

Train services between India, Bangladesh resume

STAR REPORT

Train services between Bangladesh and India resumed yesterday after remaining suspended for over two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Maitree Express, which plies the Dhaka-Kolkata route, left the Dhaka Cantonment Station at 8:15am with around 170 passengers, Shafiqur Rahman, divisional railway manager (Dhaka) of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star.

As the train resumed operations after a long while, BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder welcomed the passengers with flowers, he added.

Meanwhile, the Bandhan Express, which operates on Khulna-Kolkata route, reached Benapole railway station from Kolkata around 9:45am with 19 passengers.

Earlier, the Khulna-bound Bandhan



Express started its journey from Kolkata station at Chitpur at 7:10am (Indian time).

While the Bandhan Express runs two days a week, the Maitree Express operates five days.

Eklavya Chakraborty, ER PRO, said people on both sides of the border are excited about the resumption of the train services. The trains are fully booked for the next few days, reports our Delhi correspondent.

Mitali Express, the third passenger train to be operated between the two countries, will start operations from June 1.

The train would travel between Dhaka and West Bengal's New Jalpaiguri four days a week.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon, who is visiting India now, and Indian Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav will jointly inaugurate the new train from the Rail Bhavan in New Delhi virtually, sources said.



People walking on the middle of the street as traders left planks on the footpath and part of the road in the capital's Dholaipar. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh ready to send more peacekeepers

Says PM on International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2022

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh is ready to send more members to the UN peacekeeping missions as it is committed to playing a stronger role in establishing world peace.

"If needed further, we're ready to send the required number of peacekeepers in response to the call of the United Nations," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2022, held at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday. She joined the event from the Gono Bhaban through videoconferencing.

Hasina said, "We are committed to playing a stronger role in the establishment of world peace, keeping in view 'People Peace Progress: the Power of Partnership,' the theme of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers 2022."

She called upon all Bangladeshi peacekeepers to carry out their respective responsibilities with sincerity while maintaining professionalism and integrity in the global peacekeeping operations.

The PM also asked them to try to keep their lives protected in the missions and brighten the country's image on the world stage.

"Always keep in mind that self-confidence is the most important thing in performing any duty. So, you all

should carry out your respective duties with confidence. If so, you will be successful."

Noting that a war following the pandemic is now badly affecting the world economy, Hasina said, "We don't want any conflict or war. We want peace to be established throughout the world."

The premier said Bangladesh currently has 6,825 members in UN peacekeeping missions. They account for 9.2 percent of a total of 75,516 peacekeepers from 121 countries deployed in establishing world peace.

At present, 519 women peacekeepers from Bangladesh are engaged in world peacekeeping operations, she said, adding that participation of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh armed forces and police is rising gradually.

She said Bangladeshi peacekeepers have successfully completed 55 missions in different countries. Now Bangladeshi peacekeepers are engaged in 13 missions around the world.

The PM said Bangladeshi peacekeepers have earned unconditional love, trust and confidence of the local people through the restoration of peace in the conflict-ridden countries by working together with other allied peacekeepers, risking their lives.

Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima, is the current chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, she added.



Tailored

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"This is the right step as the corporate tax rate in Bangladesh is higher than the South Asian average," said Nasiruddin Ahmed, a former NBR chairman.

Gradually, the corporate tax rate will be brought down to 25 percent, according to the finance ministry official.

"I don't see why there needs to be a distinction between listed and non-listed companies. If the corporate sector flourishes, it is good for the economy as it will generate employment," Ahmed added.

Another measure that is in the works is the withdrawal of tax exemption for poultry and fisheries industries.

The purpose of tax exemption is to help the domestic industry become more competitive.

"But poultry and fish are not imported, so there is no competition from foreign producers. There is no need for tax exemption for these two sectors," the finance ministry official said.

Instead, retracting the tax exemption will compel

the local industries to level up.

Besides, many use the facility to evade taxes, according to Ahmed.

"This is actually a concern and the Anti-Corruption Commission has lodged many cases," he said.

The poultry and fisheries sectors are composed of a large number of small producers who are outside the tax net, according to the finance ministry official.

"You could say those industries have perfect competition, as they say in economics."

In economics, perfect competition is when a large number of producers with the willingness and ability to supply the homogenous product at a certain price exists. As a result, individuals are unable to influence prices more than a little.

