



PM'S JAPAN TOUR

Tokyo may push for re-inclusion of India in BIG-B

TASNIM MOHSIN

Japan is expected to push for India's re-inclusion in its Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative during Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's upcoming visit to Tokyo, in keeping with its broader vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), said foreign ministry officials.

Japan launched BIG-B in 2014 to promote industrial development and connectivity around the Bay of Bengal. In 2023, it proposed a broader initiative to strengthen economic links between Bangladesh and northeastern India.

Bangladesh-India ties have entered a rough patch following the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, a development that has affected Tokyo's strategic calculations in the region and complicated efforts to advance the initiative.

BIG-B is an important part of Japan's regional connectivity vision, with India playing a significant role.

"Japan has invested heavily in Northeast India. India, too, continues to engage with Bangladesh on cross-border connectivity projects aimed at facilitating the movement of goods between its northeastern states and the mainland. Both countries have an interest in connectivity that leads to the Bay of Bengal," said one of the officials.

Dhaka and Tokyo have kept the door open for India to join

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Students, teachers and civil servants take part in a rally in Athens, Greece, yesterday, to protest against the high cost of living, saying they face the same problems that sparked violent demonstrations in France at the weekend. PHOTO: AFP

NATORE CRASH

Bus had no fitness clearance for 5 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The RP Special bus involved in Tuesday's crash in Natore that killed 12 people had been operating for five months without a valid fitness certificate, according to police and the committee investigating the accident.

The bus routinely made the more than 500-kilometre journey from Barguna to Chapainawabganj overnight, leaving around 6:00pm and arriving around 6:00am.

It had about 40 passengers aboard when it collided head-on with a sand-laden truck near the Bonpara police outpost around 4:15am.

"We are investigating how it was allowed to run on this long route for so long without proper certification," said Md Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bonpara Highway Police Station.

He said the bus's fitness certificate expired in May and the matter had been reported to the district administration's probe committee.

Bus owner Md Mintu Ali said he bought the Ashok Leyland vehicle about a year ago and initially rented it out for private tours and picnics. After obtaining a route permit, he started operating it on the Barguna-Chapainawabganj route four months ago.

He claimed he had applied to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to update the vehicle's documents but continued operating it because of delays in the process.

This correspondent could not reach BRTA officials despite repeated attempts to verify the claim.

Md Abul Hayat, additional district magistrate of Natore and head of the seven-member probe committee, confirmed to The Daily Star that the bus had been operating without fitness clearance for five months.

"We will check all papers, official documents, and safety requirements to identify the root cause. We will not make further comments until the investigation is complete," he said.



The mangled remains of the RP Special Paribahan bus. PHOTO: STAR

The committee visited the accident site yesterday.

Passengers alleged that the driver had been sleeping and that a helper or supervisor was driving when the crash occurred. Mintu denied the allegation, saying two drivers were aboard.

"Sohel Rana is an experienced driver, and the

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Magura Jubo Dal leader found dead at bus counter

Family alleges he was shot over political rivalry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A local Jubo Dal leader was found dead at a bus counter in Magura town early yesterday, with a puncture wound to the back of his head.

The deceased was Md Saker Hossain, 40, senior joint convener of the Magura municipality unit of Jubo Dal, said District Jubo Dal Convener Mizanur Rahman.



Saker Hossain

Magura Superintendent of Police Molla Azad Hossain said police found the injury on the back of Saker's head but could not confirm whether it was caused by a gunshot.

"The exact cause of death will be determined after receiving the autopsy report," he said, adding that necessary legal action would follow the findings.

Saker, a resident of Beparipara in the town's Parnanduali area, worked as a counter master at the bus terminal.

His family said he had faced 10

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Five drones downed in eastern, Madina regions

Says Saudi coalition; Houthis deny drone launch, claim targeting Saudi position in Aden

AGENCIES

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Houthis said yesterday it had intercepted five drones launched towards the kingdom, including in the Madina region.

"Four drones launched toward the Kingdom have been intercepted and destroyed," coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki posted on X, adding in a second post that the interceptions took place in Saudi Arabia's Eastern region as well as Madina.

Al-Malki, who did not specify who was behind the launches, later said another drone had been intercepted, also in the Eastern region.

Houthis said that they have not launched any drones towards Madina and have not conducted any military operations towards Saudi Arabia either, denying earlier comments from the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, reports Reuters.

However, the Iran-backed rebels said they attacked a Saudi position in the city of Aden yesterday, with smoke seen rising near the airport, in the third attack in a week on the seat of power of Yemen's Riyadh-backed government.

"Our armed forces were able to target the Saudi enemy's operations room in the Badr camp in Aden with a ballistic missile," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said in a statement.

A police official in Aden earlier told AFP there had been a blast "caused by a Houthi missile", speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

- Smoke rises near Yemen's Aden airport, say witnesses
- KSA, Houthis silent on mediation offer: Iranian FM
- Egypt ready to provide KSA with support needed for security

Iran has not received a response from Saudi Arabia or Yemen's Houthis to its offer to help broker talks to end the fighting between them, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said in a television interview aired on Tuesday.

In the interview with Iraq's Al Ekhbariya TV, Araqchi also responded to the possibility of Egypt joining Saudi Arabia in the war against the Houthis.



Dust gathers on rows of machinery at Yeasin Jute Mills in Fatullah, Narayanganj, where more than 60 percent of the machines are out of operation, leaving the mill struggling to stay afloat. Once called the "golden fibre" for its economic value, jute has gradually lost its former glory. Bangladesh's jute industry is struggling to remain competitive as outdated machinery, low productivity and high energy costs drive up production expenses. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

IN FOCUS

Cop among 4 held for bike hijacking

Motorcycle was put up for sale on social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A police constable and three others were arrested in Chattogram on Tuesday night for allegedly hijacking a motorcycle and abducting its owner.

Police later recovered the motorcycle, along with two others, based on information from the suspects.

The arrestees are police constable Anik Das, 27; Wahid Md Jebel Hossain alias Anik Wahid, 39; Mohiuddin Selim, 52; and Wahed Nasir alias Diamond, 38.

Anik, who was attached to Rajarbagh Police Lines under the sports quota from Bandarban

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BNP MP receives farming incentive cheque from PM

Party says he qualifies as farmer; Abu Sayeed cites family tradition

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*



Rajshahi-6 BNP lawmaker Abu Sayeed Chand was among 15 sugarcane farmers who received government incentive cheques from Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at a rally in Rajshahi on Tuesday, receiving Tk 12,500.

The prime minister launched a Tk 12 crore incentive programme for 38,970 sugarcane farmers at Haji Muhammad Mohsin Government High School Ground.

Masuma Akter Jahan, managing

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