

Metro rail

FROM PAGE 20
in a better way, an Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate press release said on Thursday.

The release that contains the statement of the BAF about the MRT-6 route was issued against the backdrop of media reports on this issue and to clear the stand of the Air Force regarding the matter of public interest.

The government had rightly decided to build the route via Farmgate-Khamarbari-Rokeya Sarani instead of Bijoy Sarani, which would have no negative impact on Tejgaon Airport operation, it said.

The Tejgaon Airport, which is a fully operational airport and a strategic structure, is being used by the BAF and the Bangladesh Army jointly for operating helicopters, training aircraft, jet and bigger transport aircraft (4-engine C-130).

The BAF alone uses the airport for 10,000 flying hours a year besides operating regular flights for VVIPs, VIPs and carrying emergency goods and supply for relief operation.

The release said that all the structures around the airport are regulated by the Civil Aviation Regulation (CAR-84) and Bangladesh Gadget-8, which stipulate that the highest height of a structure would be 1:50 of its distance from the approach funnel of the runway.

The planned MRT-6 line through Bijoy Sarani was 701 feet far from the runway where the tallest structure could be only 14 feet. The proposed MRT on that place would be 62 feet high, prompting increase of the height of the landing approach and leaving a big portion at the beginning of runway unused for that increase.

In that case, the length of the runway would decrease to an alarming level, risking and disrupting the operation of jet and transport aircraft.

Regarding the position of the Bangabandhu Novo Theatre, the BAF said the dome of the theatre is fairly far from the runway approach line. The Novo Theatre is a 'point obstruction', with no high structures along side it. As a result, the landing and takeoff are managed by slight 'lateral

manoeuvre'.

But the MRT-6 line on the Bijoy Sarani would fall across the 'approach path' as a 'wall obstruction', leaving no room for such manoeuvre for aircraft operations. This will force changing 'approach angle' to 8 degree from usual 2.5-3 degree, increasing all sorts of risks in landing and takeoff.

The press release said the planned MRT-6 line on Bijoy Sarani would increase the risks to a level that would reduce the use of a 'strategic operational airfield' like the Tejgaon.

The high-rise buildings around this airport such as Falcon Tower, newly built Trust Bank and IDB Bhaban are not hindering the landing and takeoff of the aircraft as those buildings are far from the close proximity of the approach funnel.

It said the airport is an alternative to the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (SIA) for operating BAF jet and the civil aircraft and for relief operation during any emergency situation including natural calamity.

The airport is also an ideal one from the 'air strategic' point of view. Its 'strategic depth' is also significant for 'survivability' and protecting the central airspace during war, which had been developed to this level by spending huge money and resources in the past few years.

It said the two airports in Dhaka (SIA and Tejgaon) together increase the 'survivability' and the 'synergic effect' while they serve each other as 'technical redundancy' for 'combat air operations'.

"Tejgaon airport should be kept in full operation to maintain the strategic status of it, otherwise the BAF would lose its capacity to great extent in maintaining effectively the security of Dhaka and other areas of the central region, which will go against the interest of the country and can be 'catastrophic'," the BAF said.

On the other hand, the press release said, building of the MRT on the revised route would help protect the Tejgaon airport when it would serve the ultimate purpose of the project in improving traffic situation in Dhaka.

Indo-Bangla joint military exercise starts tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Special Forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their first-ever joint military exercise starting tomorrow in Sylhet.

The two sides will engage each other in the 14-day exercise code named 'Op Sampriti' and will practice counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations under the UN mandate, Indian Army sources said here yesterday.

India is fielding around 40 troops of its elite 21 Para (Special Forces) battalion for the exercise whereas the Bangladesh Army will deploy one of its Para Commando battalions, they said.

Around 40 to 50 troops will take part in the exercise, they said.

The officials said the two sides are aiming to further enhance their mutual understanding through increased military-to-military contacts.

Military relations between the two sides received a boost when Indian Army Chief General VK Singh had visited Dhaka last year and gifted howitzers and modern computers to the Bangladesh Army.

Gen Singh had gifted the two 3.7 inch howitzers, which were part of the first artillery unit of the Bangladesh Army.

He had also taken part in Bangladesh Liberation War as part of his Rajput Regiment battalion.

10 injured

FROM PAGE 1
at Talpukur Par might have burst. The ground floor was damaged and a fire started sending a wave of panic across the area.

The explosion was so powerful that it threw parts of the building walls onto a nearby teen-roofed house destroying it completely.

People run out of their buildings and stayed on streets until two fire engines doused the flame.

Four other houses were also damaged, police said.

Among the injured, Moron Devnath, 50, a resident of the ground floor, was taken to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital with burns. Others were being treated in local hospitals.

Two committees have been formed to probe the incident.

7 Jamaat

FROM PAGE 20
procession as it reached near Century Arcade shopping mall around 10:00am and arrested the seven, said Assistant Sub-inspector Azizul Islam of Ramna Police Station.

The Jamaat-Shibir men were chanting slogans demanding release of their top leaders detained on war crimes charges, said Officer-in-Charge Rafiqul Islam of the police station.

Police were preparing to produce the arrestees before a Dhaka Court today in connection with September 19 events, he added.

On September 19, several hundred Jamaat activists joined by Shibir members fought pitched battles with police at Bijaynagar after law enforcers obstructed their rally, leaving at least 100 injured and halting traffic for hours.

During the clashes, they set fire to at least 28 vehicles, smashed around 200 others and vandalised dozens of roadside shops.

In a press release, Jamaat yesterday evening condemned the arrest and said police held the seven without any reason after a "peaceful programme" of the party.

It demanded the authorities free all of its detained leaders and activists immediately.

ACC wants

FROM PAGE 1
look into the graft claim and an investigation might be launched on the basis of the official's findings, he said.

Meanwhile, WB has requested Canadian police to investigate the allegation too, reported BBC.

"If we learn from the World Bank about the accusation, we might also request Canadian police to let us know about it," added the ACC boss.

Man killed 'by son'

FROM PAGE 20
around 5:00pm they exhumed the body of Dulal Miah and its hands and legs were tied with a rope. Police say that Jahid Hossain Sunny, 18, admitted to killing his father but did not say why.

Police made the recovery following information from Sunny. His family yesterday handed him over to Nagorpur police in Tangail.

OC Nazrul quoted the victim's family members at Gayahata village of Nagorpur as saying: Sunny along with two of his accomplices strangled 52-year-old Dulal to death.

Dulal had been running a tin-built workshop on Narendranath Bosak Lane for over 15 years. Sunny joined his father recently and the two used to live in one of its rooms, OC Nazrul said.

On September 30, the

Asked if the commission has asked the government for information about the matter, the chairman said they might contact the authorities concerned after they know what actually the allegation is.

"The Padma Bridge construction is one of the top priorities of Bangladesh and we want transparency and the best company to do the work," the commission chairman told BBC.

father and son were supposed to go home together but Sunny went to Gayahata alone.

Asked where his father was, he gave questionable replies, raising suspicion among family members and at one stage of grilling he admitted killing his father, OCNazrul said.

The family told police that Sunny used to steal money from the cash box of the workshop and had quite a number of bad companies. His relation with father was deteriorating recently and this might have led to the killing.

The details of the murder could not be known immediately and police were yet to know the identities of the two associates of Sunny.

The body was sent to the Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue last night for autopsy.

BNP mulls more

FROM PAGE 1
on October 18.

On completion of these two, she will announce dates of road marches towards Khulna, Barisal and Rangpur, a number of leaders told The Daily Star requesting anonymity.

Meanwhile, the main opposition party decided to hold a grand rally on the Mymensingh circuit house premises on October 25. The date was earlier fixed for a march towards Chittagong, which was postponed due to hajj and Eid.

The decision came yesterday at a meeting between party acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and leaders of the Mymensingh district BNP.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, joint secretary general of BNP, said tougher programmes will be announced if the government obstructs their marches and public meetings.

On September 27, the BNP chief at a public gathering in the capital declared three road marches towards Sylhet, Rajshahi and Chittagong to drum up public support for its

demand for restoration of the caretaker government system.

Under the system, a nonparty caretaker government used to hold the national polls. But the 15th amendment to the constitution allows the incumbent government to oversee the election.

Protesting the amendment, BNP has called a number of hartals and held rallies. In a latest move, the party has decided to march towards all the seven divisional headquarters to press home its demand.

LIVE BROADCAST
Meanwhile, BNP has made arrangements to broadcast live its Monday's road march towards Sylhet at www.bnplive.com.

Centre for National Studies (CNS), a research organisation, will broadcast the show, said sources at the BNP chief's Gulshan office.

Khaleda Zia will lead the march and address nine rallies on the way. The rallies are set to be held in Narayanganj, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria, Habiganj and Maulvibazar.

AL to face off

FROM PAGE 1
inform those councils about the "opposition's move to foil the war crimes trial and create anarchy in the name of movement".

"Central leaders will attend the grassroots councils and point out government's success," Awami League acting Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hasina sits today with her party rank and file at her political office in Dhanmondi around 4:00pm to discuss the party programmes including the grassroots councils.

"...The issue of Narayanganj polls may come up for discussion at today's meeting," Hanif told The Daily Star yesterday. Awami League leaders Shamim Osman and Selina Hayat Ivy are two front-running mayoral candidates in the Narayanganj City Corporation polls.

Asked about party stance on Jamaat-Shibir activities on the streets, Hanif, also a special assistant to the prime minister, said the matter will be dealt with by the law enforcement agencies and his party does not think about it.

Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, an organising secretary of Awami League, said BNP-Jamaat want to foil the trial of war criminals. "We will make people aware of it," he said.

He said the caretaker government issue is a dead issue. "We will try to make people understand our past experience with caretaker government, which tried to destroy democracy," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Awami League Presidium member Obaidul Quader said coordination between the government and the party, party central and grassroots, and lawmakers and party leaders needs to be improved to gear up party activities at all levels.

The coordination between the government and allies in the grand alliance also needs a boost to face the opposition movement, suggested the Awami League policymaker.

N'ganj Polls

FROM PAGE 1
It has issued show cause notices to two councillor candidates—Omar Khayyam Chanchal, vying for ward no 11, and Saiful Islam, for ward no 16—as they were seeking blessings from voters through publishing advertisements in newspapers.

The commission is also investigating an allegation against Humayun Kabir, councillor candidate for ward no 15, of distributing leaflets.

Ex-army men

FROM PAGE 20
walking, like one-way traffic movement on some city streets.

The students are: Mushfiqur Rahman, Tasbeer Islam, Fahad Hussain and Prithu Amin. They are all students of Scholasticas school.

The families of the victims claimed that around 30 security guards and four retired army officials—two of them identified as Brig Gen (ret'd) Zakir Hossain and Lt Col (ret'd) Azizul Ashraf—beat them up around 8:15pm Thursday.

Victim Mushfiqur told The Daily Star, "They dragged us to the guardroom, tied us with ropes and beat us with truncheons."

He said that evening he along with his friends paid a visit to Fahad, who lives in the DOHS, and later they all decided to go for a walk in the park. He said they started walking anti-clockwise.

He claimed that Zakir Hossain appeared and asked them why they were walking anti-clockwise and rebuked them.

Mushfiqur said they were unaware of the absurd rule of the park and they later learnt that there was actually a sign there which they did not see in the dark.

"At one stage he slapped

me on my face and asked us to leave. Later, we sat down near the guardroom when Zakir Hossain showed up again with guard chief sergeant Abdus Salam and around 30 guards. They beat us up and dragged us into the guardroom where they kept us," he added.

The guardians of the teenagers later rescued them.

A negotiation meeting of the DOHS parishad was held yesterday which decided to sack Abdus Salam and withdraw Azizul Ashraf from Baridhara DOHS Parishad.

The guardians present at the meeting expressed dissatisfaction as no action was taken against Zakir Hossain. They said they would think about filing a case against Zakir if no action is taken against him.

Zakir Hossain claimed that he went to the spot and tried to make the students understand that they were walking in the wrong direction and that the teenagers misbehaved with him. He only tried to calm the situation down, Zakir claimed.

Azizul Ashraf said he was not involved in the matter. He said he went there hearing hue and cry from the guardroom.

Obama slams Pak

FROM PAGE 20
conference Thursday.

"Part of what we want to do is actually get Pakistan to realise that a peaceful approach towards India would be in everybody's interests, and would help Pakistan actually develop," he said.

Chiding Pakistan for backing Afghan insurgents to prevent India from consolidating its influence in Afghanistan after US-led forces withdraw at the end of 2014, Obama said: "I think they have hedged their bets in terms of what Afghanistan would look like."

"And part of their bets is having interactions with some of the unsavoury characters who think they might end up regaining power in Afghanistan after coalition forces have left," he said in his sternest comments amid a growing rift with its key ally in the region.

His use of the term 'unsavoury characters' clearly referred to the Taliban and the Haqqani network, whose leader served in the Taliban regime that was ousted by the 2001 US-led invasion.

Obama's comments came in response to a ques-

tion whether he agreed with Admiral Mike Mullen, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who last month called the Haqqanis a 'veritable arm' of the Pakistani spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Obama said: "What we've tried to persuade Pakistan of is that it is in their interest to have a stable Afghanistan; that they should not be feeling threatened by a stable, independent Afghanistan. We've still got work to do."

He said the United States would 'constantly evaluate' its relationship with Pakistan but indicated that a substantial cut in US military and civilian aid - which has totalled some \$20 billion since 2001 - was unlikely because he was 'hesitant to punish flood victims in Pakistan because of poor decisions by their intelligence services.'

"There's no doubt that, you know, we're not going to feel comfortable with a long-term strategic relationship with Pakistan if we don't think they're mindful of our interests as well," he said.

PMO official 'tried to scuttle'

FROM PAGE 1
related leasing deal might be "failing" because of "new conditions" presented by the leasing agent Euro-Atlantic.

"In response to Molla's comments, the PM asserted the pressing need for the delivery of leased aircraft by the end of November lest Biman lose landing rights at JFK airport," the cable said.

The prime minister emphasised that she did not want to re-tender and asked that the landing rights timeline be extended if needed, since "if there is no New York route, what is the point of buying Boeing?"