"And the taxmen are yet to reach them, so removing the tax exemption facility will have no impact on them. On the upshot, one of the many loops for tax evasion will be closed," the official added.

Reckless driving

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Ali Arshad, officer-in-charge of Ujirpur Police Station, said, "It appears from the wreckage that the vehicle was speeding."

Police and firefighters went to the scene and recovered the bodies soon after the crash around 5:30am.

Firemen had to cut part

of the vehicle to free the bodies from the wreckage, he added.

Officials formed a three-member committee headed by Barishal Additional District Magistrate Rakibur Rahman to find out the cause of the crash.

The committee was asked to submit a report in seven work days.

Abandoned on operation table

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"When we got the tip-off, we thought we had misheard ... perhaps the mother was scheduled to go into surgery or something. Never did we imagine finding this," said Mahmudur Rahman, assistant director (hospitals and clinics) at DGHS.

The officials found three other patients, who had undergone C-section surgeries in the previous days, and their newborns in general beds and cabins.

That was not the end of the shocking revelations. At least three doctors from the nearby Institute of Child and Mother Health in Dhaka's Matuail

— a government-run specialised healthcare organisation — were serving the hospital regularly as enlisted consultants, the DGHS officials found after inspecting the hospital documents.

Officials could not identify the surgeon and anaesthesiologist who abandoned the mother and child in the OT.

"Whatever the situation is, we cannot leave a patient before completing the surgery. It is a serious violation of ethics; it is a crime," Mahmudur Rahman said, adding that the matter would be investigated.

Officials arranged necessary medical support for the patients immediately and shifted the mother and her baby to the Institute of Child and Mother Health.

They sent the three others and their babies to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

DGHS officials also sealed off the hospital following the drive.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (administration) of the DGHS, told The Daily Star, "We learnt that the incident was an attempt to create controversy over the ongoing drive. So, I rushed

there immediately."

The directorate has asked police to identify the owners of the hospital and ordered the Narayanganj civil surgeon to investigate as early as possible.

Civil Surgeon Mosiur Rahman said no official of the hospital could be found yesterday.

At least 882 unauthorised private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and blood banks were closed by the DGHS officials during the nationwide crackdown as of yesterday.

Of those, 167 were in Dhaka division, 229 in Chattogram, 35 in Sylhet, 96 in Mymensingh, 14 in Rangpur, 78 in Rajshahi, 204 in Khulna and 59 in Barishal, according to the DGHS data.

Of the facilities closed in Dhaka division, only 12 were in Dhaka's two city corporation areas.

"Our officials countrywide are being encouraged by the support

from the people as well as the media. We faced no obstacle while closing 882 facilities. We will continue it for the next few days," Prof Ahmedul said.

About the registered facilities that are not maintaining the standard operating procedures, he said, "After we complete bringing all healthcare organisations under authorisation, we will concentrate on ensuring standards. That is our next target."

Meanwhile, the DGHS postponed yesterday's press conference on the ongoing drive. It is expected to be held tomorrow with Health Minister Zahid Maleque and DGHS Director General Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam expected to attend.

On Wednesday, the DGHS in a meeting decided to shut down all unregistered healthcare facilities by Saturday afternoon.

15 hurt in AL-BNP clash in Bogura

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house. This incensed Morshed's supporters, who retaliated by throwing brickbats at the AL activists, triggering the clash.

Carrying bamboo sticks and planks, activists of both the parties engaged in conflict, which continued for about an hour and half, added witnesses.

Police reached the spot around 12:30pm and fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

Abdur Razzak Milu, president of Gabtali upazila AL, said, "A female BNP leader made derogatory

comments about the prime minister while addressing a party programme last Friday. Protesting the incident, we are staging demonstrations. When our procession was passing by Morshed Milton's house today [yesterday], his supporters threw brickbats at our activists, leading to the clash."

He added that around six AL men were injured in the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Bogura district Chhatra Dal General Secretary Noore Alam Siddiq Rigan said AL men

came in a procession and started vandalising the upazila BNP office in Gabtali town. The clash broke out when BNP activists tried to resist them.

He added that seven BNP men were wounded. Md Sirazul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gabtali Model Police Station, said, "We have deployed additional police personnel at the spot."

Abdul Wadud, deputy director of Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said eight people injured in the clash were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Penalise 19 cops for not giving witness statements

HC to IGP in murder case verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the full text of the verdict in a murder case, the High Court has asked the inspector general of police to take action against 19 police personnel, including the investigation officer, for not giving statements as witnesses before the trial court.

The case was filed with the capital's Shahjahanpur Police Station on April 10, 2005, a day after the severed head of a boy was recovered beneath a foot footbridge in the area.

In the full text of the verdict released yesterday, the HC acquitted accused Md Anwar Hossain and Md Zakir Hossain, who were sentenced to death by the trial court.

The bench of Justice Krishna Debnath and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar Kajol observed that the acquitted accused were victims of miscarriage of justice and they can seek an order of compensation and proper rehabilitation.

Lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir, who appeared for Anwar and Zakir in a pro bono move, told The Daily Star that the investigation officer of the case and then sub-inspector of Shahjahanpur Police Station Rafiqul Islam and 18 other police personnel were named as witnesses in the charge sheet, but none appeared before the trial court to give statements.

"The trial proceedings of the case remained halted for eight years due to the absence of the witnesses," he said.

Fire breaks out at power plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A fire broke out at Shahjibazar 330 MW Power Plant in Habiganj yesterday morning.

Six fire engines brought the blaze under control at 11:45am, around two hours after it broke out, said Shimul Mohammad Rafi, officer at Habiganj fire service and civil defence.

The power plant — under the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) — was closed due to the fire.

Md Abdul Majid, executive engineer of Habiganj BPDB, said an inquiry committee will be formed to investigate the incident and BPDB officials will visit the power plant.

Mizanur Rahman, executive engineer of the plant, said they suspect that two transformers had caught fire due to a short circuit.

The damage caused by the fire could not be immediately determined, he said.

7 Rohingyas held in Cox's Bazar for illegal entry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police detained seven Rohingyas, including three children, in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya upazila on Saturday night for illegal entry into Bangladesh from India.

They were held from Lambasia camp 1 in Kutupalong, said Naimul Haque, commanding officer of APBn 14.

The detainees — Sajon, 20, Hamida Begum, 23, Ibrahim, 3, Mohammad Tahir, 33, Anwar Kalim, 22, Saima, 5, and Ramina, 2 — are members of two families.

Naimul said several detainees confessed to police that they came from India. They were sent to Kutupalong transit camp.

Sri Lanka police tear-gas students in fresh clashes

AFP, Colombo

Police fired tear gas to disperse thousands of students trying to storm the Sri Lankan president's home yesterday as the government offered an olive branch to demonstrators demanding his resignation.

Anti-riot squads used water cannon followed by tear gas, as protesters pulled down yellow iron barricades across a road leading to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's official residence in Colombo.

Nearby, thousands of men and women demonstrated for the 51st straight day outside Rajapaksa's seafood office on Sunday, demanding that he step down over the country's worst economic crisis since independence.

Stakeholders

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He made the remark yesterday after attending the inauguration programme of the 145th refresher course for chief judicial magistrates and chief metropolitan magistrates.

The event was organised by the Judicial Administration Training Institute at its seminar hall in the capital.

Talking to the journalists, he said the inclusion of stakeholders would make the law acceptable to all. However, no "absurd advice" should be accepted during this process.

"Before finalising the draft of the Personal Data Protection Act, we'll discuss with the representatives from media, business institutions and other stakeholders who are interested and may be affected," he said.

"I'll hold a meeting with the state minister for information and communication technology on June 1 on the issue... Plus, I'll discuss with the Bangladesh Telecommunication

Regulatory Commission in a day or two."

Asked about the Digital Security Act, he said it was made to tackle cyber offences.

Responding to another question, he said the continuation or cancellation of the Jatiya Sangsad membership of Awami League lawmaker Haji Muhammad Salim depends on the final decision of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division on his appeal.

"There are two or three Appellate Division verdicts on this issue [parliamentary membership of convicted accused]. As far as I know, according to the judgements, parliamentary membership of a convicted accused is not affected until the apex court delivers its final decision."

Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, director general of Judicial Administration Training Institute, presided over the meeting where Md Golam Sarwar, secretary to the Law and Justice Division, also spoke.