their aptitude.

English medium students following Cambridge or Edexcel syllabus can also participate in examination on it.

Students willing to take the test will have to pay a fee ranging from Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,000 depending on their class and the subject.

Termining the website launch a historic event, the minister said the young learners have to be provided education in an attractive and accessible way.

Education means knowledge and efficiency that is life-oriented, he said. The initiative taken today [yesterday] is a significant step to building a new generation, which is technologically efficient, he added.

On the current state of education in the country, Nahid said it is impossible to bring changes and achieve Vision 2021 with the existing system.

"We need to bring a fundamental change in education system which will be modern, time-befitting and people-oriented, so the new generation can acquire knowledge and apply those."

He also urged all to come up with more creative initiatives.

"These initiatives are needed now, so that we can face global challenges," Nahid noted.

Speaking as special guest, former adviser to a caretaker government Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said the website employs the techniques of formative assessment to help students review what they are learning.

He, however, suggested that the contents be provided free at the beginning to attract more students.

Bangladeshis

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However, the US, Japan, India and China are among the states preparing to evacuate their citizens.

Rahman said Bangladesh mission in Cairo sent a report to the foreign ministry in Dhaka on the status of Egypt, and said there were no problems of the Bangladeshi nationals there.

Buriganga

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kilometre-stretch of the Buriganga in Kamrangirchar, Swarighat and Ashrafabad areas.

Mahbubur Rahman fenced off with bamboo a 50-decimal portion of the river and was filling it up with sand bags. Bilal filled up four decimal and Saleha encroached upon a 100-foot stretch of the river.

The special team was led by Mohammed Munir Chowdhury, DoE director of Monitoring and Enforcement wing, and assisted by a team of Rab personnel.

"Haji Mahbubur Rahman is a notorious river grabber of the area. Though there are cases against him, I don't understand why the police were not arresting him," said Munir.

The DoE team arrested Mahbub and sent him to Kamrangirchar Police Station.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority filed a case against Mahbub on January 26 following a report published in The Daily Star. But the local police station did not arrest him.

The DoE realised Tk 2.61 lakh in fine from Mahbub, Tk 50,000 from Saleha Begum and Tk 10,000 from Bilal.

According to the Environment Conservation Act (amendment) 2010, river grabbers could be fined up to Tk 10 lakh and also jailed for 10 years.

Kalyanpur

FROM PAGE 20
canal.

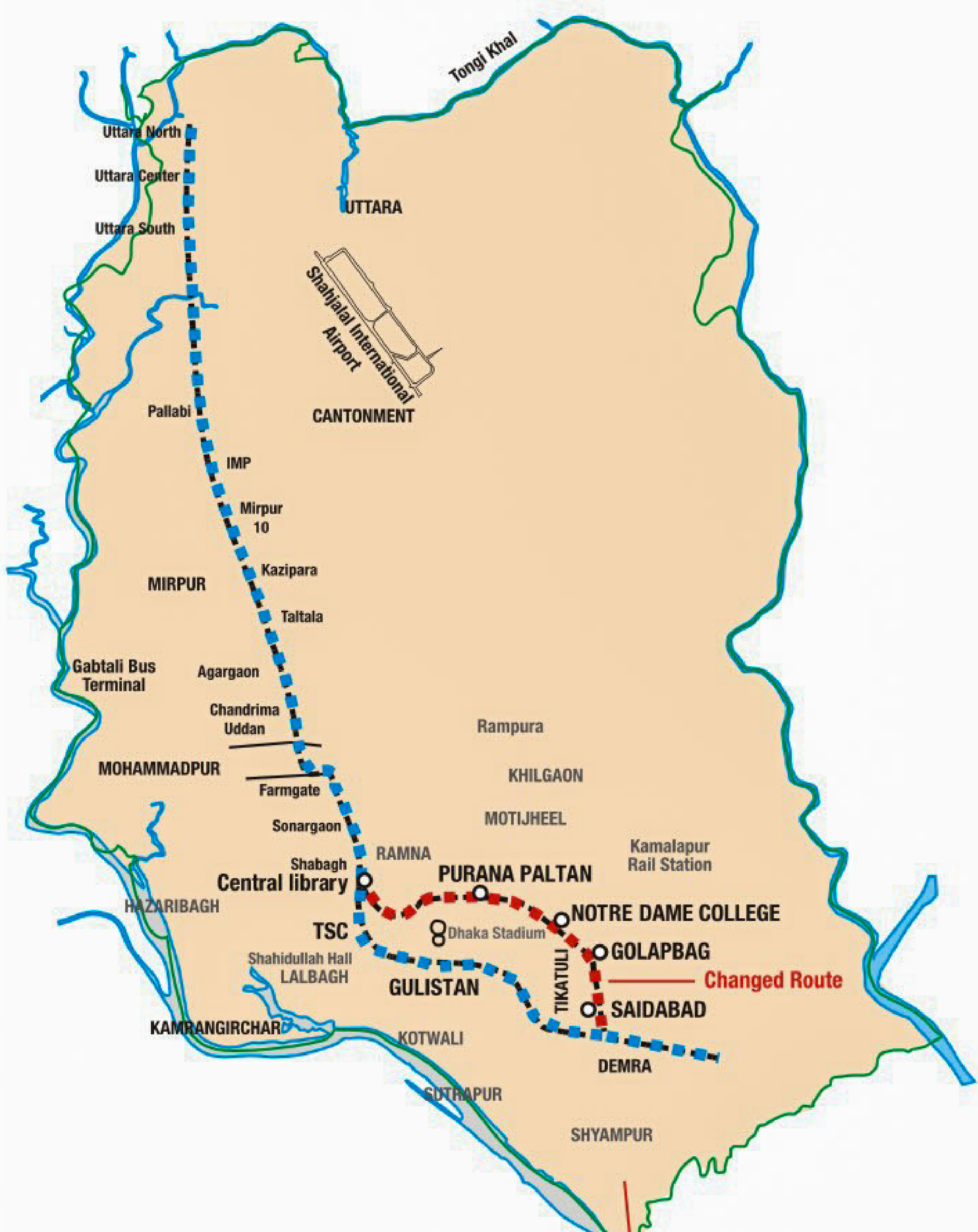
"We will discuss the removal of the mosques with their authorities," said Ruhul Amin, executive engineer of Wasa.

