

First 'Silk Road' train from Britain leaves for China

AFP, Stanford-le-hope

The first-ever freight train from Britain to China started its mammoth journey yesterday along a modern-day "Silk Road" trade route as Britain eyes new opportunities after it leaves the European Union.

The 32-container train, around 600 metres (656 yards) long, left the vast London Gateway container port laden with whisky, soft drinks and baby products, bound for Yiwu on the east coast of China.

It was seen off on its 18-day, 12,000-kilometre (7,500-mile) journey with a string quartet, British and Chinese flags, and speeches voicing hope that it will cement a new golden age of trade between the two countries as Brexit negotiations loom.

The first train from China to Britain arrived on January 18, filled with clothes and other retail goods, and yesterday's departure was the first journey in the other direction.

The rail route is cheaper than air freight and faster than sea freight, offering logistics companies a new middle option.

After the last three containers were lifted onto the wagons, the driver gave a thumbs-up and tooted his horn as he got the train rolling at the port in Stanford-le-Hope, east of London.

"Restoring the ancient Silk Road as a means by which China, north Europe and now the UK can exchange goods is an important and exciting initiative," said Xubin Feng, the chairman of Yiwu Timex Industrial Investment, which is co-running the service.

"We have great faith in the UK as an export nation and rail provides an excellent alternative for moving large volumes of goods over long distances faster."

The train will go through the Channel Tunnel before travelling across France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan before heading into China.



Of a dying tradition

FROM PAGE 16 Firoj, a trader on Dhanmondi Road-8, said the sale of earthen plates soars ahead of Pahela Baishakh as many want to use those for having panta-ilish.

Talking to The Daily Star, a sales executive of Aarong near Asadgate intersection said, "Our sale [of earthen

items] is high as people now use clay items extensively for home decorations."

A woman who works in Bangladesh Betar and was buying earthen items near Shishu Academy said she had been using earthen plates, glasses and jugs for a long time.

Who is the owner?

বিষয়: গাড়ি জমা দেয়া

জনাব,

আমি বিগত কয়েক বছর ধরে এই গাড়িটি ব্যবহার করছি। গাড়িটি আমার অনেক প্রিয় ও আবেগের। সম্প্রতি আমি জানতে পারি, এই গাড়িটিতে ট্যাক্স ফকি দেয়া হয়েছে। আমি সমাজের সমানী ব্যক্তি আমাকে অনেকে একনামে চিনে মনসম্মানের কথা ভেবে আমি নিজের ইচ্ছায় গাড়িটি ফেলে রেখে গেলামা দয়া করে আমাকে আপনার খোজার চেষ্টা করবেন না। সারাদেশ ব্যাপী পরিচালিত আপনার অতিমাননীয় আমি প্রশংসা করছি। আমার অতি প্রিয় এই গাড়িতে ট্যাক্স ফকি দিয়ে অন্যায় করলেও এটি জমা দেয়ার মাধ্যমে আমি সেটের প্রস্টিত্য করলাম।

FROM PAGE 16 After expiry of the specified time, the owners must send their vehicles back to their respective countries, Shariful said, adding that Bangladesh stopped issuing Carnet permissions in 2014.

The officers have come to know that the Porsche was brought to the country by UK citizen of Bangladesh origin Farida Rashid. Before leaving the country, she might have sold it to someone, they speculated.

The person using the unregistered vehicle may have abandoned it fearing the ongoing drives against such vehicles, Shariful said.

He added that CIID officials were

tipped that a luxury vehicle would be left at Hatirjheel yesterday and they found it in the morning.

Another tax defaulter on April 20 last year left a 2007 Lexus near CIID office in Sylhet with an anonymous letter. Officials speculated that the owner was unable to pay the taxes which had piled up over the years.

The CIID have so far seized about 60 vehicles for tax evasions.

Cases filed in connection with 10 of those vehicles were disposed of. The rest are in CIID's custody as the cases were under trial, said its Director General Moinul Khan.

Maldives opposition in new bid to take control of House

AFP, Colombo

Maldives opposition parties said yesterday they would launch a fresh bid to seize control of parliament by impeaching the speaker, weeks after their first attempt failed when the president called in troops to evict lawmakers.

A coalition of opposition parties said it had submitted a no-confidence motion on Sunday with the support of 31 MPs -- enough to force a vote in the 85-member majlis, or parliament.

But after the motion was submitted the government increased the number of signatures required for such a motion to 42, leaving it unclear whether a vote would go ahead.

The coalition, led by exiled opposition leader and former Maldives leader Mohamed Nasheed, is trying to undermine President Abdulla Yameen before elections next year.

It faces an uphill struggle, with all opposition leaders now in exile or in jail after a years-long crackdown on dissent under Yameen's leadership.

The clampdown has raised fears over the country's stability and dented its image as a tourist paradise.

Yesterday, the coalition led by Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) accused the government

of making "abrupt and arbitrary changes to the parliamentary standing orders, designed to derail the second no confidence motion submitted against the speaker".

Last month's motion ended in chaos when Yameen ordered troops to eject some lawmakers from parliament, leading the opposition to boycott the vote and prompting Washington to urge the Maldives to restore faith in democracy.

