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Route to lot of hopes

Shipping deal to cut costs, time significantly

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh and India yesterday signed the coastal shipping agreement which would help reduce the time spent in shipping goods, cut costs and lessen the load on busy roads.

The freight charge for carrying one tonne of rice to Bangladesh from India would be between \$30 and \$35, whereas it costs \$90 now, said SK Mahfuz Hamid, managing director of Gulf Orient Seaways, a local shipping company.

Importers have to pay the high charge since the ships reach Bangladesh via Singapore or Colombo as they could not ply directly between the two countries.

Now, importers need to pay \$1,700-\$2,400 as freight charge per container, with 4,000-5,000 tonne capacity, and have to wait 30 to 40 days to get their goods.

Hamid said the importers would need to pay only \$400 for carrying the same amount of goods and they would reach Bangladesh in eight days.

"Definitely, the less freight charge will have a positive impact on the prices of commodities, as Bangladesh mainly imports basic commodities from India," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Bangladesh imports onion, rice, lentils, cotton, industrial raw materials and machinery from India. Bangladeshi shipping companies would also be benefited as they would

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



FROM LEFT ... Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee sitting inside a bus. They inaugurated Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati bus services at the PMO yesterday. PHOTO: FACEBOOK NARENDRA MODI

Hasina, Modi flag off two bus services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As part of establishing a greater connectivity between Bangladesh and India, trans-border bus services on two new routes were inaugurated yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, who came to Dhaka yesterday on a two-day visit, flagged off Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati bus services.

The two premiers exchanged tickets and symbolically boarded the buses for some time on the premises of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the capital.

They wished the travelers a happy journey before giving the go-ahead to the three buses, with the slogan -- Bharat-Bangladesh Souhardya Jatra [India-Bangladesh Friendship Journey] -- imprinted on their sides, by waving green flags.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Mamata here, yet not here

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The visit of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seemed more about showing diplomatic courtesy than real fortitude to foster relations between the two countries through signing the Teesta water-sharing deal.

She came separately, stayed at a separate hotel and skipped many events, clearly indicating that she was not part of the Indian delegation accompanying Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his maiden visit to Bangladesh.

She was also scheduled to leave early, yesterday evening, without even attending the official banquet hosted by Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina last night.

However, Mamata had a meeting with Modi yesterday and was present during the signing of the Land Boundary Agreement and the inauguration of Dhaka-Guwahati and Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala direct bus services.

Mamata arrived in Dhaka on Friday night and went to Radisson hotel where she received a call from Sheikh Hasina, requesting the chief minister to stay in Bangladesh one more day and also to attend the banquet. She did attend the banquet but left for Kolkata on a 9:40pm flight.

At her hotel, Mamata passed time with the members of her entourage, gossiping at the lobby. She was at the hotel when Modi was visiting the National Memorial in Savar and

Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi upon his arrival in the morning, according to journalists based in Kolkata.

She had her first meeting with Modi at Hotel Sonargaon at 3:15pm. From there, the two went to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) where 22 deals and MoUs were signed or renewed and the bus services inaugurated.

As they walked out of the hotel to leave for the PMO, Modi asked Mamata to travel with him in his car, which she did.

On reaching the PMO, the chief minister hugged Hasina and seemed in a good mood as she exchanged greetings. She also presented Hasina with a baluchuri sari she had brought

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



MODI'S GIFT TO HASINA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday presented Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a hand-woven tapestry from Venkatagiri, in southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

The tapestry has been woven using very fine cotton yarn and pure gold threads. It is a fusion of fine craftsmanship of the two countries and woven in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a balcony of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi yesterday.

INDO-BANGLA TRADE DEAL RENEWAL

Regional links to open new doors for economy

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Allowing transit through each other's territories, Bangladesh and India yesterday renewed the bilateral trade agreement which is believed to usher in a new era of regional trade.

Under the deal, Bangladeshi vehicles will carry goods to Bhutan and Nepal

through Indian territories. And India will transport cargo through Bangladesh, particularly from the mainland to its northeastern states.

The tenure of the agreement has been extended from three years to five years, having the option of auto renewal. The first India-Bangladesh trade deal was signed in 1972.

"Today, we have unveiled some of the pathways to this future," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after the deal renewal in Dhaka.

"Connectivity is the catalyst for deeper engagement. Bangladesh's decision to allow transit of power equipment and food grains to the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

China uses drones to stop cheating

MAIL ONLINE

Drones are being used to spy on pupils during university entrance examinations in China to stop them from cheating, according to Chinese media.

Officials in Luoyang, central China, have adopted

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

MODI-KHALEDA MEETING

BNP sees it as a scope to gain Delhi's trust

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia might seek support from India for what her party calls restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and would try to gain the trust of New Delhi when she meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi today.

The party wants to use this opportunity to gain the trust of India, a BNP standing committee member told The Daily Star.

"Politics, bilateral issues, including sharing the waters of common rivers, and trade imbalance, among other topics, would dominate the meeting between the two leaders," said BNP Vice-chairman Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmad.

Former water resources minister Hafiz, former foreign secretary and another BNP Vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, Khaleda's advisers Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed, BNP standing committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan and former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury might accompany the BNP chief to the meeting at Hotel Sonargaon, party insiders said.

The composition of the BNP delegation and the discussion topics will be finalised after consultation with the party

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4



PHOTO: PIB, INDIA

26 held with 15 arms

Arrestees are followers of Nizam Hazari

STAR REPORT

Rab seized 15 firearms from vehicles of a motorcade at Lalpur area of Feni yesterday evening and arrested 26 people, apparent followers of Awami League lawmaker Nizam Uddin Hazari of Feni-2, in this connection.

Following a tip-off, a Rab team intercepted a convoy of three microbuses at Lalpur around 7:30pm and found five foreign-made shotguns, a gun, five pistols, four locally-made light guns, 133 bullets, six machetes

and two Chinese axes inside the vehicles.

Major Mozammel Hossain, in-charge of Rapid Action Battalion-7 Feni camp, said leaders and activists "of a political party" were returning from Sonagazi upazila in convoy after attending a rally there, reports UNB.

Our Feni correspondent reports: Ruling party activists blocked the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, Feni-Noakhali highway at Dagonbhuiyan, and Feni-Sonagazi road at different spots protesting the arrest of their party men.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5



PRAYER TIMING

JUNE 7

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-30 5-00 6-45 8-15
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-50 8-55

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION