



## Rail can rev up trade with India

Export by train may start in two-three months

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh is going to start exporting goods to India by train for the first time in what is billed by many as a major boost to cross-border trade.

Once the freight trains start rolling with the closed containers, Bangladesh businesses will also be able to export goods to different other countries through certain Indian ports, officials said.

Earlier this year, India lifted the restrictions on importing goods from Bangladesh via trains, and Bangladesh Railway (BR) fixed the shipping costs, they added.

India also urged Bangladeshi businesses to use its ports for transshipment to other countries.

"Most of the conditions on both sides have been met. We expect the formalities to be done and export to start in two-three months," said Sardar Shahadat Ali, additional director general (operations) at the BR.

Several firms have already expressed interest in shipping their products to India by rail, he added.

Arrival of goods through the railways from India saw a sharp rise in the last two years. Currently, the trains return empty after dropping off the goods in Bangladesh.

In the first 10 months of fiscal 2021-22, the BR brought in 29.92 lakh tonnes of goods from India. The amount was 36.93 lakh tonnes in the previous fiscal, sources said.

Operation of freight trains between Bangladesh and India revived

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Chhatra League activists rough up two Chhatra Dal men in front of Sir AF Rahman Hall at Dhaka University yesterday afternoon. The Chhatra Dal activists came under attack when the leaders of its newly formed DU unit were on their way to meet the vice chancellor.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Beaten up on way to meet VC

BCL activists swoop on JCD men at DU; 15 injured

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal were injured in an attack allegedly by Bangladesh Chhatra League men on Dhaka University campus yesterday afternoon.

The incident happened when around 30 JCD men were entering the campus for a scheduled meeting with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Md. Akhtaruzzaman at his office.

Witnesses said 50-70 BCL activists swooped on the JCD men in front of Sir AF Rahman Hall around 4:25pm when leaders of the newly formed DU unit of JCD, pro-BNP student front, were going to exchange greetings with the VC.

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## SHEIKH HASINA'S 76TH BIRTHDAY

## A steely resolve that sets her apart

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

She is no stranger to adversity. Her life has been plagued by tragedies. But none of those could break her resolve. Instead of being weighed down with personal grief, she devoted herself to fulfilling the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, her father and the architect of independent Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina has steered the nation through many troubled times, and today as she steps into the 76th year of her life, she faces another tricky task: helping the country ride out the economic gloom arising from the pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war.

On August 15, 1975, barely three and a half years after Bangabandhu shepherded the nation to liberation, his life came to an end when he along with most of his family members were killed. Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana survived as they were abroad when the atrocious killings took place.

The torchbearer for her father's ideals, Hasina also survived 22

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## BOAT CAPSIZE

## 18 more bodies fished out

Death toll now 68; four still missing

STAR REPORT

The death toll from Sunday's boat capsized in Panchagarh is now 68 after 18 more bodies were recovered yesterday.

The toll may increase further as four people were still missing, Dipankar Roy, the district's additional deputy commissioner, told The Daily Star around 7:00pm.

"We are continuing rescue operations," said Dipankar, also head of the rescue operation control room in Awalia ghat of the district's Boda upazila.

The boat capsized in the Karatoa river not far from Awalia ghat in Mareya union around 2:15pm on Sunday.

Of the deceased, 30 are women, 21 are children and 17 are men, according to the statistics available at the control room.

Yesterday, the bodies were recovered from the Karatoa river at different places of Boda and Debiganj upazilas in Panchagarh as well as Birganj and Khansama upazilas of Dinajpur.

Many bodies were carried long distances by the strong current. Bodies were found in villages in Dinajpur, around 35 kilometres from the site of the capsized, said Meraj Ali, station in-charge of Birganj Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Solin Chandra Roy, a survivor, said

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## Tk 642cr EVMs unusable for a lack of upkeep

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

At least 27,900 EVMs worth around Tk 642 crore have become unusable for a lack of proper storage facility and maintenance, show Election Commission documents.

The control units, monitors, batteries and cables of most of these Electronic Voting Machines are now non-functional as those were carelessly stacked up either at field-level election offices or schoolrooms, several EC officials have told The Daily Star.

The EC has so far bought 1.5 lakh EVMs in phases since 2018 for using those in different elections. Each EVM cost Tk 2.30 lakh, which was almost 11 times the price of the machine in India.

EC officials said another 45,500 EVMs, stored in cardboard boxes at different places, are at risk of damage from dampness, which might also become unsuitable for use in the upcoming polls.

A presentation made at an internal workshop of the EC early this month showed that 93,000 EVMs are stored at EC's field offices and schoolrooms at district and upazila levels across the country.

"Information from the EC offices shows that 30 percent of these machines are unusable at this moment," it said.

"The lifespan of EVMs is diminishing due to a lack of upkeep. A significant number of machines has been damaged. Even parts of some of the machines are missing," said the presentation, a copy of which has been obtained by this newspaper.

Another presentation at the same programme said that of the 1.5 lakh machines, 93,000 are stored at EC's field offices and schools; 54,500 at Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF); and 2,500 at the EC office's basement in the capital's Agargaon.

Asked, EVM Project Director Syed Raquibul Hasan admitted that there was no proper storage facility for preserving the EVMs.

"In many cases, monitors were broken and cables, finger-matching components and ballot unit buttons were damaged. The machines were kept in damp places."

He, however, claimed all these machines are repairable, adding that they come with five-year service warranty and one-year parts warranty.

"We have already sent 10,000 EVMs to the BMTF for checking."

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## BNP plans to hold rallies in 10 divisional headquarters

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Considering its recent demonstrations "a success", the BNP now plans to hold public rallies in 10 divisional headquarters from October 8.

It has decided to do so to keep "its presence on the streets" and up the tempo of its ongoing movement.

The rallies -- protesting the price hike of essentials and fuel, and the killing of four of its activists in the past two months -- are supposed to begin on October 8 in Chattogram and end in Dhaka on December 10.

They will be held once a week, party sources said.

"The standing committee finalised the programmes at a meeting on Monday night. So far, we found all the programmes in and outside the capital to be successful. The attitude and the body language of the party leaders and activists is very encouraging," a standing committee member, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, another member of the party's standing committee, said they will decide on the next course of action once the rallies are over.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir will hold a press conference at Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office today and announce the rallies.

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A biker has parked his vehicle inside a sewer pipe, to be laid underground, in the capital's Bangshal as there is hardly any space left on the road dug up by the contractor constructing a sewer line. Unplanned construction by the authorities often adds to the sufferings of commuters in the city. This also makes it difficult for other road users especially pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### শ্রুত জন্মদিন

হে প্রিয় অবিচল আত্মার ঠিকানা  
গণতন্ত্রের মানসকন্যা জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনা

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ৭৬তম জন্মদিনে  
কেডিএস পরিবারের পক্ষ থেকে শুভকামনা ও প্রাণঢালা শুভেচ্ছা

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