Nasheed has said that taking control of the legislature is crucial to ensuring a free and fair presidential election in 2018.

The government said the second impeachment bid was a "deliberate attack on the administration" and accused the opposition of trying to stoke political unrest.

The latest move comes days after Yameen locked up the last opposition leader still at liberty in the honeymoon island nation of just 340,000 people.

Qasim Ibrahim, who ran for president in 2013 and heads the Jumhoore Party, was one of four signatories of an opposition unity deal aimed at toppling the president.

Nasheed became the country's first democratically elected president in 2008, but was narrowly defeated by Yameen in a controversial 2013 election run-off.

'Kuchh to mila'

FROM PAGE 2

cook for Mamata when she visits Bangladesh, our Kolkata correspondent reports, quoting Mamata.

"Then, I said I will cook for you [Hasina] too," she added.

"Hasina di [sister] cooks very well," Mamata added, while talking to journalists on Sunday night after the dinner organised in honour of the Bangladesh PM.

On Saturday, the Bangladesh premier took the helm of the kitchen at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and prepared steamed hilsa for Indian President Pranab Mukherjee.

Hasina returned home last night wrapping up her India visit.

Submit

FROM PAGE 2

Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu opposed the petitions and appealed to the court to frame charges against Khaleda in eight other cases as there was no stay order on those cases.

After hearing both sides, the court granted the petitions and asked Khaleda to appear before it at the next scheduled date.

Earlier on March 28, the same court had said that legal orders would be framed against Khaleda in absentia in 11 cases if she failed to appear before it yesterday.

Of the 11 cases, 10 were filed in the first three months of 2015 over arson attacks on vehicles. The other was filed with a Dhaka court on charge of making seditious comments about freedom fighters and the Liberation War martyrs.

Police in May and June last year pressed charges against Khaleda and several other BNP leaders and activists for their alleged involvement in arson attacks on buses.

Private univ

FROM PAGE 2

vandalised some roadside shops before police arrived.

Savar Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Kamruzzaman said they were conducting an investigation. The university Deputy Registrar Faruque Ahmed said a committee would be formed to launch a probe.

The body was set to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Jails ready

FROM PAGE 16

associate Sharif Shahedul Alam Bipul are kept in Kashimpur High Security Jail while the other, Delwar Hossain Ripon, in Sylhet Central Jail.

Officials from both the jails confirmed that they received the home ministry's execution order.

Earlier in December last year, the Supreme Court upheld the death penalties for the Hujji militants, including Mufti Hannan, for carrying out a grenade attack in 2004 on the then UK envoy in Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury.

On May 21 of the year, three people were killed and some 70 others, including Anwar Choudhury, injured in the grenade attack at a Sylhet shrine after the Juma prayer.

The Bangladesh-born British diplomat suffered minor leg injuries barely 18 days into his new assignment.

Our Gazipur and Sylhet Correspondent contributed to the report.

Emergency

FROM PAGE 16

At the scene of the Alexandria blast yesterday investigators combed through the wreckage, taking pictures of the debris.

A handful of women, dressed in black, showed their identification papers to guards before entering the church.

"I'm so sad, I cannot speak," said one mourner, a woman in her 40s. At funerals yesterday, angry crowds gathered to denounce the security services.

"Leave, Leave, Abdel Ghaffar," mourners chanted, referring to the interior minister. "I am a Christian till judgement day," they shouted.

Lawmakers said the state of emergency -- Egypt's first since widespread unrest in 2013 -- would help the country face down a menacing jihadist insurgency.

It will allow police to detain for 45 days suspects "known to the security services but for whom there is not enough evidence to go to trial," said parliament member Yehia Kedwani.

TRUMP CALLS SIS I US President Donald Trump has called Sisi to express his condolences about twin church bombings by the Islamic State group, the White House said yesterday.

Trump spoke to Sisi on Sunday to express his "deepest condolences to Egypt and to the families who lost loved ones in the heinous terrorist attacks against Christian churches on Palm Sunday."

IS has been waging a deadly insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula and has claimed scores of attacks on security forces there.

But it has been unable to seize population centres, unlike its early gains in Iraq and Syria, and it has also lost top militants to Egyptian military strikes in recent months.

Analysts say Sunday's bombings suggest the group is lashing out as it finds itself under increasing pressure in other countries.

HC questions

FROM PAGE 1

The organisations have recently filed the petition saying the special provision, which has allowed a girl under 18 and a boy under 21 to get married on permission from their parents or a court, is contradictory to article 28 of the constitution.

The article 28 of the constitution does not allow discrimination, said the petitioners.

Article 28(4) says, "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth."

Article 28 (2) says, "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life."

Article 28 (3) says, "No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution."

Article 28(4) says, "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens."

Petitioners' lawyer Fawzia Karim Feroze told The Daily Star that marriage of underage girls and boys is against the spirit of the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW), 1979, the Child Rights Convention, 1989, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Under the CEDAW agreement, Bangladesh is supposed to formulate a law so that a girl under 18 and a boy under 21 cannot marry, she said.