The cable said the ambassador sought to assuage the prime minister's fears and inquired as to the nature of the perceived new conditions. "The PM turned to her advisors including Cabinet [PMO] Secretary Waheeduzzaman Molla, one of a three-member board who approved the leased contract."

Based on her adviser's comments, the prime minister said the aircraft "wet lease" fee had increased from \$5000 to \$6000 per hour of usage, the cable said.

"She worried about the political consequences of a failed deal. The Prime Minister noted & I went out for this and if it is failed or if there are new conditions it could be embarrassing. Boeing company has negotiated this. They should provide the planes," wrote Moriarty in the cable.

Putting a note Moriarty wrote, "We have followed up

with Boeing, which informed us that the lease arrangement has been finalized to the GOB's [government of Bangladesh] satisfaction."

The ambassador met with the prime minister to review his recent consultations in Washington and preview upcoming events. Topics of the wide-ranging discussion ranged from domestic -- BNP-Awami League issues, civilian-military relations, corruption -- to bilateral (TIFA/trade), regional (Burma, India) and global (climate change and food security) priorities, said the cable.

"The overall conversation was upbeat; however, the Prime Minister voiced concern over perceived hurdles in Biman's lease agreement for Boeing 777s from Euro-Atlantic," said the cable.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd on April 22, 2008 signed the final deal with Boeing to procure eight new-generation aircraft -- four 777-300ER and four 787-8 -- at a cost of \$1.26 billion (Tk 8,728 crore).

The deal gives Biman an option to buy four more planes -- two 777-300ER and two 787-8.

The same day the national flag carrier signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the US plane-maker to buy two 737-800 aircraft with an option for purchasing another two.

This is the first time Biman independently decided to buy aircraft without any political and govern-

ment interference since its birth in 1972. Biman became a public limited company in July last year.

The first of the ten Boeing aircraft join Bangladesh Biman fleet on October 22 while another one will come in the third week of November, Biman officials said.

WHAT MOLLA SAYS
Contacted by The Daily Star over the phone, the PMO secretary brushed aside the allegation raised by Moriarty against him.

Molla said he was food secretary when the Boeing purchase deal was signed during tenure of the caretaker regime.

"After my joining the Prime Minister's Office, the new board was formed and I was made a member. But I never opposed Boeing purchase," Molla said. "Even at the November 5 meeting I did not oppose the purchase."

"Moriarty's allegation was completely baseless," he said.

About not joining the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Course in Washington, Molla said he fell sick after the long journey and his brother took him to New York from Washington. Therefore, he could not attend the course.

"But Moriarty wrote me a letter in a very objectionable language which I protested. In response to Moriarty's letter, I told him that I am ready to refund the money spent for me for the course purpose. And finally, I paid Tk 8 lakh," Molla added.

Saarc nations push

FROM PAGE 20
Preliminary agenda of the agriculture ministers' meet includes steps for testing and certification of seeds, and building a framework for transfer of plant genetic materials and seeds.

Abul Kalam Azad, director of Saarc Agriculture Centre, told this correspondent yesterday, "We are also preparing a paper for presentation at the October 12 meeting, depicting prospects of further cooperation in agriculture sector within Saarc region."

Under the planned seed bank arrangements, there would be stocks of quality seeds in all the Saarc member-countries, and in case of calamities, one member would bank on others' stocks, Kalam said.

"But to make this system operative, an agreement is needed for transfer of seeds from one country to another," he added.

Anwar Faruque said, "Seed bank will be particularly useful in meeting seed shortages caused by natural calamities. This will help greater availability of quality seeds and spread of high yielding improved crop varieties, exchange of seeds and plant genetic resources and sharing of the practices, technologies and techniques."

At the Thimpu Saarc summit in April last year, Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina proposed establishment of a regional seed bank, and it was incorporated in the Thimpu Declaration. The Saarc leaders directed the agriculture ministers to start work for this.

Bangladesh then prepared a concept paper and distributed it among all the member-states through the Saarc secretariat.

Asked about Saarc Food Bank, officials said though the bank came into being through an agreement at the New Delhi Saarc summit in 2007, it is yet to be functional.

"So, it is high time the Saarc leaders give another big push so that the food bank becomes operational," said one official, seeking anonymity.

The agreement signed at the New Delhi summit provided for building a stock of 2,41,580 tonnes of food grains from the original member-states of Saarc. Contribution of Afghanistan was left to be added since it would join the regional forum.

At the first meeting of the Food Bank Board in Colombo in October 2008, Afghanistan agreed to contribute 1,420 tonnes (of wheat), raising the total to 2,43,000 tonnes.

The board's third meeting in Kabul in November 2009 recommended doubling the food stock to 4,86,000 tonnes given the rising need in the region.