He said they engaged nearly a hundred day-labourers to demolish illegal structures on the three-kilometre canal adjacent to the Dhaka Housing project.

Asked why bulldozers were not used in the drive, the Wasa engineer said there was an uncertainty about the drive following a court stay order.

Nearly half kilometre of the canal was occupied by the illegal structures, he said.

Policemen stood guard during the eviction.



Metro rail route

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said Saleh Uddin, additional executive director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board.

He said the majority of those who live in Mirpur area come to Motiheel for various purposes while the present route conflicts with the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover.

The communications ministry yesterday discussed the modification with a team from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which showed interest in financing 80 percent of the project cost -- \$1.7 billion -- while the government will bear the rest.

"I asked the JICA team to complete a feasibility study on the modified route by this March," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain said after the discussion.

Earlier, JICA study chalked out three routes for the metro rail and showed interest in the first part dubbed Mass Rail Transit-6. This part of the route will be 22-kilometre long, stretching from Uttara Third Phase to Syedabad.

The first phase of the metro rail will be built mainly

over government land and existing roads. There is, however, a chance that 1.8 kilometres of the proposed metro rail between Bangladesh Bank and Kamalapur Rail Station be underground.

"This small stretch has several high-rises and the government will have to require land. So, building underground tracks will be the best option here," architect Tanwir Newaz, also a consultant of DTCCB, told The Daily Star.

He also spoke of diverting the route from TSC. "Apart from the Gulistan flyover, the present route will also disturb the Central Shaheed Minar and the under-construction Asad Memorial near the emergency unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital," he observed.

According to the JICA study, Japan and Bangladesh are scheduled to complete financial negotiations by this June, after which a detailed engineering study is supposed to be carried out.

The study estimated \$12 million for each kilometre of the elevated part, while \$48

million per km underground.

The government earlier said it would begin construction of the first phase by July 2013, but everything seems to be delayed by months.

"We want to complete all the formalities in the quickest possible time as we target to construct a considerable portion of the metro rail within the tenure of the present government," said the communications minister.

Meanwhile, the JICA team led by its director Tomohide Ichiguchi also inquired about the progress of different projects funded by Japan, including that of reforming the Bangladesh Railway.

JICA has committed \$730 million to revamp the 150-year-old Bangladesh Railway.

Railway Director General TA Chowdhury informed that they could not form the proposed line of business (LOBs), an important part of the reform, due to no clearance from the ministry.

Communications Secretary Md Mozammel Haq Khan said the finance ministry approved formation of the LOBs and they would soon give the clearance.

Victim dies

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student of class eight, was seven months into pregnancy following rape by her 35-year-old neighbour Abu Taleb in Comilla Sadar south.

In a bid to deny paternity, Taleb and his accomplice Josna, an aunt of the victim, set her after on January 23.

Police arrested Josna after the victim's father filed a case on January 24.

While undergoing treatment at DMCH burn unit, she gave birth to a dead baby on January 29, three days after doctors declared her foetus dead.

In compliance with a High Court order, the hospital authority has collected deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) samples of the victim's baby to identify its father, Jahangir Alam, investigation officer of the case of Comilla Sadar South Police Station told The Daily Star.

Result of the test was not available as yet, he said adding, a statement of the victim was also recorded on January 29.

The HC on January 27 directed law enforcement authorities to arrest the main accused Abu Taleb and submit a report within three days.

Human chain

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the anti-graft body act.

They demanded reconsideration of the proposed amendments of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 as the changes would curtail the freedom of the ACC.

People from different walks of life joined the human chain at Genda bus stand of Dhaka-Aricha highway with placards, festoons and banners.

Earlier on January 24, the cabinet approved the draft of Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2010, which is unconstitutional, claimed the officials of TIB.

Once the amendments are made, the ACC will be required to ask for the government's approval before filing any graft case.

This will severely curb the independence of the ACC, turning it into an inactive organisation, they said.

Prof Aatur Rahman, convener of SNC of Savar unit, Kamrul Huda, president of Durniti Proirodh Committee (Savar), Samsun Nahar Rashid, organising secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Savar unit and Md Atikur Rahman, area manager of TIB, addressed the rally, among others.

Meanwhile, a six-day workshop on drama titled "Theatre against corruption" ended yesterday at NGO Forum auditorium in Lalmatia.