During hearing on the petition, Fawzia told the HC that the provision which allows marriage of underage girls and boys under "special circumstances" is contrary to the provisions of the same law -- the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017, as it allows marriage of underage girls and boys on permission from their parents or a court.

On the other side, marriage of underage girls and boys as per their own choice without permission from their parents or a court is an offence under the same law and therefore, the provisions of the law are contradictory, she argued.

She also said the House has passed the bill on the law without holding enough debates.

The Jatiya Sangsad on February 27 passed the Child Marriage Restraint Bill, 2017, keeping the provision of allowing marriage of girls under 18 and boys under 21 under "special circumstances".

The law was passed despite protracted and persistent opposition by rights groups at home and abroad.

After and before passing of the law child rights activists repeatedly called upon the government to formulate the rules of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 immediately to prevent its misuse.

The United Nations also voiced its criticism over the "controversial" law yesterday.

The rights groups fear without a specified age limit, underage children could be married off, undermining Bangladesh's efforts to curb such unions and improve women's health.

The "special circumstances" provision of the law permits parents and in the absence of parents, a girl's or a boy's guardians, to get a court order and marry their wards off even before they reach the minimum marriageable age in their (the children's) "best interests".

And no age limit is specified in the law for solemnising marriages under such "special circumstances". So, practically it can be 16 years of age, 14 or even below.

According to section 2 of the bill, any male who is yet to complete 21 years or any female who is yet to complete 18 years will be considered underage for getting married.

When one or both are underage, this will be defined as child marriage.

Provision is there

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh disclosed the findings of its study titled "10th Parliament: 7th to 13th Session". It found that no bilateral treaties were discussed in parliament.

The German-based organisation recommended that all agreements, including those signed with India during the prime minister's recent visit, should be discussed in the House.

Asked why the treaties were not discussed in the House, the chief whip said: "How would the lawmakers discuss the deals if those are not placed in parliament?"

He, however, didn't blame President Abdul Hamid for not sending the agreements to parliament.

Terming the TIB's study "imaginary and motivated", the chief whip alleged that the study was aimed at "tarnish the image of parliament and all the MPs deliberately".

Feroz protested the study and called upon the TIB not to come up with such "negative and motivated" reports in future.

"There are many problems in the country of 16 crore people. But instead of carrying out research on those, the TIB is involved in counting how many times the MPs used unparliamentary language. This can't be the job of an organisation," he said.

About the quorum crisis in parliament and the resulting loss of public money, he said although there was a minor quorum crisis, there was no need to present the issue negatively.

On the wastage of public money due to the quorum crisis, Feroz said the TIB's statistics were completely "fictitious".

"In fact there are no extra expenses

other than the bills for lighting the House chamber when parliament is in session," he claimed.

Whips Shahiduzzaman Sarkar and Iqbalur Rahim were present.

Sources at the Parliament Secretariat told The Daily Star that different reports, including those from the offices of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Public Service Commission and Information Commission, submitted to the president were placed in the House duly.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said their study was not aimed at undermining parliament and the lawmakers.

"We rather wanted to find ways how to make parliament more effective," he added.

TIB FINDINGS

The graft watchdog in its report said 59 international agreements were signed in 2015-16 fiscal year, but those were not placed and discussed in parliament.

Effectiveness of the current parliament was still questionable as the main opposition Jatiya Party played a dual role both in the House and the government, read the report.

The use of unparliamentary language by the ruling Awami League and JP lawmakers to criticise their political rivals outside parliament was notable, the TIB study said, adding that the MPs used unparliamentary language at least 2,101 times.

The seventh to 13th session of parliament saw 103 sittings between September 2015 and December 2016.

Cash rewards

FROM PAGE 16

"Foreign intelligence organs and other hostile forces have also seized the opportunity to sabotage our country through political infiltration, division and subversion, stealing secrets and collusion," it added.

The Beijing City National Security Bureau is encouraging citizens to join counterintelligence efforts, by offering rewards of 10,000 to 500,000 yuan (\$1,500 to \$73,000) for information on spies, it said.

The government has acquired new powers to safeguard China with a national security law passed in 2014, followed by measures on counterterrorism, the management of foreign non-government bodies and cyber security.

Western governments have spoken out against the new measures that they say define China's national interests too broadly, flagging the risk that they could be used to intensify a crackdown on dissent.

China says the laws are fitting, given the reality of its national security con-

cerns.

In April last year, China launched a series of warnings against espionage, publicising rare details of spy cases in state media, and highlighting how romantic relationships may be used to uncover sensitive information.

Rewards to encourage security vigilance are a common government tactic used, for instance, to draw out information on "terrorism" in far western Xinjiang.

Working with employees of state organisations to harm China's national interests, encouraging defection and buying state secrets are potential spy behaviours that could be reported, the paper said.

Discovering espionage equipment, such as recording and monitoring devices, could bring extra rewards.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING FOR RENT

B+10 Commercial Building
 Approx 66000 sft., Two Lifts,
 Two Stairs Cases Ready for Rent.

Please contact: 02-9845003-4,
 01753713864, 01713000124.
 Tahsia Monjil, Hossain Market
 (opposite TVS factory), Tongi.